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  Islamist Politics in the Middle East rejects the perspective that "Islamic fundamentalism" is a backward looking and anti-modern, religiously based political ideology. The essays in this volume challenge a Western framework – routinely used in the last two decades – that considers Islam's role in regional politics an intrusion. Shehata questions the application of fundamentalism, a term reflecting the early American twentieth century Christian reaction against modernism in favor of "biblical truth," to describe the nature of Islamist thought. The author asserts that the use of the term camouflages the diversity of Islamic political thought, which grows out of local contexts and desires for change, stemming from social welfare needs, social movements, local politics, or local cultures. Further, the use of one term, "political Islamists," to describe all individuals who hold various Islamic political views reduces analysis to an examination of the category itself, as opposed to the given phenomenon at hand. This book moves past neo-colonial perceptions by examining the organization, collective authority, and diversity that create local politics, eschewing generalizations to look at the connections between local movements; each essay serves as a case study, demonstrating Shehata's claim that in political Islam, there is scant uniformity between Islamist movements; neither is there a common explanation of their success nor a shared understanding of the implications for the future.

  The Iranian Revolution[1] brought Islamic politics to Western attention and encouraged an interpretation that Iranian forces came from a fundamentalist, retrograde understanding of the world. Events like the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the rise of Hezbollah in Lebanon fed a view that the Middle East was struggling with a wave of reactionary, religious frenzy that did not fit in the modern world.[2] Attention was on analysts' writing about fundamentalism and the revival of medieval Islam; tying current events to a familiar past took precedence over careful vocabulary and objective study. The result was a crowd of terms that hinder the ability to state what political Islam is, how it works, and how it may express better than inept and corrupt governments the desires of the people for effective action.

  Shehata proposes four factors to be considered in any definition of Islamist politics, the first of which is that Islamist politics is a recent construct – not a recall to religion "as it was." Second, says Shehata, is that Islamists tend to be members of an oppositional party, deeply involved in domestic issues and only marginally concerned with international affairs. Third, Islam is used as a source of legitimacy; no regime can survive without making some obeisance to Islam. Finally, any analysis of political Islam must approach it neutrally; the very diversity of political Islam means all views can be found within the larger construct. Shehata's introduction presents political Islam as a rational agent of political change with aims, organization, policies,

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[1] The Iranian Revolution (1979) ousted the Shah, brought the Ayatollah Khomeini back from French exile, and offered governance by clerical rule. This was accepted by referendum in April 1979. Americans remember the revolution primarily for the "hostage crisis" wherein the United States embassy staff in Teheran were held prisoners for 444 days.

[2] Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1990, 47-60; Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985; R. H. Dekmejian, "The Anatomy of Islamic Revival: Legitimacy Crisis, Ethnic Conflict and the Search for Islamic Alternatives," *Middle East Journal* 34, 1980, 1-12. (This is not an exhaustive list, simply some representative and well-known sources).

connections, hierarchies, and power struggles that tie back to local politics, groups, and ideas, not a threat to the West and modernity.

The first pair of essays outline conceptual approaches to defining political Islam and discuss why Islamic countries have not pursued a modernist development comfortable to Western minds and concerns. The first author, Francois Burgat, highlights Islamic identity and politics as being reflected through an Islamic lexicon that implicitly challenges the universality of Western ideas.[3] He notes when Islamists confront their dysfunctional domestic political systems they are unable, due to corruption or military authoritarianism, to use elections to force change. This limits political action and promotes the use of violence, revolt, and coups, which are seen by many observers as threatening international stability. He concludes with a brief discussion of current events and how Western media views the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran. The media's tendency to interpret events through Western concerns, and not the motivations within the Islamic world, promote greater confusion over meaning and events.

In the second essay, Raymond William Baker criticizes the Bush administration's desire to "remake the Middle East along democratic lines," which sets the stage for Westerners to antagonistically review the Islamic path to democracy. An implicit Western assumption is that Islamic culture has a "consistent unity representing a singular character which influences all of its parts," i.e., political diversity is mooted by the Islamic foundations of the culture.[4] Both conservatives and liberals in the West are prisoners of this idea and pay scant attention to the actual diversity within Islamic political culture. Baker maps the spectrum of Islamic political views, particularly examining political parties of the center and the ideas and principles from which such parties arose. He concludes that the Western world's failure to discuss centrist Islamic politics is a kidnapping of democratic ideas that strengthens the imperial view.

