Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World at BROOKINGS

RETHINKING POLITICAL ISLAM SERIES December 2015

REACTION ESSAY

David Siddhartha Patel, Brandeis University

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This reaction paper makes four points, two of which are ways in which reading the other country cases and participating in the June 2015 workshop made me think differently about Islamist movements in Jordan, my country of focus. A third point is a brief observation of regional commonalities and divergences. My final point is a polemic against the ongoing marginalization of Iraqi studies.

1. After reading other country cases—particularly those on Kuwait, Pakistan, Morocco, and Egypt—I was struck by how the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood has benefitted by not having to face significant Islamist rivals inside Jordan (putting aside Hizb al-Tahrir and the splinter Islamic Center Party). Competition—usually from the less pragmatic right—influences the demands that mainstream Islamist movements make on regimes and their willingness to participate in political processes. For example, in my comparison of Jordan with Morocco, I paid insufficient attention to the importance of competition between the Justice and Development Party (PJD) and Al Adl Wal Ihsane for the same base of popular support. While Al Adl basks in non-participation and illegality, the PJD participates and has had to tolerate and even embrace the regime to have its activities licensed. When Al Adl temporarily assumed a leading role in Arab Spring protests, the PJD avoided street action and participated in elections. Jordan's Islamic movement, in contrast, is less constrained (for lack of a better word) by competition on its right when dealing with the regime. The "new" Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, if it survives, would be to the left of the "old" Brotherhood. Also, I likely overestimated in my paper the degree to which the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood look to their Moroccan brethren to judge how well they are doing in the international Brotherhood firmament, although the timing and content of reforms suggests that the Jordanian regime did look, to some extent, toward developments in Morocco before acting.

2. I argued in my paper that the most important cleavage among Jordanian Islamists is "ethnic," between Transjordanians and Palestinian-Jordanians. I reinterpret purported ideological divides, including the Zamzam Initiative and recent formation of a rival Muslim Brotherhood organization, in these terms. In our June workshop discussions, it was easy for several other authors to apply my "ethnic" perspective on Islamist movements to cases that they knew well. I argue that Islamism can be used to bridge salient ethnic, linguistic, and regional cleavages in a society but that we rarely analyze Islamist movements in these terms, and we lack sufficiently developed theory to know what conditions make it likely that Islamist movements will successfully bridge such divides. I learned that the Jamaat-e-Islami tried to unify East and West Pakistan but became "Punjabified" and joined the army in killing Bengalis. In Afghanistan, Islamists tried to unite different linguistic groups but had mixed success. In Syria, the Brotherhood struggled to overcome the historic divide between Damascus and Aleppo (and, after 1981–1982, Hama), and much of what we call "Salafi-leaning" and "Sufi-leaning" wings of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood might more accurately reflect regional interests. These, like Jordan, were largely examples of Islamists failing to transcend salient cleavages. The questions raised beg for additional case study work and a cross-national dataset. I think it would be productive to import theories of ethnic politics—such as the work of Robert Bates, Dan Posner, and Kanchan Chandra—to investigate this question further.

3. For the most part, movements affiliated with or inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood participated, where possible, in elections in the 1990s and early 2000s. Reading the papers, though, I was struck by how different their trajectories were until that point. The paths movements took toward participation in the 1990s varied considerably in timing, how democratic the process was when they first participated, and the relationship with the regime and other movements at the time. If we start in 1990 and look at developments until the present day, Islamist movements might look like they are diverging from a similar participatory/"moderate" starting point. But, if we go back to the 1950s or earlier, the pattern will look different; maybe Islamist movements briefly converged on participation during a short-lived transnational period of political openness and then returned to a more common pattern of following differing trajectories based on local events.

4. In his paper on Morocco, Avi Spiegel quotes a PJD leader in 2014 saying, "We're the one last Islamist party remaining in government in the region." That leader is wrong, as are the scholars I recently heard debating whether the "most successful Islamists" in the Arab world were in Tunisia or in Morocco. By almost any measure, the most successful mainstream Islamists in the Arab world are in Baghdad, where Islamists have governed Iraq since 2005. Three different leaders of the Islamic Da'wa Party have served as Prime

Minister, and a gaggle of other Islamist parties and movements – SCIRI/ISCI, Badr Organization, Sadrists, Iraqi Hezbollah, Fadhila, the Muslim Brotherhood-linked Iraqi Islamic Party, the Iraqi Accordance Front (Tawafuq) – have provided for over a decade the majority of Iraq's ministers, deputy prime ministers, deputy presidents, chairs of parliamentary committees, and provincial governors. Yet, we rarely talk about Iraq when analyzing regional commonalities and divergences; Iraqi Islamists are largely absent from comparative discussions. Perhaps academics are sectarians, hesitant to compare Shi'ite Islamists with Sunnis. If so, that is a shame because some of Iraq's Shi'ite Islamist movements underwent ideological changes that would make for fascinating comparisons with Sunni groups. For example, Da'wa (and, arguably, Badr and SCIRI/ISCI) abandoned their support for *wilayat al-faqih* in the 1990s or 2000s and came to accept participation in an electoral system free from clerical oversight. Comparing Shi'ite movements with Salafis (!) might help us understand the conditions under and the process by which groups compromise ideological commitments when presented with political opportunities. But, even leaving aside Iraq's Shi'ite Islamists, Iraq's Muslim Brotherhood has been influential, dynamic, and worth including in discussions of Brotherhood-like movements. Muslim Brotherhood leaders in the Iraqi Islamic Party have served as Iraq's deputy president (Tariq al-Hashimi), deputy prime minister (Rafi al-'Issawi), and speaker of the Council of Representatives (Iyad al-Samarra'i). Muslim Brotherhood members have been ministers of higher education, planning, state for foreign affairs, and state for women's affairs. I was asked at the June workshop how the six months the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood spent as a part of the Jordanian government in 1990–1991 affected the movement. The Iraqi Muslim Brotherhood has been a constant presence (except for a brief hiatus in 2007–2008) in the Iraqi government for a dozen years! Similarly, the Iraqi Muslim Brotherhood has weathered splits, electoral defeats, challenges from Salafis, constitutional debates, and the necessity of political compromise. Yet, Iraq and its participatory Islamist movements remain pariahs for comparative scholars. The U.S.-led occupation of Iraq ended five years ago; it is time to include the Arab world's "most successful" Islamist movements in our discussions of Islamist responses to a changing political landscape.

About this Series:

The *Rethinking Political Islam* series is an innovative effort to understand how the developments following the Arab uprisings have shaped—and in some cases altered—the strategies, agendas, and self-conceptions of Islamist movements throughout the Muslim world. The project engages scholars of political Islam through in-depth research and dialogue to provide a systematic, cross-country comparison of the trajectory of political Islam in 12 key countries: Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Syria, Jordan, Libya, Pakistan, as well as Malaysia and Indonesia.

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- A **working paper** for each country, produced by an author who has conducted on-the-ground research and engaged with the relevant Islamist actors.
- A **reaction essay** in which authors reflect on and respond to the other country cases.
- A **final draft** incorporating the insights gleaned from the months of dialogue and discussion.