

# The Influence of Islam over the Foreign Policies of Contemporary Islamic Countries

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**Abstract:** *Islam is regarded as one of the three major monotheistic religions of the world. It is generally accepted that the so-called "Islamic Countries" usually refer to those countries where Muslims account for a majority of the overall population and Islam exerts a historically profound influence. This article starts its analysis from three aspects: the close connection between Islam and the regimes of states, the dual influence of Pan-Islam and Islamic Fundamentalism, and the actual interventions of radical religious organizations. Then the author explores the far-reaching influence of Islam over foreign policies of contemporary Islamic countries.*

**Key Words:** *Foreign Policies; Islam; Islamic Countries*

Islam is regarded as one of the three major monotheistic religions of the world, and the overall population of its believers, who are usually called Muslims, is over 1.2 billion. Generally, those countries where Muslims account for a majority of the local population or Islam exerts a historically profound influence are categorized as Islamic countries. Propelled by historical traditions and structural factors, Islam still maintains a fundamental and crucial influence over the social lives and politics of these so-called Islamic countries, shaping their domestic affairs as well as their diplomacies and foreign policies.

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In the field of foreign policy, Islam exerts its influence through three major channels.

### **I. Institutional and Structural Connections between Islam and the Regimes of Islamic States: An Important Channel Transmitting Influence of Islam over Foreign Policy**

On its historical emerging, the religion of Islam integrated all the Arabic tribes, who had previously lived in remote locations scattered over a vast area, into a single unified people and a single country of theocracy. During this historical process, Islam was endowed with some permanent characteristics. Therefore in the minds of some very pious believers, "Islam" not only refers to a divine religion, but also represents a social group, a society, a nation, and a state that could be regarded as an actual political entity. In the long history of the medieval age, the traditional practices of theocratic states that integrate religion with political power, which had been initiated by Arabic leaders, remained largely unchanged until the early stage of modern history, with only some minor modifications. The traditional doctrine of Islam maintains that a regime of a state applying the principles and rules of Allah should be supported and respected as a legitimate regime who owns the power to govern the country and society on behalf of Allah.

However, modern secular nation states quickly emerged since the beginning of modern history, particularly after World War II, which brought apparent changes to the politics-religion relations of many Islamic countries. Nevertheless, most countries did not clearly declare a separation of politics from religion, and a few countries still carry forward the tradition of theocracy. Therefore the countries in the Middle East region can be divided into three major categories in accordance with the relations between politics and religion. The first type is those countries that had clearly declared a separation of politics from religion, such as Turkey and Tunisia. The second type refers to those countries that still persist in a complex system of theocracy, represented by Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran. One of

the most outstanding characteristics of the state system of Saudi Arabia is the very close integration of royal power, religion, and the ruling family, which are three branches of its complex state system that jointly control the state power. Iran regards itself as a republic established in the name of Islam, nominally following a principle of checks and balances and operating a political system based on the separation of three branches of political power. However, there is an Islamic constitution supervising the aforementioned three branches of political power and an "Imam" taking charge of the three branches as the sole supreme spiritual leader. Meanwhile some countries, such as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, were founded in the name of Islam, even though they separate their political system from religion. Under such circumstances, the domestic and foreign policies of these countries are volatile and vulnerable, often full of ups and downs and easy to be influenced, intervened, or even impacted by their domestic religious conservatives. The third type consists of those countries that tacitly separate politics from religion without a clear declaration. In these countries, the religion of Islam is not permitted to interfere into the public affairs, such as politics, judicial affairs, culture, and education, but their constitutions do not clearly and definitely stipulate any principle related to the separation of politics from religion. A majority of Islamic countries, such as Egypt, Syria, and Indonesia, belong to this category.

Saudi Arabia is a state of monarchy operating in a system that integrates politics with religion, where there is no constitution, no political party, and no secular legal system, with only the *Quran* and *Hadith* of Mohammed regarded as the most important principles of state regulations over society and people, and only Islamic religious laws and rules applied as legal guidance for handling civil litigations and disputes. Its religious sector is generally a part of its overall regime of the state because the upper class of Saudi Arabian clergymen shares common basic interests with its royal family and aristocratic clans. Therefore, the fundamental objective of Saudi Arabian foreign policy is to carry forward and publicize the "orthodoxy" of Islam, achieve its own national interests through Islam,

