

**MUSLIM POLITICS AND U.S. POLICIES:
PROSPECTS FOR PLURALISM AND DEMOCRACY
IN THE MUSLIM WORLD**

**THE PEW FORUM ON RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE
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FIRST SESSION:

“POLITICAL TRANSITIONS AND CONTESTS”

BAHMAN BAKTIARI, UNIVERSITY OF MAINE:

**“DEMOCRATIZATION AND REPRESSION
IN POST-KHOMEINI IRAN”**

JENNY B. WHITE, BOSTON UNIVERSITY:

“THE END OF ISLAMISM?: TURKEY’S NEW MUSLIM POLITICS”

AUGUSTUS RICHARD NORTON, BOSTON UNIVERSITY:

“EGYPT: DEMOCRATIC CAPITAL LOST”

ROBERT HEFNER: And we move on now to the panelists, again with apologies for being behind in schedule. The first speaker today is Bahman Baktiari of the University of Maine, who's going to be speaking to us about democratization and repression in post-Khomeini Iran.

BAHMAN BAKTIARI: Thank you very much, Bob, for that excellent overall presentation and outlining of the views that this project has strived to accomplish.

My task in this project was to bring to light the changes that have taken place inside Iran that can help the development of pluralism and democratization in the long term, and their impact on the Muslim world and how the changes in Iran are viewed in other parts of the Muslim world.

Frequently, in Washington, the animosity of the U.S. government toward the regime in Tehran gives us the impression that nothing positive is happening inside that country. In contrast to this, if I take you back prior to the revolution of 1979, from 1954 to 1979, the intoxicated relationship that Washington had with the shah of Iran at that time gave us the impression that nothing negative was happening in that country. So this kind of duality that we go through continuously undermines our understanding of real change inside Iran. Whereas we underestimated the forces of opposition between '54 and 1979, today we underestimate the forces of change and pluralism inside Iran.

In many ways, I think our problems with Iran first have to be addressed conceptually by accepting the fact that in Iran itself, the Islamic Revolution of 1979 was only part of a continuum of changes that began in 1906 with the Constitutional Revolution. As the Iranian parliament is preparing for its elections in February 2004, it's interesting to look at the sign on the building of the Iranian parliament that says "100th Anniversary of the Iranian Parliament, 2006." We see clerics sitting down around the table, they're staring at this 100th anniversary of the Iranian parliament sign, and they are very conscious of the fact that their role is determined much by forces of revolution – forces of history – that go back to 1906 and continue to the present. Hence, what we are seeing in Iran today, I think, could be very important for the changes that will take place in the Muslim world.

The way Iranians will deal with the question of religion, faith and the state will have a lasting impact in other Muslim countries, in particular in the countries surrounding Iran. Today, Iran has land and sea boundaries with over 15 countries, and most of these 15 countries are either in turmoil, with changes taking place in their leadership, or are being occupied by Americans. In the past 18 months, this factor of U.S. forces taking and occupying two important countries surrounding Iran – one Iraq, one Afghanistan – has only urged the Iranian leaders, and more the forces of change in Iran, to accelerate the changes as fast as possible in order to guarantee a long-term security for Iran.

So as one reformist journalist remarked in an interview, "We are witnessing the decline of the fundamentalist movement in Iran. Two decades ago, we had our fundamentalist experience and we saw the outcome. Fundamentalism is good for

protest, good for revolution and good for war, but not so good for development. No country can organize its society on fundamentalism.” This quotation, by Hamid Reza Jalaipour, pretty much sums up the experience of Iran from 1906 to the present. What the 1979 revolution has meant for the forces of change in Iran is that the ideology of fundamentalism is not a panacea for change in society.

The Iranian regime has tried repeatedly to impose forces of Islamization on society. From 1981 to 1983, they closed the universities in Iran, and one of the most important voices of Iran today for reform, Abdul Karim Soroush, whom Bob Hefner mentioned, was a proponent of closing the universities at that period of time, and supporting the Islamization of Iranian universities. Now, his experience has taught him today that that ideology is not working, so he has become the most vocal proponent of reform. The transformation of Abdul Karim Soroush is an incredible example of what other leaders inside Iran are going through. Soroush has the courage to come out and say it. Others are not making that statement in public, but yet it is clear that many of these leaders are experiencing those changes. They closed the universities in the 1980s to bring about Islamization, but today they are facing challenges from universities and students, who are demanding faster change. Every time the regime tried to repress the forces of change, it had to payback later on with a greater force of change that came back.

