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THE MAZE OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER AND ARAB IDENTITIES BETWEEN EXTREMISM AND VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the challenges faced by first-year English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at El-Bayadh University in developing their oral communication skills. It identifies key obstacles such as limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and insufficient exposure to authentic language use. Additionally, cultural and educational factors, including traditional teaching methods and limited practical language use, contribute to these challenges. The study also examines strategies to overcome these barriers, such as increasing interactive classroom activities, promoting peer communication, and boosting self-confidence through positive reinforcement. By identifying these obstacles and suggesting effective strategies, the research aims to offer insights that could enhance the oral communication proficiency of EFL students, fostering more effective language learning in university settings.

1. The Global System

The postmodern era is undoubtedly characterized by cultural and media obfuscation, a trend that began in the late 20th century and became more pronounced with the onset of the 21st century. At the start of the third millennium, the world found itself navigating intersecting mazes, a shift evident in the significant changes in international relations between major powers, the central nations, and the peripheral states and societies. This shift is especially clear in the new dynamics between these countries and their relations with peripheral nations.

The capitalist system, with its colonial and imperialist roots, has adopted new roles on all levels—economic, technological, scientific, cultural, and political—leading to confusion in understanding this new paradigm, even within the societies it affects. This large-scale transformation has been observed by leading experts in international political philosophy and geopolitics. As Jean Baudrillard notes: "In reality, the universal is destroyed by globalization, and the globalization of exchanges ends the universality of values. It is the triumph of singular thought over universal thought" (Baudrillard, 2006, p. 42).

However, Baudrillard's assertion does not represent the full truth. The reality, as presented by the world's ongoing developments, is far more nuanced. New human relationships have emerged, emphasizing values based on accepting the other through dialogue, coexistence, and positive interaction for mutual living. These "fractured times" have brought about new forms of relationships between the center and the periphery, influenced by shifting mentalities and the spread of new values within the context of the new world. Jean Baudrillard further explains: "Social networks today play a vital role in reshaping a new universality within the digital network of global electronic villages. This points to the fading role of traditional institutions in controlling ideas and inclinations, leading to the erasure of psychological, physical, and symbolic borders between the world's people" (Baudrillard, 2006, p. 42).

The Arab world has experienced major transformations in this regard, especially in the last decade. The means of progress and well-being have become a defining feature of many Arab societies, although there are significant disparities across different Arab countries. This progress, seen in various social, economic, and cultural aspects, is mostly evident in the modern and contemporary Arab middle class. Without delving too deeply into defining such well-being, it is sufficient to attribute it to several economic factors, particularly those related to oil.

This newfound prosperity in the Arab world is most visible in the following areas:

1. Oil revenue, particularly in the Gulf countries and other nations like Iraq and Algeria to a certain extent.

2. The tourism economy, especially in countries like Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and the UAE.

3. The foreign labor market, with substantial remittances coming from Arab labor communities abroad.

At this point, we can observe the maze of the new global system in the age of globalization and the new manifestations and values it brings. These include knowledge, technological advancements, and the rapid evolution facilitated by modern information technologies and social media. These developments, combined with modernization, knowledge accumulation, and technological progress, are shaped by discoveries made daily around the world, especially in the capitalist and non-capitalist world. The maze of globalization imposes itself on the mechanisms of new awareness, advancing at an astonishing pace, yet it collides with what we might call "tradition," which resists these changes. This resistance comes from the remnants of old values and traditional cultures in the peripheral nations, including Arab societies. The Arab world, caught between the old and the new, faces an ongoing struggle between preserving its identity and embracing modernity. As Dr. Halim Barakat notes, "This leads us to say that the Arab society remains divided between the old and the new, without truly embodying either. It is neither old nor modern, and it is not itself as much as it is 'other.' It exists in a state of constant tension, experiencing a bitter struggle between conservative forces and those advocating for superficial progress, caught in the seduction of Western consumer goods and abandoning its creative cultural heritage" (Barakat, 2006, p. 9)

The greatest dilemma facing Arab societies in the context of the third millennium is their absolute dependence on the West, particularly on the United States. The United States not only establishes global systems across the geography of the world but also draws in all entities that orbit within its economic, technological, and military influence to subject human societies—individuals and nations alike—to its own logic.

