Can Islamists Become Moderates?: Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis

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Review Article

CAN ISLAMISTS BECOME MODERATES? Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis

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Omar Ashour. 2009. *The De-Radicalization of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements.* New York: Routledge Publishers, 205 pp.
Asef Bayat. 2007. *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*. Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 320 pp.
Michaelle L. Browers. 2009. *Political Ideology in the Arab World: Accommodation and Transformation*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 210 pp.
Gunes Murat Tezcur. 2010. *The Paradox of Moderation: Muslim Reformers in Iran and Turkey.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 320 pp.
Berna Turam. 2007. *Between Islam and the State: The Politics of Engagement.* Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 240 pp.
Carrie Rosefsky Wickham. 2004. "The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt's Wasat Party." *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January): 205–28.

IN recent years, scholarship on political Islam has moved away from abstract debates about the compatibility of Islam and democracy and toward empirical studies of the practices and commitments of Islamist groups.[1] A substantial portion of these analyses hinges on drawing a

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[1] To be sure, debates about the compatibility of Islam and democracy continue, although primarily among nonregional specialists. For example, one recent debate asks whether attitudes about gender in Muslim countries explain the supposed democratic deficit there. See Fish 2002; Inglehart and Norris 2003; and Ross 2008.

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distinction between moderates and radicals, typically viewing them as supporting and opposing liberal democratic reforms, respectively. This has brought a new focus to the study of Islamists. Have the beliefs and practices of Islamist groups changed over time? What processes, mechanisms, and institutions promote moderation? This review essay examines the recent surge of studies that examine the inclusion-moderation hypothesis with reference to political Islam: the idea that political groups and individuals may become more moderate as a result of their inclusion in pluralist political processes. The books and articles reviewed here are representative of a cross section of the current debates. Most deal directly with the inclusion-moderation hypothesis; two additional books present related frameworks for understanding the shift in Islamist politics toward the embrace of moderation and liberal principles. Two central points of disagreement emerge in these debates, concerning (1) precisely what is being explained and (2) which mechanisms (and in what sequences) lead to moderation. Authors differ in whether they emphasize changes in behavior or changes in ideology; they also vary in terms of whether the focus is on groups, individuals, or both. These distinct analytical lenses, though sometimes overlapping, have produced different explanations of precisely when and under what circumstances inclusion can lead to moderation. Most of these interventions adopt one of three foci: (1) the behavioral moderation of groups; (2) the ideological moderation of groups; and (3) the ideological moderation of individuals. After a discussion of various definitions of moderate and radical, the concept of moderation, and the centrality of moderation to studies of democratization, I examine the scholarship on political Islam that falls within each approach. I then examine several studies that raise questions about sequencing: how mechanisms linking inclusion and moderation are posited and how other approaches might better explain Islamist moderation. Finally, I critically examine the behavior-ideology binary that animates many of these models and suggest some fruitful paths for future research.

Moderation and the Moderate-Radical Dichotomy

Debates about moderation have flourished in the study of party politics (notably in the West) and the fate of postrevolutionary groups faced with integration into institutionalized politics. Most frequently, discussions about moderates and radicals emerge in debates about the merits and risks of democratic inclusivity, the challenges of democratization,

and the substance of democracy itself.[2] The language of moderates and radicals found traction in modernization theory and the democratic transitions literature, where binaries such as hard-liners/soft-liners, technocrats/theocrats, reformers/conservatives, and reformers/stand-patters are common.[3]

Nancy Bermeo's critical look at the "moderation argument"—for her, the idea that radical popular organizations threaten democratic transitions if they fail to moderate their demands and behavior—outlines how the literature on transitions in the 1990s continued to emphasize elite negotiations and initiatives, with popular organizations (radical or otherwise) viewed as at best peripheral to the process and at worst destabilizing.[4] But whereas the concern for the transitions literature has been whether the moderation of "the masses" is essential to democratic transitions (Bermeo argues that it is not), the inclusion-moderation hypothesis in more recent debates asks whether political actors become more moderate *as a result of inclusion* in pluralist political processes. And if they do, what precise mechanisms are at work to produce this change? These debates have particular resonance for the Middle East, where radical Islamists are seen as among the greatest threats (along with repressive regimes) to democratic politics both in the region and globally.

Debates about the effects of inclusion and exclusion in the Middle East that were made explicitly[5] and implicitly[6] in the 1980s and 1990s have now moved to the center of debates about Islamist groups.[7] Islamists—a term used for highly diverse political actors who, in varying ways, find the blueprint for social, moral, political, and economic reform in the teachings of the Islamic faith—are undoubtedly the most significant nonstate political actors throughout the Middle East. Political openings of almost any kind will continue to see Islamists make immediate gains because authoritarian regimes have for decades quashed

[2] This literature is vast, but seminal interventions (in addition to those discussed below) include Pateman 1970; Mouffe 1992; Berman 1997; Young 2000; and Warner 2005.

[3] This language also dominates policy debates. See Brown et al. 2006; Caldwell 2006; Leiken and Brooke 2007; Lynch 2010b; and Malley and Harling 2010.

[4] Bermeo 1997, 305.

[5] Krämer 1994; Norton 1995; Moussalli 1999.

[6] Ibrahim 1980; Anderson 1997.

[7] Shadid 2002; Hafez 2003; Wickham 2004; Wickham 2007; El-Ghobashy 2005; Mecham 2005; Mecham 2006; Schwedler 2006; Schwedler 2007; Caldwell 2006; Clark 2006; Brown et al. 2006; Brown 2007; Turam 2006; Leiken and Brooke 2007; Ashour 2007, 2009; Browers 2009; Tezcur 2010a; Tezcur 2010b; Yadav 2010; Kurzman and Naqvi 2010.

other oppositional voices. There may be few reasons, however, to expect Islamists to sustain those successes over time.[8]

Within the broader political science literature, sharp distinctions between moderates and radicals are central to many models.[9] In the transitions literature, political actors who support an elite-led transition are often described as moderates, while those who put forth demands that are revolutionary in their broad support of the "masses" are described as radicals. While *moderate* is sometimes utilized as a synonym for protodemocratic, a close look at these debates reveals that the term is most often used to describe those who don't rock the boat: moderates may advocate for democratization, for example, but ultimately they accept limited reforms that protect the power bases of the current elites. Meanwhile, the term *radical* is typically used to label those who demand substantive systemic change and strongly oppose the power configurations of the status quo. In this sense, the real democratizers may be the radicals, calling into question the frequent association of moderation with such democratic norms as toleration and compromise. The varied and frequently normative usages of these terms mean that readers must pay careful attention to precisely what individual authors mean by them and to how they function in different models.

