

## Tension between the Islamic Middle East and the International System: A Sub-state Perspective

LIU Zhongmin<sup>①</sup>

(Middle East Studies Institute, Shanghai International Studies University)

***Abstract:** This article focuses on the tension between the Islamic Middle East and the international community. After a brief study from the political, economic and cultural perspectives and a review of relevant documents and materials, the author has decided on the current research perspective. The sub-state actors in the Middle East mainly refer to religious and political organizations which can infiltrate into or influence this area or the international community, terrorist organizations of religious extremists, straddling groups and minority groups which seek independence or unification. Their major influence on the international community lies in their resistance against the present state weakens the nation state system in the Middle East and pushes anti-state/system movements; their significant role imposes a deep impact on the peace process in the Middle East; they lead to external intervention from the international system and growing tension between the Middle East and the international community. The root of the above-mentioned tension is that the combined actions of internal and external factors have made the Middle East system vulnerable and infiltrable, creating the soil for the rise of religious and political organizations and thus inspiring the anti-system movements of the sub-state actors in the Middle East.*

***Key Words:** Anti-state/system Movements; International System; Middle East Tension; Sub-state Perspective*

---

<sup>①</sup> Dr. LIU Zhongmin, Professor and Deputy Director of Middle East Studies Institute, Shanghai International Studies University.

## **I. Introduction to and Review of Relevant Documents and Materials**

In Western international relations theory, realism, liberalism, and structuralism interpret the formation and development of the international system from power structures, international regimes and ideological identity respectively. According to relevant documents and materials, definitions of the international system by Chinese scholars roughly break down into two categories. One defines the international system as a whole constituted by gathering together mutually interacting major powers of the world in a given structure over a given historical period. For the scholars of the second category, the international system is an organic whole with a structure and functions, and is composed of closely interactive units which interacts with the environs. It includes four aspects, namely, the international actors, the structure of international powers, norms of international interaction and international regimes (Yang, 2006: Winter). The first definition, deeply influenced by the power structure theory of realism, is rather similar to the popular Chinese concept of the international pattern. The second definition is basically what the English School means by the term "international society". The concept of the international system in this article is based on the second definition.

From different perspectives, the international system can be divided into different sub-systems. It can be categorized into security, economy and civilization systems according to the fields involved. It can also be divided into Europe, North America, East Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and Africa systems according to the concerned regions. Originated from the *Peace of Westphalia*, the international system is, in essence, a globalization process of the international system led by Europe and the USA. There is not any substantive change in terms of its power structure, policy-making or values. The relation between any country, region or civilization and the international system is actually their relation with the West. In recent years the West has shown a strong interest in the relation between China, India and the international system and anxiety about

the anti-West sentiment and movements of the religious extremists in the Islamic world. The fundamental reason behind this is that the West fears that the above-mentioned factors may threaten or challenge the current international system.

The core feature of the current international system is that it has been dominated by the West, and the Middle East, both a geopolitical region and the core region of Islamic civilization, however, has always been in tension with the international system and sometimes the conflicts in this region obstructed the development and transition of the international system. In the political field, the Middle East has long been in tension with the international system. During the Cold War, most areas across the world maintained a state of "cold peace" while four large-scale wars broke out in the Middle East, the Israeli-Lebanon War, the Lebanese Civil War, the Iran-Iraq War and the Soviet war in Afghanistan, all accompanied by many small-scale regional conflicts. The Islamic Revival Movement began in the late 1960s, and the Iranian Revolution in particular impinged upon the Cold War system badly. After the Cold War, many major events happened in the Middle East which impacted the international transition. For instance, the Middle East, a region rich in oil as well as extremism, became a high priority in the US global strategy. As a result, the international system was reshaped by the following three wars, the Gulf War, the Afghan War and the Iraqi War. Taking the economic backwardness, autocracy, regional conflicts and the religious extremism in the Islamic Middle East to the hotbed of terrorism, the US implemented its "Greater Middle East Initiative", which, together with its inconsistent and unsuccessful interference with the Middle East peace process, imposed unprecedented pressure on the social transition of the Middle East. The Iraq War undermined the ally relationship between the US and core European countries, which revealed the influence of the Middle East issue on the whole West. The Palestine, the Iran, the Kurdish, and the Lebanese issues, and the chaos in Pakistan are all of regional or international significance. Speaking of the "Greater Middle East", the continuous

