

## Islam in International Relations

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this article is to provide a brief examination of the situation in the Middle East through the realm of Islam as a power in a geographical and historical perspective by studying the interaction between the Arab and Muslim states that make up the MENA region, but also the interaction between Islam as power and the West without neglecting the contemporary terrorist organizations and their potential to diminish the state sovereignty.

**Keywords:** Islam; sovereignty; alter-globalization; International Relations; religion

Progress in the social sciences has meant for many scientists of the time such as Freud, Weber or Marx the diminution of the influence of religion, but these scientific theories developed over time have been challenged since the 1970s since the emergence of Christian Law in the US, the Islamic revolution in Iran and culminating with the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism, which causes us to re-examine these social theories in the light of how religion was perceived within the system of international relations in order to prevent and settle conflicts in the international arena.

According to the demographic study conducted by Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life in over 230 countries "worldwide, over eight out of ten people identify with a religious group and an estimated 5.8 billion adults and children are religiously affiliated worldwide, representing 84% of the world population of 6.9 billion in 2010 ". Thus, the importance of religion in public and private life and, consequently, its importance for the identity of the people, results. From this perspective "as in the case of identity, religion has gained importance in

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the discipline of international relations when the empirical reality of repeated claims made on its behalf in the various national and international conflicts has become acutely felt".

In a world of material progress and self-indulgence, it is necessary to bring back to the debate two concepts the fundamentals, human dignity and freedom of conscience, especially that "we live in times when human dignity is under a permanent siege: war, famine, violence. , racism, neo-Marxism "and" religion, although sometimes rejected or denied by Western social scientists, remains a force in our modern political scenario "and" despite the recognition of religion as an important variable in the study of international relations, evaluation, conceptualization and the delimitation of what constitutes the religious phenomenon continues to be the field of intense debate".

From the geographical perspective of the countries according to which this "determines fate, when it comes to the Middle East, it becomes an indisputable fact. The reason for this is the economic, political and strategic value of the Middle East". Compared to the European states where "from the point of view of its human dimension, the Church will function like any other civil institution (...) which in the current circumstances, characterized by the primacy of human rights, will make it maintain its equidistance to the front. by the authority of the state, thus being able to exercise, including the defining spiritual attributions ", in the Islamic world" external pressures, failure to come to the nation stage, conflicts between tribes, made Islam a form of identity declaration, and Islam has become politicized. "

Although, each country has unique characteristics in relation to "current theories of international relations, religion is not included in these theories, despite the important role they play in the history of mankind in individual, social, political and interstate relations" and specific to the Middle East. is that the region's interregional and international politics have always been dominated by the energy resources that have become foreign policy instruments and "the political structure of Islamic countries, instead of ensuring the socio-economic development of their societies, reproduces pre-modern structures."

The schools of Islamic jurisprudence, Shafiite, Malikite, Hanabila and Hanafite have been elaborated and used in the internal political struggle during the caliphate period and have been perpetuated so far in the Arab-Islamic space as dictated by the interests of each period and each power, either in fighting the Shiites (the Abbasid Caliphate), or in accessing and maintaining power even within the Sunni

community (the Ottoman Caliphate), which spread throughout the administered space the school or the Hanafita theory, still influential in Egypt and Jordan, currently referring to the jihadist currents promoted in complicity with the great powers in the international arena dispute, between the US and the Russian Federation, through the so-called "Afghan Afghans".

Strengthening the above statement by a simple observation of the behavior of the Muslim states in the International Relations system we deduce immediately that they coexist with non-Muslim states in an anarchic structure, as well as a diverse range of non-state actors behaving in the same way, as non-Muslim states and pursuing their own interests.

However, the concept of Islamic society is universal, and what makes the differences between Muslim and non-Muslim states is precisely the creation of an Islamic state subsystem that operates within the state system, manifesting itself globally by operationalizing the defined concepts. from the inner boundary (Dar al Islam - the House of the Muslims) and the outer boundary (Dar al Harb - the War House) or Dar al Ahd (the land of the treaties) which leads to the assabiya manifestation, which shows precisely the hegemonic character of the religion.

A brief examination of the situation in the Middle East from the point of view of Islam as a power and the geographical and historical interaction between the Arab and Muslim states determines us to resort to a multi-level approach.

Regarding the historical approach, we will start from the schism in Islam in 632, after the death of the prophet Mohamad, which led to the emergence of Islamic rites, Yism and Sunni, but also the emergence of two powers and centers of power, Saudi Arabia and Iran.

At the same time, before the emergence of the Arab states, as we know them today, there was the Caliphate in which also appeared the theories of Islamic Jurisprudence, encouraged and propagated by different caliphs, who succeeded to maintain their hegemony over the others, in fact, in the spirit of Islam that encourages internal competition within the Islamic Ummah.

