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CALL FOR PAPERS

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

as part of the research program of the European Research Council

When Authoritarianism Fails in the Arab World (WAWAW)

Venue and date: CERI/Sciences Po (Paris, France), 29 and 30 October, 2015

“WITH OR WITHOUT THE BROTHERS”

Domestic, Regional, International and Transnational, State and Sub-State Political Makeovers of the Islamist Scene (2013-2015)

- Deadline for sending abstracts: 30 June 2015
- Deadline for sending full papers: 20 September 2015

Scientific committee: Laurent Bonnefoy (CERI/Sciences Po, deputy project investigator of WAWAW), François Burgat (IREMAM, Project investigator of WAWAW), Stéphane Lacroix (CERI/Sciences Po), Bjorn Olav Utvik (Oslo University).

Rationale of the conference and information

Over the last years, politics in the Middle East and North Africa have been shaped by impressive reversals of fortune. Month after month, liberals, islamists, soldiers, women, jihadis, youth have all at some point been depicted by journalists and analysts as the great winners of the "Arab spring", before being later considered as likely losers. The root causes of the Muslim Brotherhood's inability since the fall of Muhammad Mursi in Egypt, during the second "round" of the Arab Spring, to cash in on the political capital originally accumulated thanks to their leading role in the opposition to authoritarian regimes and subsequently during post-revolutionary elections, still call for substantial research, even if the broad outlines are now well-known.

Such a reversal of fortune is having lasting effects on the Islamist field. The object of this international conference organised in Paris by the WFAW/ERC project will be to focus on the way Salafi and Jihadi groups are affected by the apparent marginalization of the Muslim Brotherhood. Academic contributors will be encouraged to propose case studies that deal with recent trends and interactions within the broad Islamist field.

Since 2011, both in Tunisia, Yemen and Egypt, blatant blunders by governments dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood acting in a particularly demanding political environment might have appeared to some as a structural erosion of Islamist power. This share in responsibility on the part of the Islamist leadership enhanced the already built-in resiliency of the "Deep States" which had accumulated vast resources. This resiliency was rendered all the more robust for its being at the nexus, not only of certain Arab regimes' strategic interests - and more particularly of those of the Gulf states - but also of those of their Western partners, more than ever in a hurry to turn over the decidedly annoying "Islamist page". The repression and disinformation leveraged by media machines, both in Tunisia and in Egypt, which remained largely beyond the reach of the winners at the ballot-box, were soon to go to work on adding a final touch to the general picture, whether real or not, of the people's disenfranchisement towards the Brothers.

However visible this fall from grace may be, Ennahda's results during the 2014 legislative polls and also those of the candidate the party ostensibly supported at the Presidential ballot nevertheless clearly demonstrate that it is far from complete. The setback suffered by the current generation of Muslim Brothers should in no way be interpreted as being yet another proof of a death foretold of Islamism. Furthermore, such a crisis is having evident repercussions on other branches of the Islamist spectrum, in particular quietist Salafis and jihadi movements. The object of the conference will hence be twofold: firstly, to complete the study of the mechanisms generating "disillusionment with the Brothers", and to better gauge the phenomenon's importance. Secondly, to understand what has become of the "survivors" of the Muslim Brotherhood's and of those Islamists who had distanced themselves from the Brothers, often criticizing the concessions made by the latter while in power.

The downfall of the Muslim Brothers since the Egyptian military coup is a far cry from having seriously damaged Sunni Islamism as a whole. It is no doubt possible that certain disillusioned Brothers may have called into question the "Islamist"

dimension of their political commitment. It is however well established that a part of the "disillusioned", whose numbers have yet to be quantified, have become even more radically "re-islamised" since then. The path to radicalization which they tend to follow leads them to follow in the footsteps of their "Jihadi" predecessors towards a rupture with the doctrinal accommodations which had enabled the Brothers to produce a pattern of "Islamic" recognition of democratic process and to establish diplomatic ties with Western powers.

Over and beyond the deliberately depoliticized fringe, the importance of the concessions made by the Brothers in view of the necessities of being in office, when compared with their paltry gains, may well favour a significant shift in mobilizable resources playing into the hands of their direct historical challengers, i.e. of the Salafi, and/or further still afield, in terms of oppositional resources, of the Jihadis themselves.

Participants are encouraged to propose papers focusing on the following issues:

- Micro-dynamics of Islamist mobilization post-2013
- Quietist Salafi resilience
- Political and popular interactions with the Organisation of the Islamic State
- Al-Qaida vs. the Islamic State
- Intra-Muslim Brotherhood contestation
- Jihadi movements and diasporas

Deadline for proposals in English, Arabic or French (300 words) is June 30th, 2015. Proposals will be sent to all the following emails: francoisburgat73@gmail.com ; salaam@wanadoo.fr ; stephane.lacroix@sciencespo.fr and b.o.utvik@ikos.uio.no.

Proposals will be selected by the scientific committee.

Approved first draft papers (4,500 words minimum, in English, Arabic or French) will be sent for circulation by September 20th, 2015.

In order to enhance the quality of the discussions and debates, it will be mandatory for all participants to send their paper prior to the conference and to circulate it amongst other paper givers. All will be encouraged to have read all the contributions. As such, oral presentations will only be minimal and the conference will dedicate most of its time to interactions between specialists and the audience.