

Remarks by Martin Indyk

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Transitions from military to civilian rule are amongst the most trying -and often turbulent- stages of governance. In large and diverse countries, local values are key factors in the success or failure of such a process. The cultural contours of political values can make or break the democratic experiment. Thus, understanding grassroots civic cultures, and how they can serve as the foundations of democratic federalism, require great attention and study.

At the same time, the questions of whether and how Islam is compatible with democracy are not just an academic matter, but of crucial policy importance. However, while the focus of US attention on the Muslim world has been on the cauldron of the Middle East, such questions may best answered from the lived experiences of Muslim communities around the world.

Nigeria, set within the non-Arab Muslim communities of West Africa, is a critical case study to answering such questions. By far the largest country in Africa, Nigeria has a population of about 138 million, of whom about half are Muslim and half Christian or traditional, making it a key fault line. At the same time, Nigeria is one of the most strategically important states in the world. It plays a regional power role in West Africa and is also the seventh largest producer of oil in the world.

As our guide to understanding these dynamics, we are lucky to benefit from John Paden's *Muslim Civic Cultures and Conflict Resolution: The Challenge of Democratic Federalism in Nigeria*. Prof. Paden takes us inside the world of Nigerian religion and politics, with a focus on the ways Muslim civic cultures, ranging from the emirates of the far north to the more individualized patterns of the southwest, deal with matters of leadership and conflict resolution. The book provides a case study context for the current international concern with issues ranging from Shari'a law and communal violence, to the war on terrorism. More broadly, this book will be essential reading for anyone trying to understand the dynamics of Muslim civic cultures and conflict resolution. We are delighted that it is part of our new series at Brookings Institution Press on U.S. policy toward the Islamic world.