It is important to address the impact of this dependency on the entire structure of Arab society, especially in relation to the informational aspects that now play a central role in regulating social, economic, and cultural relations. The digital space has expanded from certain Arab nations and societies, which are relatively affluent and prosperous, to poorer and less affluent countries. This shift is visible across most Arab nations today. The Arab informational space now exists within the global informational space, primarily Western, as it operates within Western intellectual realms. Although studies in this area are scarce and do not fully cover the scope, it is crucial to point out the role of this Arab informational space. The focus here is on the relationship between the Arab informational space and the complex web of the globalized, American-controlled internet, which monitors, directs, and shapes the boundaries within which the Arab informational space operates. This space is undoubtedly shaped by the informational directives set within the Western realm, encompassing all its scientific, technological, and intellectual facets.

The United States has a history of not tolerating other powers that challenge its authority in this area, as evidenced when China attempted to deviate from the norms and expectations set by the United States. This highlights the importance of the U.S.'s influence on global logic—particularly economic, political, and military—which is wrapped in a cultural veneer, exploiting this space to:

- **A.** Expand its economic influence in all forms.
- **B.** Impose a system of modernization in the scientific, technological, and informational realms.
- **C.** Combat everything traditional in culture, values, and practices considered backward, particularly in underdeveloped societies, including the Arab world. This also involves monitoring every aspect of Arab creative work, identifying the threads that connect efforts and practices aimed at escaping poverty, ignorance, and dependency.

The informational space operates within a complex network controlled by a centralized force, often based in the United States or Western countries. This creates a state of confusion in the informational work of Arab nations, which lack comprehensive knowledge and understanding of these new informational technologies. "Although most Arab countries are keen on joining the ranks of nations included in the electronic readiness ranking of the new information society, aiming to assert their dominance over specific areas of the

new global space, this effort has not been successful for many of these countries, leaving them struggling to secure a position. Meanwhile, those nations fortunate enough to have secured a spot in this digital readiness race face significant obstacles that hinder their ability to achieve higher positions on the global electronic readiness scale" (Hassan Muzaffar al-Rizzo, 2007, p. 320).

Arab societies have remained unable to overcome the creative and scientific barriers, which have become psychological barriers that are difficult to break. Despite the enormous wealth possessed by these societies on all levels, whether material or human, the Arabs have not progressed significantly. Despite numerous attempts made during periods of renaissance and revolution—periods that seemed promising but remained stalled and incapable—the reasons behind these failures and the causes that have placed the Arab world in the maze of globalization are the most significant. This is especially true now, as the world is no longer the same, and relationships between societies and nations have become more complex. It is now harder to track and decode the intricate codes that govern today's geostrategic conflicts and relations.

2. Arab Identities:

Identity holds a special place within the global system, as discussions about universality often imply the rejection of narrow identities that represent a particular nation or people. Advocates of globalization, in its economic, political, and cultural dimensions, present and defend the concept of a universal, global identity that encompasses all people on Earth. However, the key question that arises in this context is: Is there a single identity, or are there multiple identities? And what is the nature of the conflict between these identities, should they exist and multiply?

The mechanisms of the new global system, with its cultural, ideological, and value-based foundations, clearly show that identity remains central in our contemporary world, just as it was in the past. While today's world is different from yesterday's, historical, geographical, and ethical affiliations, along with ethnic, cultural, and civilizational connections, continue to shape and highlight these identities through various fronts. Ultimately, these expressions of identity point to the core of that affiliation and reflect the structures upon which they are founded.

The concept of identity, though complex and multifaceted, refers to another concept in opposition to it, namely "otherness." One cannot discuss identity without referring to and comparing it with the concept of otherness. Through the meaning expressed by this "otherness," we can locate and contextualize the concept of identity. The topic of identity, as both a dynamic and procedural concept, has been philosophically, sociologically, and anthropologically addressed. This concept defines other procedural concepts and announces itself as a center of attraction, especially for this particular approach we are adopting.

Here, it is necessary to consider identity as multiple and diverse, overlapping, and difficult to separate entirely. Religious, linguistic, ethnic, national, and cultural identities are distinct, but they often merge. The conflict between these identities is complex and multifaceted. The Western identity, which embodies the cultural, civilizational, and religious values of the West—along with its languages—is an identity with deep roots and a future perspective that defines a social reality. It fosters a dynamic creativity that produces material, cultural, scientific, and technological advancements, extending even into the digital communication space.