turmoil in the "Islamic Crescent" area, the strong comeback of international terrorism (such as in Pakistan and Afghanistan), the Iran nuclear issue and the worsening Darfur issue in Africa have made the Middle East the contentious current focus of powers across the world for and a long time ahead as well. It is urgent for the international community to strengthen its global governance in this area.

In regard to the economy, the Middle East, with strong anti-globalization views and movements, is still one of the least globalized areas as a whole although there are several rich oil producers along the Gulf. Oil resources were even used by some countries or organizations in this area to fight against the current world economic order. The 1970's oil crisis and the recent energy crisis are both typical examples of this kind. In regard to civilization and culture, from the assertion that "Islam: A Threat to Us All" upon the rise of the Islamic Renaissance Movement to the argument about "the clash of civilizations" after the Cold War, the West showed increasing cultural prejudice and hostility in its "demonizing" the Islamic civilization while the anti-globalization/American movement of Islamic extremists took root in the Middle East. All this shows the worsening of the confrontation between the Islamic civilization and the Western civilization, which is dominated by the current world system.

Likewise, most researchers in other countries also interpret the relations between the Middle East and the international system. Immanuel Wallerstein, an expert on the world system, argues that the relationship between the Middle East and the world system has undergone three phases. First, the phase with the Middle East outside of the world system. When the world system took shape and started to expand in Europe, "the Islamic world seemed a hard nut to crack" and "it seemed the primary expansion of Europe in the beginning of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries overlooked the Islamic world or the core of the Middle East at least"; second, the secular anti-system phase, beginning with the colonization of the Middle East and featuring the nationalist movements and modernization reform of Arab, Turkey and Persia in the twentieth century; third, the phase of Islam anti-system. Since the 1970s, Islam has

been resisting secular nation-states and their governments as well as the leaders of the world system, the West. Believers of Islam put forward their "understanding of other historical possibilities of rebuilding a world system" (Wallerstein, & Tan, 2007: 89-107). Edward Said, a Palestinian-American scholar well-known for his critique of "Orientalism," looked into the unequal relationship between the Middle East and the capitalist countries in Europe and America and the relations between colony knowledge and colony power by adopting the discourse analysis of Michel Foucault, a French post-structuralist (Said, 2000).

In *A Study of History* (Toynbee & Cao,[1934-1961] 1997) and *Civilization on Trial* (Toynbee,[1948] 1997) Arnold J. Toynbee, focuses on the "challenge and response" between Islamic civilization and Western civilization since the medieval period to interpret the relations between Islam and the West. His theory had a far-reaching influence on later studies. Samuel P. Huntington developed Toynbee's theory into "the Clash of Civilizations", asserting that "from the Maghreb to Pakistan - the struggle for a new world order will begin,"(Huntington, 1993:32) and thus regarding the Islamic world as a challenger and destroyer of the current international system. Representatives of American neo-conservatism such as Bernard Lewis, Martin Kramer (Lewis, 2002, 2003), Daniel Pipes (Kramer, 2001) and other Middle East experts all take Islamic civilization and the Islamic world as a challenger of the West's dominant position in the world system(Wang, 2008).

As far as the research of the international system in China is concerned, it has three obvious characteristics. First, its theory has been deeply affected by the West, so relevant research tends to follow the West in terms of research topic selections and subsequent research. Secondly, priority is often given to the international system theory of traditional powers or groups or the relativity between China and the international system. Finally, in the study of the international system at the regional level, focus is placed on the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Although some attention is also paid to Latin America and Africa, it is apparent that the study of the Middle East system is far from being enough (Ye, 2007). Therefore,

objective research of the relations between the Middle East and the modern international system is of great academic and practical significance for enriching the studies of the international system in China and understanding the challenges facing Chinese diplomacy in the Middle East from the perspective of the international system.