Outside of the democratic transitions literature, the terms moderate and radical are used more generally to reflect an actor's position vis-à-vis the existing political (or economic or social) system or practices. Moderates are conventionally those who seek gradual change by working within the existing political system; radicals, by contrast, seek to overthrow that system in its entirety. With specific reference to debates about Islamists, however, scholars disagree on whether the terms moderate and radical should be used with reference to objectives (the acceptance or rejection of existing institutions and power relations) or tactics (the method of achieving those objectives). Scholars emphasizing objectives argue that most Islamist seek a fundamental alteration of existing political, economic, and social relations and are thus radical. Scholars emphasizing tactics argue that Islamists who work within the existing legal channels—such as through elections—should be characterized as moderate, while those who use violence to achieve their goals can be described as radical. In studies of Middle East politics, the emphasis on tactics was strongly advocated in the 1980s and 1990s by liberal and progressive voices that reserved the term radical for groups

[8] Schwedler 1998; Langohr 2001; Kurzman and Naqvi 2010.
[9] For example, O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Przeworski 1991; Kalyvas 2000.

that used violence. This trend contrasted with the 1960s and 1970s, when the terms radical and progressive were often linked in reference to leftist and prodemocratic movements that sought to overthrow repressive military or dynastic regimes. But as oppositional voices of all ilk were subject to severe repression and exclusion, scholars began to use the moderate-radical distinction to wield strong critiques of regimes that repressed all critical voices, even those that sought gradual, limited, or democratic change. From this now dominant perspective, Islamists who participate in pluralist elections are treated as categorically distinct from militant groups.[10]

But the problem with hinging a moderate-radical distinction on whether a group adopts a tactical use of violence is that it clusters together groups that common sense tells us are very different. For example, the many branches of the Muslim Brotherhood, quiescent Salafi groups, and conservative clerics like those of Egypt's al-Azhar all explicitly reject violence as a means to domestic political change, but their ultimate political objectives range from limited reforms that do not challenge the authority of the existing regime to the total overhaul of the existing systems of government, economy, and society. Likewise, groups that do use political violence are as diverse as Hizbullah, Hamas, militant Salafi groups, and al-Qaeda. Conflating groups like Hamas and al-Qaeda, for example, denies that violence used in contexts of repression or occupation might be qualitatively different from violence used to advance a radical ideological agenda.[11] Furthermore, nonmilitant groups may support militant groups materially as well as rhetorically—most Muslim Brotherhood branches support Hamas but do not themselves use violence against their own regimes[12]—and even the most ardent moderates might turn to violence if they are subject to severe repression or completely excluded from the political system.[13]

In a study of Islamist women's activism, Janine Astrid Clark and I argue that the moderate and radical labels are problematic because an individual or group may easily hold moderate views (however defined) on some issues but radical views on others.[14] We advocate abandoning

[10] Burgat 1993; Krämer 1994; Norton 1995; Esposito and Voll 1996; Esposito 1997; Kurzman 1998; Hefner 2000; Hefner 2004; Kepel 2002; Hafez 2003; Wedeen 2003; Mamdani 2004; Wickham 2004; Lust-Okar 2005; Nasr 2006; Clark 2006; Brown et al. 2006; Gerges 2009; Brownlee 2010; Lynch 2010a.

[11] Mamdani 2004; Gerges 2009.

[12] Stacher 2009.

[13] Hafez 2003; Ashour 2009; Hamid 2010.

[14] That is, moderates on questions of political participation or the use of violence may hold radical views on social or economic issues, thus rendering singular labels such as moderate and radical useless in capturing these complexities.

the terms moderate and radical as categories describing political actors and instead adopting distinctions specific to individual issues. For example, one might distinguish between legalists and contextualists (concerning the interpretation of religious texts) and between accommodationists and nonaccommodationists (concerning participation in state processes).[15] Carrie Rosefsky Wickham is currently expanding on this critique, arguing that the term moderate is so conceptually problematic that is may be useless.[16] To be sure, any nuanced examination of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis (like the exclusion-radicalization hypothesis) will require that these distinctions be carefully parsed, along with the extent to which levels and patterns of state repression shape the trajectory and orientation of opposition groups.

In broad terms, *moderation*—a process rather than a category—entails change that might be described as movement along a continuum from radical to moderate. Moderation is implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) tied to liberal notions of individual rights and democratic notions of tolerance, pluralism, and cooperation. To become more moderate, the scholarship implies, actors must become more open to the possibility that other perspectives are valid, even if not equally so. But mere participation in elections or democratic processes—behavior that might appear to indicate the embrace of liberal and democratic norms of governance—is alone insufficient as an indicator of moderation; participation is a form of political behavior that a group might adopt for purely strategic purposes while continuing to harbor a more radical political agenda. Scholarly models thus posit a variety of ways to determine when moderation has taken place and to identify the mechanisms that bring about that change.

Model 1: The Behavioral Moderation of Groups

The vast majority of the literature on the inclusion-moderation hypothesis emphasizes the ways in which institutions and political opportunities provide incentives for previously excluded groups to enter the system, abandon more radical tactics, and "play by the rules." The scholarship on political parties has long established that the constraints placed on parties that seek to compete within the system affect their behavior. Although the literature is vast, the works of Robert Michels,

[15] Clark and Schwedler 2003.

[16] Personal correspondence with author, February 2009. I am grateful to Wickham for discussing these ideas in detail and for sharing the first chapter of her current manuscript on Islamic autoreform.

Anthony Downs, Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner, and Scott Mainwaring and Timothy Scully have been particularly influential in emphasizing the impact of diverse political constraints on party behavior.[17] In a similar vein, Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward examine the role of institutional constraints on social movements.[18] The move toward "system-friendly behavior" in these studies might easily be recognized as a form of political moderation that has been triggered by the incentives for groups to participate.

In an early incarnation of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, Samuel P. Huntington explores the "participation/moderation tradeoff" but treats the concept as self-explanatory and thus fails to offer a precise definition of moderation.[19] His argument suggests that moderation entails the modification of both behavior and ideology (beliefs) as they are brought in line with the "rules of the game" articulated and maintained by government actors and agencies. Political inclusion provides incentives for groups to negotiate and compromise in order to achieve outcomes that provide gains for everyone involved, a complex and multifaceted process that he calls a "democratic bargain"[20] in which opposition groups become eligible to take advantage of political openings once they have "modified their demands and moderated their tactics."[21] This typically involves "agreeing to abandon violence and any commitment to revolution, to accept existing basic social, economic, and political institutions, . . . and to work through elections and parliamentary procedures in order to achieve power and put through their policies."[22] Negotiation takes place primarily between government reformers and opposition moderates,[23] although this sort of cooperation also creates incentives for radicals to moderate their goals and tactics.[24]

In much of the recent literature on the effects of inclusion on Islamist groups, scholars have built on Huntington as well as on studies of Christian and socialist groups that formed political parties in the early twentieth century. Particularly influential have been the works of Adam Przeworski and John Sprague, and Stathis Kalyvas, who argue

[17] Michels 1967 [1915]; Downs 1957; LaPalombara and Weiner 1966; Mainwaring and Scully 2003.