However, this Western identity carries within it a center of internal conflict that surfaces intermittently. For example, the German and Russian identities, as discussed by one of the foremost researchers on the subject, *Dariush Shayghan* in his book *Identity and Existence*, illustrate such conflicts. Shayghan notes: "This conflict was initiated by the Germans in the 18th century, where Germany declared its open opposition to Western identity, particularly French identity. This was a declaration of embracing its Germanic identity through national, linguistic, and even religious (Protestant) unity." (Shayghan, 2020, p. 18).

This researcher, in his analysis of the identity issue, refers to the conflict that was stirred by the Germans in the 18th century, where Germany announced its open confrontation with Western identity, particularly French identity, and adopted its own Germanic identity through national, linguistic, and even religious unity. This led to three consecutive wars: the Franco-Prussian War of 1871, World War I, and World War II. A similar conflict unfolded between European identities and the Russian identity. Imperial Russia, which was closely aligned with French culture and civilization, opposed all things Western in terms of identity, culture, and civilization. This resistance became evident in the Russian rejection of Western hegemonic identity, which was asserting its control over land and sea—first through Britain, then France, and later the United States.

We can also point to the Russian intelligentsia, which largely stood against Western identity, as seen in the writings and positions of Russian writers and poets in the 19th century, particularly the poet Pushkin, and

prominent authors such as Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. Observing this fracture in Western cultural identities reveals that the issue of identity is far more complex than initially perceived.

The issue of identity in the Arab world places us at the heart of the ongoing and often tense relationship with the West. The search for selfhood for Arabs continually clashes with the self-centeredness that defines Western identities. The Arab confrontation with the concept of identity, and its understanding in both the Western and Arab contexts, cannot be viewed epistemologically or philosophically except within the framework of difference, which highlights the conflict between Western identities themselves and between these identities and those of peripheral societies, particularly the Arab society.

Modernity plays a central role in this complex relationship in the age of globalization. "If identity is a dual relationship with the self and the other, then we must practice our identity and difference in such a way that we rearrange our relationship with ourselves and with the other—that is, we must change our stance toward ourselves and toward the West at the same time." (Ali Harb, 1992, p. 104).

Today, identity has become the most effective means to confront the Western "other" in terms of its statements, productions, creations, and the promotion of its values. When the West opposes these damaged, sick, and traditional identities, it seeks to prove that the only true identity—one that serves historical civilization and aligns with modernity—is the pure identity. This identity represents the Western logic. "The struggle today against the concept of identity and its ideologies is intensifying with what appears to be a crushing and definitive victory of the Western way of life model, in its cultural sense, meaning that Western social values are seen as the only suitable ones for contemporary civilization. Politically, it implies that liberal democracy is the only viable method for building a modern political society. Economically, it means that open market policies, based on the laws of supply and demand, are the only ways to ensure economic development and enhance production structures" (Ghalioun, 1992, p. 65).

At the end of this brief presentation on the issue of identity in relation to the new global system, we must highlight the identity that emerges within this system, defined through economic, social, cultural, and aesthetic models that dominate all aspects of daily life, both in the center and on the periphery. How do we confront this global identity, which imposes itself with such force and aggression that it seems almost impossible to believe or overcome?

The logic of identity, in its true sense, is closely linked to efforts to define and align this identity with modern action. For Arab countries and societies, entering the age of modernity is impossible without being active participants in it, without connecting to its threads. This must be achieved through creative forms and strategies to acquire the essential elements of modern identities. Mohammed Arkoun suggests how to approach this connection with identity by stating: "Thus, we touch on a crucial condition for renewing both individual and collective interest in re-producing our identities within a clear historical framework belonging to the twentieth century, which has reached its end... and this can be done by:

1. Removing all mental barriers that we imposed on ourselves under the guise of reviving our 'identities,' which were, in fact, mere illusions about identity.

2. Committing to all modern works and the places of their production. This will either help us practice our critical awareness or enrich, through our contribution, the progress of modernity and its dimensions. Naturally, these two efforts should also support the demand for democracy and respect for human rights" (Arkoun, 1992, p. 14) [8].

The issue of identity or identities, and modernity or modernities, as intellectual and cultural constructs laden with technological, industrial, and informational implications, is deeply connected with the global age and all its cultural, political, and economic structures. This relationship between the social, political, cultural, intellectual, ethical, and religious spheres is difficult to define and present. Particularly, the religious issue, which has been embodied, isolated, or at least placed on hold in the context of globalization, has once again emerged, especially by the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. Religion, associated with the sacred, in opposition to the secular, has now regained its role at all levels, driven by the intellectual demands of the contemporary era.

