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# Introduction

## *Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory*

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In October 2001, the U.S. decision to launch a military campaign in Afghanistan in response to the September 11 attacks by al-Qaeda unleashed a maelstrom of protest throughout the Muslim world. Despite the variegated contexts of activism and the multivocality of the demonstrations, several common patterns emerged during the early stages of the war in Afghanistan. First, many of the strongest demonstrations erupted after prayers and the Friday *khutba* (sermon) at mosques. In Kenya, for example, 3,000 protesters ran through the streets of Nairobi waving placards and chanting slogans after attending prayers at a mosque controlled by Shaykh Ahmed Mussallam, the chairman of the Council of Imams and Scholars (*Africa News*, October 13, 2001). In an episode in Jakarta after Friday prayers, 10,000 Muslims marched from the National Monument to the U.S. embassy and then filled the southbound lanes of Jalan Thamrin with protesters, buses, motorcycles, and trucks (*Agence France Presse*, October 19, 2001). In Kuala Lumpur, 2,000 members of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) demonstrated outside the U.S. embassy after gathering for Friday prayers at a nearby mosque. Representatives of the PAS were eventually allowed into the embassy to present a note protesting the bombings in Afghanistan (*Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, October 12, 2001). Certainly, demonstrations took place on other days as well, but as social sites of collective action, the Friday gatherings in mosques provided opportunities for organizing contention.

Second, although nonaffiliated Muslims frequently participated in demonstrations, Islamic movement groups organized many of the protest events. Well-known Islamic organizations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood (Egypt and Jordan), the Justice Party (Indonesia), and the Jamiat Ulama-I-Islam (Pakistan), coordinated massive protests and rallies opposed to the war in Af-

ghanistan and Muslim government support for the United States. Smaller, more radical groups, such as Lashkar Mujahidin (Indonesia), also actively organized demonstrations against the U.S. bombings.

Third, the demonstrations were frequently used as opportunities to articulate an indictment of U.S. foreign policy that reversed attributions of fault and reassigned definitions to the terminology used by the American administration to justify its actions. In particular, America was framed as the embodiment of evil, terrorism, and injustice because of its support for Israel against the Palestinians, policy toward Iraq, and attacks that killed civilians in Afghanistan. Banners denounced the U.S. war in Afghanistan as “a crusade against Islam” (*Jordan Times*, October 12, 2001) and charged that “Bush is the greatest terrorist” (*Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, October 12, 2001). Others pledged to “save the world from global terrorism [i.e., the United States]” and to “drag Bush to an international tribunal” (*Agence France Presse*, October 11, 2001). These slogans were accompanied by the ubiquitous “Death to America” and placards proclaiming support for Osama bin Laden. At a rally in northern Nigeria, attended by more than 3,000 Muslims, the president of the Kano State Council Ulama aptly summarized the general sentiment on the Muslim street: “America’s definition of terrorism differs from the rest of the world. America is the biggest terrorist nation, given its record of unprovoked attacks on countries like Libya, Iraq, and Sudan” (*Agence France Presse*, October 7, 2001).

Fourth, many of the protests exhibited a consistent repertoire of contention (Tilly 1978; Traugott 1995). In addition to marches and rallies intended to demonstrate opposition to the United States, protesters utilized other tools of dissent. Petitions were directed to U.S. representatives as well as to Muslim governments. Protesters unveiled banners in indigenous languages as well as English, the latter indicating a strategy to target broad audiences in the era of globalization. Symbolic props and actions were also common, especially religious idioms and burning American flags and effigies of President George W. Bush. Violence did occur, but usually in response to protest policing techniques, which tended to be repressive.

All of these forms of contention are part of what we term “Islamic activism”—*the mobilization of contention to support Muslim causes*. Our definition of “Islamic activism” is purposefully broad and attempts to be as inclusive as possible. In doing so, it accommodates the variety of contention that frequently emerges under the banner of “Islam,” including propagation movements, terrorist groups, collective action rooted in Islamic symbols and identities, explicitly political movements that seek to establish an Islamic state, and inward-looking groups that promote Islamic spirituality through collective efforts. We believe that given the plethora of differences within the Muslim world as to what is truly “Islamic,” it would be folly to artificially con-

struct a narrow delineation that includes some self-declared definitions of what is “Islamic” while excluding others.

The patterns of contention in anti-U.S. protests identified above are not unique to Islamic activism. Petitions, banners, marches, and other tactics of dissent, for example, enjoy illustrious careers in modern protest. While the precise timing and choice of tactics may vary according to local contexts, there are common instruments in repertoires that exhibit consistency across time and space. As Sidney Tarrow (1994) argues, such tactics are so common that they reflect modular forms of protest that can be used by different actors at different moments and places. In addition, other collective actors also respond to grievances, use institutional and organizational resources to muster support, and produce mobilization frames rooted in symbols, discourse, and practice, often designed to evoke a sense of injustice to encourage activism.