[18] Piven and Cloward 1997.

[19] Huntington 1993, 165. These ideas are already present in Huntington's earlier work, though less explicitly developed. See Huntington 1969.

[20] Huntington 1991, 169.

[21] Huntington 1991, 165.

[22] Huntington 1991, 170.

[23] For similar articulations of such negotiations between reformers and moderates, see also O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Karl 1990; and Przeworski 1991.

[24] Huntington 1991, 171.

respectively that socialists and Catholics entered the political system expecting to make immediate gains but ended up compromising on their original objectives as they became enmeshed in the system.[25] In an influential article, Kalyvas also compares the Catholic party in late-nineteenth-century Belgium with the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS party) in Algeria in the early 1990s. Unlike the moderate Catholics of the 1880s, the Islamist moderates in Algeria a century later were unable to demonstrate their commitment "that once in power, they will behave moderately."[26] The reason, he argues, is because Islam, unlike Catholicism, lacks a central power structure: "Centralized, autocratic, and hierarchical religious structures allow religious parties, which are typically young and divided, to implement such measures and overcome their commitment problem by credibly signaling future compliance."[27] Although perhaps unintentionally, Kalyvas's comparison lends weight to arguments that there is something exceptional about Islam—in his view, its lack of centralized authority—that undermines the ability of Islamists to demonstrate their commitment to embracing moderation and rejecting radicalism.[28] But he compares apples to oranges: a whole religion—Islam—is compared to the institutions of one historically evolved denomination of Christianity, the Catholic church, which just happens to be characterized by strong hierarchical authority.[29] A comparison between Christianity and Islam would reveal that neither religion requires any particular arrangement of institutional authority, and thus neither would have a necessary advantage in terms of signaling commitments. Kalyvas's insights are really more about the particular contests around religious authority in Algeria in the early 1990s than about Islam as a religion. We need to be careful to avoid constructing self-fulfilling situations of distrust that render certain political groups—particularly those deemed "threatening" to democracy, such as are Islamists in this contemporary moment—unable to demonstrate their commitments to moderate and democratic politics in a way that others might view as credible.[30] In any case, credibility is ultimately in

[25] Przeworski and Sprague 1986; Kalyvas 2000.

[26] Kalyvas 2000, 380.

[27] Kalyvas 2000, 381.

[28] Kalyvas 2000, 379.

[29] Interestingly, Kalyvis adds to arguments of Islamic exceptionalism by arguing that an Islamist party that won elections in the early 1990s was unable to do what a Catholic party was able to do more than one hundred years earlier: demonstrate its commitment to democratic politics. As Bellin 2008 has noted in her review of recent literature on religion and politics, the many studies of Catholic party politics perhaps tell us less about religion and politics than they do about the Catholic church and politics.

[30] On the credible commitments of Islamists, see Brownlee 2010.

the eye of the beholder, so the burden is not entirely on the messenger. Nevertheless, comparisons between the experiences of Islamist parties and those of Christian parties and socialist parties do demonstrate that moderation may have little to do with religion and everything to do with historical power struggles and local contexts.

A typical model in the recent debates about the inclusion of Islamist groups is that presented by Mona El-Ghobashy, who draws on the aforementioned literature as she examines the ways in which the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has changed in recent decades. She finds that "[t]he Ikwan [Brotherhood] have come to experience organizational and ideological transformations endemic to any party or social movement: splits along generational lines, intense internal debates about strategy, and a shift in their ideological plank from politics as a sacred mission to politics as the public contest between rival interests."[31] Her analysis largely follows what I describe as the strategic moderation of behavior model, whereby decisions about taking advantage of political openings produce first behavioral effects and then ideological effects. These changes have emerged as some power has been gained by the "middle generation," Brothers who came of age on campuses during the 1960s and 1970s—a cohort distinct from the hard-liner "prison generation" of party elders.[32] The Brotherhood's strategic participation in elections has brought a gradual diminishment of the influence of the radical Brotherhood member Sayyid Qutb—whose thinking became the inspiration for many radical Islamist groups, including al-Qaeda—and new interpretations of the thinking of the Brotherhood's founder, Hassan al-Banna—who was always an advocate of participation in elections, having personally run and lost twice in the 1930s and 1940s. As Samer Shehata and Joshua Stacher also demonstrate, this generational shift has produced an embrace of a set of ideas as well as practices that are in concord with democracy and electoral engagement.[33] Sequencing is key to both of these explanations, as it is in the parties literature: incentives alter strategic choices, which lead to the moderation of behavior, which in turn leads to ideological moderation. As discussed below, however, the explanatory link between behavioral moderation and ideological moderation merits closer examination.

In his comparative study of Islamist groups in Egypt and Algeria, Omar Ashour aims to explain why militant actors decide to abandon

[31] El-Ghobashy 2005, 374.
[32] El-Ghobashy 2005, 374
[33] Shehata and Stacher 2006.

the use of political violence. He reserves the term *moderation* to refer to attitudes changing positively toward democracy and adopts instead the term *deradicalization* as the process of abandoning militancy. He asks, "Why do radical Islamist militants revise their ideologies, strategies, and objectives and initiate a de-radicalization process?" (p. 3). While he conceptualizes moderation as distinct from deradicalization, his broader framework couples abandoning militancy with the adoption of liberal and democratic norms: "can militant Islamist radicals turn into relatively peaceful groups that accept the 'other' and, if yes, under what conditions?" (p. 3). He examines cases of both behavioral and ideological moderation and concludes that "domestic and international structural constraints forces [*sic*] several armed Islamist movements to initiate the aforementioned endogenous processes of change" (p. 12). He argues for "the primacy of structure over agency" (p. 12) in initiating change, with the subsequent process entailing structure and agency interacting in an almost dialect sense (though he does not employ that term). In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1970s and al-Jihad and the Islamic Group in the 1990s all underwent "comprehensive, substantive, or pragmatic de-radicalization,"[34] whereas in Algeria in the 1990s, only the Islamic Salvation Front deradicalized, while the Armed Islamic Group failed in its attempt to deradicalize. Algeria provides the puzzle, then, of a single context in which one group successfully deradicalizes (FIS), another fails similar attempts (AIG), and a third—the Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat—becomes even more radical.