Following the revolution of 1979, many clerics tried to exclude other forces of the revolution for change, ignoring the fact that the Iranian revolution was a mosaic of forces that brought down the shah. It included the nationalists, liberal democrats, the Islamic Democrats of the liberation front of Iran – radical Marxists and Maoist groups. It was a coalition; it was a mosaic of forces that brought down the shah. The clerics tried to exclude many of these forces, by purging them from the political arena, but today they are paying the price for it. These forces are coming back in a different form. So the role of women, for example, in Iran in the 1980s was transformed by how much the regime tried to force them into the military and fighting the war. Today, because of the war that the regime pursued for six years after 1982, exclusory policies that brought about has created a stronger constituency for change.

It is not so much the changes inside Iran that surprise the Iranians and many countries around Iran; it is the ability of the Iranian government to manage the changes so far that has surprised them to a greater extent. Today we may be fascinated by the fact that repression takes place; we are not looking at the fact of how difficult it is to manage that country and how the ruling clerics have arrived at a quid pro quo that repression does not pay in the long term. Nevertheless, voices of change and reform persist.

For example, President Khatami openly criticizes his opponents. In many speeches he clarifies his position and says, I do not get along with so and so. He even hints at resigning in protest. Yet the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the constitutional authority to remove him, does not take that action. The supreme leader will not come down on him and say, you are questioning my authority if you resign; you are questioning my authority if you provoke people. This shows that in Iran

today, factionalism, differences of opinion, all of the changes that we see among the clerics actually provide space for debate and expression of dissent.

More disagreements between Khatami and Khamenei allow for more space for debate and discussion, so they move these debates and discussions to the press, they move these debates and discussions to the media. The conservatives control the national TV; the reformers control some of the print media. The conservatives control the mosques, the reformers control the Internet. You have a balancing game that is taking place; it's a matter of time before one side gives up and the other moves on, but history is on the side of reformers.

History has shown that the 1906 revolution in Iran can last for 100 years. The forces of that change will continue to go through not just the shah of Iran, occupation of the country during World War II, the coup of 1953, the revolution of '79, Saddam Hussein's war with Iran 1980-1988, Salman Rushdie's book and the passing away of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989 – who was the first Iranian leader to die in office rather than in exile since 1906. So in many ways, if one looks at these changes, one will see the forces of change in Iran have continued to take shape and will continue in the post-Khomeini period.

The only question for the United States and many observers of Iran is how to come to terms with these changes. In the United States, we are used to seeing everything in terms of enemies. During the Iran-Iraq War, we supported Saddam Hussein on the logic of “the enemy of our enemy is our friend.” Today, we're pursuing the same strategy by labeling Iran as part of the “axis of evil.” With this kind of policy, we are actually slowing down the forces of change that started in 1906. By not taking an historical approach to Iran, we will make the same mistake we made in 1979.

The debate frequently in 1979 was about who lost Iran. The CIA director was grilled about his inability to predict the revolution, but the real debate should have been not who lost Iran but who lost the United States. And if one looks at it from that angle, one sees today that the United States is confronted with this problem of how to understand Iran without mixing its politics and policy with the current regime in Iran, and of how to go beyond the 1953 *coup d'état* that brought the shah to power. We invested everything in the person of the shah, and in 1979, when the shah disappeared from the scene, the U.S. was, well, empty-handed.

We are paying the price for our past policies today. Saddam Hussein and the war in Kuwait came about because of our bad policies toward Iran, supporting Saddam during the Iran-Iraq war and giving the impression to Saddam that he could wage another war, this time against Kuwait. Many of the policies, in terms of understanding Iran and not taking sides with different factions, come from the fact that we have this innate opposition to taking an historical viewpoint. If we did that, the United States would have to come to terms with several policies of change in Iran. The 1953 *coup d'état* against the forces of change obviously was important. It delayed changes that eventually took place. Steven Kinzer has a very good book about this that I highly recommend, *All*

the Shah's Men. In that book, he brings into our attention what happened in 1953 that brought about the revolution of 1979.

We need to adjust our lenses to look at Iran in the long term. The policies we pursue today will come back and haunt us 10 years from now, 15 years from now. The much-advocated statements from Washington for a popular uprisings in Iran, and the fact that students go into the streets, and people like Michael Ledeen get excited about a second revolution, and that second revolution does not come and nothing happens – that never brings back the reflection mode of asking the question, why do we always jump the gun? Why do we always go out and continuously call for people's uprising, whether it was the Hungarian revolution, a Cuban revolution against Castro, now an Iranian revolution against the clerics? We never learn the lessons that uprisings and forces of change are more complicated than simply a group of students coming to the streets and demanding change, with United States supporting these groups. We fail to understand the past policies and how they have affected public perceptions of America as a country that does not support democracy.

