

The Muslim World Is Facing an Internal Crisis.  
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Since the Iranian Islamic Revolution, the moribund Muslim World has begun the process that the West faced during the 17th Century \342\200\234Religious Wars.\342\200\235

For Islam, the process of secular rule gradually replacing Islamic rule has stopped, and what has emerged instead is a four-part internal war: a suddenly violent eruption of hatred between the Sunnis and Shiites, and another between modernizers and reactionary Islamism. The first blood was let during the Iran-Iraq war (1979-1989); Iran was Shiite and Iraq was ruled by a Sunni fascist party led by Saddam Hussein.

During that time, nobody had taken a reliable census of Iraq, or they would have seen that this once Sunni Arab country had a population explosion of Shiites, now no longer a minority.

Lebanon, a fragile construct at best, also had a census problem. After the Maronite Christians ruled unchallenged for a long time, based on an old census, a new census was taken and the combined Muslim sects had become the majority. But even that majority was divided between Sunni and Shiite, and the Shiites had a population explosion in the interim. A brutal civil war devastated what had been the one best modernizing countries in the Muslim world.

Islam's internal war between modernizers and militant Islamists has flared up. Most Muslim countries are autocratic; either kings or dictators rule, most of whom suppress Islamists and push modernizing institutions. The dictatorships in particular (Egypt, Syria, Libya, Iraq) mostly promoted public education, secular dress, and nationalism trumping religion.

Today, however, with the emerging election processes in these former dictatorships, the modernizers appear to be a distinct minority. When everyone can vote, the most backward and religious are the vast majority of voters.

Two important Muslim countries have gone another direction. Saudi Arabia has modernized only its infrastructure. What looks modern hides a country almost totally brainwashed by the most severe sort of Islamic puritanism, the Wahhabis, who have power equal to that of the royal family. Ferment between modernizers and reactionaries is clandestine but threatens to erupt at any time.

The other troubled country is Pakistan, designed as a secular Muslim country by its founders, but now in an undeclared war among Sunnis, Shiites, tribal warlords governing ignorant serfs, and a thin educated stratum in the major cities and army.

The death cult seems to have overwhelmed all reason in this vast internal war, and the war has spilled out to the rest of the world. On June 16, Pakistani Islamists (al Qaeda) bombed a busload of young university women, and then suicide-bombed the hospital where the wounded had been taken. Twenty-three are dead and many more injured.

Pakistani militants have also shot and killed two volunteers providing polio shots to children in June, and had done the same earlier because they believe that \342\200\234polio vaccination is against Islamic law.\342\200\235 (Did Mohammad know about polio vaccines?)

Iraq's murderous Al Qaeda chief is even defying his leader, Ayman al-Zawahri, who is trying to make his terrorists stop killing other Iraqis. They intend to keep killing Shiites, who intend to kill them back.

Border strife on the Lebanese-Syrian border recently killed four Lebanese, with more to come. Shiite majority villages and Sunni majority villages are now in a cycle of vengeance. The horrors of a Lebanese civil war are awakening again.

So, what about Iran, whose Islamic Revolution started all this? They have just held an election in which voters had precious little to choose from, but they did elect the best of all bad options, a reasonable-seeming cleric, Hassan Rowhani, who is a mild improvement over the bombastic Ahmadinejad. But he actually has no power. The real boss is Ayatollah Khamenei, who supports the increasingly unpopular Syrian dictator, Bashar al Assad, a fellow Shiite.

This choice has turned the entire region against Iran. In 2006, about 75% of the

region's population admired Iran for defying America and threatening Israel. Today support has fallen below 25%. Iran is loathed.

Settling the Israeli-Palestinian issue may actually be timely. We need to stand aside as Muslims go after other Muslims.

676 words

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