Like other studies, Ashour argues that the impetus for deradicalization is largely structured by strategic calculations and political opportunities, and the resulting political learning may lead to a shift in the orientation of the group, particularly when a charismatic leader provides ideological justification for the shift. He identifies four variables at work: state repression, selective inducements, social interaction, and leadership. *State repression* "comprises all confrontational activities, both violent and non-violent, that are directed from the ruling regime towards the population in general and the political opposition in particular" (pp. 14–15). *Selective inducements* are "any explicit or implicit sociopolitical/socioeconomic incentives proffered by domestic and/or international political actor(s) to an Islamist movement in return for behavioral, ideological, and/or organizational changes." *Social interaction* entails engagement with other actors, external and/or internal, at the leadership, midrank, and/or grassroots levels. *Leadership* empha-

[34] Wickham also uses the term "pragmatic de-radicalization." See Wickham 2007, 4.

sizes the presence of a charismatic leader able to provide justifications for deradicalization (p. 15). While all of Ashour's cases saw some initial structural incentives for deradicalization, those that did not see each of the three additional mechanisms at work did not result in deradicalization (pp. 17, 88, 127–34). His notions of leadership and social interaction will be discussed in models 2 and 3 below; what is crucial here is the extent to which his first two mechanisms entail strategic calculations made in response to a changing political context.

Indeed, the idea of the strategic moderation of behavior exists in virtually every study of moderation, although its centrality varies. In her study of Islamists in Lebanon and Yemen, Stacey Philbrick Yadav extends the notion of behavior to include public framing of arguments, arguing that Islamists operating within a political context of greater inclusion and thus competition must self-consciously moderate not only what they do but what they say in order to appeal to a broader audience: "Where contestation and competition are vibrant, as is the case in Lebanon, Islamists must struggle to articulate a more broadly resonant message, capable of convincing or persuading a broader range of their fellow citizens."[35] Charles Kurzman and Ijlal Naqvi find that many Islamist groups have similarly adjusted their public rhetoric, as reflected in their electoral platforms.[36] Even when other studies of Islamist groups emphasize different mechanisms for ideological change (discussed below), all acknowledge that groups strategically moderate their behavior as well as their rhetoric in order to take advantage of new political opportunities.

In his study of Islamist moderation in Turkey and Iran, Gunes Murat Tezcur also argues that political openings can create incentives for behavioral moderation: "[Radical parties] have strong incentives to comply with democratic rules even if they do not hold deep democratic convictions" (p. 31). As he notes:

> Once Islamists are organized as electoral parties seeking mass support, they expose themselves to constant state surveillance and to outside influences that dilute their ideological cohesion. Even just for organizational reasons, it becomes increasingly difficult for Islamists to pursue radical agendas because of their vulnerability to regime crackdowns and discontent among their own ranks.[37]

Tezcur's approach to moderation will be examined in more detail below, but it echoes the consensus in the scholarship that Islamists are

[35] Yadav 2010.
[36] Kurzman and Naqvi 2010.
[37] Personal correspondence with author, March 2009. See also Tezcur 2010a; Tezcur 2010b.

ready to take advantage of political openings when they are available. But does such strategic behavioral modification have any necessary effect on the ideological orientation of these groups?

Model 2: The Ideological Moderation of Groups

If institutions and incentives can lead to the strategic moderation of the behavior of groups, what explains their ideological moderation? Many studies imply a near mechanistic causal relationship, with ideological moderation necessarily resulting from behavioral moderation: actors need only adjust their behavior, and changes to their beliefs will follow. Janine Astrid Clark questions this assumption in her study of the inner workings of the Higher Committee for the Coordination of National Opposition Parties (HCCNOP) in Jordan. She shows that the Islamist Action Front has come to cooperate with secularists, leftists, and liberals under the banner of the HCCNOP, yet she wonders how much Islamists really moderate as a result of cooperation with ideological rivals (p. 1). She finds that while cooperation is common in many areas, redline issues may serve as ideological roadblocks past which even the strongest strategic incentives will not compel them to move. For many Islamists, "issues that are fully addressed by *shari'a* are not open for discussion with other parties" (p. 2), regardless of how powerful the structural incentives for cooperation might be. In Wickham's study of Egypt's Wasat Party, she concurs that "Islamist leaders tend to exhibit the least ideological flexibility on issues around which there is a strong consensus within the movement";[38] Nathan J. Brown finds similar constraints at work in Kuwait's Islamic Constitutional Movement.[39]

But if strategic cooperation does not always lead to ideological moderation, even on some issues, what do we know about those mechanisms that do produce ideological moderation? Empirically, the studies by Clark[40] and Wickham tell us that cooperation across ideological lines does emerge in cases where it was previously taboo, so at least some change must be taking place. Similar findings appear in Maha Abdelrahman's study of Islamist-left cooperation in Egypt,[41] Francesco Cavatora's study of Islamist-secular/liberal cooperation in Morocco,[42] and Michaelle L. Browers's study of cooperation among Islamists, socialists, and liberals within the Joint Meetings Party in Yemen (pp. 138–74).[43]

[38] Wickham 2007, 6.
[39] Brown 2007.
[40] Clark 2006.
[41] Abdelrahman 2009.
[42] Cavatora 2009.
[43] See also Browers 2007.

But the model specifying that strategic incentives produce behavioral moderation clearly does not explain precisely how behavioral change produces ideological moderation, particularly given that such outcomes vary considerably across cases. I take on this puzzle in my comparative study of the political inclusion of Islamist parties in Jordan and Yemen in the 1990s, where I find that Jordan's Islamic Action Front became relatively more moderate through its participation in pluralist political processes (including elections) while Yemen's Islah party did not; the question is why.[44] I define moderation as "movement from a relatively closed and rigid worldview to one more open and tolerant of alternative perspectives,"[45] providing for the possibility that a radical group might become relatively more moderate than it had been but still be not satisfy many definitions of moderate. Changes in political opportunity structure provide the strategic logic for Islamist groups to participate, but those incentives do not always lead to ideological moderation, let alone in consistent or predictable ways.

Like many scholars examined here, I focus on ideological change within group political actors, and like Clark, Wickham, and Brown, I argue that for ideological actors, certain redlines may not be crossed even when a strong logic exists for behavioral moderation. But I attempt to theorize precisely how redlines may shift over time, arguing that internal party debates may make formerly unimaginable actions not only imaginable but even justifiable on ideological grounds. While by the mid-1990s Jordan's IAF had come to cooperate routinely with leftists and liberals, Yemen's Islah Party as a whole did not adapt its positions similarly, despite considerable incentives once its alliance with the ruling General Popular Congress (the party of Yemen's president Ali Abdullah Salih) began to deteriorate from 1994 onward. I explain this variation by providing evidence that the IAF had serious and sustained internal party debates about whether participation in pluralist politics could be justified on Islamic grounds. The contents of those debates are perhaps less important, however, than the fact that the debates took place; even more telling is that the party consistently voted on which positions to adopt and then all party members, even the dissenters, adhered to those outcomes.[46] By comparison, the more inter-

[44] Schwedler 2006.