Students in Iran have certain demands, but they're not shared by all sectors of Iranian society. Many Iranians today view the students as a radical part of the reform movement. The view is that students are frustrated by the slow pace of change, but they're not really conscious of how much the revolution of 1979 set Iran back. So today, the problem of Iran and democratization is a matter of how to bring about change in a risk-averse society that is not keen to go through another revolution. Iranian society as a whole has a bad experience from the revolution, so they're very conservative in moving ahead with anything that brings about change. So it is a risk-averse society, combined with looming threats around its borders – the United States and the military occupations – and the forces of change inside Iran have to continuously adjust their strategies by being cautious, by going one step forward, two steps backward.

This is the only solution for democratization in Iran. And we will see that later on, after the parliamentary elections of February 2004 and Khatami's term, which is over after a year and a half. Then we will see that changes will continue in Iran post-Khatami. And it will be only a question of how the United States will deal with those changes, not so much how Iranians will deal with those changes, because I think they have decided that change is to their benefit and in their interest.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. HEFNER: We move now directly not too far from Iran, but to Jenny B. White of Boston University's presentation on "The End of Islamism?: Turkey's New Muslim Politics."

JENNY B. WHITE: Thank you. I just wanted to say that one of the wonderful outcomes of this Pew-supported meeting has been that I began to see – in fact many of us

began to see – all kinds of overlaps between the situations in countries one wouldn't ordinarily put in the same category, like Iran and Turkey.

So in Turkey, much as Bahman Baktiari just said, there is also a move from political Islamism to a more cultural, civic Muslimhood. Even as Islam is obviously, in Turkey more so than ever, part of the political system, one can also see there the role of the media and a kind of factional debate play in creating openness and more moderation.

In any case, Turkey's experiment in Muslim democracy is arguably one of the most interesting developments in the region. As Bob Hefner mentioned earlier, last November the Justice and Development Party, or the AKP Party for short, won the elections in Turkey and now holds more than a two-thirds majority in the Grand National Assembly. That's enough to change the constitution, which is quite remarkable. The AKP Party is the most recent in a long line of Islam-inspired political parties, some of which were quite radical in their aims. One after the other, these parties were closed down by the state, the military, the courts, usually for threatening the integrity of the very militantly secular Turkish state.

The AKP Party's election last fall made secularists in Turkey very nervous, as well as those here in Washington who distrust Islam in politics in general, but the results have surprised everybody. The AKP Party has pushed through seven packages of radical reforms, and I mean radical in the democratic sense, not in the Islamic sense. These reforms have tackled the economy, corruption, torture, freedom of speech, Kurdish language rights. They limited the influence of the military in politics, and they pushed through a host of other reforms, the impetus being to get Turkey in line with EU standards in time for a 2004 deadline, when Turkey hopes to get a date to begin accession talks to the EU. It has been an absolutely breathtaking ride since this party has come to power.

Even, I will venture here to say, the Turkish government's inability to push through the approval of U.S. troop deployments to Iraq can be seen as a departure from politics as usual. To some extent, it was the result of inexperience of a new government and some intra-party discord, but the AKP Party came to power precisely because it was more responsive to grassroots opinion and more dependent on local activists than the traditional top-down party machines; so when constituents called and e-mailed, these legislators listened.

Why is it, then, that in Turkey, unlike other parts of the Muslim world, people can claim, as they do, that radical Islamism is dead and it has been replaced by Muslim democracy? And if this is so, can it serve as a more general model for Muslim governance, or does it reflect circumstances that are unique to Turkey?

I'm going to give you seven factors that I think encourage moderation in Turkey, and then I'll talk about some policy implications and whether or not this has any meaning for other places.

First, Turkey has a very long history, since the 1950s, of fair, multiparty elections in a system that allows competition and change. Political parties in Turkey are balanced by a strong state and a military that put limits on political opportunism. So no small group, whether they are leftists or Islamists, has been able to hijack the system for very long before the military or the state steps in. So in other words, the political context not only allows moderation, it demands moderation.

But what differentiates this from any other authoritarian state with a tight control on politics? Two things. One is that the repressive institutions themselves – the state and the military – enjoy widespread legitimacy and support, even among people who don't like what they're repressing. So I think that's an important factor, the legitimacy of the repressing mechanism. The other difference is the fact that the banned political actors are allowed to reform and get right back in the game. These parties are closed down, they reform, they have different platforms – often more moderate – the next time around, and then they're back in the competitive fray. So the competition, I think, is very important.

The second factor encouraging moderation in Turkey, I think, is that there is no powerful clergy. There is no *Ulama* that you would find elsewhere. There's nobody in power to issue *fatwas*, or religious edicts. The clergy are civil servants. You don't find the kinds of *madrassas*, Islamic schools, that are often funded by Saudi money that you probably have read about all over the Muslim world. The Saudis do give money to build mosques in Turkey, but the educational system is very tightly under government control.

