RELIGION AND POLITICAL CIVILITY

The Long Conversation

Peter Mandaville

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For the ninth annual U.S.-Islamic World Forum, we returned once again to the city of Doha. The Forum, co-convened annually by the Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World and the State of Qatar, serves as the premier convening body for key leaders from government, civil society, academia, business, religious communities, and the media. For three days, Forum participants gathered to discuss some of the most pressing issues facing the relationship between the United States and global Muslim communities.

Each year, the Forum features a variety of different platforms for thoughtful discussion and constructive engagement, including televised plenary sessions with prominent international figures on broad thematic issues of global importance; morning "breakfast" sessions led by experts and policymakers focused on a particular theme; and working groups which brought together practitioners in a given field several times during the course of the Forum to develop practical partnerships and policy recommendations. This year, the Forum also featured a signature event, "The Long Conversation," in which all participants came together in an off-the-record and town hall style format discussion on the evolving relationship between the citizen, religion, and the state. For detailed proceedings of the Forum, including photographs, video coverage, and transcripts, please visit our website at http://www.brookings.edu/about/projects/islamic-world.

Each of the four working groups focused on a different thematic issue, highlighting the multiple ways in which the United States and global Muslim communities interact with each other. This year's working groups included: "Compassion: An Urgent Global Imperative," "Between Interference and Assistance: The Politics of International Support in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya," "Water Challenges and Cooperative Response in the Middle East and North Africa," and "Developing New Mechanisms to Promote the Charitable Sector."

We are pleased to share with you the paper that both framed "The Long Conversation" and was subsequently edited to reflect the discussions of the event. Please note that the opinions reflected in the paper, entitled "Religion and Political Civility," and any recommendations contained therein are solely the views of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the participants of the event or the Brookings Institution.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the State of Qatar for its partnership and vision in convening the Forum in partnership with us. In particular, we thank the Emir of Qatar, HRH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani; the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Qatar, HE Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr Al-Thani; H.E. Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Jabr Al-Thani, the Minister's Assistant for International Cooperation Affairs and the Chairman of the Permanent Committee for Organizing Conferences; and H.E. Ambassador Mohammed Abdullah Mutib Al-Rumaihi for their collective support and dedication to the Forum and the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World.

Sincerely,

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INTRODUCTION

More than anything else, the momentous events of 2011 in the Middle East have refocused the world's attention on the power of people. These were citizen revolutions, driven first and foremost by a desire to create states and societies in which individuals would have greater voice and where governments could be held accountable for their actions. As complex and difficult transitions play out in the region, questions are being raised about how to create new political systems characterized by a commitment to genuine pluralism and social equity. Similar questions about the limits of civility and tolerance also animate debate—and in some cases even violence—in Afghanistan and Pakistan today. And in deeply religious, democratic societies such as the United States, voices across the political spectrum have been asking tough questions about the role of the government in shaping public morality, particularly where religious values are concerned.

As communities revise their basic political rules and shape new political institutions, some of the most complex and vexing questions regard religion and what role it should play. On the one hand, there is much to be found in the world's great religious traditions that strengthens and undergirds citizenship and political civility. Notions of tolerance, compassion, and respect for the rule of law and governing institutions are central to all great faiths. But difficult issues frequently arise around the question

of religion's role in politics, particularly in the diverse societies that are increasingly the norm in a globalized world. For example, if faith informs public morality, what space is there for those whose religious beliefs are outside the majority—or for non-believers? And while many would agree that religious values can and should infuse political life, the question of whether religious authority has any superior claim to determine or affirm legislation raises a thorny set of issues. What is the appropriate relationship between the state and religious institutions and other faith-based actors? How can the full rights of all citizens—particularly those in the minority—be ensured, and who has the authority to determine the boundaries of citizenship? Given the importance to many of religion and religious values as the fundamental basis for determining right from wrong, what are the respective roles of the state and religious institutions in shaping, implementing, and enforcing both religious norms and secular affairs? Who is authorized to define and speak on behalf of religion? And when, as is inevitable, conflicts do arise over different conceptions of morality, authority, and national priorities, where can we turn to find resources and examples for resolving these disputes judiciously and equitably? This paper reflects the rich and active discussions that took place on these questions, among others, during the course of the "Long Conversation" on religion, civility, and state-building at the 2012 U.S.-Islamic World Forum.