[45] Schwedler 2006, 3.

[46] This is not to suggest that factions do not attempt to manipulate the system to produce desired outcomes. In April and May 2010, for example, a leadership struggle within the IAF led one faction to take a controversial vote after another faction had left an adjourned meeting. The remaining faction realized that it still had a quorum, so it reopened the meeting and took a vote; the party's legal committee later ruled that vote procedurally invalid. See Schwedler 2010.

nally fractured Islah Party did not engage in substantive debates about what could be justified in terms of the party's core beliefs and commitments. Only as a result of these internal debates did the IAF see a shift in some (but not all) of its ideological positions in ways that may be described as ideological moderation.

Also focusing on internal party debates, Ashour argues that charismatic leadership is essential to provide the broader party and its constituents with the ideological arguments that can justify the move toward deradicalization. As a radical group weighs "rational-choice calculations and cost-benefit analyses," its leaders will need to justify the process of deradicalization to the party at several levels, requiring "lectures, discussions, meetings between the leadership, mid-ranking commanders and the grassroots in an effort to convince them about the merits of deradicalization" (p. 14). Ashour emphasizes that charismatic leadership is necessary because "only a leader/leadership that is perceived by the majority of the followers as credible, pious, theologically knowledgeable and, preferably, with a history of 'struggle' could cast legitimacy on the de-radicalization process"(p. 15). The Armed Islamic Group in Algeria failed in its attempted efforts to deradicalize, Ashour argues, because it lacked just such an effective charismatic leadership (pp. 16, 127–31).[47] The justifications put forth by the charismatic leader are necessary but insufficient to produce deradicalization. In contrast, I do not find that only a charismatic leader can advance persuasive justifications; it is the process of *engaging in* debates about ideological commitments—and collectively agreeing to adhere to the outcomes of internal votes on the substantive issues being debated—that can produce ideological moderation. In her study of Islamists in Lebanon and Yemen, Yadav also examines ideological moderation through the need for Islamist leaders to present religious justifications for the actions taken by the party, but she emphasizes that these arguments must be put forth publicly, and no only internally, in ways that will gain them widespread support for their political positions.[48]

Most of these studies are primarily concerned with the commitments of each party and whether the group coheres into a unified whole or fails to reach shared positions on issues of potential conflict. Ashour and Yadav both emphasize that the arguments put forth by a char-

[47] Ashour 2009, 16, 127–31. This portion of Ashour's argument echoes Kalyvas's argument that FIS was unable to moderate because it lacked a central authority structure, although Kalyvas's concern is more about signaling commitments to those outside of the party than about presenting new justifications to the party's own members and constituents.

[48] Yadav 2010.

ismatic leadership are essential for bringing the rest of the party and its followers along, and Kurzman and Naqvi measure those changes across a large number of Islamist parties through the shifting language of their political platforms. But can we know if the individuals concerned are genuine in their expressed commitments? Certainly, internal party documents and debates provide better evidence for substantive ideological change than do statements and rhetoric structured for public consumption. But do shifting group positions reflect changing beliefs of individuals within the group or merely the ascendance of one internal faction over another? Both may display effects recognizable as moderation, but we would want to know which process is at work.

Model 3: The Ideological Moderation of Individuals

A third model focuses attention on the ways in which the values and commitments of individual Islamists as well as those of entire groups evolve over time. The most prominent model in this group is that of political learning, which acknowledges that moderation—in groups as well as individuals—may be triggered by the political opportunities created when states allow for greater political inclusion. Wickham accepts that institutions and opportunities create incentives affecting behavior, but she focuses on the political learning model with respect to individual Islamists as well as to whole parties. She proposes a process of gradual metamorphosis, akin to the "democratic habituation" argument[49] of Dankwart Rustow, and she sets a high bar for ideological change, defining moderation as necessarily entailing the embrace of liberal and democratic values:

> Ideological moderation refers to the abandonment, postponement, or revision of radical goals that enables an opposition movement to accommodate itself to the give and take of "normal" competitive politics. It entails a shift toward substantive commitment to democratic principles, including the peaceful alternation of power, ideological and political pluralism, and citizenship rights. (p. 206)

This definition can be applied cross-nationally, she argues, to "determine whether and to what extent radical Islamist groups are evolving ideologically in a way comparable to socialists in the West and, if so, to investigate whether their evolution is driven by similar causes" (p. 206). As Kurzman and Naqvi demonstrate, the language of minority rights, democracy, and women's rights has significantly increased in Islamist

[49] Wickham 2004, 225.

platforms, while references to sharia, jihad, and hostility toward Israel are diminishing.[50] Yet despite Wickham's references to the evolution of Islamist groups, the substance of her evidence is drawn from the moderation of individuals, moderation that she defines as changes in their views as compared with their previously stated views.

Wickham develops her theoretical model through a study of the Wasat (Center) Party in Egypt, which was formed in 1996 by Muslim Brotherhood activists who broke with that organization over disagreements concerning both goals and tactics.[51] While the group has until today not received a license to function legally as a political party, its leaders seek to establish a political system based on Islamic law (p. 207). Yet, as Wickham demonstrates, the Wasat Party represents a significant break from the conservatism of the Muslim Brotherhood and has even less in common with militant Islamist groups in Egypt or elsewhere.

The idea of political learning is well established in a range of qualitative as well as quantitative studies, including social choice and rational choice theories, social movement studies, and the literature on democratization. Huntington posits the importance of political learning,[52] noting particularly that the "desirability of compromise"[53] is based not only on one's own experiences but also on witnessing and learning from the experiences of others. Wickham follows Bermeo (p. 214) in formulating a definition of political learning that distinguishes strategic calculations from cognitive change: political learning is "the process through which people modify their political beliefs and tactics as a result of severe crises, frustrations, and dramatic changes in environment."[54]

As it was in Clark's study,[55] cross-ideological cooperation is central to Wickham's analysis. Wasat leaders who had shunned engaging with leftists in the 1970s and 1980s had, by the 1990s, begun cooperating with diverse ideological rivals around issues of common concern, most notably the desire for political reform and expanded political freedoms. To be sure, changes in the political opportunity structure provided the incentive for certain Islamists to cooperate with non-Islamists: even when the regime opposes substantive democratization, "limited institutional openings can be sufficient to generate strategic incentives for moderation and create opportunities for political learning, or ex-

[50] Kurzman and Naqvi 2010, 58-59.
[51] See also Stacher 2002.
[52] Huntington 1991, 172.
[53] Huntington 1991, 174.
[54] Bermeo 1992, 273–75.
[55] Clark 2006.

perience-driven change in individual leaders' core values and beliefs" (p. 205). This is precisely what Wickham argues has happened to some Islamist leaders. Thus, while my study of Islamists in Jordan and Yemen posits cross-ideological cooperation as an *effect* of shifting ideological commitments, Wickham views cooperation as a mechanism that *produces* ideological moderation. Islamist leaders may have adopted certain political positions for purely "instrumental" purposes, Wickham argues, but those positions eventually "metamorphosed into matters of principles" (p. 219).