Secularism, promoted as a fundamental structure representing modern times in contrast to the heavy religious influence in human history, was initially believed by many of the 19th century's leading thinkers and sociologists to be in the process of diminishing. They predicted that the center of religious issues would fade over time, and that religious practices would lose their momentum in human societies, particularly in industrial, democratic, and liberal European societies, and later in socialist-communist societies at the beginning of the 20th century. This secularism was expected to replace religion with its values, rituals, and both public and private practices. However, the displacement of religion from the human scene, as many philosophers of the Enlightenment had believed, was far from reality. In fact, religion experienced a resurgence in the final years

of the 20th century and into the third millennium, which is difficult to unravel in the face of secularism as a modern intellectual and cultural practice.

While secularism is still strongly supported in Western societies, especially within the political class in countries like France, this shift has not been confined to Western contexts. The development of religious phenomena has become increasingly evident in the United States and peripheral countries, including those that had previously declared strong opposition to religion, such as Eastern European nations once associated with Soviet socialism. Today, religious issues are central to the concerns of all nations worldwide. As Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart highlight, "Religion as a human phenomenon has been part of humanity's history since its awareness of itself and its surroundings. Despite modernization, rationalization, and the transition from agrarian to industrial societies, religion has not been removed from the focus of contemporary humanity" (Norris & Inglehart, 2018, p. 19).

Although the predictions of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim regarding religious matters were not successful, other prominent figures were no more fortunate than those mentioned above. A prime example of this is one of the distinguished sociologists who left significant marks on both American and global sociology: *Wright Mills*. In his book *The Sociological Imagination*, he states: "At one time, sanctity filled the world's ideas, actions, and institutional structures. Then, the forces of modernity, following the periods of reform and the Enlightenment, swept across the entire world. Secularism, a historical consequence of this onslaught, was able to reduce the dominance of the sacred. In the following trajectory, the sacred would disappear entirely from all domains, except perhaps the personal one" (Wright Mills, cited in Norris & Inglehart, 2018, p. 20).

However, contemporary and modern history clearly demonstrates that religion, as a complex human phenomenon that expresses all the values accumulated over time, deeply intertwined with human behaviors, emotions, ethics, and practices—both visible and hidden—cannot simply vanish because of some will to eliminate it. What we can observe instead is the emergence of a violent reaction to what is being passed off and presented concerning religious issues. This is especially evident in the Abrahamic faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The marginalization of these religions has given rise to extremism and fundamentalism within Judaism, Christianity, and particularly Islam. Most scholars focus only on analyzing and presenting Islamic extremism and fundamentalism, often neglecting or failing to even mention the similar extremist tendencies in Judaism and Christianity. An example of this can be seen in the work of American writer Samuel Huntington in *The Clash of Civilizations*, where he brazenly declares a blind war against Islam as a religion and accuses Islamic civilization and its culture of all manner of demeaning attributes. He claims that Islam, as a religion, represents the most dangerous element facing Western civilization, alongside Chinese Confucianism.

What concerns us here is identifying these forms of fundamentalism, particularly the kind associated with Islam. This brings us to first highlight the significant danger posed by Jewish fundamentalism alongside Christian fundamentalism. Jewish extremism is clearly demonstrated by the actions of extremist Jewish movements worldwide, described as "an evil consciousness" by Abdelkbir Khatibi (1974). Khatibi writes: "This consciousness has produced highly extreme practices under the guise of a civilizational and modernistic cover, epitomized by the Zionist movement from the late 19th century to the present" (Khatibi, 1974, p. 48).

Jewish fundamentalism exploits historical events to prove that it is a peaceful movement, associated with modernity, rationality, and democracy. Thus, what this movement advocates through the terrorism and extremism of the Israeli state is considered legitimate within the framework of self-defense and the defense of Western values through the intertwining of Jewish-Christian religious ideologies.

Christian fundamentalism is more complex, as the Christian world is heterogeneous and often divided into opposing directions. However, the importance of Christian fundamentalism becomes clearer in the United States, where the extreme fundamentalist movement is most evident in U.S. foreign policy and the activities of religious movements within American society. Religious extremism is a contemporary global phenomenon, as noted by Mohammad Said Ashmawi in his book *Political Islam*: "Extremism is a global phenomenon that is spreading in many parts of the world—both East and West, North and South. This phenomenon is due to several factors, the most prominent of which is, seemingly, the loss of trust in international, religious, and political institutions" (Ashmawi, 1990, pp. 72-73).