The last nine essays are more specific studies and offer rich sources on local Islamic movements. "Islamist Social Networks and Social Welfare Services," by Jenny B. White and "Patronage, Prestige and Power: The Islamic Center Charity Society's Political Role within the Muslim Brotherhood," by Janine Astrid Clark, examine the structure of community organizations in Turkey and Jordan. The Turkish example highlights the role of women in creating and fostering networks in their communities to identify and solve problems associated with education, self-help, and, in the long run, party identity.[5] Clark discusses the interplay between the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and the Islamic Center Charity Society (ICCS), and the tensions that underlay their relationship. Islamic societies have a tradition of social welfare as the responsibility not of the state but of communal charities. The MB founded the ICCS in 1962 to provide independent and professional management for many of its education and health care activities. The ICCS directors were elected; over the years these elections became increasingly contentious. The winner played an important patronage role in ICCS hiring and contracting work out to businesses, and MB members were frequent beneficiaries of the victories. Clarke documents how factions within the MB were advantaged depending upon election results. This internal contest for material and economic privileges resulting from ICCS patronage created divisions within the MB which had little to do with Islamic ideological differences.

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[3] F. Burgat, L'Islamisme au Maghreb. La Voix du sud, Paris: Karthala, 1988 (new édition: Paris: Petite Bibliothèque Payot, 1995.)

[4] L. C. Brown, "The Dream Palace of the Empire: Is Iraq a 'Noble Failure'?" Foreign Affairs, September/October 2006.

[5] Party in question is the Justice and Development Party, known by its Turkish acronym, AKP.

The next three essays focus on oppositional parties in Morocco and Egypt. The first, by Henri Lauziere, describes a movement in Morocco based on "Sufi-inspired vocabulary and practices," which were positioned, after the terrorist attacks of 2003, in opposition to Jihadi Salafism and earned a reputation for being a modern, positive, and progressive force. The essay highlights how the language of religion, (Burgat's "lexicon" from the first essay) – as opposed to the practice – can define the attraction of a political movement. Amr Elshobaki, the second author, dissects how the organization of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, founded on principles enunciated by Hasan al Banna in 1928, has survived for 90 years as an oppositional party. His essay ends wondering if the MB can adapt to a new challenge: the need to be a ruling party. Samer Shehata, in the third essay, picks up that question and explains why the Muslim Brotherhood agreed to become a political party within a regime under which elections were neither free nor fair. He argues that each election offered moments for political da'wa (evangelizing), or an opportunity for the brotherhood to communicate its political message to the electorate without fear of repression or success. These three essays look at the connection between the people (electorate) and the evolution of party language, principles, and organization that will maintain that connection.

The next thematic section looks at three examples on national independence and/or liberation movements to define Muslim action. Ahmed S. Hashim begins in Iraq. He discusses how Islam plays a large role – though not a simple one – in the struggle for independence. Defending Islam provides motivational strength in the struggle for independence and mobilizes popular support, but it also encourages all Islamic-based insurgents. It does not offer one united vision. Rola el-Husseini uses Hizbollah to illustrate how mixing an anti-imperialist resistance movement, characterized by its "struggle against foreign colonization and the protection of the impoverished against external oppressors," with Islamic thinkers can be successful. He credits Franz Fanon and Ali Shari'ati, an Iranian sociologist and one of the main thinkers of the Iranian Revolution, for this hybridization. Jean-Francois Legrain, in the third essay, argues that Hamas won its election in 2006 by transforming itself into a "modern" party after failing to gain popular support during the Fatah election of 1996,[6] which the author characterizes as "ethno-local." His argument rests on the long-term, associative actions of the Muslim Brotherhood. By 2006, the support of the Muslim Brotherhood, with its thirty year history of promoting social welfare activities, made Hamas' decision to become a political actor viable. The Muslim Brotherhood's social record gave Hamas legitimacy with the people, regardless of how Hamas was perceived internationally. He concludes that Hamas is representative of an Islamic community, democratically elected, even in the face of international opposition.

The final essay, by Said Amir Arjomand, takes us back to the Iranian Revolution and looks at Islam as a state ideology. Arjomand analyzes a moment in 2000, when a constitutional crisis between the Supreme Leader and the conservative clerics almost forced a democratization of the regime. This essay highlights how little we know about Islamic politics when we examine it only through the lexicon of Western political thought.

This wonderful set of essays takes many different approaches to examine the diversity of political movements in the present day Islamist Middle Eastern setting and shows where the

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[6] The 1996 election was the first election for the President of the Palestinian National Authority and the Palestinian Legislative Council. This was a moment when Palestinians believed they were voting for the future of Palestine, but there were no established political parties, leaving Fatah, the coalition of YassirArafat, the favorite. Yassir Arafat and Fatah won with 87% of the vote, reflecting the popularity of Palestinian self-determination.

West is entrapped in the use of language and images that stifle analysis. Assembled in one space, the essays let us contemplate Shehata's introductory theme, the puzzle to the West of defining political Islamists. The West, staggering at times under its own unexamined truce between secular society and Christianity, is badly equipped to view impartially the ineluctable centrality of Islam in these states. Researchers and policy makers who wish to build a more practical and realistic view of the Middle East will find Shehata's book useful.

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