In terms of geographical interaction, it aims at extending the influence of Islam as a power and religion on the world through the existence of a share of the Muslim population; the weight on each rite is also important because it will be observed a manifestation of Iranian influence or of Saudi Arabia or of both states but also a competition. Here we can recall the state of Qatar, more recently under the

influence of Iran amid disagreements with Saudi Arabia affecting the balance of regional and international power.

The relationship between Islam as a power and the West has been complicated since its inception and especially after the emergence of contemporary Arab states, after 1924, whose borders were established by the will of the great imperial powers, Great Britain and France, but also for internal considerations. of the Arab tribes. The US relates to Saudi Arabia, but also to other states in the region, especially after 1933 and especially with the discovery of oil in this country in 1938.

Before proceeding, an empirical observation is required, namely that the aforementioned states are favorite targets of terrorist attacks executed by Islamic fundamentalists.

Another observation before delving into what Islam implies in the field of international relations is that religion itself versus other religions can mobilize large numbers of people under the dome of Jihad, which goes beyond the borders of Arab states and does not recognize the sovereignty of any state, but it is addressed to the whole Ummah.

International relations in Islamic vision represent those external connections established by a Muslim state with other states, groups, but also individuals to achieve certain goals in accordance with the Islamic vision derived from the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet and the endeavor of the specialists in the field of Islamic science.

The importance of international relations in Islam derives from the need to coexist and cooperate within the international system. At the same time, the goals are general and special. The general ones aim at defense, common security and peace, and the special ones aim at the spread of Islam and the protection of Muslim minorities.

International relations in Islam have an inclusive character, which is obviously also stated in the constitutions of the Arab and Muslim states, which were built in modernity on two foundations, of Arab identity and of Islamic membership.

During the events known as the Arab Spring, one of the popular demands was the democratization and modification of these constitutions, but the inability of the governments to bring about real change led to frustration, dissatisfaction and despair, which opened the door for extremist groups, such as the Islamic State, take

advantage of these conditions and promote violence and extremism, the most conclusive example being Syria.

At first glance, we can say that not only geography separates one Arab country from another, but also the systems of government, constitutions, internal laws of each state, the national governments being unable to establish social justice by addressing economic issues or challenges. and political in most Arab states, and that the events of the Arab Spring have done nothing but highlight the legislator's ambiguity in drawing up constitutions and governing laws, especially as these once-popular movements have led to a fierce debate about the sources of constitutions. and the organization of powers in the state and the relations between them.

The main problem at the moment mentioned was the choice of an Islamic source or other sources of legislation and we observe that the religious nature of the Arab state was and is still stipulated in the constitutions of the states, but it is a real problem or the problem is applied and therefore the practice ?

We can say that these constitutions, regardless of their content, are intended to provide a broad framework, a vision from which the laws will be developed in practice, and the most eloquent and handy example is Egypt, where the constitution has not changed with the access to power. to President Al-Sisi because democracy must first be understood, so that society is not harmed regardless of the source of legislation.

Another example that reinforces our assertion, quite eloquently, is the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which by constitution made a separation between religion (Sharia) and state, drawing precisely the competences that belong to Sharia, which only compose social affairs, marriage. , divorce, inheritance, etc.

a) Examining contemporary terrorist organizations and their potential to diminish state sovereignty

Violent Sunni extremists, ISIS and Al-Qaeda continue to be the largest regional threat in the East, but also global without neglecting Iran, along with its strategic partner Hezbollah. These violent and extremist Sunni groups are geographically diverse and most likely will exploit any conflict in the Middle East, Africa and Asia where they can combine terrorism with insurgency by subordinating different local groups such as the Haqqani Taliban network.

We appreciate that ISIS will regroup in Iraq and Syria amidst the instability in these states and strengthen its global presence by encouraging its sympathetic members to attack in their home countries claiming to have a functional Caliphate, which governs populations by maintaining an insurgency. robust as part of a long-term strategy that will ultimately lead to the re-emergence of the so-called Caliphate.

Also, ISIS will encourage outside Iraq and Syria the interconnectivity between its different branches and networks, which will lead to local attacks and in some regional cases, and when the situation favors it also global.

Al-Qaeda will remain a major player on the global terrorism scene, especially due to the strength of its allies, and will continue to carry out attacks in or near affiliated operating areas, including participating in ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. , but also from other parts of Africa, Asia and the Middle East, and globally al-Qaeda leaders will continue to appeal through media platforms to supporters leading attacks in the West.

