

## What is Political Islam?

The term “political Islam” refers to movements and parties in the Muslim world that have the following things in common:

- Their ultimate goal is to create a global Islamic cultural, political, and religious entity known as *Khalafa* / Caliphate in which no other independent or sovereign state exists.
- The Khalafa should be governed and ruled by Islamic law; the *Shari'ah* (literally translated “the path”).
- They believe that the Shari'ah, the moral and religious law, is the Master Plan given by *Allah* (literally translated “the God”) to mankind. As such, it is the manifestation of Allah's ultimate will, and therefore people should live their life only according to the Shari'ah. Accordingly, the Shari'ah should be the only source of legislation and the supreme governing authority, and should govern all areas of life – public and private.
- Any other political philosophy or political system (communism, democracy, socialism, etc.) is unacceptable because it is man-made, therefore it is imperfect, unjust, and doomed to fail. Furthermore, adopting these systems is in defiance of Allah's will.
- They completely reject political frameworks, ideologies, and values that are not Islamic.
- Though they reject democracy, it is legitimate in their view to use democratic elections and democratic government systems, such as parliamentary, multi-party political systems, etc. as a temporary and tactical tool to achieve their ultimate goal which is to create a global Khalafa.
- They are willing to participate in government as a temporary stage towards fulfilling their ultimate goal - to create a global Khalafa.
- They oppose, and are in direct conflict, with Western values such as gender equity, homosexuality, liberalism, pluralism and secularism. They are less tolerant of diversity, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, freedom of thought, human rights, individualism, liberty, open-mindedness, etc. because they view western values as an imminent and existential threat to Islam.
- They create their support and cultivate their power base through creating economic, educational, social, and welfare programs that benefit the broad public, especially people on the lower end of the socio-economic scale.
- They create educational and religious programs and institutions to educate and embed the values and ideology of political Islam in as many people as possible and they use these frameworks as a platform to percolate and spread their ideology as far as possible.
- Absolute and uncompromising opposition to the existence of the State of Israel. The animosity towards Israel is justified upon Islamist theology. According to the ideology of political Islam Jews are not a nation. Judaism, as a religion was once a valid religion, but the Jews betrayed the Divine Mission that they were given by Allah, - to spread Allah's rule and justice upon the land – and therefore he punished them and dispersed them in the world and sent Islam as the real religion to guide mankind. Therefore, in the eyes of political Islam, the existence of Israel is not only unjustified because Jews are not a nation; but the existence of Israel is a direct defiance of Allah's will.

The most prominent representative of political Islam is the *Jamaat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin* - the Muslim Brotherhood, the biggest mass movement in the Muslim Sunni world. The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in Egypt at the end of the 1920's by Hassan al-Banna, an Egyptian teacher and *Iman* (preacher) who was alarmed by what he perceived to be a western threat to Islam and an attack on Islam's codes, morality, and values - such as male-female social interaction, movie theaters, music, western dress, women's liberation, etc. He created the Muslim Brotherhood as a revolutionary group to restore the Khalafa, through education, preaching, indoctrination and proselytization of the masses - a term known as *da'wa* (literally translated "call" or "an invitation").

Another major group within Political Islam is the Salafi Movement. The word *salaf* means the past of something, its origin, its roots, its primal source. The origins of Salafi thought are deep in the sands of the Arabian Peninsula. Salfi thinkers and theologians believe that Islam will thrive and flourish again once Islam adopts and applies the Islamic codes, law, norms and values as they were in the time of the Prophet Muhammad and his first four successors, known as *Al-Khulafa-ur-Rashidun*, The Rightly-Guided Caliphs. The term *Khalifa* / Caliph is part of a term *Khalifat Rasul Allah*, "the Replacer of Allah's messenger" – Prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam.

We must also remember that the Muslim Brotherhood and the *Salafis* are marathon runners - the Arabic term *Sabr* (patience) is one of their core values. This characteristic is manifested by another core value of political Islam known as *Tamkin*. The term *Tamkin* means "to make possible." Meaning, focus today on creating the conditions and the laying of the foundations for a future—undefined in time—in which it will be possible to actualize the vision of the global *Khalafa* based on the full implementation of the Sharia'ah in all aspects of life. The realization of this goal justifies temporarily political and ideological compromise and flexibility if it is necessary. In simple terms – the end justifies the means. *Tamkin* is the central code that guides, and will continue to guide, political Islam, the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood, and is also the core of the mainstream *Salafi* thinking.

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Avi Melamed who serves as the [Salisbury Fellow of Intelligence and Middle East Affairs](#) for the [Eisenhower Institute](#) with offices at Gettysburg College and in Washington, DC, is an expert on the Current Affairs in the Arab and Muslim World Arab and their impact on Israel and the Middle East.

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Avi is a former Israeli Intelligence Official and Senior Official on Arab Affairs. In his decades of public service, Avi - an Israeli Jew who is fluent in Arabic, English and Hebrew, with a unique understanding of Arab society and culture - has held high-risk Government, Senior Advisory, Intelligence and Counter-Terrorist intelligence positions

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As an Author, Educator, Strategic Intelligence Analyst, Avi Melamed educates current and future leaders around the world about Israel and the Middle East and trains them to be Media Literate Critical Thinkers who dialogue with reality and don't get sidetracked by concepts, narratives and theories.

He coauthored [Separate and Unequal: Israel's Rule in East Jerusalem](#) in 1999, and he wrote *Ubrusi: The Novel* in 2010. His newest book. Avi's newest book, [Inside the Middle East: Making Sense of the Most Dangerous and Complicated Region on Earth](#), (also just released as an audio book) a GPS to help you navigate the dramatically changing Middle East offers a unique insight into the Arab world, challenges widely-accepted perceptions, provides a guide to make sense of the events unfolding in the region, and offers an out of the box idea that could lead to a positive breakthrough in the Israeli- Palestinian conflict.

He is the Founder and Director of the Eisenhower Institute's "[Inside the Middle East – Intelligence Perspectives](#)" program designed to ensure that the next generation of policy makers and influencers will be knowledgeable about Israel and the Middle East and will apply methods of critical thinking regarding Middle East Affairs.

Avi provides intelligence analysis, briefings and tours to diplomats, Israeli and foreign policy makers, international media outlets and a wide variety of organizations and private clients on a range of Israel and Middle East affairs.

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Avi has his finger on the pulse on the Arab world. With a proven record of foreseeing the evolution of events in the Middle East and their impact on a local and regional level.

Through all of his efforts, as an analyst, educator, entrepreneur, and writer, Avi is a bridge builder. He dedicates himself to enhancing the Arabic, English and Hebrew speaking audience's comprehensive understanding of the Middle East and of each other.

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