However, according to Wickham's definition, Wasat Party leaders seem to fall far short of achieving moderation.[56] She acknowledges that Wasat's conception of Islam is "not elastic enough to permit a full reconciliation of religious and democratic values" and also notes that the movement is "careful to avoid western terminology" and does not use the term "democracy" in its formal platform (p. 222). The redlines examined in detail by Clark[57] remain an obstacle to achieving moderation on Wickham's more substantively liberal and democratic terms. But Wickham does provide compelling evidence of two individual Islamists whose views have become substantively more moderate over the course of several decades, and as such her analysis advances debates about moderation beyond the focus on parties.

Ashour also utilizes the political learning model to explore the effects of cooperation and engagement at an individual level, arguing that "interactions with the 'other'" facilitate political learning, which is essential for successful deradicalization. He implies that social interactions always "affect the ideas and behavior of the leadership of a radical organization and probably lead them to initiate three endogenous processes: strategic calculations, political learning, and *Weltanschauung(s)* revision(s)" (p. 14). Like Wickham, Ashour implies that political learning through cooperation and interaction with others *necessarily* leads to moderation; they provide no examples of interactions not having that effect. Is this the case? Could one not also "learn" radicalism, perhaps as a result of experiences engaging with a regime that has no real intention of democratizing? And what if two individuals share similar experiences but only one "learns" and therefore becomes more moderate? In this sense "learning" may be more of a description of change than an

[56] In a January 2008 talk given at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C., Wickham revised her argument: she now posits that Islamists need not adopt democratic values in order to be considered moderate. I am grateful to Wickham for sharing with me the text of her CSIS talk.

[57] See also Clark 2010.

explanation of it or an outcome more than a mechanism. Nevertheless, the literature on political learning does well to draw attention away from groups-as-wholes arguments and toward the internal micropolitics of groups, including the influences of individuals with different perspectives and experiences as well as power struggles over group leadership.

Sequencing in Models of Moderation

This examination of the recent literature on the inclusion-moderation hypothesis quickly reveals not only that the authors are advancing very different causal arguments and mechanisms but also that they suggest different sequences of those mechanisms. Tezcur presents a model of moderation that incorporates the insights of each of the models discussed but questions the sequencing implicit in many models. In particular, he challenges the primacy of political opportunity structures in creating the initial incentives for groups to start down a path that might lead to moderation. He examines Islamist parties in Turkey and Iran, cases of considerably different institutional context from the well-studied cases of oppositional Islamist parties in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Yemen. His argument is twofold: first, he notes that what he calls moderation theory—presented here as model 1: the idea that institutions and opportunities create incentives for behavioral moderation—cannot fully account for the developments among Islamist reformers in Turkey and Iran because it focuses primarily on institutional constraints and behavior, paying less attention to ideological or ideational factors. Tezcur does not reject the insights of model 1, but he argues that processes other than political openings must be at work to produce ideological moderation. Even more, he demonstrates that ideological change does not necessarily *follow* behavioral changes sparked by strategic considerations. Ideological change can also take place *in parallel* to behavioral change, so the latter is not a necessary precondition to ideological moderation, and neither is necessarily sparked by political openings. He also questions an underlying sequence implicit in the inclusion-moderation hypothesis concerning the trajectory of political reform more broadly. That is, he points to *the paradox of moderation*: the possibility that nonstate actors may become more moderate both behaviorally and ideologically—internalizing and acting on liberal and democratic ideas—but that this moderation may not advance democratization at the state level. In fact, moderation may bolster the state's power by deflating potential challengers that would otherwise push for

substantive reforms—precisely what regimes hope will happen. While most other studies do not make explicit claims about the effects of opposition moderation on the state, they imply that moderation is necessarily a positive step toward broader democracy promotion.

Tezcur's argument about the mechanisms of moderation—that moderation can and does take place along multiple tracks simultaneously (ideological and behavioral) and in a variety of sequences—seems to present a less parsimonious but more empirically accurate model of the multiple processes that lead to political moderation of both groups and individuals. Yet he preserves the distinction between ideological and behavioral moderation:

> *Ideological moderation* can be defined as a *process* through which political actors espouse ideas that do not contradict the principles of popular sovereignty, political pluralism, and limits on arbitrary state authority. . . . *Behavioral moderation* concerns the adaptation of electoral, conciliatory, and nonconfrontational strategies that seek compromise and peaceful settlement of disputes at the expense of nonelectoral, provocative, and confrontational strategies that are not necessarily violent but may entail contentious action. (pp. 10–11, emphasis in original)

He also focuses on group-level moderation, but his attention to the views of leaders recognizes individual-level mechanisms. For example, he echoes Ashour's argument about the necessity of charismatic leadership in arguing that the integration of radical groups

> into the political system will not result in moderation unless party leaders have enough intellectual resources to reorient their ideological worldviews. In this sense, ideological evolution remains a precondition for behavioral change. The existence of these intellectual resources ultimately depends on party leaders' life experiences and exposure to new ideas, or the rise of a newer generation of activists that challenge the party hierarchy. (p. 11)

Both behavioral and ideological changes are part of moderation, he argues, but there is no consistent sequence of mechanisms that explains how moderation takes place.

