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