Third factor: The polls in Turkey show very little support in the population for Islamic law or even for Islam in politics, in the political system.

Fourth: This lack of support for political Islam is due in part to the sheer variety of Islam in Turkey. Turkey has every kind of group, from the liberal Alevi who are experiencing their own renaissance at the moment, to the conservative Naksibendi, and the now defunct, but for a while very violent, Hizbollah terror group. As a corollary to that, I think probably because of the lack of widespread orthodox religious training, even among mainstream Sunni Muslims, there is real variation in understanding of Islamic precepts. What is *shari'a* law, Islamic law, for instance? You ask people, even devout Islamist activists, and they will give you a whole range of definitions, from “metaphor for a just society” to “you can have four wives” and everything in between.

The fifth factor is nationalism, which I guess is not fashionable anymore, now that we are in the global era. But in fact nationalism, particularly in Turkey, where the idea of Turkishness is very powerful – is a check to Arab-derived Islam, to Arab-derived Islamic ideas and practices, about which more in a moment.

Sixth: There are public discussions and debates in Turkey, and have been for nigh on two decades now, among the representatives of different forms of Islam, and also between Islamists and secularists. These have been on talk shows, on interview shows, on TV, and there has been an annual meeting now, over a number of years, in a little town called Abant. The Abant meetings are mediated; the participants, who come from

all across the spectrum, are basically forced to hash out something they can agree on regarding some particular topic related to religion and society or politics. This joint statement is then published and publicized. This kind of activity gives people exposure to different views and a forum for negotiating positions. In the end, I think this has an all-around moderating effect.

Seventh: For Turkey, the lure of EU membership is significant. Muslim Turks desire EU membership in part because they feel it's going to protect their right to religious expression. At the moment, they're living in a secular legal system that's really hostile to religious expression in the public sphere, which is so broadly defined it even bans young women going to the university and wearing a headscarf. So they think joining the EU will ensure that they have their religious rights.

If Islamism or radical Islam is dead in Turkey, what has taken its place? The answer is something that the Turks call the Muslimhood model. In this model, Islam is individual; it's personal. Islam in politics is limited to ethical and moral inspiration of individual behavior, so the parliamentarians will tell you – or the ministers – “we don't leave our ethics at the door.” In fact, they often refer to President Bush as their model. So they support democracy because it guarantees freedom of individual belief and expression, with the implication that if being a Muslim is simply a personal attribute, then it's not a hindrance to running a secular government. A secular government, they say, is nothing more than a technology, or as Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan said, it's a “style of management.” So it's an interesting approach, and this is justified by a uniquely Turkish understanding of Islam.

Turkish Islam is thought to be more individualistic, more moderate than Arab Islam because of the Turks' Central Asian Sufi heritage. And there's a whole theological basis for this worked out by a group of theologians that are called the Renewers, who sit at the School of Theology at Ankara University. They have an understanding of religion as human nature, as an internal state rather than as some kind of societal religion or tradition. So in this way, they can separate Islam from its Arab cultural baggage and make it available for insertion into a Muslim democracy, Turkish style. The Renewers are a very interesting group of people. They're Western-educated – when you interview them, they freely quote Freud, Heidegger, Kant – but not all of them can read Arabic.

Can Turkey serve as a model for moderating radical Islam elsewhere? Can this travel? What can the U.S. do to facilitate this? The Muslimhood model, on its face, might be hard to support elsewhere, since the theology behind it is based on some assumed characteristic of Turkish Islam, but other aspects of the Turkish model I believe can travel. This is a big stretch for an anthropologist, but I'm going to make five policy recommendations.

First: Using the Abant meetings as a model, the U.S. can encourage public fora for discussion among representatives of competing visions of society and religion. To use an example of topics from the Abant meetings, have people discuss the relation of Islam to secularism from the point of view of a number of Islamic approaches, not necessarily just secularism versus Islamism. The relation of the state to law, pluralism, social

reconciliation, and so on; these were all themes, annual themes that were then hashed out.

Second: The U.S. should support state educational systems, even if they have a Muslim component, to undercut unregulated schools. Turkish Islamists are graduates of a secular educational system. Even the religious schools have certain basics; all the graduates know what democracy is.

Third: Provide a carrot. Turkey has the EU as a major motivator to become Muslim democrats. The U.S. can facilitate geopolitical linkages to create reasons for governments and popular Islamic groups to become more moderate. They have to have a reason to become more moderate. So, for instance, improving economic ties or setting up regional cooperation agreements—I will leave the details to the actual politicians. But it's also important to remember that EU membership is a powerful motivator not only because of imagined economic benefits, but also because of national pride, being recognized as a peer. National pride is a powerful motivator, and I think one that is much underrated.