and even consolidate its status as a leader of faith in the Islamic world. For example, Saudi Arabia decided to take an all-out effort to support the US to lead the anti-Soviet war of Afghanistan (1979-1989), and did everything in its power to assist the military forces of Afghanistan Mujahedeen, because it intended to achieve its own strategic interest in the overall geopolitical pattern of Central Asia. In brief, its strategic interest in this region at that time was composed of two sections. The first was to construct a defense barrier of Sunni Muslims that can effectively obstruct the surging expansion of Shiite-dominated Iran, while the second was to seek an appropriate agent of its own strategic interest in Central Asia through its support and assistance to some specific factions or groups of Afghanistan's Mujahedeen, including the Taliban, who later seized Afghan's national regime. At that time, it did this in collaboration with Pakistan's military government, because Pakistan rulers themselves had been deeply troubled by extremist Shiites within Pakistan's own border. For a very long time, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan were the two of the only three countries in the world that officially recognized the Taliban regime in their diplomacies and foreign policies (the third country was United Arab Emirates). Nevertheless, the US launched a high-profile anti-terrorist war in Afghanistan after the 9/11 attack of 2001, and finally overthrew Taliban's national regime. As a consequence, both Saudi Arabia and Pakistan were forced to dramatically adjust their foreign policies, so as to liberate themselves from the tremendous embarrassments brought by their intimacy with the Taliban, and to re-gain strategic initiatives under the circumstances of worldwide campaigns of anti-terrorism.

During the reign of the Shah Pahlavi, Iran was one of the most secular powers of the Islamic world, guided by a pro-west and pro-US policy. However, Ruhollah Khomeini, the supreme spiritual leader of Shiite Muslims, who seized power after the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979, converted Iran into one of the most influential countries that enthusiastically pursue the principles of radical Islamic fundamentalism. The political changes of Iran have drastically re-shaped its foreign policies and left an outstanding legacy that can still be felt in its diplomacy, although its foreign policy at present

might be relatively more moderate after many years of delicate adjustment. After the revolution of 1979, Iran had implemented a foreign policy of "exporting its model of Islamic revolution" for a certain period, which had been particularly targeted at those conservative Islamic countries, such as Saudi Arabia. In this way, its relations with the Arabic countries in the Gulf region quickly deteriorated. Keeping vigilance towards Iran against its intention of "exporting revolution" throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Arabic countries of the Gulf region established and maintained the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf.

Crowned with the title of the "Realm of Islam," Pakistan maintains its secular regime of state that is separated from Islamic religion, where Islamic organizations are regarded as non-government religious organizations that are not permitted to participate in political games of elections in the name of political party. Nevertheless, the ideology of Islam is revered as the ideological foundation of Pakistan, so Pakistan's right-wing religious groups often pose heavy pressure on secular political parties and government in the name of Islam, with an attempt to turn Pakistan into a "real" Islamic country that takes on Islam as the supreme divine principles guiding its domestic and foreign policies. During the ten years' reign of General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988), religion and politics were most closely connected to each other in Pakistan's history since the establishment of its state. In order to oppress the left-wing secularist People's Party, General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq decided to take a great effort to promote a process of Islamic transformation over the system and institutions of the Pakistan state, after he seized power and established a military government under his dominance, which was supported by the right-wing religious strength and opposition party. Under his leadership, the Islamic Ideology Committee was reestablished as an advisor to the president, and granted the responsibility of working out practical approaches and blueprints for an Islamic system. Meanwhile traditional Islamic criminal law was created during a process of legal reform and promulgated by the head of the Pakistan state. Economic reform was also conducted to forbid interest in the name of revelation

from Allah and convert the original religious practices of Zakat and Tithe into state-controlled tax items. Stirring up many controversies, the official measures of Islamic transformation adopted by Zia-ul-Haq's government enormously shaped Pakistan's domestic and foreign policies in the following period. For Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sherriff, Zia-ul-Haq's successors who were deeply influenced by these measures, one of the most important contents and principles of foreign policies was to strengthen Pakistan's relations with the Gulf countries.