The "Long Conversation": an Overview

Our discussion at the Forum was structured around the triangular relationship between the state, society, and religion. More specifically we posed questions such as:

- What is the role of religious institutions and authorities in new and transitioning democracies? How can they help to inculcate the values of citizenship and political civility? What other roles can they play?

- What is the role of the state in defining and/or implementing moral values and religious norms? What limits are there on this role for the state in society?

- Should religious institutions, religious authorities, and other faith-based actors in society try to shape social affairs and public life through policy (with respect to issues such as dress, social welfare, etc.)? What are the limits to this role?

- How should these same institutions address the rights and autonomy of individual citizens—men and women alike—particularly when their religious or moral views differ (e.g., religious minorities, nonviolent political dissenters)?

- Who counts as a citizen and who makes this determination? What rights and protections should be offered to citizens as a matter of course, even if their views and beliefs differ from the majority?

- Who decides who has the authority to speak, on behalf of religion, in the political realm?

It should also be clarified at the outset that the "Long Conversation" sought to approach these questions in a spirit of openness and without the assumption that easy, "correct" answers would be readily available. Rather, we started from the premise that these are complex questions on which dialogue is needed to identify areas of agreement and disagreement. The framing paper provided to participants ahead of the Forum set out to identify key questions and to frame some of the parameters of our subsequent discussion—in other words, to lay out the terrain of the "Long Conversation"—rather than to resolve or achieve closure on any of these complex and multifaceted issues. In that regard, the various examples and experiences we cited from various real world settings were intended as fodder for discussion and debate, and not as endorsements or proposals for preferred solutions. The perspectives represented by participants at the Forum were extremely diverse—a hallmark and deeply valued feature of this annual gathering—and it is therefore inevitable that the answers provided to our core questions were similarly wide ranging. Our objective was not to produce a single, definitive set of prescriptions or policy proposals. We hoped first and foremost to achieve a cross-fertilization of ideas and to provide Forum delegates who may be wrestling with some of these vexed questions in their own societies with access to new viewpoints, resources, and potential partners.

Religion and Societal Transitions

Given the tectonic changes occurring today in the Middle East—with new constitutions being written and social contracts renegotiated—we are naturally led to wonder about the role religion can play in helping nations through complex and fraught periods of transition and upheaval. One pattern that is clear throughout modern history is the empowering role that religion and religious institutions have played in supporting, and in some cases leading, popular movements for democracy, civility, and positive social change. From the role of Iranian *ulama* in that country's Constitutional Revolution in the early 1900s, to anti-colonial activism in South Asia in the 1930s and 1940s, to the Latin American Liberation Theology movement of the 1970s, Bishop Desmond Tutu in 1980s South Africa, and Buddhist monks in Burma a few years ago, religious actors and leaders have served

consistently as the conscience of nations and as moral compasses pointing the way toward social justice and political civility. We also need to recognize that the authoritarian regimes that were overthrown in the Arab world in 2011 tended to define Islam as an enemy in the political sphere. This has led some to embrace a more assertive role for Islam in public life almost in reaction to its prior exclusion at the hands of a now discredited political order. As one Forum participant said, "the Arab uprisings created an *umma*."

In "third wave" democratic transitions in Latin America and Eastern Europe from the 1970s through the 1990s, churches and other religious actors served as crucial voices of opposition to authoritarian regimes—as forums for community discussion and mobilization—and helped to maintain social cohesion through complex processes of political, social, and economic upheaval. Religion can therefore be seen to strengthen and consolidate transitions to democracy. Similarly, in many recent cases of civil war and social conflicts in Latin America, Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia, religious leaders have served as peacemakers—often willing to bear considerable risk and sacrifice to find common ground where others had given up.