This indicates that the *dynamics, process, and organization* of Islamic activism can be understood as important elements of contention that transcend the specificity of “Islam” as a system of meaning, identity, and basis of collective action. Though the ideational components and inspiration of Islam as an ideological worldview differentiate Islamic activism from other examples of contention, the collective action itself and concomitant mechanisms demonstrate consistency across movement-types. In other words, Islamic activism is not *sui generis*.

Despite these similarities, the study of Islamic activism has, for the most part, remained isolated from the plethora of theoretical and conceptual developments that have emerged from research on social movements and contentious politics. Instead, most publications on Islamic activism are either descriptive analyses of the ideology, structure, and goals of various Islamic actors or histories of particular movements. Other sociological dynamics typically remain unexamined or are downplayed as contingent upon the unique ideological orientation of Islam, thus implicitly essentializing Islamic activism as unintelligible in comparative terms and perpetuating beliefs in Islamic exceptionalism. Where comparative analysis is used (beyond examining multiple examples of Islamic activism), it is typically limited to comparisons with other “religious fundamentalisms” that share similar ideological foundations and religious orientations, thus emphasizing the comparability of ideas rather than the mechanisms of activism (Antoun and Hegland 1987; Lawrence 1989; Sivan and Friedman 1990; Kepel 1994; Marty and Appleby 1995). The consequence is that scholarship has tended to ignore developments in social movement research that could provide theoretical leverage over many issues relevant to Islamic activism.

An additional obstacle to theory building in the study of Islamic activism is that multidisciplinary research is not unified by a shared research agenda. Scattered among a variety of disciplines, publications on Islamic activism

tend to follow narrow sets of research questions, theoretical frameworks, and methodologies, each determined by a particular disciplinary focus. Political scientists, for example, are mostly concerned with how Islam impacts the state and politics; sociologists are interested in exploring the demographic roots of Islamist recruits; religious studies scholars predominantly focus on the ideas that motivate Islamic activism; and historians detail the histories of particular Islamist groups. The result is that disciplinary fragmentation has produced greater understanding about each particular element of Islamic activism without developing models or frameworks that explain how all of these elements fit together, interact, and influence patterns of Islamic contention. A cooperative research agenda, in contrast, would produce a set of shared working questions, concepts, and lines of theory that help provide a comprehensive, interconnected understanding of Islamic activism.

The purpose of this book is to propose social movement theory as a unifying framework and agenda that can provide effective modes of inquiry to further the boundaries of research on Islamic activism. Whereas the majority of studies on Islamic activism tend to assume that a particular set of grievances, translated into religious idioms and symbols, engenders mobilization, various generations of social movement theory and concomitant debates have demonstrated that other factors are inextricably linked to mobilization processes, including resource availability, framing resonance, and shifts in opportunity structures. By engaging social movement theory, this book demonstrates the efficacy of a shared language for comparative analysis and theory building.

At the same time, our hope is not only to demonstrate the ways in which social movement theory offers theoretical leverage over many of the issues germane to the study of Islamic activism but also to show how the study of Islamic activism provides new testing grounds for social movement theory. Dominated by empirical research on the United States and Western Europe, social movement theory building has been heavily contextualized by liberal democratic polities and Western societies, thus narrowing the generalizability of findings and conclusions. As several social movement scholars lament, “The new comparative riches available to movement scholars are based, almost exclusively, on research rooted in core liberal democratic polities. . . . If our understanding of collective action dynamics has benefited as much as we contend by comparing cases across this relatively homogeneous set of polities, imagine what we are likely to learn from broadening our perspective to include those set in very different times and places” (McAdam et al. 1996, xii).

To be certain, the universe of cases has expanded to include less open polities and non-Western societies. But the Muslim world has yet to be fully integrated into social movement theory. The ubiquity of Islamic activism and its global ramifications (in both the Muslim and non-Muslim world, especially since September 11) means that this oversight is significant. Given the variety of collective actors that operate in the name of “Islam” (prayer groups,

terrorists, propagation movements, study circles, political parties, nongovernmental organizations, cultural societies, etc.), one might even make a strong claim that Islamic activism is one of the most common examples of activism in the world. It is thus an important topic and may challenge social movement theory to reflect and modify its assumptions and conclusions about contention.

In demonstrating the fecundity of a social movement theory approach to the study of Islamic activism, this book provides form to an interest that has been emerging in strength over the past few decades. David Snow and Susan Marshall (1984) initiated the first published call to incorporate research on Islamic activism into social movement theory. Their analysis of the relationship between cultural imperialism and Islamic movements effectively utilizes the theoretical tools that were current in social movement research at the time, including structural strains as catalysts, mobilizing ideologies, and resource mobilization. Religion is depicted as the source of a mobilizing ideology and organizational resources that are used to combat perceived cultural imperialism. They conclude by calling for “the integration of research on both religious and political movements” and note that “[t]oo frequently students of both kinds of movements have ignored each others’ work, the result of which is a fragmented understanding of social movements” (1984, 146). Others have argued for the more general elimination of an artificial bifurcation between the studies of religious and nonreligious movements (e.g., Hannigan 1991; Williams 1994), and a handful of scholars have encouraged the study of Islamic activism in particular (either directly or indirectly by way of example) (Foran 1994; Vergés 1997; Tehami 1998; Wolff 1998; Munson 2001; Wiktorowicz 2001; Schatz 2002; Wickham 2002; Clark 2003; Hafez 2003). Sidney Tarrow’s decision to include a brief discussion of Islamic fundamentalism in the second edition of *Power in Movement* (1998) reflects the broader recognition among social movement theorists that Islamic activism represents an important topic of inquiry, especially as scholars broaden to study new regions and movements.