## **II. Pan-Islam and Islamic Fundamentalism: Two Important Factions of Ideologies Shaping Foreign Policies of Islamic Countries**

Since the emerging of Islam, a systematic and exclusive Islamic philosophy consisting of outlooks on the world, on human life, and on values was constructed in accordance with Islamic faith, which became the foundations of traditional Islamic culture that keeps an extensive and ever-lasting influence over the perceptions and practices of various peoples of Muslims all over the world. Transformed from an early ethnic system of faith to a worldwide religion, Islam attaches a great importance to the uniformity and transcendence of Islamic faith, which have always been stressed as the nature of Islamic ideology. The uniformity refers to the "recognition of the only Lord of the world," which means that all the peoples of the world faithful to Islam should be united into a single political entity that can be viewed as the only homeland for all the Muslims. Whereas the transcendence is used to describe the supreme status of Islam that is superior to the statuses of ethnic groups and states, and unrestricted by any barriers related to languages, ethnic groups, or geographical divisions. For a very long time since the early medieval age, the mainstream ideology of the Islamic empire tended to divide human beings into Muslims and non-Muslims, and separate "Islamic territory" from "non-Islamic territory" (Wu, 2009: January), in accordance with the faiths of people living on the land, because of the strong influence of the thoughts of Pan-Islam.

Although unable to actually eliminate the ethnic divergence inside the multi-ethnic and trans-continental Islamic empires of the medieval age and incapable of establishing a nation state that granted completely equal rights to diverse peoples, the Pan-Islam ideology for uniformity was regarded as a mainstream religious thought in the medieval age, whose idea of solidarity, embedded in the slogan that “all the Muslims of the world are brothers,” actually created a strong religious emotion that was based on common faith and enjoyed wide spread influence over Muslims of the whole world. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman Turkey Empire, the last Islamic empire in history, constantly declined and waned, whose territory and sphere of influence were quickly encroached or annexed by aggressive European powers, such as Russia, which continuously expanded their territories through the application of their strong military forces. Confronted with such a tense situation, Ottoman monarchs once initiated the Pan-Islam movement, calling for the solidarity of all the Muslims of the world that could mobilize a new Jihad to defeat European powers and defend the Ottoman Empire. Nonetheless, the Pan-Islam movement failed to salvage the Ottoman Empire and was finally abandoned by peoples in the Middle East region due to the dynamic emerging of nationalist movements in Turkey and the Arabic world. But the ideology of Pan-Islam is still worshiped, praised, and even supported as a part of valuable Islamic traditions by some religious conservatives of Islamic countries.

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1924, Turkish nationalists overthrew the dynastic regime in their democratic revolution and abolished the obsolete systems of monarchy and universal Caliphate. Since then, the political and spiritual center of the Islamic world no longer existed, and Islamic clergymen began to get concerned with a universally concerned problem that is hard to be solved: what system can be used to maintain the unity of Islamic world under the new circumstances? In 1962, famous Islam clergymen and representatives gathered in Mecca during their pilgrimages and established a Pan-Islamic international religious organization entitled “Rabtiah al-'Alam al-Islami” (the League of Islamic World), which was

deliberately promoted, propagated, and organized by Saudi Arabia, and then expanded to include over 60 member organizations and delegates, with its headquarters set up in Mecca. In addition to this pure religious organization, Pan-Islam is also embedded into an international political organization named "Organization of the Islamic Conference," Originally established in 1971 and consisting of 57 member states with its headquarters set up in Jeddah. This organization was also operated and controlled by Saudi Arabia in the name of Islam.

As for Saudi Arabia, "Rabtiah al-'Alam al-Islami" was constructed not only for the purpose of counter-balancing Egypt, which had been holding the banner of Arabic nationalism in the international arena, by replacing Egypt-prone "Arabic solidarity" with Saudi-supported "Islamic unity", but also for a display of the status of Saudi Arabia as a spiritual leader in the Islamic world. Later, Saudi Arabia and Egypt finally got reconciled with each other because Egypt suffered a fiasco in the third Arab-Israel War of 1967 and urgently needed Saudi Arabian economic aid to recover from the damages of war. Since then Saudi Arabia repeatedly emphasized the significance of its leadership in religious affairs during its operation of the "Rabtiah al-'Alam al-Islami," which was converted into its own diplomatic tool to expand its influence in the Islamic world. At the same time, Saudi Arabia spent more and more energy and resources to carry forward the Islamic values, defend the rights and freedom of Islamic faith, and protect the interests of Muslim minorities in various parts of the world, which were included in its diplomacy as important and integral parts. Containing typical characteristics of a Pan-Islam international religious organization, the "Rabtiah al-'Alam al-Islami" tends to over-emphasize the religious factors in its handling of some issues and even makes partial or extreme conclusions.