One of the baseline assumptions of our discussion, then, was the idea that religion and religious values can be rich contributors to the proper functioning of tolerant and democratic societies. In the context of complex processes of political transition—such as those we see today in parts of the Arab world—it is vital for the transitioning society to consider explicitly the specific role that religious ideas and institutions can play in supporting fledgling political institutions, promoting tolerance and a sense of communal responsibility, and enabling a robust and active citizenry. Where and how should religious actors fit into the writing of new constitutions? How do religious values relate to the essential democratic value of individual liberty? How can a society achieve a balanced equation where politics will not dictate religion, nor religion dictate politics—but where both can coexist to mutual benefit, the pursuit of the public good, and the enrichment of society?

State, Religion, and Civility

We can begin to get at these crucial issues surrounding religion, new democracies, and transition by asking a very basic question: **How have different societies defined the relationship between religion and the state?** Some participants in our discussion pointed out that our very juxtaposition of "religion" and "politics" as separate domains reflected a very particular Western Enlightenment experience and hence a certain bias. They pointed out that not all world cultures necessarily recognize or grant this distinction on exactly the same terms.

We also recognized that the institutional arrangements surrounding religion and politics vary widely in societies around the world, ranging on the one extreme from highly secular countries, such as France, that try to enforce a strict firewall between the temporal realm of public life and matters of faith seen to fall within the private domain, to nations such as Saudi Arabia or Iran in which governance is seen to derive directly from religious mandate and divine law. Even among countries that stipulate a direct relationship between religion and the state, we find divergent customs at work. The British monarch is technically chief defender of the Church of England—the official religion of state—but the state does not legislate on the basis of Church teachings and much of Britain's society and political culture are highly secular. In recent decades, the Egyptian government has enforced a largely secular order—banning political parties based on religion—even though the Egyptian constitution has stipulated since the 1970s that "Islam is the main source of legislation" and personal piety is highly salient for most citizens. Even in societies whose political cultures are supposedly very similar, there can be important differences in how and where religion connects with public life. The examples of the United States and France—nominally both secular, liberal societies born of the European Enlightenment—illustrate this point particularly well. French candidates running for high political office who talk openly about their religious beliefs would be regarded as talking out of turn, while in

the United States, presidential candidates have little hope of getting elected unless they are comfortable talking openly about their religious faith.

In many societies, religion is an important aspect of national cohesion and identity. It is not uncommon for constitutions to indicate an official religion of state in order to emphasize the centrality of a particular faith tradition to a national people's sense of history and cultural identity. Even in the United States, where there is a purported separation of church and state, God is central to the American self-image, and religious symbolism is pervasive in its civic culture. American coins testify that "in God we trust," and the U.S. pledge of allegiance is to "one nation under God."

Several of the Forum participants emphasized that the nature and purposes of secularism are often misconstrued. "Church-state separation in the U.S. has been misunderstood," argued one. "The separation demanded in the constitution is an institutional separation. There is no way that the government can force [an employee of the state] to not let their faith influence their work in official life." Others agreed, suggesting that "secularism in the U.S. was designed to protect religion from the dominance of any one sect and from the influence of the state." The participant went on to argue that many people of strong faith prefer this separation because they would rather not subordinate their religion to the corrupting influence of politics—a view endorsed by several other participants. "We need to introduce a new definition of secularism" declared one speaker. "You have to separate the religious and political institutions for the benefit of both, but you cannot separate the values."