Browers also questions the sequencing of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, with particular reference to the role of individuals within debates about cross-ideological cooperation. She distinguishes her definition of moderation from others by not linking it to movement away from radicalism or toward liberal or democratic norms. She also implicitly rejects the distinction between behavioral and ideological moderation, a point that I will address below in greater detail. For Browers, moderation refers instead to the way in which an individual situates

"one's self both as a member of a community and as an intermediate between existing positions deemed extreme in some manner" (p. 49). There is no reference to embracing norms about rights, inclusivity, pluralism, or tolerance. Moderation refers to a position of *wasatiyya*: "an intellectual trend characterized or claiming characterization as centrist or moderate (*wasti*), or said to occupy the middle (*wasat*) between extremist alternatives" (p. ix). She emphasizes individuals over parties—"Political parties do not work for moderation; individuals within and outside of parties do" (p. 9)—and points to the possibility that individual leaders within parties who have become more moderate may or may not have an impact on the discourses and practices of the political parties themselves. She notes that while some scholars draw attention to the role of individuals and groups of individuals, their focus remains on the orientation of the parties themselves, and this emphasis comes at a cost:

> Thus, focusing on inclusion or cooperation at the level of parties may miss both the impetus and the outcome of cross-ideological interactions. They miss the impetus when they focus on structural conditions—such as the democratic openings of the early 1990s, which are said to have brought more groups into political processes—but neglect the intellectual context, often the result of exclusion and closings and conflicts (rather than inclusion and openings). (p. 9)

Scholars, that is, may overlook important processes or factors that precede observable moments of cooperation of the sort that are identified as evidence of moderation. But Browers does more than shift the emphasis from groups to individuals or away from structural incentives for moderation; she redirects the debate toward "intellectual and ideological contexts, and from parties to individuals and networks of individuals that cross or work outside party lines" (p. 9). She argues that processes examined as moderation often neglect the extent to which those processes require the existence of moderates already at the beginning of the processes. In this sense, internal debates and the presentation of new justifications may be less evidence that a process of moderation is under way than they are the expression of views already held by moderates. Indeed, I note in my own work that few studies of moderation deal with groups that had once been radical in the sense of having attempted to use violence to overthrow existing regimes; Ashour is among the first to tackle this question. As a result, we mostly see only relative change—moderates becoming more moderate, or moderates coming to edge out more radical trends within the group. As Tezcur argues, inclusion may not make moderates more numerous,

but it may make them more visible: "institutional incentives moderate political actors who [have] already abandoned radical world views" (p. 15, see also p. 12); he does not, however, examine why they may have abandoned those radical views in the first place. An additional problem, one not addressed by Browers, is that many studies are biased toward more liberal individuals within these groups—those to whom foreign researchers have the greatest access—leaving open questions of whether the individuals examined are in any way representative of the different layers of members. As Stacher points out, there also tends to be a geographical bias in the individual Islamists whom scholars study, so that a handful of Islamist leaders in major urban centers such as Cairo—those who blog, give interviews, and publish their views—become frequent objects of study while many others in rural regions are relatively ignored.[58]

Browers's analysis unfolds in two parts, the first examining strains of ideological thought in the Arab world, from socialist thought and Arab nationalism to Islamist thinking and, eventually, the *wasatiyya* trend. She sees a wide range of ideological groups that are "developing shared stores of concepts and [are] increasingly dominated by rhetoric traditionally associated with liberalism, and based on notions such as democracy and human rights" (pp. 10–11). However, the use of liberal rhetoric should not be assumed to indicate a movement toward more liberal views. This argument questions the conclusions of Kurzman and Naqvi, who argue that shifts in the language of electoral platforms provide evidence that Islamist parties are liberalizing.[59] As Browers notes:

> Rather, what the evidence reveals is something more tenuous: the persistence of those oppositional frames that permit these alliances to take place hinders discussion of various issues—particularly gender and religion, but also other forms of difference—which might contribute to fuller articulation and more meaningful embrace of liberal and democratic values. (p. 11)

While ideological collaborations make cooperation possible, Browers rejects arguments that make sequential causal arguments connecting cooperation to moderation (p. 176).

The second portion of Browers's study turns to case studies to demonstrate that the focus on the groups over individuals fails to provide an adequate understanding of how and why Islamist groups are changing. Through detailed studies of Egypt's Kifaya movement and Wasat Party and Yemen's Joint Meetings Party (which includes the Islah Party), she

[58] Personal correspondence, January 2010
[59] Kurzman and Naqvi 2010, 57–61.

challenges the core premises of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis by critiquing the disaggregation of factors that other scholars adopt in order to posit clear causal explanations. She advocates an emphasis on broader ideological context (not just internal party debates and positions) and on individuals and the ways in which they are in dialogue with each other. The focus on cooperation in the existing literature, she argues, "neglects the modes of thinking and the character of individuals necessary to bring about the interactions in the first place. This is not to reverse the causal relation by suggesting that the existence of moderate ideas alone will necessarily bring about more liberal and democracy [*sic*] practices" (p. 179). Rather, structures, agents, material conditions, and ideological contexts exist dialectically. "'Moderation' in any of the senses in which it is currently used requires intellectuals who are free to interact and develop alternative frameworks for politics and society" (p. 179).

While not explicitly engaging the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, Asef Bayat advances debates about the moderation of Islamists in his study of what he calls the post-Islamist turn: "the metamorphsis of Islamism (in ideas, approaches, and practices) from within and without" (p. 10). This entails both a condition and a project,

> where following a phase of experimentation, the appeal, energy, and sources of legitimacy of Islamism are exhausted, even among its once ardent supporters. Continuous trial and error makes the system susceptible to questions and criticism. Eventually, pragmatic attempts to maintain the system reinforce abandoning its underlying principles. Islamism becomes compelled, both by its own internal contradictions and by societal pressure, to reinvent itself, but it does to at the cost of a qualitative shift. (p. 10)

This shift includes a conscious project that aims to move beyond Islamism's "fusion of religion and responsibility," advocating not a secular project but a pluralist one that emphasizes religiosity, individual choice, and human rights, as well as plurality in place of a singular authoritative Islamist voice (p. 11). The sequencing of Bayat's argument emphasizes a wide range of trial and error in both political engagement and debate. Post-Islamism may not necessarily be linked to a democratic future, but it is forward looking (rather than focusing on the past) and imagines what some have called an alternative modernity.

Bayat views such a transformation as having taken place in post-revolutionary Iran but not yet in Egypt. In Iran, the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989 and the end of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988 taken together marked the conditions of possibility for the emergence of post-Islamism, but they do not stand as a political opening that creates

incentives for moderation, as they would in the inclusion-moderation literature. They did set the stage for the rise of opposition voices that would eventually call into question the main tenets of Islamism and its failure; but this was not because opposition groups seized political opportunities and self-consciously adopted more moderate behavior in order to take advantage of those openings. Rather,

> it expressed itself in various social practices and ideas, including urban management, feminist practice, theological perspective, and social and intellectual trends and movements. Youths, students, women and religious intellectuals, as well many state employees, among others, called for democracy, individual rights, tolerance, and gender equality, but they refused to throw away religious sensibilities altogether. Thus daily resistance and struggle by ordinary people compelled religious thinkers, spiritual elites, and political actors to undertake a crucial paradigmatic shift. Scores of old Islamist revolutionaries renounced their earlier ideas and warned of the dangers of a religious state to both religion and the state. Adversaries from both without and within the Islamic state called for its secularization but stressed maintaining religious ethics in society. (pp. 10–11)

This description of the state of Islam in the Iranian republic is likely surprising and unfamiliar to many scholars in large part because literatures like the inclusion-moderation hypothesis anchor notions of change in terms of a movement away from radicalism and toward moderation, which is implicitly or explicitly linked to liberal and democratic norms and practices. Bayat's approach also abandons the clear dichotomies between state and nonstate actors and between behavioral and ideological moderation. The result is a sharp analysis that accounts for substantial change within a society that continues to hold a strong religious identity, both socially and within the state. He shares the conclusion that Islam per se is not an impediment to reform: "obstacles to democratic governance in Muslim societies have little to do with religion as such; they are more closely tied to the material and nonmaterial interests of those who hold power."[60] Institutions and political opportunities thus do matter, but not necessarily in producing the expected sequence of reforms suggested in much of the inclusion-moderation literature.

