Islamic Fundamentalist Views on Democracy and Political Pluralism in the Arab World*

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CONTENTS

I. Introduction
II. The World, Pluralism, and Democracy
III. Fundamentalist Discourses on Pluralism and Democracy
   1. Inclusivist Discourses
   2. Exclusivist Discourses
IV. Conclusion

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<Abstract>

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The main purpose of this paper is to analyze the role of Islamic discourses on the political stability of the Arab world. Islam’s appropriateness to pluralism and democracy is of major interest to Western scholars and politicians as well as to Muslims in general, including the fundamentalists. In the Islamic world, the quest for democracy and pluralism is very apparent; a substantial number of political and intellectual conferences were held to study the possible ways to democratize and liberalize politics, society and thought. A majority of fundamentalist theoreticians are now engaged in the Islamization of democracy and pluralism. They argue that social and political tyranny and oppression are the main catalysts for defeat and underdevelopment of the Islamic world, and are detrimental to the rise of Islam. Therefore, this article aims at highlighting some of the important debates that have been going on in modern Islamic fundamentalist discourses about democracy and pluralism. This article argues that while a majority of Western media and scholars along with a majority of their Middle Eastern counterparts treat fundamentalism as exclusivist by its nature and definition, and while a few widely publicized fundamentalist groups are truly exclusivist and adhere to the notion of change through radical programs and uncompromising revolutions, most mainstream and major fundamentalist groups are pluralistic, democratic and inclusivist indeed. For the origins of exclusion are neither Islamic metaphysical perceptions of the universe nor