Neither Iran nor Lebanese Hezbollah is to be neglected, with Iran remaining the most important state sponsor of terrorism, providing financial and logistical assistance to militant and terrorist groups in the Middle East, cultivating networks of operators around the globe to maximize the chances of some. potential attacks, especially since Lebanese Hezbollah has demonstrated its ability to promote regional instability by sending thousands of fighters to Syria and providing the necessary logistics to militants and terrorist groups wishing to underline its ability to attack other states as well. such as Israel, Saudi Arabia and even the US or its interests. A relevant example is the latest attack on the refinery in Saudi Arabia operated by Aramco, claimed by the Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Non-state entities, both international terrorists and international organized crime groups will continue to use and develop information capacities, both in terms of quality and quantity of human, technical and cyber resources, as in the case of state intelligence services. to facilitate their illegal activities and to avoid detection.

Terrorism challenges and can cancel the sovereignty of a state because it questions its ability to defend its own citizens against violence, exclusive state protection through the social contract itself. At the same time, terrorism is also a challenge for the state in the international arena through the prism of international law and for

the international community as a whole, questioning international law and existing jurisprudence.

At the regional level, we can also speak of a climate of instability and vulnerability, which comes to facilitate the insurgency of these groups, whether terrorist or otherwise, through the neo-Ottomanism practiced by Erdogan's administration, the "resistance" of Saudi Arabia that is erected in the main. regional power and Iran challenging both Saudi Arabia and Turkey, without taking into account Israel's interests and exacerbating Jewish ultra-Orthodoxism.

b) The role of International Organizations, of Religious Associations and the Islamic economic component in exerting influence beyond the national borders

The Muslim world, through the exclusive protection of the Gulf countries, has over the years developed institutions, mechanisms and organizations that are alternative to international ones, precisely describing the concept of alter-globalization in order to safeguard one's own identity and especially the Islamic one in the international arena.

These institutions and / or organizations represent a source of geopolitical projection, among which we mention:

- The Organization of Islamic Cooperation whose objectives are stated in the Mecca Declaration of 1981 and foresee precisely the strengthening of Islamic solidarity, the development of multilateral relations between the Muslim countries, the support of the Muslim population in their struggle for national independence and freedom;
- The Islamic League, which is de facto an instrument of regional foreign policy and of geopolitical projection through its main stated objectives, which aims at Islamic propaganda and rejecting any accusations against Islam by acting through the Coordination Councils on the continents of Asia, Africa, Europe and America.
- Islamic Development Bank as an alternative to the International Development Bank, whose main purpose is the economic and social progress of the member countries, but also of the individual Muslim communities in accordance with the Islamic Law (Sharia).

The inclusive nature of the Islamic religion has led to alter-globalization, which would express a social and geopolitical "crisis of civilization" forming a culture through the convergence of local social movements transposed into regional and

international geopolitical plan, which come as part of a plan. to strengthen the international position as a global player.

Local and regional Islamic religious associations play a major role at local, regional, but also international level because even though secularism is guaranteed by the constitution, as in the case of Nigeria, the result is not the one most expected especially this connection and especially regional it can be easily observed by the flow of capital from the rich Muslim Arab countries for the propagation of Islam in all its forms.

Nigeria was granted political independence on October 1, 1960 and the status of republic on October 1, 1963. Nigeria is a very populous country, whose Constitutions have been frequently amended (1960, 1963, 1979, 1989, 1999), each of them acting as the Nigerian state to look more like a secular state.

The impact of religion in a state that was meant to be secular seems to have played a negative role, as politics and religion are intermingled; religion being exploited by the Nigerian oligarchy as the main weapon to maintain power, for example, by establishing Jamaatu Nasril Islam (JNI) for the propagation of Islam in northern Nigeria through aggressive conversion of the non-Muslim population.

To counteract such an action, northern Christians, in the minority, formed the Northern Christian Association (ACN) to protect the impact of an Islamic conversion campaign. The Northern Christian Association also aimed to resolve the grievances against state excesses in support of JNI actions.

Despite all these threats, the ACN did not benefit from the sympathy of Southern Christians, which in 1964 led to the ACN becoming the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) as a way to provide a platform for a national association capable of promoting and to defend the common interests of Christians in the country.

Nigeria is a member of the Islamic Cooperation Organization since 1986 which has led many Nigerians to question the secularity of the Federal Republic of Nigeria now ruled by the Buhari administration perceived as another threat to any non-Islamic religion which has led to volatility social, which later led to frequent crises, capable of destroying the peace and good governance of any nation.

In the midst of this instability in Nigeria, radicalism emerged, which was initially fueled by the ideology of groups such as Al Qaeda, whose influence began to expand rapidly after the end of the Cold War.



Ideology arrived in Nigeria in the form of Boko Haram, the radical Islamist group that held the front pages of the press and captured the attention of the international media in 2015, when it abducted over 2000 girls and allied the terrorist group to the Islamic State, jeopardizing state security and threatening the state. its existence and long-term integrity.

In conclusion, religion should not be understood as reductionist and should not be ignored in a global society in which multilateralism, multiculturalism and relativism of values are promoted, along with religious education but also with the need for education in the spirit of correct values.

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