At the same time, specialists on Islamic activism have been actively searching for a new framework for understanding Islamic contention. Driven by an overall shift in area studies to become more broadly comparative and theoretical (Tessler 1999), those interested in Islamic activism have sought to engage more comprehensive theoretical debates. As the following sections explain, this search has led Islamic activism scholars through theoretical developments that parallel trends in social movement theory. Although these two areas of research historically enjoyed little interaction, similar developments intimate commonalities and the possibility of cross-fertilization. The remainder of this introduction details areas of convergence that have emerged over the past several decades before concluding with an outline of the structure of the book.

### Structural Strains as Proximate Causes?

Early approaches to the study of social movements derived from functionalist social psychology accounts of mass behavior. The starting point for such analyses was an assumption that system equilibrium is a natural societal condition. From this perspective, societies organically generate institutional infrastructure that regulates the balance between inputs and outputs in the political system. Societal demands are accommodated by responsive institutions that channel and address myriad interests to produce optimal policies. These policies, in turn, assuage demands and function to maintain the equilibrium of the system. For functionalists, system *disequilibrium* derives from exogenous structural strains that produce new grievances and erode the efficacy of institutions, producing pathological dysfunctions that can cause political instability. If institutional capacity cannot accommodate newly mobilized societal demands, the result is social frustration and political disorder (Huntington 1968).

The first generation of social movement theory was rooted in functionalism and focused on the structural and psychological causes of mass mobilization (see McAdam 1982, chapter 1). The classic models posited a linear causal relationship in which structural strains produce psychological discomfort, which, in turn, produces collective action. Various strains, such as industrialization, modernization, or an economic crisis, disrupt social life and accepted routines, thereby creating a degree of social and normative ambiguity about how to respond to changing conditions. Theories of mass society, in particular, argued that the erosion of intermediary groups that integrate individuals into society and politics creates a growing sense of social anomie, despair, and anxiety. A psychological sense of isolation and impotence in the face of broad societal changes was believed to prompt individuals to join social movements. Movements were thus seen as escapist coping mechanisms through which individuals regain a sense of belonging and empowerment (for various renditions, see Turner and Killian 1957; Kornhauser 1959; Smelser 1962). While there are different variants of the early social movement theories, they all shared a common understanding of social movements as mechanisms for alleviating psychological discomfort derived from structural strains.

The logic of the sociopsychological approach dominates much of the scholarship on Islamic activism. For many scholars, the underlying impetus for activism derives from the structural crises produced by the failure of secular modernization projects (Waltz 1986; Dekmejian 1995; Hoffman 1995; Faksh 1997). During the pinnacle of developmentalism, leaders in Muslim countries, especially in the Middle East, adopted Western modernization models to promote economic development. Steeped in Western education systems, elites frequently viewed modernization and Westernization as part of the

same process, thus advocating not only policies of industrialization, but also the incorporation of Western practices, including clothing styles, secularization, and Western languages. Even in states borne from brutal confrontations with Western powers, elites frequently adopted Western cultural attributes, despite anti-Western rhetoric. This was particularly the case in North Africa, where the ruling elite preferred to speak French. While this small minority drifted apart from the cultural mainstream of its own societies, regimes attempted to placate their populations by promising economic growth, national wealth, and social protection.

Rapid socioeconomic transformations tended to concentrate wealth among the Westernized elite, state bourgeoisie, and corrupt state officials, while concurrently generating negative side effects that impacted large segments of the population. Municipal infrastructure, for example, was insufficient to accommodate the influx of rural-urban migrants seeking employment, leading to housing shortages, the expansion of shantytowns, and the growth of unwieldy mega-cities such as Cairo, Tehran, and Algiers. At the same time, prices on basic commodities rose while real wages and employment declined. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the standard of living for many in society had suffered under failed state-controlled economic policies. The sense of general economic malaise was compounded by exclusion from political power, which was monopolized by a small elite coterie that seemed to espouse an alien value system. These failures and the growing impoverishment of larger portions of the population were magnified by the devastating and bitter Arab defeat in the 1967 war with Israel, which served as a catalyst for societal introspection (Haddad 1992).