Judging by the relationship between parts and the whole system, the relations between the primary actors of the modern international system, the nation-states and the international system have been the fundamental perspective for the analysis or research of the international system. The reason lies in that the international system only involves sovereignties while to a large extent the international system has been deemed the gaming result of countries which compete against each other on international power allocations, international norms, and institutional arrangements. However, this traditional and practical Westphalian mentality can hardly be used to explain the relationship between the Middle East and the international system considering the complex political actors in the Middle East. The nation-states are no more than some political institutions among sub-states (such as domestic ethnic, religious sects or clan forces) and supra-states (such as Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islamism institutions). As the heritage after the collapse of the Western colony system, the nation-state system in the Middle East is rather distorted and vulnerable under the double pressure from the sub-states and supra-states. Nevertheless, the current international system, still limited by the Westphalian thinking, makes governing and reshaping the so-called "failed countries" and "rogue states" its sole task but ignores its analysis and governing of the sub-states and supra-states. The root reason of the failure of the American anti-terrorism strategy lies in its focus on "regime change" and "democracy reform" at the state level (such as the Iraq and the Afghan Wars ), which did not help relieve the tension between the Middle East and the international system but led to more severe conflicts instead.

To sum up, in order to understand the relationship between the Middle East and the international system from the actor perspective,

analysis of the root cause of the tension between the Middle East and the international system must be made at the country, sub-state and supra-state levels. Meanwhile, we must take into consideration the influence of the international system, as an external force, on the Middle East. This article mainly discusses the relations at the sub-state level.

## **II. Sub-state Actors: An Important Factor for the Tension between the Middle East and the International System**

Generally speaking, sub-state actors refer to those domestic groups, institutions and organizations with certain capacity for actions; they mainly refer to those local governments, interest groups, private institutions and non-governmental organizations that function in the political, economic and other social fields. In the Middle East, however, there are numerous sub-state actors which are not derivatives of modern political regimes or sub-state organizations fostered by the civil society; yet they are capable of conducting international actions. Based on traditional identities such as race, ethnic group, religion and clan, they are in tension with the current state. They not only challenge and threaten the exercise of sovereignty of current states but also have a strong presence in the international relations of the Middle East. Besides, they even grow to be regional or international hot-spot issues, posing a challenge to the current international system.

Huntington defines political modernization as including rationalization of authority, differentiation of structures and increased participation of social groups in public life. He argues that rationalization of authority means "the replacement of traditional, religious, family, ethnic political authority by one secular, national, political authority." "Political modernization also means the external sovereignty of nation-states shall not be interfered by other countries and the internal sovereignty of the central government shall not be affected by local or regional power. It means the integrity of the country and centralizing or gathering the state power in the recognized national legislature,"(Huntington, & Wang, 1989: 29).

However, the prevalence of sub-state actors that exist in the form of ethnic groups or religious groups and their huge regional or international influence has become an important factor for the tension between the Middle East and the current international system. In regard to their international influence, the sub-state actors in the Middle East can be divided into the following classes:

First of all, religious political organizations with regional and international presence or influence. For instance, the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1928, now has branches in almost every Islamic country in the Middle East. Among its varied factions there are mild Islamic organizations which engage in legal political struggle and extremist Islamic ones which engage in terrorist actions as well. That is why the phenomenon of "political Islam" has become an international issue and the West regards it an "Islamic threat" against the international system. Likely, Lebanon's Hezbollah has played a significant role in the relations among Syria, Lebanon and Israel. Hezbollah was highly involved against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and in the Lebanon-Israel conflict in 2006. Hezbollah has been a semi-state force beyond the control of the Lebanese government. Strictly speaking, the 2006 Lebanon-Israel conflict represented a new type of international conflict in the globalization era, namely, a conflict between a sub-state actor of a certain country and another country, one that went beyond the traditional concept of an "international conflict". Today, due to its close ties with Iran and Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah has complex and profound impact on many affairs of the Middle East. Additionally, with the increase of its domestic and international influence, the Shiites in Iraq tend to become another "Hezbollah".

