

Muslims & Arabs in Western Politics

Indiana University
Thursday, September 22 – Saturday, September 24, 2005

Abstracts of Presentations

Public Lecture by James Zogby, Arab American Institute:

The Emergent Arab American Political Constituency

The 2004 election was a triumph for the Arab American community. Twenty years ago, some campaigns returned contributions and rejected support from Arab American groups, and Arab Americans were excluded from the US political process. Today, their voices are being heard and they are making an impact. The path of Arab Americans into the mainstream of US politics has been a difficult one. Despite the obstacles, with roughly 3 million Arab Americans, their efforts have persisted and are beginning to bear fruit.

Panel One

Comparative overview of political development of Muslim minorities in the West

Jorgen Nielsen, University of Birmingham:

Religion, Muslims and the state in Britain and France: from Westphalia to 9/11

Britain and France are often presented as representing opposite approaches to the challenges presented by Muslim settlement in western Europe, one adopting a pluralist and communitarian policy aimed at integration, the other an individualist policy aimed at assimilation. Starting from a review of the historical antecedents of church-state relations in the two countries, this paper will review the process and impact of Muslim immigration and settlement giving particular attention to government responses. It becomes clear that the distinction between the two countries is not nearly as sharp as often made out. The French authorities have been struggling for almost two decades to find a way of incorporating Islam into the public space, while Britain seeks to balance a traditional collectivist approach with the growing judicial and political focus on the rights of citizens.

Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, Georgetown University.

Muslims in the American Political Maelstrom: 1776-2005

The study will examine the role of Islam in the American debate on separation of religion and state, the attempt of Muslim immigrants to negotiate a place for Islam in the "melting pot" and "Judeo-Christian" paradigms, and the impact of 9/11 and the PATRIOT act on Muslims in the US.

Panel Two
Participation, cooption or marginalization?
Muslims and the different institutions of the EU and US.

Abdulkader Sinno, Indiana University.

Is there a glass ceiling for Muslims in American Politics?

Up to two percent of the American population is Muslim or of Muslim background and Muslim Americans are, on average, more educated and affluent than the average American. Yet, there are no Muslim congressmen, state legislators, governors and other state executives, and very few Federal appointed officials, such as Ambassadors Khalilzad and Tahir-Kheli. There is extreme under-representation even at the lower levels of political appointments, such as congressional staffing and advisory committees. In contrast, both Britain and Germany have Muslim parliamentarians. This chapter assesses the extent of Muslim-American under-representation in government and evaluates different hypotheses to explain it. Those hypotheses include: reluctance to participate and compete, poor understanding of the political process, inability to gain a foothold in the two large parties, the incentives of the electoral system, influence of groups committed to defend Israel's interests, and general hostility towards Muslims among Americans.

Christopher Soper, Pepperdine University.

Religious Institutions, Church-State History, and Muslim Mobilization in Western Europe.

State accommodation of Muslim religious practices is an increasingly important political issue across Western Europe. More than ten million Muslims currently live in Western Europe, which makes them the largest religious minority in the region. Islam is the third largest religion overall, and in most West European countries it is growing much faster than the historically dominant Catholic and Protestant churches. As they have settled in Europe, Muslims have turned to their respective states to recognize and accommodate their religious needs. However, European states have often been constructed around a common religion and public policy in most states explicitly or implicitly advantages particular religious groups.

This paper will explore how the inherited religious institutions and church-state history in Britain, France, and Germany have shaped public policy on the accommodation of Muslim religious practices. I will argue that this policy tradition determined the religious demands that Muslims have proposed, the response of various actors to those demands, and the public policy that the states eventually adopted in the area of Muslim religious rights. Finally, I will explore how the de-christianization of Europe might impact Muslims in the decades ahead.

Panel Three
Are there tradeoffs between security and civil rights and could both be enhanced simultaneously?

David Cole, Georgetown University.