Although proponents of this sociopsychological understanding agree that Islamic activism is a response to the psychological distress produced by these conditions, scholars have debated the relative importance of different precipitants. Some argue that socioeconomic factors are the principal cause and tend to emphasize the common socioeconomic background of Islamic activists (Ibrahim 1980; Ansari 1984; Munson 1986; Waltz 1986). The underlying assumption of such an approach is that socioeconomic background tells us something about grievances and therefore why individuals join an Islamic movement or group. Early research indicated that most militants had high levels of education and recently migrated to urban centers, often in search of employment opportunities. Scholars argued that because these recruits were cut off from their rural roots and family, lived in a new urban environment with different values, and faced blocked social mobility, they suffered a sense of social alienation and anomie that rendered them vulnerable to the Islamist message of tradition. Later studies showed that the base of support shifted toward the less educated strata of society, but recruits were still seen as motivated by psychosocial pressures created by socioeconomic crisis (Ibrahim 1996).

Others view Islamic activism as a response to cultural imperialism. From

this perspective, the most important societal strain is the growing influence of Western culture, as supported by an assortment of foreign and international political, economic, and military instruments (Burgat and Dowell 1993; Keddie 1994; Esposito 1998).

Islamists themselves tend to emphasize this dimension of the crisis. Whether such claims mask other interests, Islamists frequently couch their grievances and goals in language akin to Huntington's (1996) "clash of civilizations," whereby mobilization is viewed as a response to insidious Western desires to undermine the culture of Muslim societies. A direct corollary of this cultural infiltration argument is that the erosion of Islamic values and practices will inexorably lead to deeper problems in various spheres of social life, including economics, politics, and military defense. The Western "attack on Islam" (whether by foreign enemies or Western proxies in the Muslim world) is thus conceptualized as the first stage in a conspiracy to undermine, weaken, and eventually dominate Muslim countries (see Burgat and Dowell 1993; Wiktorowicz and Taji-Farouki 2000).

Still others favor political strain explanations for the rise of Islamic activism. Under authoritarian rule, the masses lack formal political access to mitigate the adverse effects of modernization projects and the deterioration of quality of life. With few open channels for political recourse, the result is societal frustration and a sense of alienation. The feeling of political impotence is exacerbated in the face of security service repression and administrative processes that attempt to depoliticize civil society and prevent oppositional activities. Since political movements are banned under most authoritarian regimes, Islamic activism becomes a natural vehicle for political discontent. Rooted in established social sites of religious practice and widely accepted values, contention through Islam represents one of the few remaining effective options for confronting a sense of political exclusion.

Some scholars take the strain argument even further and assert that the precise shape of Islamic activism is directly correlated with the intensity of the crisis. Dekmejian represents this perspective when he argues that "The scope and intensity of the fundamentalist reaction, ranging from spiritual awakening to revolutionary violence, depends on the depth and pervasiveness of the crisis environment" (1995, 6). Increased strain is assumed to elicit increased responses whereby individuals seek to re-anchor themselves or redress grievances through religion (Esposito 1992, 12-17).

The early sociopsychological approach to the study of social movements met with stark criticism for its overly simplistic formulation of an inexorable linkage between structural strain and movement contention (e.g., McAdam 1982), a criticism that is equally applicable to similar approaches in the study of Islamic activism. Systems are not inherently balanced or static, but rather consistently dynamic as they experience the pressures and strains of societal changes, events, and interactions. More importantly, structural strain and the discontent it produces (the alleged catalyst for contentious action) are ubiqui-



tous in all societies (though the precise content varies according to local conditions), yet do not always elicit a movement. In reality, social movements do not correspond to the strain-movement paired logic. In fact, poor countries with limited resources or political freedom often produce few social movements, despite the ubiquity of strain and discontent. Western democracies, on the other hand, which enjoy much higher standards of living, political freedom, and stability, are ripe with robust movements.

Not only did early strain models of social movements ignore the innumerable instances where strains did not actually engender movement mobilization, but they also tended to disregard the purposive, political, and organized dimensions of movement contestation. Movements are not merely psychological coping mechanisms; they are often explicitly focused and directed toward the political arena (McAdam 1982; Buechler 1993). In addition, participants are not “dysfunctional” individuals seeking psychological comfort, but instead frequently represent educated and well-adjusted members of society.

While social movement theory moved to redress this theoretical deficiency, the study of Islamic activism has, to a large extent, remained circumscribed by the inherent limitations of the sociopsychological model. Building on the underlying suppositions of the model, recycled renditions have mostly sought to create more complex lists of strains and grievances. Explanations for the emergence of Islamic activism no longer narrowly focus on a single category of strains or concomitant discontent (political, socioeconomic, or cultural), but rather combine these factors into single explanatory frameworks that include extensive lists of precipitating causes. The massive accumulation of different societal problems makes mobilization seem virtually inevitable.

But by unreflectively replicating the weaknesses of strain-based explanations, scholars cannot effectively answer central questions about the emergence and dynamics of Islamic activism. Under conditions of repression, how do movements collectivize individual grievances and mobilize participants? Given similar structural conditions, strains, and grievances, what explains cross-national and diachronic variance in patterns of Islamic mobilization? In shared political contexts, what explains intra-movement tactical differences? Why do some groups use violence while others adamantly eschew violent contention? And why did aggrieved individuals turn to Islam rather than liberal democracy, nationalism, socialism, or other “isms”? Questions such as these raise comparative issues about the dynamics of contention that prioritize the *mechanisms* of collective action. Structural strain and discontent may be necessary, but they are not a sufficient causal explanation for Islamic activism.