The "Organization of the Islamic Conference" was established against the background of Arab-Israel conflicts, for the purpose of strengthening the solidarity, mutual assistance, cooperation, and coordination of all the Islamic countries in their handling of international affairs, so that they "can speak in a single voice on external issues" (Schmidt, 2004: 209). Its charter of incorporation lays a



stress on the common religious faith of all the Islamic countries that can be viewed as a strong link connecting various peoples of the Islamic world, and calls for extensive cooperation between all member states in the fields of economy, social affairs, culture, education, and science and technology, on the basis of solidarity. Meanwhile the charter also declares that all the member states shall jointly oppose colonialism and racial discrimination, take a joint effort to defend the holy sites of Islam from any harm, support with an all-out effort world peace and security on a fair foundation, and do everything in their powers to support Islamic peoples' struggles for dignity, independence, and national rights. All the resolutions passed by this organization are inclined to reach a general consensus among Islamic countries over some commonly-concerned international issues through consultation and negotiation, which can be achieved by seeking a common ground on the basis of the UN charter and universally accepted principles of international law. Therefore this organization has established a subordinate foreign ministers' council to act as a channel and mechanism for member states to coordinate with each other over the most important issues of international affairs. Generally speaking, this "Organization of the Islamic Conference" does play a very important role in international affairs, particularly in the affairs related to Arab-Israel conflicts, Palestine-Israel confrontations, and the Middle East peace process, as well as the issues connected to the endogenous conflicts and common interests of Islamic countries. Meanwhile it also shapes the foreign policies of member states to a large degree. But the ideology and practices of Pan-Islam cannot fundamentally eliminate the disagreements, disputes, and conflicts between Islamic countries for their own national interests. The "Iran-Iraq War", which lasted for 10 years, could prove this point as the most convincing case.

As one of the most influential factions of social thought and ideology in modern time, Islamic fundamentalism also has a significant effect over foreign policies of some Islamic countries. However, not like the Pan-Islam that attaches great importance to international cooperation, Islamic fundamentalism has not been

included into any official ideologies or guiding philosophies of foreign policies of most Islamic countries, and its enthusiastic preachers or advocates usually belong to the camp of radical Islamic religious organizations or political opposition groups of some Islamic clergymen, who attempt to use Islam as a means of launching political struggles and to turn it into the only guiding principle of state foreign policies. Advocating a return to traditions, Islamic fundamentalism tries to reinvigorate traditional Islamic thoughts in social and political lives through a modern interpretation over Islamic traditions in ancient times, so that Islam might intervene into politics more effectively. When handling the issue of modernization, Islamic fundamentalists argue that the westernization and secularization of Islamic societies should be regarded as the outcomes of serious mistakes of the ruling class of those Islamic countries, and that only through a re-transformation of societies towards Islam could Islamic countries and societies regain their hopes.

More specifically, the Islamic fundamentalism creates the famous "Four Opinions" as its political theory (Liu, 2011: April). The first opinion is "the Opinion on the Sovereignty of Allah", which declares that the absolute sovereignty of a state belongs to Allah, and that any state which ignores "the Sovereignty of Allah" belongs to the illegal regime. The second opinion is "the Opinion on the Authority of the Prophets," which argues that the "Divine Words" and "Divine Deeds" of Islamic prophets should not only be regarded as the past guidance for the ancient governance of state, but also be viewed as modern guidance for current life. The third opinion is "the Opinion on the Agent of Sovereignty," which means that any government of a state does not own any original power of sovereignty, and that it just applies "the Sovereignty of Allah" as an agent. The fourth is "the Opinion of Political Consultation," which emphasizes that the principle of consultation, which had been stipulated in the *Quran*, must be observed in national politics so as to practice "Islamic democracy".

Nowadays, the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and the "Jamaati al-Islami" (Islam Promotion Council) of Pakistan are regarded as the two most influential factions of Islamic fundamentalism in the world

of Islam, both of which belong to the category of non-governmental religious organizations with a certain political propensity. As a matter of fact, the influence of Islamic fundamentalism is mainly concentrated on political opposition groups of those Islamic countries, but occasionally some rulers might incorporate Islamic fundamentalist ideas into their own foreign policies due to their pragmatic attitudes on specific political considerations. For example, Omar al-Bashir, who seized power through a military coup and held the office of president for a long time, had cooperated with the Muslim Brotherhood of Sudan, and later adhered to Islamic fundamentalism as the major guiding principle of Sudan's foreign policy. In the early 1990s, Hassan Abudulla Turabi, the protagonist of Sudanese Islamic fundamentalism, sponsored the "Islamic Arab People's Conference" in Khartoum and invited major Islamic fundamentalists of various countries to attend this conference. Two years later, Islamic fundamentalist factions of various countries declared their intention to withdraw from the "Organization of the Islamic Conference" in the name of "Islamic Arab People's Conference", which indicated the dividing effect of fundamentalism.