These contrasting experiences leave us considerable latitude to consider various options and approaches. So we must ask **whether the state should have authority to regulate religious institutions and the religious lives of its citizens.** And if so, how much authority and what are its limits? In practice, the answer to this question has often depended very much on the character and historical origins of particular states. Where governments have been

dominated by ideologies that seek to de-emphasize religion's role in society, modern states have tended to maximize control over religious institutions. Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*), which licenses all mosques and educational facilities for training imams, is one example. It is even responsible for determining the text of the *khutba* (sermon) given during congregational prayer each Friday in the thousands of mosques under its jurisdiction. Similarly, although in a less heavy-handed manner, the Egyptian state, from the 1950s onward, progressively asserted authority over major religious institutions such as Al-Azhar—integrating the institutions' management into the state bureaucracy. But in other settings, hierarchies of power between the state and religious institutions are less clear-cut. In Poland, for example, the Catholic Church has tended to enjoy considerable autonomy in terms of its ability to shape public views and intervene in policy debates even as it receives high levels of financial support from public funds.

In the United States, religious debates are very much in the public square today. One example is the ongoing and often heated politics around such issues as abortion, the teaching of evolution, and prayer in schools. One of the more recent episodes in the U.S. debate occurred when the federal government moved to mandate that all employers in the country—including religiously affiliated schools and hospitals—must provide contraceptive services as part of the health care plans they offer to their employees. Some faith-based organizations argued that they should be exempt from this requirement since it amounted, in their view, to the government forcing them to take actions incompatible with their religious values—"forced secularization," as some put it. This episode, along with President Barack Obama's recent remarks in support of gay marriage, has rekindled a wider debate in the United States about the relationship between the state, society, and the religious lives of citizens. Indeed, one participant in our discussion observed that there has been much more discussion of religion and politics (under the guise of "social issues") in America recently than there has been in Egypt during its own presidential race.

Infusion without Compulsion

So we should perhaps ask a more fundamental question: **What should be the role of the state in implementing and/or enforcing religious beliefs and teachings?** This question raises a crucially important issue. It invites us to ask whether the state, beyond its function of implementing and enforcing laws, has a role to play in prescribing and policing the morality necessary for democracy. In other words, should governance involve the state serving as an arbiter of right and wrong? If so, under what circumstances should it do so, and what are the limits to this role—does it apply only to certain issues? Should the state reflect the values of the majority or should it mediate between dissenting visions of morality? In some societies there are certain issues that are seen to fall within the private domain, or where the state's regulatory capacity is seen to be limited—such as matters of personal religious belief including the freedom to change religion, questions of dress, sexual behavior, etc. In some cases, of course, religion addresses these issues quite directly (although interpretations of those religious teachings often vary considerably). What is the division of labor between the state and religious institutions in providing guidance and regulating such issues? For example, U.S. norms around religious freedom tend to view laws in Turkey and France that ban the wearing of headscarves in certain public institutions as unduly restrictive. At the same time, the American emphasis on individual freedoms sees laws requiring the wearing of headscarves as equally inappropriate. One of the participants spoke of the value provided by international human rights standards—such as Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—in providing a common reference point for discussion of religious freedom.

Another participant suggested that the relationship between religion and politics should be viewed as the relationship between ethics and politics. In particular, the state has the authority and responsibility to implement and protect a number of ethical—in this case Islamic—principles. The specifics of such an arrangement are manifested in different ways at different times, the speaker argued, but can be seen in, for example, the prevalence of personal status codes that reflect Islamic law. At the same time, the participant argued, it is possible and necessary to "separate" Islam and the state—a recognition that citizens have their own private lives and also that some issues may involve religious institutions but not the state.

Turkey, another participant suggested, provides an example of how, under a secular state, parts of society can still remain highly religious. The argument was that religion does not need to be officially "promoted" or enforced by the state in order for it to have a role in public life. In fact, the participant suggested that, when we consider instances in which religious observance is mandated—for example, through forced prayer or via religious police—religion becomes weakened because society's acceptance of it is based on coercion rather than on their being persuaded of its moral force. Another speaker agreed: "In Islam we understand that religion has no meaning without freedom—that you have to respect freedom in order for religion to have value. You cannot impose religion." But the participant went on to ask important questions about the balance between individual freedom and the moral constraints prescribed by religion. "Where do individual freedoms end? What are the limits? Does individual freedom mean everything is allowed? There have to be some constraints to protect the individual and the society, but where do you draw the line?"