Second, religious extremist organizations with huge international influence. The most typical representative is al-Qaeda, a terrorist organization established by Bin Laden in Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda is not only armed with its own ideology and some twisted concepts such as "holy war" in Islam but also has a global network of members, capital and information. With al-Qaeda as the core, it also has Islamic extremist branches in Southeast Asia, South Asia, Middle Asia, the Middle East and



North Africa. Apart from its enormous influence in the "troubling arc" of the "Islamic crescent area", it also dealt the current international system a heavy blow by the 9/11 attacks. Once again, the 9/11 incident proved that the confrontation between sub-state actors and states has transcended traditional "international politics" and turned to "global politics". It has fully displayed the huge influence of sub-state actors on the transition of the international system. At present, with the comeback of al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan and anti-American and terrorist organizations creating havoc in Iraq, an ally of the US "on the frontline of anti-terrorism", Pakistan now has become "a major center of the global network of terror" (Rubin, 2008: May/June).

Finally, straddling groups and minority groups which seek for independence or unification. Straddling groups mainly refer to those ethnic groups living in neighboring countries because their traditional settlements have been separated by modern political boundaries. In the Middle East, the Kurdish issue which has perplexed Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran for years is a typical issue of straddling groups. To seek autonomy and independence, the Kurds have undergone many conflicts with Iraq, Turkey and Iran. Additionally, conflicts often occur between the different Kurdish factions. As they often set their bases in neighboring countries, neighboring countries are often at odds. Many political organizations were established during the Kurdish pursuit for autonomy and independence, in the hope of founding an independent country or a unified country of the Kurds. The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey has drawn the most attention due to its considerable influence. However, the PKK has transformed into a terrorist organization and became a threat to the stability of surrounding countries and regions. What is more, it has a lot of impact in Europe. In recent years, especially after the Iraq War, it has been noted that the PKK is bound to come back. Turkish military forces have crossed the border on several occasions into Iraq to track down members of the PKK and thus the Kurdish issue has become an important factor that undermines the Turkey-Iraq relation and is a new hot-spot issue in the Middle East.

The sub-state actors in the Middle East are an important factor that causes tension between the Middle East and the international system. Their influence is as follows:

First, their confrontation with current states makes the nation-state system in the Middle East rather vulnerable and arouses anti-state or even anti-system movements. In many Middle Eastern countries especially in those highly secular republics or countries with multiple ethnic groups, religions and sects, the ethnic group organizations of sub-states may criticize current secular political mechanism in terms of religious-secular divide, challenge the legitimacy of current nationalist regime, threaten the unification and stability of the country or trigger disputes or conflicts with other countries. All this makes the nation-state system in the Middle East rather weak. As some areas in Europe and Southeast Asia are seeking new "regionalism" that goes beyond the nation-state, many Middle Eastern countries, influenced by sub-state actors and other complicated factors, now feel uneasy with "the nation-state", a "label" bestowed by the international system. Many sub-state actors have been trying to shatter the old taboo to be on their own. Hinnebusch and Etesham argued that "in the Middle East the competition between sub-state identity and state identity encourages transnational movements and restricts pure state-centric behaviors."(2002: 2).

Secondly, sub-state actors have greatly hampered the peace process in the Middle East and have grown to be major actors of the conflicts in this area. There are four major types of conflicts in the Middle East. The first one refers to the national conflicts between countries such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Iraq-Iran war and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The second type refers to conflicts happened during the external intervention in the Middle East issue such as the Gulf, the Afghan, the Iraq and the Soviet War in Afghanistan. The third type mainly refers to internal conflicts or ethnic group conflicts in the Middle East, the most representative of which include the Lebanese, the Somali and the Sudan Civil War. The long standing tension between ethnic groups has posed a severe threat to the

