



Political Islams' Multiple Voices

Outline

- I. Definitions
- II. Three major misconceptions
- III. Colonialism and emergence of Islamisms
- IV. Islamisms today
- V. Types of Islamisms
- VI. Conclusions

I. Definitions

Political Islam/Islamism:

- Political ideology rather than religion or theology
- How politics and society should be ordered according to Islam as a body of faith
- Use of various forms of Islam by individuals, groups and organizations that pursue political objectives

Three major misconceptions of political Islam

- Intertwining of religion and politics unique to Islam
- Political Islam and Islam are monolithic
- Political Islam is inherently violent

Colonialism and the emergence of Islamisms

- Political activity and popular mobilization as response to encounters with Europe and, later, the U.S.
 - Response to state repression
 - Response to foreign occupation

Islamisms today

- Promote distinct national agendas within nation-state framework
- Lack of central authority, uniform laws, legal interpretations
- Serve both as political opposition and legitimizing oppressive mainly U.S.-supported regimes

Types of Islamisms

- Self-proclaimed Islamic states (Saudi Arabia, Iran)
- Between ideology and pragmatism (Egypt, Pakistan)
- Muslim democracies (Turkey, Indonesia)
- Islamist national resistance (Hamas, Hezbollah)
- Transnational Islam (Tablighi Jamaat, Hizb ut-Tahrir, al Qaeda)

Conclusions

- Wide socioeconomic diversity and variety of political systems
- Political Islam today is largely a national phenomenon
- Growth of political Islam due to repressive regimes and U.S. support of those regimes that decimated secular political parties
- Islamic parties moderate as become part of political status quo
- Focus on “far enemy” by small minority – ineffective at targeting local regimes, lack domestic popular support