Balancing Liberty and Security for All

Democratic societies often seek to avoid difficult trade-offs by imposing costs selectively on a disadvantaged minority group. That phenomenon is never more prevalent than in times of

national security crises. I will examine the temptation to adopt double standards in balancing liberty and security, and will argue that such double standards are both wrong in principle and shortsighted as a security matter.

Kent Roach, University of Toronto.

Canadian National Security Policy and its effects on Canada's Muslim Communities

This paper will outline the major components of Canada's evolving post 9/11 national security policy with an emphasis on its effects upon Muslims living in Canada. Topics to be examined will include the effects of Canada's 2001 *Anti-terrorism Act*, the three year review of the act, the use of Canadian immigration law and in particular security certificates to detain and deport suspected terrorists, the inquiry in Canada into the actions of Canadian officials in relation to the United States' extraordinary rendition of Maher Arar to Syria, and Canada's 2004 national security policy "Securing an Open Society" including the creation of a cross-cultural roundtable on national security.

Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, Danish Institute for International Studies

Security and Civil Liberties in the European Union

The chapter analyzes and discusses: 1) the EU's reaction to the emergence of salafi-jihadist terrorism inspired by Al-Qaeda, 2) impact of terrorist attacks on Madrid and murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, 3) the attempt to integrate internal and external security instruments to take into account the transnational nature of the most salient security challenges facing the Union, and 4) the impact on civil liberties and the right to privacy, particularly for European minorities.

Panel Four

Comparative attitudes towards political mobilization and participation among Western Muslim minorities

Zahid Bukhari, MAPS, Georgetown University

Ethnicity and Muslim Political Experience in the United States

This paper will examine the trends of convergence and divergence among the indigenous and immigrant American Muslims. These two groups vary substantially in their social background, Islamic growth and community development experiences. The majority of the indigenous Muslims, as Afro-Americans, suffered the white racism, memories of slavery, inner-city poverty, and the brutal civil right struggle. The vast majority of the immigrant Muslims, on the other hand, came here to fulfill their American dreams. They have established resourceful Muslim communities in the suburban areas of the United State. The immigrant Muslims also brought with them the socio-political cultures and Islamic traditions of back home countries. Both communities have been living as *marajal bahrain*, two currents of water, side by side with a barrier in between.

As a result, the indigenous Muslims have developed a rejectionist attitude towards the society and a reluctant behavior towards the immigrant Muslims. On the other hand, the apparent success in the American society was instrumental in changing the self perception of the immigrant Muslims. They have cultivated a sense of accomplishment and some of them also expressed the feeling that they knew Islam better than other, especially indigenous, Muslims.

Two developments, the interaction between the two groups over the time period and the aftermath of September 11, 2001, however, have produced some converging trends among these two distinct groups of the American Muslim community. Analyzing the two American Muslim Polls conducted by the Project MAPS in 2001 and 2004, the paper will discuss the similarities and dissimilarities among these groups. The analysis will also be made about the three prominent ethnic groups of American Muslims: South Asian, Arabs and Afro-Americans. Their demographics, opinions on socio-political issues, and the levels of participation in the political process will be examined in the perspective of their ethnicity.

Jocelyne Cesari, Harvard University

Public Discourse on Islam: A Transatlantic Comparison

My paper will present the different components of the public discourse on Islam in American and European societies. It will present non-Muslim and Muslim narratives in public space and discuss their intersections and tensions. The following questions will be addressed: What are the main topics? Who are the main agents of American and European public discourse on Islam? What has changed since 9/11?

The paper will analyze the discourses on Islam produced by the dominant societies (political institutions/intellectuals/religious groups) and highlight their evolution since 9/11 as well as their differences. It will simultaneously discuss the role of Muslim groups in shaping narratives on Islam in American and European societies and differentiate between the various ethnicities, gender and religious orientations of the dominant Muslim voices today.