unification and territory integrity of many countries in the Middle East especially in Sudan, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen (Ibrahim, 1994: 225-290). The fourth type refers to conflicts caused by religious extremist organizations such as the conflicts between Islamic extremist organizations and governments of Middle Eastern countries, the conflicts between Lebanese Hezbollah and Israel and the conflicts between al-Qaeda and the West especially the US. These conflicts often prove to be rather interactive. For instance, the internal sect conflict in Lebanon became an important element of Israel's invasion of Lebanon. The terrorist attacks of al-Qaeda induced the Afghan and the Iraq Wars, which then led to bloody sect conflicts in Iraq. Barry Buzan and other Western scholars, defined the above cycle as a "security complex" or "security interdependence". Sub-state actors have become an important force which promotes the process of "building security". "The Middle East is in many ways the ideal type case of a regional security complex today, with deep divisions and recurring conflicts." (Buzan, Wver, Wilde, Waever, & Zhu, 2003:180).

Finally, they are responsible for the constant external intervention that the current international system imposes on the regional system of the Middle East. The conflicts influenced by sub-state actors restrained many Middle Eastern countries from exercising their internal authority. In addition, they also provided a pretext for big powers or the international community to intervene in this area or even triggered conflicts or wars that threatened the stability of the international system because they had posed a threat to the interests of big powers and regional and international security and might cause a "humanitarian" crisis. In recent years, the majority of countries on the American list of "rogue states" have been Islamic countries in the Middle East and the USA has brought about "regime change" in Iraq and Afghanistan. With a lack of administration or without an effective administration according to the US, the "failed states" became "failed", as a matter of fact, mainly because they had failed to control the domestic ethnic group conflicts and sect conflicts. The Darfur issue which has been causing concern in the international community is a typical example.

Although the current governments of these "rogue states" or "failed states" are involved in their confrontation with the West which takes a dominant position in the international system. Undoubtedly, the West has not tapped into the sub-state actor factors in these unstable countries let alone seeking for a real and thorough resolution.

### **III. The Root Cause Why Sub-state Actors Give Rise to Tension**

Judging by the relations between unit and system, the root reason why the active sub-state actors are causing tension or even conflicts between the Middle East and the international system lies in that although nation-states(or sovereignty states), as basic units of the international system and a political formation which the West imposed on the whole world in modern times( a form advocated by the political elites of those colonial and semi-colonial countries), have been widely accepted by Middle Eastern countries. They have not achieved internalization in a real sense and, lack of support from local culture and tradition, coupled with rejection from traditional religions or sects and they often led to anti-state or anti-system movements (Liu, 2007). Due to their influence beyond their borders and external interference, the domestic and inter-state religious, sect and ethnic group conflicts have grown to be various international hot-spot issues, destabilizing and damaging the current international system and order.

#### **A. The Co-work of Factors Inspiring the Anti-system Movement of Sub-state Actors in the Middle East**

In history, the political territory of the Middle East changed from time to time due to the warfare between empires. With common religious and sect factors, the different nations grew to be quite open toward each other. In modern times the nation-state systems of the Middle East took shape against the background of the collapse of empires and colony split. In 1916, Britain and France signed the Sykes-Picot Agreement in secret, which divided the Arab region into sphere of influence: Lebanon, Syria and Maghreb in North Africa were

assigned to France, and Egypt, Sudan, the Gulf region, Jordan, Iraq and Palestine to Britain. Later the nation-state system in the Middle East was basically established in accordance with this split.

There were a number of local anti-system forces under the regional system based on the West-imposed territory division. They fought under the name of territory, ideology, clan, tribes, religion or anti-Westernism (Buzan, et al., 2003: 180). The nation-state system in the Middle East was rather weak due to the mismatch between nation and state and the absence of minority groups or straddling groups which could found a state mainly by themselves. More often than not, there would be various political movements calling for changes in current boundaries. Among them there were the "irredentist movement" initiated by current states, national unification movement for benefits, movements of minorities or straddling groups to get independent and national movements to establish a state (e.g. Palestine). During the above movements, some sub-state groups obtained support from other countries; some went their own way and some joined other similar groups, all getting involved in the interaction between Middle Eastern countries. Therefore, the Middle Eastern countries "can output loyalty to political or religious centers outside their boundaries and any leader of Middle Eastern countries can easily win support from the people in neighboring countries by sponsoring newspapers or oppositions, which is pretty natural and widely accepted" (Owen, 1983:20-21).