### **III. Seemingly Radical Domestic Religious Organizations: Occasional Harassments and Impacts over Foreign Policies of Islamic Countries**

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Islamic Rejuvenation Movement, which originated from Arabic countries in the Middle East region, quickly swept over the whole Islamic world due to the forceful encouragement and strong influence from the Iranian "Islamic Revolution." A group of religious sects and factions with clear political propensities sprang up in large numbers in various Islamic countries, shaped by the surging wave of ideology of the Islamic Rejuvenation Movement, which brought heavy pressures on the governments of those Islamic countries. It is revealed by some investigation that there are nearly 100 publicly registered or secret radical Islamic organizations in Arabic countries, most of which belong to the category of illegal religious organizations with a

propensity of anti-government and violence, except for some relatively more mild and moderate factions that have gained recognitions from states. Normally, it is impossible for the ideas, opinions, and ideologies of these radical religious organizations to be understood by the governments of various Islamic states through normal channels of their respective political regimes, nor could they be incorporated into the overall governmental considerations over their national foreign policies. However, some of those radical religious groups did pose some influence over the foreign policy-making of a few Islamic countries.

The actual extent of the influence of those non-government religious organizations over the foreign policies of an Islamic state is determined by the specific political system of that state, particularly the pattern of the relation between politics and religion of that state. In a typical theocratic Islamic state, such as Saudi Arabia, Islam is not only acted as the faith of common citizens, but also revered as an important source of reference for rulers to make policies, including foreign policies. In the foreign policy-making process of Saudi Arabia, all the important policies and decisions made by Saudi Arabian royal government should be submitted to a "Committee of Senior Religious Scholars of Islam" for examination, verification, and approval. Theoretically the basic principles of its foreign policies should be in conformity with the essence and principles of Islam, because of the high level integration of royal power with Islam. Nevertheless, this theoretically confirmed conformity is sometimes suspected and challenged by dissidents and those religious scholars outside the state system, which was outstandingly embodied by the dispute over the issue of Gulf War in the early 1990s.

In the early 1990s, the foreign policies of Arabic countries over the Gulf War, which was launched and dominated by the US, were hotly debated as a focal point of public opinion. At that time, most Arabic countries expressed their supports to Kuwait and their condemnations on Iraq for its unrighteous aggression into Kuwait, and some Arabic countries even sent some symbolic troops to participate in the multi-state military force led by the US. However, in sharp contrast to

the official attitudes of the Arabic states that formed an almost unanimous support to the US-led war, common people in many Arabic countries initiated enormous waves of demonstrations and protests against the US military intervention into the conflicts between Kuwait and Iraq, which were considered as an issue of pure internal affairs of the Arabic countries. They argued that the US attempted to consolidate its own hegemony over the Middle East through this Gulf War, notwithstanding that Iraq should be condemned and punished for its aggression into the sovereign state of Kuwait. The demonstrations of common people of the Arabic world in the streets were merely an outlet of indignation and dissatisfaction over foreign affairs, but some radical non-government religious organizations and political opposition groups snatched this chance and emerged to attack the foreign policies of their governments, creating large waves of anti-government clamors. A famous religious leader of Saudi Arabia issued a "religious decree" (*Fatwah*) at that time, which said that the US should be accused of occupying Saudi Arabian territory if Iraq could be accused of occupying Kuwait. He also argued that, viewed from the perspective of Islam, the real enemy of Arab is not Iraq, but US and the west. In May 1991, 57 men of a Saudi Arabian religious opposition faction who called themselves "Islamists," presented a petition to Fahd Ibn Abdul-Aziz, the King of Saudi Arabia at that time, and stated their ideas and suggestions towards the domestic and foreign policies of Saudi Arabia. In September 1992, over 100 members of religious and political opposition factions jointly submitted a "memorandum of expostulation," which described their viewpoints over Saudi Arabian domestic and foreign policies since the beginning of the Gulf War and proposed their suggestions of reform. Both the petition and the memorandum seriously criticized Saudi Arabian policy of forming an alliance with the US in the Gulf War of 1991 and permitting US military forces to use Saudi Arabian bases to attack Iraq. The opposition groups and factions requested that the Saudi Arabian royal family should listen to commoners' opinions and ideas on domestic and foreign policies extensively, through a kind of consultancy conference that could control substantial power and

perform actual duties. They also required that Saudi Arabian foreign policies should be revised so as to protect the fundamental interests of Muslims and avoid the political alliance (referring to the alliance between Saudi Arabia and the US) that violated the religious law of Islam. Although over 110 core members of Saudi Arabian political and religious opposition groups and factions were punished with the accusations of “misleading folks” and “dividing the state with contempt,” the Saudi Arabian royal rulers at the same time accepted part of the criticism and suggestions of those dissidents (Cordesman, 2003: 181). They gradually adjusted some part of their former foreign policies. For example, the US air force retreated from Saudi Arabian air bases after a bilateral negotiation since 9/11.