There is also the question of whose morality is being enforced. If the state takes on the role of reflecting and enforcing the moral values of the religious majority, what impact does this have on the social position and well-being of citizens who do not belong to the majority faith or who interpret it differently? Does such a role for the state undermine the equality of citizenship? For example, some who advocate that the state should enforce shari'a law claim that it would only apply to Muslims, but many non-Muslims express concern that they would effectively become second-class citizens under such arrangements. Although Islamic values will inevitably inform politics and law in a Muslim-majority

society, there are still wide variations in their application under the law, both in theory and practice. Moreover, there are still important questions to ask about who gets to determine Islamic values. Likewise, in the United States, many citizens express support for the idea that their country is and should be a Christian nation, while holding very diverse views about what that means in practice with regard to the role of the state in either regulating or making space for the concrete expression of religious values in policy or law. "Respectful pluralism is rare today," observed one participant. "In many contemporary nation-states, there is an attitude of homogeneity or nothing else—annihilation or assimilation." The discussion went on to consider the need for a political and legal system that can apply universally accepted standards at the same time as it leaves room for both individuals and communities—defined perhaps by religion—to pursue their own distinct vision of what makes a good life.

One of our participants went so far as to propose a set of four principles that could guide the preparation of constitutional arrangements that permit all citizens to enjoy equal access to legal rights and protections: there should be (1) no religious test or basis for citizenship, (2) no differentiated categories or classes of citizenship based on religion (i.e., all citizens have equal provisions of rights including the right to hold high political offices regardless of religion), (3) no restriction on the expression and practice of religion or on houses of worship, and (4) no imposition of religious identity or requirements on individuals—either by society or by the state—and no forcible entry or exit from religious identities or institutions.

Another complicating factor around the question of **what it means for the state to implement religious law** lies in the fact that, for example, even among supporters of shari'a, there seem to be multiple conceptions of what the law actually requires in practice. While opinion polls across much of the Muslim world suggest high levels of support for shari'a in the abstract, it is clear that opinions vary considerably when people are asked about specific requirements and practices that supposedly derive

from shari'a. This same data also suggests that, while many Muslims support shari'a, they equate that term first and foremost with broad notions of morality, justice, and the rule of law, rather than with the idea that the state should legally mandate specific behavioral requirements for its citizens. This point again raises the question of how citizens and state institutions should think about what shari'a means in practice and what it would mean to create a political order based on shari'a. Many have raised concerns about rule by religion. "As for shari'a," asked one participant, "what does it mean? If you accept that shari'a is a main source of legislation, then somebody needs to define shari'a. This, by definition, establishes a theocracy."

While direct application and state enforcement of the Islamic personal status code is one way to think about implementing shari'a, there are other approaches that have been proposed. One tradition of thought, encompassing both historical figures such as the Egyptian shari'a judge Ali Abdul Raziq (1888-1966) and contemporary thinkers such as the Sudanese scholar Abdullahi An-Na'im, emphasizes the idea that shari'a should not be thought of as a separate and closed body of law wholly distinct from laws whose origins lie outside religion. For them, any law, regardless of its ultimate sources, can be deemed shari'a compliant so long as its content embodies the principles and values of Islamic morality. Thought of in this way, it becomes possible to think of shari'a and secular legal systems to be not only compatible, but virtually identical.