Thus, Islamic fundamentalism can be approached as an exceptional phenomenon, one that is difficult to dismantle in terms of its ideological and conceptual foundations, which justify its actions both within Arab and Islamic societies and beyond their original geographic boundaries. The presence of a large Arab and Muslim diaspora in various parts of the world, particularly in Europe, raises critical questions about the practice of Islam outside its traditional environment and the consequences that arise—especially when it comes to

extremism and fundamentalism and their attempted application in foreign, vastly different contexts. Olivier Roy refers to this as *"Islam as a minority without a state"* (Roy, 2016, p. 61).

This form of Islam has sparked widespread debate, particularly in political and media circles, especially within far-right European political discourse. Islamic fundamentalism epitomizes the confrontation between self and other, strong and weak, dominator and dominated. In this struggle between powerful centers and weak peripheries—including those within the Islamic and particularly Arab world—the logic of this fundamentalism does not differ greatly from other forms of fundamentalism previously discussed. Defining the term "fundamentalism" is crucial here. Muhammad Said Ashmawi provides a clear explanation:

*"In the United States, there is a group that believes in withdrawing from civil life and isolating itself from modern circumstances to live as the early Christians did, in a primitive and communal manner. This group was labeled 'Fundamentalists,' meaning they return to the origins of Christianity. Due to the influence of American thought and English-language terminology, the term was translated into Arabic and applied to a movement that adheres strictly to certain formal aspects of Islam while overlooking its core teachings. This movement, marked by rigidity and sometimes violence, came to be known as Islamic fundamentalism— regardless of its varying factions and contradictions. Its adherents became known as Islamic fundamentalists" (Ashmawi, 1990, p. 159).

Islamic fundamentalism is driven by specific values, theoretical practices, and particular interpretations of sacred texts, including the Quran and the Sunnah. These interpretations are heavily influenced by a reality marked by crises and contradictions in a globalized era that often appears hostile to all things Islamic. As a result, Islamic fundamentalism develops a confrontational stance—both internally, within Muslim societies, and externally, against others.

The jihadist tendencies that emerge from Islamic fundamentalism are not entirely new; they have historical roots within Arab-Islamic traditions. These movements are shaped by the ideological premises of Islam as a religion, as well as geographical and political factors. Karl Wittfogel, for instance, describes this as *"Oriental despotism,"* a form of governance distinct from other political and ideological systems. He argues that the economic, social, and cultural structures of pre-capitalist societies follow what he calls the *"Asiatic mode of production,"* characterized by specific economic and mental frameworks (Wittfogel, 1957).

This particular framework has historically given a unique role to violence within these societies, a phenomenon that continued throughout the last century and into the present. The current globalized era is, in many ways, an era of violence. Islamist violence, as embodied by jihadist groups, is one form of confrontation against the structural violence embedded within the global system—a modernity defined by its "whiteness," which does not accommodate any alternative. This systemic logic promotes an organized vision of humanity, one that aligns with the image of the "white-skinned, blue-eyed" individual.

Consequently, religious revival has erupted across nearly every region. However, this resurgence is not the spiritual awakening of the past, nor the traditional faith that once prevailed. Instead, it is an aggressive revival, born from the frustration of religious individuals struggling to adapt, fueled by a sense of defeat and a desire for retribution. This revival carries the ambition of reclaiming territories once governed by religion, even if it means burning them to the ground.

Perhaps this explains, at least partially, the appeal of organizations such as ISIS—one of the most prominent examples of globalized terrorism. Thus, we see how religion, in its most radical manifestations and tragic expressions, remains a force to be reckoned with. Defying the fate assigned to it by extreme materialist modernity, it demands recognition of its existence and asserts its ability to challenge the global order (Salem, 2018, p. 11).

Through the jihadist movements declared at the end of the last century and the beginning of this one, we can perceive the danger posed by these movements, not only to the Islamic and Arab world but also for several geopolitical and geostrategic reasons that serve the narrow interests of those nations or ruling families. *Dore Gold* has demonstrated with numbers how one particular Islamic country has defended and protected some aspects of terrorism in the world (Gold, 2014).