Fourth: The U.S. should pay special attention to local concerns, not just whether there's a pro-U.S. stance or anti-Western rhetoric. They should pay attention especially to issues that are shared by Islamists and non-Islamists. What are the sorts of general issues that are shared across the public? In Turkey, these would be issues like the banning of political parties, curtailment of free speech, banning of headscarf in universities. The U.S. can identify and support groups that channel these desires for reform even if they are Islamic groups. Often, these local concerns are just left to NGOs, which often have a very shallow penetration in society. I think local concerns are too easily overlooked in favor of a narrow emphasis on immediate geo-strategic interests.

Lastly, number five: Rethink the policies that prop up weaker Muslim groups that are seen to be friendly and oppositional or secularist civil society groups just because they're oppositional and secular. It's the strong groups that have to be nudged and lured in a moderate direction. They're the ones with the people behind them, and I think that, at least based on what I have seen in Turkey, in a truly competitive political system, moderation can bring a kind of Darwinian advantage.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. HEFNER: Richard Norton is from Boston University, and he will be talking today about "Egypt: Democratic Capital Lost."

AUGUSTUS RICHARD NORTON: Thank you. I would like to publicly thank my colleague, Bob Hefner, for his wisdom and, I daresay, his brilliant contributions to this subject matter. It was very nice to be involved with a group of people who brought rich social and political understanding of Muslim societies to the project. I can't remember, in the course of the project, anyone speaking in sweeping generalizations or

assorted verities and that made it a particularly attractive experience. It has been a very nice project, and I would like to also thank Pew for having the generosity to make it possible.

My paper deals with a failed attempt by a group of middle-aged or really young Islamists in Egypt to create a political party in the 1990s. This was the case of the Hizb al-Wasat, the Party of the Center.

I would argue that, while this is a case study of failure, it's nonetheless a very instructive example, not just for the state response to an attempt to organize in opposition, but also because it provides a template of political parties that we are likely to see emerging over time in Muslim societies, not just in Egypt. I don't have to remind anyone in this room of the dramatic shift in mood that has taken place amongst American policymakers with respect to the topic of democracy in the Muslim world, and particularly in the Middle East.

During the Clinton administration, while the administration spoke in sweeping generalizations about the notion of democracy around the world, key officials in the Clinton administration were very quick to pour cold water on the prospect of democratic development, in the Arab world. And in fact, the shift that has taken place is perhaps illustrated by the fact that one of the staunchest opponents of this sort of project, Martin Indyk, who served throughout the Clinton administration, published in January of 2002 an article in *Foreign Affairs*, which dramatically reversed his position. I think that illustrates the shift that has taken place in many people's minds. One only needs to think of recent speeches by President Bush; Secretary of State Colin Powell; Richard Haass, the former head of the policy planning staff at the State Department, and now the president of the Council of Foreign Relations; Paul Wolfowitz; and many others embracing the idea of political reform and democracy to have a sense of the sort of sweeping change in perspective that has taken place.

Haass, in an article that was published in *The Washington Quarterly* in August, I believe, speaks with a certain amount of trepidation, however, about parties with an "Islamic character," as he euphemizes them. The fact of the matter is that in dealing with Muslim societies, sometimes one has the sense in policy discussions that policymakers expect parties to emerge that do not have an "Islamic character." For those of us who work in the region, that's very unlikely, particularly so in Egypt. Many of you have experience in the region, I'm sure, and I suspect you would agree.

You heard Bahman Baktiari previously talking about Iran. On the part of the casual observer, one might presume that Iran is a more religious society than Egypt, but anyone who has been to both countries, can certainly vouch for the fact that that's decidedly not true. Egypt is very much more marked, in terms of public displays of religiosity and so on, than is Iran. In fact, Iran strikes one as being very secular in many ways, in terms of the mood of the public; whereas Egypt, over the years, has become a much more religious society, not least amongst the middle class, in many different manifestations.

Let me back up for a moment to the mid-1990s. I will do this very quickly and very telegraphically, but I wanted to provide a sense of the context in which this Hizb al-Wasat, the Party of the Center, emerged. This was a time of foment and reflection in Egypt. After experiments in inclusion in the 1980s, in which members of the Muslim Brotherhood, the most venerable Islamists organization in the Muslim world, participated in parliamentary elections and did quite well, the government responded to these successes crudely. The response was to clamp down. So, in the mid-1990s, we see the government launching series of arrests, particularly against popular members of the Ikhwan who might do well in parliamentary elections. Amongst Islamists, there was a lot of thought about the idea of creating a political party within the Ikhwan, and these were mostly younger people. Many of these people had basically come into public life not through the Ikhwan, but through the associations that grew up beginning in the 1970s on university campuses and later, as they became graduates, in the professional syndicates of teachers, doctors, lawyers and so on.

