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'Vingt Ans Après ...' An Assessment of Modern Islamist Movements

From 21-24 June 2000, a group of international scholars met in Paris to discuss modern Islamist movements in a conference under the (translated) heading: 'Twenty Years After ...'. The idea was to review and assess the 20 years of the studies of Islamist movements, taking the Iranian Revolution of 1979 as a hypothetical point of reference. These movements, collectively known as 'Political Islam', have been used synonymously with terms as varied as 'fundamentalism', 'alternative modernities', 'Islamic revivalism', and so on. It has been perceived as a 'threat', a force opposing Western culture in the 'clash of civilizations'. The more militant groups, with their calls for 'jihad', are often – and erroneously – considered representative of Political Islam as a whole.

A number of scholars have come to the conclusion that Political Islam has been less successful than expected in attaining some of the main aims, in particular the revival of the umma as a viable political entity. The conference dealt with the varying assessments of these movements in these years. For most of the scholars, who have been studying these movements for the last twenty years, the conference provided an occasion to share their personal recollections and concerns about the past and future of their fields of research on the subject

The international conference 'Vingt Ans Après ...' was jointly organized by the Programme Doctoral du Monde Musulman

(PMM), the Institut d'Études Politiques in Paris, and the ISIM. Gilles Kepel, Olivier Roy and Muhammad Khalid Masud chaired the conference. The sessions were organized by region. Andrée Feillard, together with Martin van Bruinessen and David Camroux, covered the Southeast Asia. Masud chaired the session on South Asia: The *madrasas* of Pakistan were dealt with in a paper delivered by Mariam Abou Zahab. Muhammad Qasim Zaman also gave special attention to Pakistan in his paper on the religio-political activism of the Sunni ulema in the contemporary Muslim world. William Maley and Pierre Centlivres both dealt with the Taliban. This series of papers on the Afghan context became more visually manifest when excerpts from a documentary called *Inside Afghanistan* by François Margolin were shown. Azadeh Kian-Thiébaud and Farhad Khosrokhavar gave presentations on the transformations in post-Islamist Iran and the Iranian intellectuals of the 21st century, respectively. The situation in Turkey was addressed by Ruşen Çakir, with a view to the Welfare Party (RP) under Erbakan, and by Elise Massicard who spoke about the Alevis of Turkey. For the Palestinian context, the post-*intifada* period was evaluated by Jean-

François Legrain. Mona Harb-el-Kak and Bernard Rougier presented the situation in Lebanon, where the Hezbollah both competes with and complements the government. Patrick Haenni and Ahmad Moussalli addressed the situation in Egypt. The assessment of the Islamist movements in Egypt 'Twenty Years After ...', according to Moussalli, was that arguments are made either in cold war or essentialist terms, neither of which further the understanding of the Islamist movements. His hypothesis was that Islamism has not yet begun. Gérard Prunier and Saeed Ya'qoub then gave an overview on the situation in Sudan. Mamoun Fandy's focus was on the relations between state and society in Saudi Arabia, under the heading of 'cyber resistance', i.e. the Saudi opposition between globalization and localization. Renaud Detalle addressed the historical context of the Islamist movement in Yemen, which Bernard Haykel subsequently evaluated in his role as discussant. Gudrun Krämer gave an overview on the cross-border activities of the Muslim Brotherhood, also with a view to problematizing the hypothesis that political Islam has failed. Martin Kramer linked in with the previous presentation, as he dealt with the pat-

tern of the sudden rise (or internationalization) and fall (or localization) of the Islamist movements. The attempts at mass mobilization in North Africa on the part of the Islamist movements were addressed (specifically in the Algerian context) by Gilles Kepel, and (for Morocco) by Mohammed Tozy. On the last day, Xavier Bougarel introduced a series of papers on the post-communist world, starting with his own presentation on Islam and politics in the Balkans. Nathalie Clayer specifically focused on the Albanians of the former Yugoslavia. The issue of Islam in the former USSR was problematized by Aleksei Malashenko. The final paper presented at the conference was Dale Eickelman's contribution on mass media, the Internet and the emerging public sphere. He affirmed that the new media have transformed the ideas and practices of religious and political authorities throughout the Muslim world. Olivier Roy then gave a general synthesis and chaired the closing debate.

The discussions and debates initiated in the conference will continue on the ISIM website: <http://www.isim.nl/> ◆