Berna Turam's study of Islam and democracy in Turkey also advances debates about Islamist moderation. She tackles a crucial case study—Turkey's mainstream Islamists—because Turkey would seem to be a case of *exclusion* leading to moderation.[61] Turam argues: "Each time

[60] Bayat 2007, 13.

[61] Eva Wegner and Miquel Pellicer argue that Morocco's Islamist Party of Justice and Development has also continued to moderate despite the reversal of earlier political openings; Wegner and Pellicer 2009, 157–58.

Islamic social forces gained power and were thought to pose a threat to the secular state, the Turkish military, the staunchest protector of laicism in Turkey, intervened in the political process through a coup d'etat" (p. 6). But rather than focusing exclusively on Islamist moderation, she notices an interesting phenomenon: "the increasing number of secular Turkish citizens who have been developing more accepting and even sympathetic attitudes towards Turkish Islamic actors" (p. 4). Over the past twenty years Islam has gone from being viewed as "the main threat to Turkey's secular heritage" to being regarded as a force for democratic reform. Turam's attention to public perceptions of Islam puts an interesting spin on moderation arguments. As she notes:

> Clearly, it was *not* only Erdogan and the Islamic followers who have changed in this short period from their confrontational Islamist positions to a moderate reform-oriented pro-*Islamic* mode. On the contrary, the attitudes of a growing number of secular actors towards Islam have also been moderating from intolerant forms of laicism to moderate secularism since the late 1990s. (p. 6, emphasis in original)

The moderation of the Islamist movement in Turkey should thus be understood in concert with the moderation of laicism—two relatively closed and mutually exclusive ideologies that in a relatively short period came to accommodate one another. Turam examines how this change occurred as state and Islamist actors interacted with each other, much in the way Bayat explores everyday engagements across multiple spheres. As Turam notes, her analysis attempts to "capture and analyze the contemporary everyday settings that have allowed Islamic actors and the state to interact and reshape each other" (p. 9). Like Bayat, she emphasizes everyday interactions, rather than a focus on the inclusion of Islamists into electoral politics or the formal political system. Turkey's mainstream Islamists are in fact in power, thus offering a crucial contrast to the oppositional Islamist politics of much of the Arab world. Also like Bayat, Turam draws attention to a whole political context and not merely to a sequence of mechanisms that affect the behaviors and/or ideologies of discrete Islamist groups and individuals.

Conclusion

As Timothy Mitchell noted two decades ago, much social science hinges on "common sense" distinctions between the material world and the ideological world, between body and mind, between a behavioral

realm and a mental realm.[62] The literature on the inclusion-moderation hypothesis offers a stark example of the extent to which this binary persists. The "puzzle" of how to know definitively whether Islamists really mean what they say *requires* the possibility that one's behavior can go against one's "true" ideological commitments. It thus also requires autonomous and rational actors who are capable of acting in ways that mask what they really believe. Here Islamists are often added to the pantheon of historical bad guys about whom we have learned nothing if not to be skeptical about their expressed democratic commitments. If Islamists were really all irrational ideological fanatics, there could be no way of understanding or predicting their actions; yet if they are rational and strategic—something of a promotion from being blind fanatics—then they must also be capable of deceit and therefore should not be taken at their word. Yet the empirical examples used in studies of Islamists do not always fit well into this behavioral-ideological binary. While some behaviors are categorized as purely strategic and rational responses to political opportunities or incentives, whereas other behaviors are coded more as manifestations of ideology, is this distinction really so clear in practice? For example, if some behaviors can be fully justified in terms of one's ideological commitments while others cannot, why should the former necessarily be *less* ideological than the latter? As Mitchell observes, "the rational is never something that is calculated in a manner that is context free."[63]

To be sure, many of the studies reviewed here emphasize the ways in which all politics is saturated with meaning and thus illustrate that a behavior-ideology dichotomy is nonsensical. These studies do not, however, produce neat arguments about how to encourage moderation. Indeed, a normative bias undergirds much of the inclusion-moderation literature: we *want* Islamists to become more moderate, and so we prioritize causal arguments about which mechanisms produce behavioral moderation, which ones produce ideological moderation, and in what sequences those mechanisms interact.[64] I do not find it problematic that analytic perspectives are shaped by normative commitments, but those commitments ought to be acknowledged head on and examined for the ways in which they structure our analyses. Tezcur comments, for example, that scholars seem very committed to the idea that Islamist

[62] Mitchell 1990.

[63] Mitchell 1990, 555.

[64] For an analysis of the liberal biases of much American political science research on the Middle East, see Wedeen 2007.

moderation is necessary in order to advance democratization. Yet, as he demonstrates, the moderation of those who challenge autocratic regimes clearly works to preserve those regimes, rather than to advance democratic reforms. This insight should not be surprising, given that the early democratic transitions literature acknowledged that compromises (in the forms of "pacted" transitions) often preserved many elements of existing power configurations. But the moderation of Islamists in particular is deemed *essential* for the global democratic project, despite the fact recognized by virtually every specialist of Middle East politics (and by many other political scientists) that the greatest obstacle to democratic reform in the region is the maintenance of repressive autocratic regimes, many of which receive hundreds of millions of dollars annually in U.S. aid.

The waves of protests that have spread throughout the Middle East since January 2011 have elevated the specter of Islamist participation in meaningful pluralist systems, should they emerge, in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere. Variants of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis may well be put to the test: we will see how different Islamist groups engage in real democratic processes and not only in the quasi-authoritarian elections that have been a mainstay of the region for decades. As a new wave of debates about inclusion and moderation emerges, we would do well to expand our focus beyond Islamist groups to examine a broader range of political actors both within the region and globally. We would also benefit from critically examining the instances in which our biases in favor of deflating Islamist opposition movements run roughshod over our broader desire to see substantive, meaningful democratization in the Middle East.

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