Let me quote the founder of the Hizb al-Wasat Abu al 'Ala Madi, reflecting on his experience. This is an excerpt from a more extensive interview. He says, "The truth was that the Brotherhood was completely far away and distant from the student movement" – he's referring to the associations – "and after the Islamic factions, the *kawadir* (ph) joined the Brotherhood, a blending of thought took place, and we accepted that some of those ideas inside the Brotherhood and rejected others. And this reaction persisted in a quiet manner, but those leaderships were faced with a severe shock when we discovered the real condition of the Brotherhood; when we found out that the big picture we imagined was not true. And this shock kept on reacting until many of us left the Brotherhood," and so on. This gives you a sense of the internal foment that marked the Islamic street during that period of time.

Against this backdrop, this party came into formation in 1996, with some 74 founding members, many of them members of the Ikhwan. An application was filed with the government to legally form a political party. This is a very instructive exercise because, from the standpoint of the government, this was seen as an attempt by the Muslim Brotherhood to organize a party in opposition to the regime; it wasn't seen as something that was autonomous. And yet, Ikhwan responded furiously since it saw al-Wasat as an intrusion into its autonomy, its corporate control of political activities. And indeed, the response from the Ikhwan leadership was to press those members of the Ikhwan who were participating in this new party to withdraw.

The result was that this first attempt to create the party was thwarted by the government very easily because, by the time the Ikhwan members withdrew, the party had less than the required 50 members to qualify for legal registration. The attempt to register was appealed. Additional members were then recruited. And then, in 1997, we had a rather incredible moment when, at the hearing for the appeal, the members of this party-in-construction arguing their case, and the other side – not only the authorities of the state but the Ikhwan – arguing against the Hizb al-Wasat. It was a rather sensational scene when you think about it. The appeal was turned down on that occasion on the basis of Law 40, which argues that new parties may only be formed if they fulfill a legitimate purpose that is not fulfilled by a present party. Since the ruling

party, the National Democratic Party, does everything, it's almost impossible to conceive of a party that could possibly add anything to the political milieu.

I have done a number of interviews in the context of this study, including interviews with leading journalists and officials of the Muslim Brotherhood, and many of the principals in this abortive party, as well as a number of government officials, including the leading advisors to Mubarak. One of my interlocutors, a very respected jurist, argues that this restriction on political parties having to fulfill a purpose that's not already fulfilled simply violates common sense; it violates the idea that public space should be a space for a marketplace of ideas.

Nonetheless, the appeal was unsuccessful. There was an attempt to reorganize the party in 1998 and '99. That also failed, and then in 2000, almost by default, many of the individuals involved with this experiment in party creation were permitted to form an NGO – Egypt for Culture and Dialogue (Misr—Lil thiqafa wa hiwar) – which is an interesting forum for discussions around a number of different topics.

In the process of attempting to create this party, there were extensive programmatic materials created. By the way, a number – now, certainly by no means a majority, but a number – of the participants in the party were Christians, they were not Muslims, including the son of a respected theologian. In any case, programmatic materials are available in print in Arabic, and they are extensive in terms of the discussion of the party's ethos and goals. Basically, what we find in the programs is a modernist interpretation of religious law, which is interpreted as a collection of flexible principles that are implemented through the crafting of law. That is to say, *shari'a* is not explicitly binding in its details, but is, if you will, a sort of vector for the construction of law. While the program rejects *almaniya*, or secularism, it embraces pluralism, *ta'adudiya*, and indeed really shifts the debate. And this shift has been taking place very dramatically in the minds of a number of reformers and in a number of discussion groups, and so on.

In the context of changing the sort of structure for debate from the assertion of *din wa dawlah*, religion and state, to *din wa 'ummah*, religion and community. A book published last year by Gamal al-Banna, the youngest brother of Hasan al-Banna, makes this argument explicitly, that Islam is not *din wa dawlah*, it is specifically religion and community, *din wa 'ummah*. It's a very important shift with some very significant subtleties. The supporters of this trend, including a number of names that you're familiar with – Hasan Hanafi, the *'alim* Yousef Qaradawi, Salim Al 'Awa, the respected law professor and Islamist, and a number of others – people who are really trying to think, if you will, on the cutting edge of reform.

The regime, unfortunately, sees this as a zero-sum game. This is unfortunate because it seems to me that this kind of experiment is precisely the kind of experiment that actually moves us further along not only towards pluralism, but on the path of democratization.