### Resources and Mobilizing Structures

Resource mobilization theory (RMT) emerged in response to the shortcomings of the early sociopsychological approaches to social movements. Rather than viewing movements as constituted by irrational or psychologically de-

prived individuals who join in response to structural strains, RMT views movements as rational, organized manifestations of collective action. As an approach, its central contention is that while grievances are ubiquitous, movements are not. As a result, there must be intermediary variables that translate individualized discontent into organized contention. For RMT, resources and mobilizing structures, such as formal social movement organizations (SMOs), are needed to collectivize what would otherwise remain individual grievances. Movements are not seen as irrational outbursts intended to alleviate psychological distress, but rather as organized contention structured through mechanisms of mobilization that provide strategic resources for sustained collective action.

Steeped in Western societies, RMT emphasizes the rational and strategic dimensions of social movements in liberal democratic polities (Oberschall 1973; Gamson 1975; Tilly 1978; Jenkins 1983; McCarthy and Zald 1987a, 1987b). Movements create crucibles of mobilization, communication mechanisms, and professional staffs through a process of bureaucratization and institutional differentiation designed to coordinate and organize contention. With a sturdy and enduring infrastructure, formal institutions, resources, organic community organizations, and a division of labor, movements can strategically direct activism to maximize impact and efficaciousness. In cases where resource availability for disempowered collectivities is limited, third party intervention may be necessary to create mobilizing structures (Jenkins and Perrow 1977). At the same time, movement entrepreneurs offer selective incentives (Olson 1965) (material, solidary, as well as purposive) to entice actors to join an SMO, sharply contrasting the rational recruit of RMT with the psychologically distressed joiner of early sociopsychological models. For both entrepreneurs and professional SMO staffs, employment depends upon the ability of the organization to attract and maintain membership, thus creating a movement-business model designed to promote organizational continuity. The consequence of such a formulation is that mature social movements use resources to evolve into organizational models akin to other bureaucratic entities and forms of institutionalized politics.

Although most research on Islamic activism does not directly address RMT debates, scholarship highlights the importance of organizational resources. The mosque, for example, is a central institution for religious practice in Muslim societies and is frequently utilized as a religiospatial mobilizing structure by various Islamist groups (e.g., see Parsa 1989). Within the physical structure of the mosque, Islamists offer sermons, lessons, and study groups to propagate the movement message, organize collective action, and recruit new joiners. Mosques also provide an organic, national network that connects communities of activists across space. In this manner, mobilization through the mosque is analogous to the use of churches by the civil rights movement in the United States (McAdam 1982; Morris 1984), though the

role of the mosque as a “free space” has declined in recent years as regimes have extended state control over public religious institutions.

Islamic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) constitute another set of widely used meso-level organizations (Sullivan 1994; Clark 1995, 2003; Shadid 2001; Wiktorowicz 2001). Islamic NGOs, such as medical clinics, hospitals, charity societies, cultural centers, and schools, provide basic goods and services to demonstrate that “Islam is the solution” to everyday problems in Muslim societies. Within these organizational contexts, Islamic activists not only provide needed social services (often in areas where state programs are absent or ineffective), but use social interactions with local communities to propagate and recruit followers as well. In at least a few instances, employment opportunities at Islamic NGOs provide patronage rewards (selective incentives) for loyal constituents, thus reinforcing solidarity ties to the movement. Rooted in socioeconomic development activities, these organizations represent a friendly public face that promotes the Islamic message without directly confronting the regime, even though the activities themselves may highlight the inability of the state to effectively address socioeconomic problems (Sullivan 1994). They also offer concrete, visible examples of what Islam can provide, in contradistinction to the state’s secular modernization failures. Islamic NGOs are commonly used by peaceful, reform minded movements, but they also constitute organizational resources for radical groups such as Hizbullah and Hamas (Shadid 2001; Robinson in this volume). Where the regime constrains formal political space, outreach programs through Islamic grassroots activities can provide tangible resources for mobilization (Wickham 2002).

Within civil society, Islamic activists also mobilize through the structure of professional and student associations (Wickham 1997; Fahmy 1998). Frequently in Muslim countries, these associations function as surrogate political arenas where various social tendencies compete for control of institutional positions and resources. With the decline of leftist ideologies and movements, especially after the end of the Cold War, Islamic movements have successfully gained control over various associations and utilize them to promote a religious message, even while providing services to the professional or student body. Islamic activists do not create these organizational resources; rather, they capture and usurp “potential resources” for movement purposes (Kurzman 1994).