The inter-state infiltratability between the 22 Arab states is even more obvious and there is no clear-cut line between domestic politics and foreign policy. "There's almost no diplomatic relations in real sense among Arab states but an extension of family affairs" (Korany, & Dessouki, 1984: 2-3). Unlike the European regionalism whose integration did not start until the nation-state system had become mature, the Arab Unification Movement has been accompanied by the independence movements in the Arab world. In fact, it had begun before the independence of many Arab countries. However, the Arab unification or public resources which were supposed to benefit the

Arab world as a whole might become a legal tool for some countries to pursue their self-interests. "The pursuit of unification may easily prove to be of great splitting effect for certain Arab country because those who support an ally with an external force often find themselves in bloody conflicts with those who support another ally" (Owen, 1983: 20-21). Although the unification of the Arab world is not a major subject of this article, it provides huge international space for activities of sub-state actors.

The ethnic groups or sect factors infiltrated in the power structure or adoption of improper or wrong nationality or religious policies in many Islamic countries of the Middle East prepared the conditions for sub-state actors to come into play and also sowed seeds of disputes and unrest in these countries. One typical form was domestic conflict triggered by ethnic-oriented state power allocation such as the Lebanese Civil War and the power struggle and vendetta killings among different sects during the rebuilding of Iraq. Another form was domestic conflict caused by ethnic-oriented monopolization of power. For instance, as the state power was monopolized by the Sunnis during Saddam Hussein's rule in Iraq, the marginalized Shiites and Kurds fought back at his dictatorship with insurrection or riots, which is also one root of the vendetta killings in Iraq today. Additionally, there were also conflicts induced by the separation movement of minorities and straddling groups such as the conflict caused by the independence movement of Kurds. The above-mentioned examples were typical of foreign-involved conflicts. For instance, the Lebanese Civil War involved the Lebanese-Israeli relationship while the internal conflict of Iraq involved the Iraq-Iran relations. The Kurdish issue, which involved multilateral relations with Turkey, even evolved into a regional conflict when it reached its peak.

The unjust and unreasonable international settlement of Middle Eastern affairs under the post-war international system also encouraged the rise of sub-state actors. From the UK's empty promise of helping establish a unified Arab state to its support of Zionism; from the unfair partition plan for Palestine and Israel to the US bias for Israel in the

Middle East wars; from the proxy wars to ever-changing pragmatist allies; from Soviet's invasion of Afghanistan to US dominance in the Middle East after the Gulf War; from "Islam is a threat to the world" to "clashes of civilizations" to the list of "rogue states" and "axis of evil"; from the counter-terrorism war in Afghanistan to the Iraq War featuring "preemptive strike" strategy and "regime change" policy to "democratic reform" and "Greater Middle East Initiative", the Middle East has been under the heavy pressure of Western hegemony and power which dominates the international system. Under this pressure, "the memory of Western hegemony in the past centuries, coupled with continued dependence on the West, left a deep scar and resentment, which may easily become a plea for social failure and the last straw in Muslim politics" (Esposito, 1999: 254).

The heavy pressure imposed on the Middle East created a condition for the emergence of anti-hegemony and anti-system activities of sub-state actors in the grassroots. Take the Palestine issue as an example, in the eyes of the Arab world, Israel is like a nail hammered into the heart of the Middle East, a living symbol of "New Imperialism" of the West "because it reproduces the historic picture of the relationship between the West and the Middle East as a whole and Palestine has become one of the few common symbols that the Muslim world is beyond religious, racial and national boundaries" (Doran, 2003:21). Under this background, Palestine's efforts for its national rights, anti-Israel and anti-West movements became the most effective weapon for sub-state actors like the national religious organizations in the Arab world to mobilize the public. Besides, any compromise or concession that any Arab state made to Israel would come under heavy criticism from the above sub-state actors or even the whole Arab community. For instance, the anti-Soviet war of Afghanistan and the US pragmatic strategy taken against USSR gave birth to al-Qaeda, the Taliban and numerous other national or religious organizations in the Islamic world, in this author's opinion, which imposed a great impact on the international system.