Some of our participants also raised concerns about shari'a not in principle but with respect to historical configurations of religious authority in Islam. One perspective was that shari'a is a respectable source of jurisprudence but, in practice, its meaning and implications will always be left to exclusively male interpreters—in, for example, running the lives of women. Again, such concerns are by no means unique to the Muslim world. One example is a recent congressional hearing in the United States to discuss how the U.S. administration's health care reform plan handles birth control. Many were quick to observe that all the experts providing testimony for

the hearing were men—mostly, religious leaders representing Christian and Jewish faith communities.

Whose Religion?

If the state takes on the role of applying or enforcing religious values, does this degrade or undermine the spiritual authority of religious institutions and leaders? **Who has the authority to speak on behalf of religion and to define religious norms in the context of statecraft?** Contrast, for example, the Roman Catholic Church which possesses a single, undisputed central authority in the figure of the Pope who presides over a clear clerical hierarchy, with Sunni Islam in which there is no single, universally recognized locus of authority. In Islam, religious knowledge and authority has tended to be thought of in relation to a body of sources and traditions rather than a centralized "church" structure. These sources are subject to multiple and in some cases conflicting interpretations on the part of the experts charged with elucidating their meaning. While some issues produce a strong measure of consensus (*ijma'*) among leading religious scholars, others generate fraught debate—with no clear mechanism available to resolve these conflicts authoritatively. Some have seen value in this diversity of viewpoints. One prominent thinker, Shaikh Rached Ghannouchi from Tunisia, has argued that one possible approach to reconciling democracy with divine rule would be to allow citizens to choose—even in the form of voting—from among the multiple interpretations and perspectives of leading religious scholars, trusting in the collective will of committed, believing Muslims to achieve something approaching *maslaha* (public good). In this view, religious authorities and institutions help to lay out the parameters of the debate on public morality, and the mechanism of democratic politics becomes the arbiter of which religious interpretations will be accepted as authoritative by the state. Some, however, may view this as a subjection of divine will to secular authority, or an infringement on religious liberty.

Another difficulty surrounding the question of who possesses the authority to speak on behalf of religion relates to the fact that distinctions between "religious" and "non-religious" actors are not always so clear-cut. While some forms of Christianity possess recognizable clergy and ecclesiastical structures, Buddhism has its monastic tradition, and Islam and Judaism have a widely acknowledged class of religious scholars and juristic specialists, many alternative voices in society and politics today claim a role in bringing their respective societies into closer conformity with religious teachings. Sometimes these "lay" religious actors and movements are at odds with traditional religious institutions and authorities, even where they ostensibly share a common goal of emphasizing the role of religion. And in some cases, some parts of society do not recognize, let alone accept, the religious authority of the religious leaders of other parts of society (e.g., Iraq, Bahrain, Syria, Pakistan, etc.). Moreover, we find partisan political groups claiming that their specific political preferences are religiously authoritative and therefore demand allegiance. Others, such as Christian Evangelicals in the United States, prefer to work through special interest groups and political lobbying efforts to bring elected officials around to their point of view. Some Salafis have now formed political parties to contest for power. The challenge is therefore not one simply of deciding a division of labor between the state and a self-evident and clearly delineated set of religious actors and institutions, but the need to recognize that religious voices in the world today are highly diverse. Religious actors often differ widely in kind, and in their understandings of the content and role of religion in society—even within the same faith tradition.

A number of interventions over the course of the "Long Conversation" alluded to the fact that individuals are increasingly acting on their own interpretations and understandings of religion as a guide to behavior. We should not, however, think of the relationship between individual and state or individual and religious institutions as a tug-of-war. Modernization means that individualism is growing in all our societies. This offers opportunities not only for the revitalization of politics but also for the revitalization of religion through individual commitment to faith. In both the religious and political

spheres, central authority will be challenged by individual autonomy. But, as one speaker contended, religion "will capture people better if it can be persuasive on the individual level, not through forced community."

