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## *Introduction*

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**T**he Islamist world continues to be highly dynamic and was especially so over the last six to twelve months. The contents of this fourth issue of *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* are an expression of that dynamic.

Two developments of this period stand out most clearly and emphatically: The first is the reemergence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Islamist affairs—or, perhaps, renewed appreciation of its enduring force. The second is the reemergence of radical Shiism, under the auspices of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as a potent, if variant, strand within radical Islam.

Neither the Brotherhood nor radical Shiism was, of course, inactive or entirely unnoticed during the preceding period. But since September 11, 2001, al-Qaeda and its associated organizations have tended to steal the limelight and overshadow them. Their lower profile was abetted, moreover, by al-Qaeda and other *jihadi* terrorist organizations that declared themselves the new, preeminent leaders of the Islamist movement. They claimed to have assumed the mantle of the older *salafi* organizations, such as the Brotherhood, and to have surpassed them in strategic clarity and operational efficiency.

Recent events have tended to weaken that claim. Of course, al-Qaeda remains very important and potent. It appears, indeed, to have reinforced its position recently by establishing a new sanctuary in northwest Pakistan. But both the Muslim Brotherhood and radical Shiism have managed some conspicuous successes over the past year sufficient enough to raise rival claims of leadership.

In the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, three events are particularly significant: the victory of Hamas, the Palestinian branch of the Brotherhood, in the 2006 Palestinian elections; the partial success of the Brotherhood in the Egyptian parliamentary elections; and the Brotherhood's leading role in orchestrating the Danish cartoon crisis—which was instigated by the organization's Danish branch and aggravated by wide-spread violent demonstrations that were supported, at least in part, by its branches in the Middle East. All this testifies to the renewed vitality of the Brotherhood and to the breadth and depth of its resources as the oldest and best organized radical Islamic movement. Two pieces in

this issue are devoted to aspects of the Brotherhood and its recent activities. Israel Elad Altman's article focuses on the current dynamic and debate within the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, and Lorenzo Vidino's article discusses the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe. The latter provides an account of the history of the organization's establishment in Europe, its relationship with other Islamist groups, and of the steady and now accelerating growth of its influence.

The Brotherhood's achievements—especially its electoral participation and success—and the possibility of alternative Islamist strategies and leadership have necessarily generated considerable discussion within jihadist circles. A third article by Reuven Paz reports on and analyzes this response.

The renewed vigor of radical Shiism dates to the election of the new president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and his assumption of office in the summer of 2005. As has become clear in the past six months, Ahmadinejad has managed to revivify the regime. He has restored the revolutionary vision and rhetoric of its founder, Ayatollah Khomeini, and thus the morale of the cadres who are essential to the regime's survival. By confronting Western liberal democracy, Ahmadinejad has advanced Iran's preeminence in the radical Islamic movement, as well as his own personal bid for the leadership of that movement. (See Hillel Fradkin, "Reading Ahmadinejad in Washington," *The Weekly Standard*, May 29, 2006).

This drive has assumed additional momentum because of the Iranian client Hezbollah's claim of success in its war with Israel in the summer of 2006, and because of Iran's ongoing resistance to the demands of the United States and its allies regarding uranium enrichment. Of less certain import is the establishment of a Shi'a-led government in Iraq, which might well fall under Iran's sphere of influence and has thereby given rise to the notion of a general Shi'a revival and/or threat.

The presumed successes of radical Shiism, especially in the court of public opinion in the Middle East, have predictably produced a flood of reactions from *salafi-jihadi* circles, which are traditionally and deeply hostile to Shiism. Their hostility is both of word and deed. The Wahhabi branch of radical Islam has a record of violence directed against the Shi'a that stretches back to the nineteenth century. Its most prominent recent standard-bearer was the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was until his death the head of al-Qaeda in Iraq. Nibras Kazimi's article explores the sources, both ancient and modern, of *salafi* hostility to Shiism.

Another front in this conflict between *salafi-jihadism* and Shiism is Pakistan. Although Pakistan is a mostly Sunni country, it has a substantial Shi'a community that has, moreover, played a substantial role in Pakistani politics. The growing impact of radical Sunnism has, however, led to sectarian strife. Hussain Haqqani's article describes the history of that strife and its current manifestations, and analyzes the problems it poses for Pakistan's stability.

Overall, these articles explore the new circumstances affecting the radical movement, namely, its evolution into at least a three-sided competition and rivalry. How long this rivalry will continue and what its outcome will be is difficult to know. But for the moment, it supplies a kind of framework for the global Islamist movement, and future issues of *Current Trends* will continue to track its various factions.

The final article in this issue focuses on an abiding concern of this journal: the attempt to radicalize Islam in Southeast Asia. Zachary Abuza's piece brings much-needed attention to a little-known arena of this struggle—the Muslim minority community of Thailand.

—Hillel Fradkin  
Washington, D.C.  
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