**B. The Co-work Factors Creating Soil for the Rise of Religious Political Organizations and Promoting Islamic Anti-state & system Movements in the Middle East**

The contradiction between the generality value of the Muslim community and the cruel political reality led to rise of the Islamic Revival and the intrinsic logic of the anti-system movement of the religious political organizations established by sub-states in the Middle East was opposing current nation-states and the international system based on them. In respect of ideal, belief and political culture, "Umma is the sole perfect form for the existence of the whole Muslim community; it recognizes neither territory or boundaries of nations and countries nor racial and linguistic differences among the Muslims" (Jin, 1995:165). However, the truth is that the Islamic civilization has divided into many nation-states after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire while the Islamic world today is simply a group of countries with the same culture, far from an entity which can adopt unified political standpoint for certain political purposes. As for the 59 member states of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, they can hardly find any effective means of leading the Islamic world or a core state with desirable international influence. The Islamic world, argued some scholar, is the only traditional civilization that has failed to rebuild itself into an important international role after the retreat of Western colonists from the Third World (Buzan, et al., 1991: July: 246-247).

Considering the modernization frustration of the nation-states in the Middle East, the intensified social contradictions, the repeated shame of foreign policy failures and the heavy pressure from the West, "the Islamic Renaissance was apparently a response to the failure of Islamic political elites in trying to establish a legal public order within the political community."(Dekmejian, 1980: Winter: 3). The ideal of the Islamic Renaissance is to rebuild a supranational *Umma* which can truly represent "Allah's sovereignty". Yet its primary opposition is the current state in those highly secular Middle Eastern countries or those countries being rapidly secularized. Due to the supranational feature of the Islamic ideology and its anti-Westernism, Islamic organizations



have rather strong international infiltration capabilities and often cause tension or conflicts, at regional or international levels, between the Middle East and the international system.

The extremist actions of sub-state actors such as religious extremism and international terrorism, as an outgrowth of the Islamic ethos and movements in the Middle East, are in essence anti-state and anti-system movements that, out of desperation about current domestic and international order, resorted to violence by twisting or misusing traditional theory of Islam. Hussein Kamel Bahaa Eddine, an Egyptian scholar, once said, "In an atmosphere where the principles of international law and world peace are absent, double standards are taken, tyranny and grimness is felt everywhere but there is no hope of change, there's a sense of spatial strangeness among those who are already deprived of hope and left aside suffering from pain and desperation. Now that they can only seek for a spiritual ballast in temporal distance or a way out in extremist and terrorist thoughts, terrorism will continue to exist across the world and, together with the impact of continuous economic recession upon politics, society and their psychology, terror events will be more common" (Eddine, 2005: 60).

The stimulation of the unfair international order on the appearance of religious extremism and international terrorism can also be confirmed by the logic of bin Laden. There were three major reasons, Laden said, why the US would become a target of Islamic religious terrorist forces. One was that the American military presence in the Gulf region after the Gulf War did not only threaten the security of the two holy places of Islam but also interfered in the internal affairs of the Middle Eastern countries. Another was that the American sanctions against Iraq and bombing of Iraq after the Gulf War led to humanitarian disasters. Finally, the US had been supporting and showing favoritism to Israel in the Arab-Israel conflict, controlling, attacking and alienating Arab countries but ignored the legal rights and national dignity of Arab countries and the people in Palestine (Wang, 2002: 311).