In addition to these organizational fora, a number of Islamic groups have responded to limited political liberalization measures by mobilizing through political parties (Esposito and Voll 1996; Robinson 1997; Akinci 1999; Langhor 2001; Lust-Okar 2001). While many Islamists reject democracy as un-Islamic, reform-oriented movements have taken advantage of new political openings. In Jordan, for example, the Islamic Action Front (IAF) has demonstrated remarkable electoral strength and organizational capacity since its le-

galization in 1993. It is the most widely recognized party in the kingdom and has seriously contested municipal and parliamentary elections (despite a national electoral boycott in 1997). In Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, Yemen, and elsewhere, moderate Islamists have demonstrated remarkable skill in mobilizing support through political parties as well (Langhor 2001). Even radicals-cum-reformists from the Islamic Group and Islamic Jihad in Egypt have attempted to create political party vehicles (the Shari'ah Party and the Islah Party), though state opposition and repression have proved daunting hurdles.

While RMT has tended to emphasize these types of formal organizations, it also accommodates the role of informal institutions and social networks. A multitude of studies, for example, highlight the importance of social networks for movement recruitment, particularly in high-risk activism where social ties provide bonds of trust and solidarity and encourage activism (McAdam 1986). Still others point to the decentralized, polycephalous, and reticulated structure of movements such as the Pentecostal and black power movements (Gerlach and Hine 1970). And a number of scholars have embraced less formal understandings of social movements by conceptualizing informally structured movements as "social movement communities," understood as "informal networks of politicized participants who are active in promoting the goals of a social movement outside the boundaries of formal organization" (Buechler 1990, 61). As opposed to the bureaucratic model of SMOs, social movement communities exhibit "fluid boundaries, flexible leadership structures, and malleable divisions of labor" (*ibid.*, 42). Examples include elements of the women's movement (Buechler 1990), lesbian feminists (Taylor and Whittier 1992), some neighborhood movements (Stoecker 1995), the alternative health movement (Schneirov and Geczik 1996), and Earth First! (Ingalsbee 1996). At least a few scholars have argued that informality, as opposed to formal organizations, is more effective for protest since the organizational survival imperatives of SMOs can undermine the purpose of a movement (Piven and Cloward 1979).

The use of social networks and informal resources for mobilization is especially common in less open polities where visibility is dangerous. In such contexts, formal resources are inviting targets for regime repression and may actually make it easier for security services to undermine the institutional capacity of the movement. As a result, movements may instead use informal institutions and social networks for activism, since they are embedded in everyday relationships and thus more impervious to state control (Scott 1990; Opp and Gern 1993; Schneider 1995; Zuo and Benford 1995; Pfaff 1996; Loveman 1998; Zhao 1998). In his analysis of the 1989 "revolution" in Eastern Europe, for example, Pfaff (1996, 99) finds that in "societies in which the state virtually eliminates an open public sphere and organization independent of regime control, informal ties are of critical importance. Tightly knit net-

works nurture collective identities and solidarity, provide informal organization and contacts, and supply information otherwise unavailable to individuals.” Addressing the same question of mobilization under repressive conditions in the Chinese context, Zuo and Benford (1995) find that the Chinese student movement overcame similar impediments to mobilization by utilizing social networks, campus study groups, student unions, dormitory networks, and informal communications, such as protest notices, all of which facilitated the social construction of grievances and protest.

Given the decentralized nature of Islamic authority, the importance of social connections and personalism, and political repression in Muslim societies, scholarship on Islamic activism has much to offer the study of informality in social movement theory. In Jordan, for example, a number of Islamic activists have utilized informal social networks as viable mobilization structures and resources for contention (Wiktorowicz 2001). Despite political liberalization in 1989, the Jordanian regime has maintained social and political control through the “management of collective action”—the manipulation of bureaucratic processes to set limits and channel movement activism in particular, less oppositional, directions. Legal codes and administrative procedures are manipulated to favor the creation of moderate Islamic SMOs while disempowering more radical activists. Radical activists have, in turn, responded to these limitations by mobilizing through informal social networks and institutions. Through a loose web of personal relationships, study circles, and informal meetings, these activists mobilize outside the boundaries of formal institutions. While personalism and informality may ultimately limit the reach of a social movement, social networks provide viable resources for movement survival and activism, especially in contexts where authoritarianism limits formal resource availability.<sup>1</sup> In Muslim contexts, informal networks are an indelible component of the social matrix and are frequently used as resources for political, social, and economic purposes (Denoeux 1993; Ismail 2000).

### Opportunities and Constraints

Social movements do not operate in a vacuum; they belong to a broader social milieu and context characterized by shifting and fluid configurations of enablements and constraints that structure movement dynamics. Regardless of level of grievances, resource availability, or the prevalence of mobilizing structures, collective actors are both limited and empowered by exogenous factors, which often delimit movement viability and the menu of tactics, actions, and choices. Such understandings contextualize collective action by incorporating the influence of external factors and concomitant structures of opportunity and constraint. While many scholars describe these structures as “*political op-*

portunity structures” and incorporate them into a political process model of social movement mobilization, in practice they encompass cultural, social, and economic factors as well.