COMPLEX CHALLENGES, CREATIVE APPROACHES

So what options do we have for answering these questions in a real world full of real problems? Societies have to confront multiple and often conflicting views on these questions within their citizenries. Many Muslims, for example, will be dissatisfied with a conception of shari'a that equates to a rather amorphous notion of "being ethical." Likewise, religious minorities are likely to remain skeptical of the idea that they can enjoy full rights within a legal system based on the direct application of majority religious law. So, then, **how can citizens from these two divergent perspectives agree on rules for their shared polity?**

Any conversation focused on the question of the relationship between religion, civility, and citizenship needs to inquire about the nature and boundaries of that latter category. How "citizen" is defined, whether religious identity should play a role in that determination, and how to ensure equality among citizens of different faiths are all vexing questions. That a citizen enjoys full rights under the law may seem self-evident, but it is not always so straightforward in practice. Even setting aside the question of immigrants or temporary residents who do not hold citizenship, societies have long had to deal with groups whose claims to full belonging and enfranchisement have been questioned. For many years in the United States, African Americans fell into this category. In many countries, religious minority groups viewed as heterodox, such as the Ahmadiyya in Pakistan, Alevis in Turkey, Shi'a in Saudi Arabia, Mormons in the United States, and Christian Scientists in Germany have long functioned as political lighting rods in this regard, not to mention objects of frequent persecution and violence. There have been ongoing debates, for example, about whether members of such groups should hold equal franchise, especially the right to hold high political office. There is also the question of whether laws expressing religious values held by the majority have the effect of degrading the citizenship of individuals who do not share the majority faith. South Africa offers perhaps the best example today of a society that has gone through a traumatic process of trying to move beyond a system that categorically devalued and disenfranchised large portions of its population based on race. Its post-Apartheid constitution-writing process may hold many valuable lessons for other societies looking to avoid having social divisions result in unequal citizenship.

While our "Long Conversation" in Doha did not conclusively settle any of these complex questions, we hopefully set in motion discussions that can be carried back by participants after the Forum and continued at home. Of course, in many settings in the Middle East, the United States, and beyond, these very questions are already the stuff of vociferous debate. We particularly appreciated the fact that while much of our conversation naturally focused on the Arab world given current events, we also heard perspectives from Indonesia, India, Turkey, and South Africa. This paper's goal, and the conversation it captures, is not to provide pre-packaged solutions or to impose policy prescriptions focused exclusively on the transitional Middle East. Rather, it is the hope that as we all interact, citizen to citizen, we can discover ideas, resources, and experiences that can inflect ongoing debates in our respective walks of life in constructive new ways and open new avenues of possibility. As one participant observed, "the debate we're having now is happening on the ground remarkably fast. It took South Africa eight years to make their constitution, and in some countries today, there is more like an eight month window. In the rush, the dialogue suffers." It is our hope that even while the inexorable pace of politics plays out in societies across the Middle East and elsewhere, the U.S.-Islamic World Forum's "Long Conversation" can continue to serve as a refuge for civil dialogue focused on the big picture and on the longer term.

About the Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World

The Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World is a major research program housed within the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. The project conducts high-quality public policy research, and convenes policy makers and opinion leaders on the major issues surrounding the relationship between the United States and the Muslim world. The Project seeks to engage and inform policymakers, practitioners, and the broader public on developments in Muslim countries and communities, and the nature of their relationship with the United States. Together with the affiliated Brookings Doha Center in Qatar, it sponsors a range of events, initiatives, research projects, and publications designed to educate, encourage frank dialogue, and build positive partnerships between the United States and the Muslim world. The Project has several interlocking components:

■ The U.S.-Islamic World Forum, which brings together key leaders in the fields of politics, business, media, academia, and civil society from across the Muslim world and the United States, for much needed discussion and dialogue;

■ A Visiting Fellows program, for scholars and journalists from the Muslim world to spend time researching and writing at Brookings in order to inform U.S. policy makers on key issues facing Muslim states and communities;

■ A series of Brookings Analysis Papers and Monographs that provide needed analysis of the vital issues of joint concern between the U.S. and the Muslim world;