The 9/11 attacks in 2001 prove that international terrorism, the largest

non-traditional security threat in the age of globalization, has had a profound influence on the international system and the international order. The influence that humans must be wary of can be summed up in three points as follows: first of all, all humans must take sterner and more powerful measures against the real and severe threat of terrorism; second, they must look dig deeper for root causes of the appearance and growth of terrorism and establish fairer and more reasonable international regimes as well; finally, the unilateral foreign policies of the US featuring self-centeredness, power politics and outrageous attacks will injure others and ruin itself at the same time, which is to some extent the historical reaction of Islamic extremist terrorist forces to the hegemonic policies of the US (Li, & Wang, 2002:26-27).

## Reference

- Buzan, B. (1991:July). New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-first Century. *International Affairs*. 67(3).
- Buzan, B., Wilde, J. and Waever, O. (2003). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, translated by N. Zhu. Hangzhou: Zhejiang Peoples Publishing House.
- Dekmejian, R.H. (1980: Winter). The Anatomy of Islamic Revival: Legitimacy Crisis, Ethnic Conflict and the Search for Islamic Alternatives. *The Middle East Journal*. Vol.34, No.1.
- Dongfang, X. and others. (1999). *Islam and Post-cold War World*. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press.
- Doran, M.S. (2003:January/February). Palestine, Iraq, and American strategy. *Foreign Affairs*.
- Eddine, H.K.B. (2005). *The Crossroad*, translated by W. Zhu, and J. Ding. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Esposito, J. (1999). *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, translated by R. Hinnebusch, A. and Ehteshami, A.(2002). *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*. Boulder, CO.: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Huntington, S.P. (1989). *Political Order in Changing Societies*, translated by G. Wang, and others. Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company.
- Huntington, S.P. (1993: Summer). The Clash of Civilization?. *Foreign Affairs*.
- Ibrahim, S.E. (1994). *Sects, Ethnicity, and Minority Groups in the Arab World*.

- Cairo: Ibn Khaldoun Center.
- Jin, Y. (Ed) (1995). *Islam*. Beijing: Orient Publishing House.
- Korany, B. & Dessouki, A. E.H. (1984). *The Foreign Policies of Arab States*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Kramer, M. (2001). *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America*. Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy.
- Lewis, B. (2002/2003) *What Went Wrong? The Clash between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lewis, B. (2003). *The Crisis of Islam, Holy War and Unholy Terror*. N.Y.: The Modern Library.
- Li, S. & Wang, Y. (Eds.) (2002). *2001 International Situation Review. Report on Global Politics and Security in 2002*. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press.
- Liu, Z. (2007). A review on the Relations between Nationalism and Islam in the Middle East. *Arab World Studies*. No. 3.
- Owen, R. (1983). Arab Nationalism, Unity and Solidarity. In Talal Asad and Roger Owen Eds. *Sociology of "Developing Societies": The Middle East*. London: Macmillan Press.
- Pipes, D. (2002). *Militant Islam Reaches America*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Rubin, B. R. (2008: May/June). Saving Afghanistan. *Foreign Affairs*.
- Said, E.W. (2000). *Orientalism*, translated by Y. Wang, Y. and others. Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company.
- Toynbee, A. J. ([1934-1961] 1997) *A Study of History*, translated by W. Cao, and others. Shanghai: People's Publishing House.
- Toynbee, A.J. ([1948] 1997). *Civilization on Trial*, translated by H. Shen, Hangzhou: Zhejiang People's Publishing House.
- Wang, J. (2008). Analysis on the Jewish Elements in Islamic Studies of the United States. *Arab World Studies*. No 1.
- Wang, Y. (Ed.) (2002). *Origins of Terrorism*. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press.
- Wallerstein, I. (2007). *Decline of American Power*, translated by R. Tan. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press.
- Yang, J. (2006: Winter). China and U.S. Strategies and Measures in Response to Transition of the International System. *International Review*. Vol. 45.
- Ye, Q. (2007). The Development of Middle East Regional System and Its Characteristics. *Arab World Studies*, No 5.

(Translated by FAN Peng, Shanghai: Foreign Languages School, East China University of Political Science and Law).