Egypt, the other important Arabic ally of the US-dominated strategic alliance in the Middle East besides Saudi Arabia, was also severely and widely criticized by its own domestic religious opposition groups for its policies in the Gulf War of 1991. However, not like Saudi Arabia where no political party is allowed to be established, Egypt operates a political system consisting of a multi-party mechanism and a parliament. Radical religious organizations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, could still openly express their own opinions, including some commentaries and remarks criticizing or advising government affairs, through their own representatives in the Egyptian parliament or other legal channels, although they are not regarded as political parties. During the Gulf War of 1991, two questions were viewed as the most important ones in the criticisms raised by the religious opposition groups of Egypt and other Arabic countries. The first question was the righteousness and legitimacy of the Gulf War launched by the US, while the second one was the righteousness and appropriateness of Arabic countries' alliances with the US and their participation into the multinational military force attacking another “country that could be viewed as a brother of the Islamic world.”

The anti-war social groups of the Islamic world actually created enormous momentum in many places, and anti-war declarations, protests, or “religious decrees” sprang up in a variety of newspapers

and websites, which stirred up huge chaos in the rank and file of many countries. Therefore leaders of many Arabic countries felt it necessary to issue a document as soon as possible that could elaborate the nature of the Gulf War from the perspective of Islam and explain the exact points of their policies related to that war. In early 1991, requested by the state of Egypt, the national general Mufti of Egypt, Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, issued a 57-page "religious decree," with a title of "Islamic Verdict on the Gulf Crisis." In accordance with the religious traditions of Islam, a "religious decree" can be issued by senior and authoritative scholars of Islam for the purpose of making authoritative explanation over some important but controversial issues of Islamic law, so that controversies can be settled and people's perceptions can be uniform. This "religious decree" of Egypt actually made a defense and explanation over its foreign policies (Skovgaard-Petersen, 1997: 315). In this famous "religious decree" that attracted the attentions of the whole Islamic world, Mufti Tantawi answered many questions in the name of Islam, in which the most challenging one was concerned with the righteousness of the alliances between Islamic countries and non-Islamic countries, because religious opposition groups had fiercely debated over Saudi Arabian alliance with the US and its opening of air bases to the US military force. This "religious decree" certified from three points that it was necessary and righteous for Saudi Arabia to permit alien military force to get stationed on its territory. First, it declared that Islam permits Muslims to establish military alliances with non-Muslims under special circumstances for the purpose of defeating viciousness. Second, it also argued that Islam permits Muslims to turn to non-Muslims for help so long as the external help obtained by Muslims is used not for the purpose of oppressing another group of Muslims, but for the principle of justice. Third, it maintained that there are some precedents in the history of Islam, which indicated the practice of Muslims establishing alliances with non-Muslims, although these precedents might not be viewed as general examples. It further pointed out that the Islamic prophets showed positive and affirmative attitudes towards such alliances in their "divine words" and "divine

deeds." Mufti Tantawi's religious decree defended and elaborated the attitudes, stands, and actions of Saudi Arabia and Egypt in the Gulf War from a variety of perspectives and angles, but its effect was very limited. At that time, the US launched the Gulf War for the purpose of consolidating its hegemony in the Middle East region and establishing a US-dominated "New World Order," which irrevocably divided and disintegrated the Arab World and the Middle East region. Furthermore, the rulers and commoners of Arabic countries actually fell into a state of confrontation and conflict due to their fundamental antagonism between each other.

Of course, those radical non-governmental religious organizations do not represent states or countries, nor can they present mainstream public opinions. Nevertheless, their influences cannot be ignored or neglected, because they are not only able to stir up waves of clamors that can create chaos over people's minds, but also are capable of initiating terrorist actions targeted at governments and civilians. Many terrorist organizations, such as the world famous al-Qaeda led by bin Laden before his death, actually share identical or similar ideas or opinions over the Gulf War and many other issues with the religious opposition groups of many Islamic countries.

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