■ An Arts and Culture Initiative, which seeks to develop a better understanding of how arts and cultural leaders and organizations can increase understanding between the United States and the global Muslim community;

■ A Science and Technology Initiative, which examines the role cooperative science and technology programs involving the U.S. and Muslim world can play in responding to regional development and education needs, as well as fostering positive relations;

■ A Faith Leaders Initiative which brings together representatives of the major Abrahamic faiths from the United States and the Muslim world to discuss actionable programs for bridging the religious divide;

■ A Brookings Institution Press Book Series, which aims to synthesize the project's findings for public dissemination.

The underlying goal of the Project is to continue the Brookings Institution's original mandate to serve as a bridge between scholarship and public policy. It seeks to bring new knowledge to the attention of decision-makers and opinion-leaders, as well as afford scholars, analysts, and the public a better insight into policy issues. The Project is supported through the generosity of a range of sponsors including the Government of the State of Qatar, The Ford Foundation, The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and the Carnegie Corporation.

The Project Conveners are Stephen R. Grand, Fellow and Director of the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World; Martin Indyk, Vice President and Director of Foreign Policy Studies; Tamara Cofman Wittes, Senior Fellow in and Director of the Saban Center; Kenneth Pollack, Senior Fellow in the Saban Center; Bruce Riedel, Senior Fellow in the Saban Center; Shibley Telhami, Nonresident Senior Fellow in the Saban Center and Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland; and Salman Shaikh, Fellow in and Director of the Brookings Doha Center.

About the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings

THE SABAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY was established on May 13, 2002 with an inaugural address by His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan. The creation of the Saban Center reflects the Brookings Institution's commitment to expand dramatically its research and analysis of Middle East policy issues at a time when the region has come to dominate the U.S. foreign policy agenda.

The Saban Center provides Washington policymakers with balanced, objective, in-depth and timely research and policy analysis from experienced and knowledgeable scholars who can bring fresh perspectives to bear on the critical problems of the Middle East. The center upholds the Brookings tradition of being open to a broad range of views. The Saban Center's central objective is to advance understanding of developments in the Middle East through policy-relevant scholarship and debate.

The center's foundation was made possible by a generous grant from Haim and Cheryl Saban of Los Angeles. Ambassador Martin S. Indyk, Vice President of Foreign Policy at Brookings, was the founding Director of the Saban Center. Tamara Cofman Wittes is the center's Director. Within the Saban Center is a core group of Middle East experts who conduct original research and develop innovative programs to promote a better understanding of the policy choices facing American decision makers. They include Daniel Byman, a Middle East terrorism expert from Georgetown University, who is the center's Director of Research; Kenneth M. Pollack, an expert on national security, military affairs and the Persian Gulf; Bruce Riedel, a specialist on counterterrorism; Suzanne Maloney who focuses on Iran and economic development; Michael Doran, a specialist in Middle East security issues; Khaled Elgindy, an expert on the Arab-Israeli conflict; Natan Sachs, an expert on Israeli domestic politics and the Arab-Israeli conflict; Stephen R. Grand, Fellow and Director of the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World; Salman Shaikh, Fellow and Director of the Brookings Doha Center; Ibrahim Sharqieh, Fellow and Deputy Director of the Brookings Doha Center; Shadi Hamid, Fellow and Director of Research of the Brookings Doha Center; and Shibley Telhami, who holds the Sadat Chair at the University of Maryland. The center is located in the Foreign Policy Studies Program at Brookings.

The Saban Center is undertaking path breaking research in five areas: the implications of regime change in Iraq, including post-war nation-building and Gulf security; the dynamics of Iranian domestic politics and the threat of nuclear proliferation; mechanisms and requirements for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; policy for the war against terrorism, including the continuing challenge of state sponsorship of terrorism; and political and economic change in the Arab world, and the methods required to promote democratization.

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