While the French intellectual and specialist in political Islam, *Bruno Etienne*, argues that the Western imagination was shaped through its dramatic opposition to Islam (Etienne, 1987, p. 5), it is equally true that the contemporary Arab Islamic imagination was formed through its confrontation and struggle with everything Western, with all its religious, cultural, and political baggage. In fact, as *René Girard* explains, the sacred generates violence, and violence emerges from the sacred. "Sacred violence is the essence of all forms of violence. Sacred violence, tied to the sacred, always finds justification for its occurrence. This is why it is

difficult to contain or eliminate. Violence is often described as 'irrational,' though it certainly has its rational justifications, as it knows how to find the best ones when it is inclined to explode" (Girard, 2009, p. 19).

These contemporary times, within the context of the new global system, are marked by rapid development in all aspects of life. Yet, day by day, they sink deeper into the maze of confusion that contemporary life produces, as the new affluent life associated with the global capitalist system creates a terrifying void within cultural structures and human values. This void leads to the alienation that Marx pointed out in his 1844 manuscripts and in the drafts he wrote in preparation for his *Capital* book, known as the "Grundrisse." He developed several ideas on alienation within the capitalist system and its complex mechanisms of production. This is clearly evident in his *German Ideology*. *Max Weber* reformulated this in his own unique way, in his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* and his writings on religion.

The violence associated with what is termed *political Islam* is a direct response to the poverty, marginalization, and continuous oppression experienced by Islamic societies since the 19th century. This explanation does not justify the actions of extremist movements in the name of Islam, but rather presents the situation as it unfolds in the geopolitical and geostrategic confrontation between the Western world and the Arab Islamic world. One of the contemporary philosophers, *Michel Onfray*, in his *Cosmos* (2015), provides an interpretation that defends Islam, justifying the political, economic, and military violence, pushing the confrontation to its extreme with all forms of violence in clear retaliation against global hegemony (Onfray, 2015, p. 222).

The question raised by what is happening and what has happened is: How can humanity reconcile with itself and with the other? *Ernst Cassirer* offers an answer, presenting the philosophy of the Enlightenment in its treatment of the religious question: "The most powerful intellectual pulses and the actual capacity of the Enlightenment do not lie in its rejection of religion, but in its presentation of new models of faith, and in the new form of religion that it embodied in itself. Goethe's saying about faith and unbelief demonstrates its complete depth and truth in relation to the Enlightenment, when Goethe describes the conflict between faith and unbelief as the deepest issue, indeed the only issue of the world and humanity. He also adds that the eras in which faith prevailed were prosperous, magnificent, and fertile for the people who lived in them, as well as for the generations that followed" (Cassirer, 2018, p. 185).

This summary presented by Cassirer regarding the relationship between religion, faith, and the Enlightenment movement has been obscured in the subsequent phases, especially during the modern era and beyond, within the context of globalization. This has resulted in a deliberate or inadvertent cultural siege and marginalization by cultural and ideological institutions.

This issue has been criticized and exposed by several scholars of religious studies and related matters. *Olivier Roy* dedicated a significant portion of one of his books to examining this sacred phenomenon and its relationship with culture. Roy asks: "Are the religions that prevail today still the same, beyond their labels (Christianity, Islam), the religions that founded the great civilizations we know? We observe traditional forms of religiosity (Catholicism, Hanafi Islam, classical Protestant denominations like Anglicanism) alongside more extreme, fundamentalist, and charismatic forms of religiosity. In fact, these movements are relatively modern: Salafism dates back to Wahhabism, which was established at the end of the 18th century. Evangelical movements belong to the 'Great Awakening' traditions of Protestantism that appeared in the 18th century... Likewise, certain forms of Buddhism and Hinduism that attract followers and present themselves are reconfigurations dating back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries" (Roy, 2015, p. 25).

It is important to emphasize that the religious phenomenon, which today dominates public discourse in both civil and political spheres, whether in peripheral societies or core nations, has taken a radical turn. Its impact has grown in both private and public life, affecting people across the globe. This rise began during the early stages of the Enlightenment and became more evident during the era of modernity and beyond, as cultural and political movements linked to religious practices emerged. As for political Islam and the movements associated with it—movements that stem from systematic religious extremism aiming primarily to seize power in Arab and Islamic countries—these movements also seek to destabilize other societies, particularly Western societies, with the aim of bringing them into the fold of Islam, even by force.

Many believed that what came to be known as the Arab Spring opened the doors to modernity for countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, and Yemen. However, it turned into an era where political Islam, combined with oil-driven spring movements, became the dominant force. This shift occurred in the absence of a clear vision for the way forward, which could prevent these societies and nations from falling into the quasi-catastrophic situation they now find themselves in.

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