In some ways, the experience of Hizb al-Wasat marks a liberal ideology under development and the acceptance of pluralism. In other respects, al-Wasat's commitment to interpret *shari'a* flexibly flows naturally from the modernism of Mohammed 'Abdu almost a century ago. When he created the Ikhwan in 1928, Hasan al-Banna was more comfortable with Rashid Rida's *salafism* than with Abdu's modernism, but now we see the pendulum shifting amongst these younger voices.

The emergence of al-Wasat does not mark a new azimuth as much as new generation. The failed party is only a symptom of foment and rethinking within the ranks of the Ikhwan in a broader society. What is missing, alas, is reflexivity in the regime. There are some bright regime intellectuals who would dearly like to see change. A few new ideas bubble to the upper reaches of the regime. When new ideas do surface, they are merely melded into regime rhetoric as in 1999, when Mubarak's embrace of institutions spawned momentary hope of serious reform, but are then quickly forgotten.

So, al-Wasat is a failure, but it's a prototype for parties of an "Islamic character," to quote Haass, with its political content, its social profile, and its goals.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. HEFNER: The floor is open, and we ask all people who wish to ask questions to pose them through the mic. Yes, we'll start here.

Q: This is a question for Mr. Baktari. You mentioned that there was a continuum from 1906 to the present, with 1979 being maybe a blip or maybe a phase in that. I'd like a summary of what forces you think are going directly from 1906 to today.

MR. BAKTARI: Thank you. The most important forces that are continuing from 1906 are within the clerical class. And if one wants to see the roots of Khatami today, you have to go back to Ayatollah Behbahani of 1906. The position that that ayatollah took regarding the constitution, regarding the role of the clerics, regarding the monarchy as a system where the ruler is subject to laws is pretty much the same as Khatami's emphasis on the rule of law in today's Iran.

So we need to understand Iranian clerical leaders' mentality in the context of previous actions the clerical establishment has been forced to take. So in 1906 the clerical establishment had to make a decision between tyrannical monarchy and constitutional monarchy. They decided on the constitutional monarchy. In 1953, they had to make a decision between the CIA-supported coup that supported the shah, and Mosaddeq's secular nationalism. They took the side of the shah. And in 1979, when a time came in to take the side of Khomeini, who was a radical Islamist calling for an Islamic Republic, – (unintelligible) – and not compromising with the shah, they took the side of Khomeini. So, this experience of the clerical establishment has continuously left them in a situation where they are always reforming, they are always changing their positions.

And Iranian clerics of 1979 are not the same clerics of today. Rafsanjani of 1979 is not the same Rafsanjani. So we need to understand how sociopolitical factors in Iran change their leaders and their leaders have reacted to those sociopolitical factors, whereas I think American policy refuse to acknowledge the fact that the shah, for 30 years, was a weak leader because he was not the result of the sociopolitical factors; he was going against them. By making this historical continuum, I'm trying to bring the readers and observers of Iran into a focus that shows the long-term impact of changes in Iran and brings it to their constituency groups within Iran.

And finally, I end by saying what we are witnessing today in Iran is the decline of religious authority as the final phase of this constitutional revolution. We are witnessing a decline of religious authority in Iran, and going back more and more toward a liberal version of Islam that they wanted to formulate in 1906, but because of World War I they could not implement, because of the other factors they could not – (cross talk, inaudible).

MR. HEFNER: Thank you.

Q: I'm Nick Berry, Foreign Policy Forum. Mr. Hefner, back to the clash of civilizations. The Pew research and other research shows that democracy, pluralism, liberties – that there are a great many similarities in attitudes. The big difference, of course, is gender. Isn't it true that in the Islamic world – the Islamic world sees the West as a cultural threat, mainly on this issue of the corruption that the West brings to the Islamic world, and that cultural difference then breeds into political tension. So, in effect, that there is, at least fundamentally, this cultural basis for a political divide.

MR. HEFNER: There are policy bases, and very practical policy bases, for very serious divides as well. We should begin by acknowledging that many of the clashes that begin in the world have very little to do with civilization; they have very much to do with the national interests and practical interests. But your question is a very good one because the figures come up and those of us who work more at the base know that in interaction there is a very different commonly held view concerning gender, and concerning sexuality more generally, in the Muslim world, and it is something, particularly in the discourse of Islamists, that's frequently pointed to as a serious source of tension.

Now, all that said, I think we have to not just take the long-term view; we also have to contrast the words of Islamists and indeed moderate, mainstream Muslims, contrast whatever reservations they may express about full gender equality or, all the more strikingly, gay rights. We have to contrast that with the process that is underway in those Muslim societies that have significant middle classes and ongoing programs of mass education.