Social movement theorists do not necessarily share a common delineation of the most important exogenous factors, but most scholarship in this area focuses on “the opening and closing of political space and its institutional and substantive location” (Gamson and Meyer 1996, 277). Some of the most cited variables in determining access to political space include the level of formal and informal access to political institutions and decision-making, the degree of political system receptivity to challenger groups, the prevalence of allies and opponents, the stability of the ruling elite coalition, the nature of state repression, and state institutional capacity (Tilly 1978; Kitschelt 1986; Tarrow 1994; McAdam et al. 1996a). While these dimensions may impact social movements by either opening or closing possibilities for activism, movement responses are contingent upon recognition and interpretation of opportunities and threats (Kurzman 1996; McAdam et al. 2001).

Although this approach focuses its attention on structural factors, it shares similar assumptions with RMT. In particular, despite the micro-macro differences between the two approaches, they both share an underlying assumption that social movement contention derives from rational actors. For RMT, movement entrepreneurs construct SMOs and institutional infrastructure and strategically mobilize resources and personnel to produce efficacious choices and actions, whether for individual preferences or movement goals. Movement participants are not irrational, but rather join because of a variety of incentives and goals. Similarly, while a structuralist analysis of social movements is primarily concerned with the ways in which structural conditions shape social movement dynamics, there is an assumption that actors, once they perceive opportunities and threats, will respond rationally to maximize openings or limit adversity (Berejikian 1992). A focus on structural factors is thus an additive piece of an overall understanding of social movements and reflects a difference in emphasis, rather than a fundamental ontological disagreement.

Since the late 1990s, a number of scholars have shifted to reconceptualize Islamic activists as strategic thinkers embedded in a political context which influences choices and decisions (Anderson 1997; Alexander 2000; Ismail 2001). Recent research, for example, has demonstrated that despite widely accepted understandings of Hamas as an uncompromising movement trapped by rigid adherence to doctrine, the movement has strategically responded to changes in the surrounding political context. Prior to the Palestinian *intifada* (uprising) that began in 2000, there was growing popular support for the peace process, which posed a dilemma for the movement. Strict adherence and an intransigent position vis-à-vis peace was likely to erode the support of bystander publics that sought an end to the economic and social hardships of

occupation, thus threatening the organizational survival of Hamas as an alternative to Arafat and his supporters. As a result, Hamas tactically adjusted its doctrine to accommodate the possibility of peace with Israel by framing peace as a temporary pause in the jihad that would strengthen Muslim forces before a final assault. Islamic concepts such as *sabr* (patience) and *hudna* (truce) were used to legitimize doctrinal flexibility within the overall objectives of the movement (Mishal and Sela 2000; see also Hroub 2000). The uprising and escalation of violence that started in September 2000 increased public support for Hamas and provided an opportunity for the movement to reinstate earlier militant positions and actions. Additional studies of the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria (Kavylas 1999) and various chapters in this volume (Hafez, Hafez and Wiktorowicz, Lawson, and Robinson) concur that radicals respond rationally and strategically to structures of opportunity. At least a few studies of moderate Islamist groups also depict activists as strategic thinkers who are affected by opportunities and constraints (Mufti 1999; Alexander 2000).

### Culture and Framing Processes

Since the 1980s, social movement theorists have been interested in the role of ideational factors, including social interaction, meaning, and culture (Morris and Mueller 1992; Laraña et al. 1994; Johnston and Klandermans 1995). In addition to the strategic and structuralist dimensions of mobilization outlined in RMT and the political process model, social movement theory has increasingly addressed how individual participants conceptualize themselves as a collectivity; how potential participants are actually convinced to participate; and the ways in which meaning is produced, articulated, and disseminated by movement actors through interactive processes. In the development of a theoretical approach to social movements, this interest has predominantly manifested itself through the study of framing.

Frames represent interpretive schemata that offer a language and cognitive tools for making sense of experiences and events in the “world out there.” For social movements, these schemata are important in the production and dissemination of movement interpretations and are designed to mobilize participants and support. As signifying agents engaged in the social construction of meaning, movements must articulate and disseminate frameworks of understanding that resonate with potential participants and broader publics to elicit collective action. Although extant ideas or ideologies may underlie contentious action, they are arranged and socially processed through grammatical constructs and interpretive lenses that create intersubjective meaning and facilitate movement goals. The term “framing” is used to describe this process of meaning construction (see Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Benford 1988; Snow and Benford 1992; Benford and Snow 2000; Williams and Benford 2000).

David Snow and Robert Benford (1988) identify three core framing tasks

for social movements. First, movements construct frames that diagnose a condition as a problem in need of redress. This includes attributions of responsibility and targets of blame. Second, movements offer solutions to the problem, including specific tactics and strategies intended to serve as remedies to ameliorate injustice. And third, movements provide a rationale to motivate support and collective action. While potential participants may share common understandings about causation and solutions to a particular problem, motivational frames are needed to convince potential participants to actually engage in activism, thereby transforming bystander publics into movement participants.