Amaney Jamal, Princeton University

The Racialization of Arab and Muslim Americans: 9-11 and Civil Liberties

Since 9-11, the state of civil liberties in this nation has deteriorated noticeably. New legislation passed immediately after 9-11 undermined Arab American perceptions of security in this country. The PATRIOT Acts I and II grant the government significant powers to monitor Americans, even allowing the indefinite detention of “non-citizens.” With post 9-11 government scrutiny, a wave of anti-Arab backlash ensued. Passengers refused to board airplanes with apparently Arab individuals; mosques were burnt and vandalized. In 2003, the Council of American Islamic Relations reported 2003 that hate crimes were up at least 300% from 2001. “The violence, discrimination, defamation and intolerance now faced by Arabs in American society have reached a level unparalleled in their 100-year history in the US,” reports Cainkar.¹ Many blame US legislation targeting Arabs and Muslims for this horrifying backlash.

Exacerbating the sense of Arab and Muslim American vulnerability is mainstream American public opinion. In the immediate days after the attacks, the majority of Americans, according to Gallup polls, were in favor of profiling Arabs. A vast majority of 63% of Americans in the Detroit Metro area were and are still willing to infringe on the civil liberties of ordinary Arab and Muslim Americans. Why is there so much support for policies so apparently anathematic to basic American values? Several hypotheses can plausibly explain support for removing Arab and Muslim American civil protections, ranging from a general sense of vulnerability to more specific anti-Arab attitudes and predispositions. While the former can be explained away as general fear

¹ Cainkar, Louise. “No Longer Invisible: Arab and Muslim Exclusion after September 11,” *Middle East Report*. Fall, 2002.

and worry in the aftermath of the attacks, the latter, this paper argues, is far more troubling. For if the general American population is willing to support infringements on civil liberties by reason of misperceptions that characterize Arabs and Muslims as “enemy others,” then we must also address the larger phenomenon of Arab and Muslim racialization in mainstream America.

Panel Five

Public perception of Muslim minorities in the West

Erik Nisbet (co-authored with James Shanahan), Cornell University.

Mass Media and Perception Gaps: Defining the Relationship between Islam and the West.

In recent years, scholars, policy-makers, and advocates have increasingly focused on the role of the mass media in promoting anti-Americanism within the Islamic World that leads to actions against Americans and American interests, or conversely negative views of Islam and Muslims within the West that results in fear, stereotyping, political intolerance, and support for restrictions on Muslim civil liberties. In this paper we re-conceptualize both anti-Islamic and anti-American sentiment as a fundamental consequence of a *perception gap*, or a significant difference in the perception of the same phenomena (i.e. event, action, behavior, problem) and/or attribution of causality/responsibility, between Muslim and non-Muslim publics. A wide perception gap increases the likelihood of negative attitudes and/or behavior, and thus social or political conflict between publics, while a narrow perception gap may reduce the likelihood of such conflict.

Building upon recent published scholarship examining the relationship between exposure and attention to different television news sources and anti-American sentiment within the Islamic world (Nisbet, Nisbet, Scheufele, & Shanahan, 2004), this paper explores how mass media use may *widen* or *narrow* the perception gaps between Muslim and Non-Muslim publics that result in anti-Islamic and anti-American sentiment. We take a comparative approach in examining this problem and analyze survey data collected across three different populations to explicate the relationships between individual predispositions, mass media use, and perceptions of both the United States and Islamic countries. Included in our analysis are two national surveys conducted by the authors in 2004, one a representative survey of the U.S. population and the other a national survey of Muslim Americans of Near Eastern descent. The third set of data is survey data from six countries located in the Near East collected by both the Gallup Organization and Zogby International in 2002 and 2003. Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), we demonstrate how certain mass media sources within the United States promote fear of and negative perceptions toward Islam, while mass media use in the Islamic World may also promote negative sentiment toward the United States. These results highlight the key role that the mass media play in shaping and defining the relationship between Islam and the West, especially within the context of the ongoing “U.S. War on Terror”.

Paul Sniderman, Stanford University

Multiculturalism, Muslims, and Identity Politics.

This presentation examines the connection between a conflict of values and identity politics. It focuses on distinctive issues incorporating Muslim immigrants in Western Europe.