The evidence there, with a few exceptions – obviously in Saudi Arabia things are very difficult still on this front – in much of the Muslim world, I would dare to say the majority of societies that are well along in the process of building national educational

systems, we see the movement of women into the professions, we see the movement of women into a variety of public spheres where historically they were not present or they were not present in the numbers that they are today.

So at the very least, I think we have to recognize once again that there's a tension between, in particular, these sort of all-encompassing statements of values, many of which flow or hang at a relatively abstract distance from ground-level events, and social reality itself. There's a tension between those general statements and the broader social processes, which I think are pointing very, very significantly in the direction of far-reaching gender change. Just as in the United States, this will take time. It will take a long time, perhaps, but, again, it's a process that is not antithetical to democracy. Mainstream Muslim views of gender may differ with those in the contemporary West, but if we look at the history of democracy in our own societies, we can recognize that democracy is what it is; that is, it accommodates very different judgments and popular values on questions not just of gender but a whole variety of lifestyle and cultural issues.

MR. NORTON: May I add something very briefly? Just a point of detail here in the Hizb al-Wasat case. In that case, the question of women's equality was answered very enthusiastically in the affirmative. And I think 14 of the founding members the second time around were actually women. And in that sense, it was a very unusual program, and hopefully argues for sort of similar changes programmatically in other contexts.

MR. HEFNER: Please.

Q: A follow up. How do you compare this source of tension with the source of tension that is bred by the United States support of Israel? Because that certainly has inflamed much of the Islamic world – not so much Turkey but in many other parts.

MR. HEFNER: Richard, why don't you –

MR. NORTON: Oh, thanks, Bob. (Laughter.)

I think the polling results that we've seen over the last several years are very instructive – the Pew data, some of the Zogby polls – in terms of indicating a very high, in many cases extraordinarily high, respect for Western institutions and values and Western products – media and so on – in many instances versus specific U.S. policies. And I don't think there's any question – I mean, the findings are robust – that the U.S. position in the Arab-Israeli conflict – which, in my judgment, is far too skewed in one direction – evokes an extremely negative response across the board. When you ask people specifically about U.S. policies in the Arab-Israeli conflict, you get approval ratings of 2, 3, 4 percent. And by the way, those aren't too much lower than comparable polls done in countries like Venezuela, France, et cetera.

And by the same token, when you ask people about U.S. policies in Iraq, you get a similar response. In other words, there's a very differentiated set of views here. I don't

think there's any question that this is really one of our fundamental problems in terms of the way the United States is viewed in the Muslim world.

Q: The notion of Sunni-Shiaism is becoming prominent. Do you see any future for this notion of Sunni-Shiaism in the Muslim world and the future?

MR. BAKTIARI: I'm sorry; the question was about the Sunni-Shi'ite?

Q: Yeah. Do you see any future role, I mean, for this notion, Sunni-Shi'ite in the Muslim world? And would that be a factor in the development in the Middle East – I mean, in all of the Muslim world – in coming years?

MR. NORTON: With respect to cooperation?

Q: No. I mean, the Sunni-Shiite Muslim – much is spoken about in the American media. But in the Middle East, I mean, this is something – I mean, far from reality. I mean, would you see the future of the Middle East, this Sunni-Shiite factor would – (unintelligible)?

MR. BAKTIARI: Well, I think Iran being the largest Shiite state, how the question of religion and state and the questions of minorities and the question of different equality of – the gender issues is dealt with will definitely have an impact on the Shiite perspective of religion. So a good contrast of that is to compare and contrast the view of the Shi'a leaders in Iraq with the Shi'a leaders in Iran. The Shi'a leaders in Iran by far have a more open perspective when it comes to a question of divorce, marriage rights, whereas Ayatollah Sistani, who is a Shi'a leader in Iraq, is very conservative, very traditional. He stays away from politics but he would not look straight to the women's eyes, he takes a conservative position when it comes to art, music; he doesn't think music is acceptable.

So in many ways, Iranian Shi'a clerical leaders are by far more open to address these issues than the Sunni clerics, because of the revolutionary changes that are taking place, than I think other parts of the world. So I don't see Sunni-Shi'a conflict in Iran to be as sectarian as Pakistan. I think Pakistan, with the Shi'a, Sunni is – we have a sectarian problem. We have never had Sunni and Shi'as attack each other in Iran. We have never had a major Sunni and Shia attack on each other in Iraq. This is an abnormality. We don't know who killed Ayatollah Hakim.

So in many ways, I think it is not a question that in history we can provide a lot of documentation and say, in Iran there has been a secular conflict between Sunni and Shiites. Iranian leaders have been by far more astute to manage that.

MR. HEFNER: I would apologize to all present for the speed with which we have to move on to the next panel, but we do. And before I do, let me thank the three panelists this morning. Thank you very much. (Applause.)