

Mahmood Monshipouri. *Muslims in Global Politics: Identities, Interests, and Human Rights.* Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights Series. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009. xiv + 328 pp. \$65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8122-4181-5.



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Islamic Reformers' Call for Democracy and Rights

The global world order that has emerged since September 11, 2001, has for many reaffirmed the clash of civilizations thesis. The war on terrorism is seen as a war between Islam and the West, with an essentialist view of Muslim identity that conflates it with Islamic terrorism. The question of how the West should respond to this threat has come to dominate global politics. In American and European discourse, this terrorism is often framed as resistance to Western values and norms. Hence prescriptions for dealing with the challenge of global jihadists have included not only military responses but also a campaign for “winning the hearts and minds of Muslims” that usually takes the form of initiatives to introduce “Western” secular and liberal democratic values and human rights norms to Muslim populations (p. viii). Meanwhile, the global jihadist framework is a mirror image of Western perceptions of threat and destruction, and calls for defensive action by Muslims united as a community of faith that condones violence.

In his latest book, *Muslims in Global Politics*, Mahmood Monshipouri offers an alternative to the project of

global jihadists. He convincingly depicts this movement as only one among many competing to win the Muslim hearts and minds. He sees a crowded field of contention over how to reconstruct Muslim identities and reformulate their interests. These competing movements differ in their reactions to globalization and their position on the preservation of Islamic identity. He recognizes, however, that the current sociocultural context, which has been shaped by decades of Islamist activism coupled with domestic repression and Western hegemonic practices, is more conducive to the expansion of the global jihadists’ agenda. Monshipouri’s prescription for preventing the spread of the transnational community of Islamist militants and for enhancing the enjoyment of human rights is inclusionary politics. This would encompass the integration of Islamic reformists into the political process within Muslim majority countries and of Muslim minorities into the Western societies they are living in, as well as Western engagement with Islamic reformers who have already illustrated their receptiveness to universal values, such as democracy and human rights.

Monshipouri develops this policy-relevant advice through a study that clearly demonstrates his argument that "Muslim identities are multiple, fluid, and contentious" (p. 260). Drawing on constructivist insights from international relations, his analysis takes into account the dialectical relationship between material and ideational transformations within the international system and domestic environments that continually shape and are in turn shaped by the growing number of claimants to distinct identities. In chapter 1, he discusses the international and domestic factors that set the stage for Islamic revivalism, and how processes of both modernization and globalization have strengthened the authoritative status of Islamists of various stripes in shaping identities at the individual, national, and transnational levels and transformed existing formulations of Islamic national and state identities into new and hybrid forms. In chapter 2, Monshipouri introduces a typology of four competing schools of thought—Islamic conservatives, neoconservatives, reformists, and secularists—focusing especially on their perceptions of globalization, in particular the universalization of human rights discourse and their strategies of action. He argues that while the conservatives and neoconservatives resist global norms which they perceive as instruments of Western hegemony and secularists adopt them as the correct model, reformists look for ways of reconciling and accommodating human rights norms within Islamic principles. He illustrates throughout the book the increasing interconnectedness of the assertion of Islamic identities and struggle for the protection of human rights alongside mounting criticism of the universal human rights regime in the post-Cold War period. Monshipouri strongly endorses calls for intercultural dialogue to negotiate a set of non-ethnocentric universal rights. Especially commendable is chapter 3 on gender identity, which is the issue at the heart of the debate between Islamic and universal human rights. He investigates the unique role of Islamist women who have to struggle not only against state repression but also against conservative Islamism and patriarchy. He demonstrates the empowerment of women's movements and the increasing trend of cooperation between secular and Islamist women at the national and transnational levels as a clear example of the diffusion of global norms and social networks among Muslims.

In the case studies that follow, Monshipouri explores the question of how to reconcile conflicting identities that have emerged within the context of the rising influence of Islamism and Western-led globalization. Chapters 4 through 9 provide an elaborate account of the cur-

rent status of the competing claims on Islamic national and state identities in six Muslim majority countries (Egypt, Iraq, United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Iran, and Indonesia) by tracing the history of the contestation between the state, secularists, and Islamist movements with conservative, radical, and reformist visions. In his analysis of Egypt, Turkey, and Indonesia, Monshipouri underlines the trend toward Islamic reformism. He strongly praises the reformists for their adoption of the universal values discourse based on human rights. This is especially true of his treatment of the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey, which Monshipouri identifies as a successful example of Islamist transformation. He argues that in sharp contrast to the Turkish case, the Iranian reformist movement failed to sustain political liberalization and rapprochement with the West because they have neglected economic development. Chapter 5 focuses on the paradoxical consequences of U.S. occupation of Iraq: on the one hand strengthening transnational identities of Arabism and Islamism, and on the other hand weakening national Iraqi identity. In chapter 10, Monshipouri examines the relationship between Muslim minorities living in Europe and the states they are living in. He illustrates the growing influence of transnational Islamic identity as these immigrants feel alienated by societies and discriminated against by state policies.

By situating Islamist movements within the larger field of contention over identity, Monshipouri contributes to the debate on the relationship between universal and particularistic views of human rights in general and between Islam and international human rights specifically. He also blends successfully the domestic and international factors in shaping the trajectory of identity politics. The volume is rich in detail and references and will serve as a great resource for scholars, advanced students, and public policymakers interested in the topic. Yet two interrelated limitations of the study stand out: the terminology he utilizes and the recommendations he offers. In addition to his four category typology, Monshipouri frequently adds qualifiers, such as modernist, moderate, radical, and mainstream, when referring to different movements without providing his criteria for differentiating them. These terms, though frequently used in academia, are still being debated. This reviewer expected acknowledgement of the fact that naming has political consequences. Furthermore, the author has not taken into account the changes in global and domestic contexts since the emergence of Islamism in the late 1800s when devising his four categories of Muslim thought. For example, he has in-

cluded Islamic modernists of the nineteenth century and contemporary Islamic liberals within the category of reformists and Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and global jihadists of Al Qaeda within the category of neoconservatives. His compromise of historicity within his typology becomes a major obstacle for explaining the changes in the goals, strategies, and ideas of Islamist movements. These problems with conceptualization carry over to the recommendations he proposes. Though he strongly advocates inclusion of Islamists within their respective political systems in order to curb militant Islam, he does not address how or why the Islamic reformism he favors would prevail. Contrary to his recommendation, there is evidence in his account of Turkish and Indonesian cases that exclusion from political power were major incentives for Islamists to adopt more accommodative stances

toward their states. The calls for engagement by the United States and Europe with moderate or reformist Islamists contradict his strong stance against the imposition of rules and standards from the West. He does not acknowledge the power of public discourse framing that Western states are exercising through their engagement with "Islamic reformists." If these Western states behave as though they have the right to determine which strains of Islamism are acceptable and which are not, this will be perceived as another hegemonic tool. Furthermore, it may alienate the secularists that were traditionally supportive of Western modernity. This was illustrated in the Turkish case when the AKP was promoted by the United States as the model of moderate Islam for the rest of the Middle East, thus jeopardizing its credibility in the eyes of Turkish secularists.

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