One of the most critical dimensions of the framing process for movement mobilization is frame resonance. The ability of a movement to transform a mobilization potential into actual mobilization is contingent upon the capacity of a frame to resonate with potential participants. Where a movement frame draws upon indigenous cultural symbols, language, and identities, it is more likely to reverberate with constituents, thus enhancing mobilization. Such reverberation, however, depends upon not only its consistency with cultural narratives, but also the reputation of the individual or group responsible for articulating the frame, the personal salience of the frame for potential participants, the consistency of the frame, and the frame's empirical credibility in real life (Benford and Snow 2000, 619–22).

Islamic movements are heavily involved in the production of meaning and concomitant framing processes. Like many “new social movements” driven by issues of identity, culture, and post-materialism (as opposed to class, economic, or narrow political interests) (Laraña et al. 1994), Islamic movements are embroiled in struggles over meaning and values. While a great deal of research has focused upon politicized movements that seek to create an Islamic state, the core imperative of Islamic movements is a desire to create a society governed and guided by the *shari'a* (Islamic law). Control and reconstruction of state institutions may be an effective instrument for accomplishing this transformation, but it is only one of many routes for change. In other words, the state is a means for the production of meaning, not an end. In fact, most Islamic struggles are waged through society and cultural discourse rather than state institutions or government decision-making bodies. Such efforts challenge dominant cultural codes and create networks of shared meaning about the proper functions of society, groups, and the individual (Melucci 1996).

An important component of most Islamic movement diagnostic frames is to blame the spread of Western values and practices for a wide variety of social ills, including rising unemployment, stagnant economic development, soaring debt, housing shortages, dwindling public social and welfare expenditures, and so forth. The argument is that the true path to development and success is outlined in the sources of Islam. So long as Muslims follow this



straight path, they will be rewarded for their faithfulness. The onslaught of Western cultural codes, however, erodes the sanctity of Islamic mores and devalues the very Muslim institutions and social relationships necessary for a healthy society. Following or mimicking Western practices (styles of dress, culture, public behavior, etc.) is thus viewed as an egregious departure from Islam and the cause of crisis (Wiktorowicz and Taji-Farouki 2000).

Most frames go a step further and argue that this process of cultural imperialism is a conscious Western strategy to weaken Muslim societies for economic, political, and military purposes. International institutions, media outlets, the marketplace, and secular modernization projects are all framed as vehicles for the strategic infusion of alien value systems calculated to undermine the strength of Islam. For some Islamic activists, the ultimate manifestation of this imperialist design is Western support for pliant “non-Islamic” regimes, which are framed as Western puppets controlled through International Monetary Fund structural adjustment programs, Western foreign aid, and U.S. military forces. From this perspective, regimes are merely extensions of Western interests determined to weaken and control Muslim societies (Burgat and Dowell 1993).

Social movements, however, are embedded in a field of multiple actors that often vie for framing hegemony. Frequent disagreements and framing contests over meaning encourage competitive pressures as various groups produce and disseminate interpretive schemata (Benford 1993). Such competition takes place not only between a movement and its adversaries, but within the movement itself as well. Intramovement divisions (such as hardliner-softliner, conservative-liberal, young-old, ideologue-pragmatist) can create internal framing disputes as each faction attempts to assert its own frame for movement-wide adoption. Prognostic framing, in particular, tends to produce numerous intramovement-framing disputes. While social movements often share a common understanding about responsibility for a problem, there is far less cohesion over strategies and tactics (Benford 1993; Benford and Snow 2000, 625–27).

These prognostic framing differences are common among Islamic activists. Many concur that some break with the West is necessary and that “Islam is the solution,” but there are important divergences over specific tactics and strategies. Some groups, for example, believe that the transformation of individual beliefs will eventually affect broader circles over time. Thus missionary movements, such as Jama‘at Tabligh, focus on *da‘wa* (propagation) to affect shifts in individual attitudes toward the role of religion in regulating society and personal behavior. The hope is that these individuals will then promote proper Islamic practices among friends, families, neighbors, communities, and other collectivities. Eventually, this process expands to incorporate the entire society, after which point state institutions naturally evolve to accommodate shari‘a principles. Other groups advocate formal political participa-

tion to restructure state policy and institutions. Advocates of this approach typically have formed political parties and successfully contested elections (where possible). Many such groups also rely upon grassroots activities as tangible manifestations of Islam in action and frame participation in terms of a “new ethic of civic obligation” (Wickham 2002; also in chapter 9 in this volume). Still others advance violent prognostic frames that support the use of military coups or revolutions. Particular Islamic groups may support multiple tactics or shift prognostications, but the existence of multiple prognostic frames is the cause of a great deal of internal conflict and competition.

In addition to intramovement framing contests, social movement groups often compete with “official frames” as well (Noakes 2000). Because regimes throughout the Muslim world depend on Islam in a variety of ways for legitimation, they are actively engaged in what Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori term “Muslim politics”—“the competition and contest over both the interpretation of symbols and the control of the institutions, both formal and informal, that produce and sustain them” (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996, 5). In an effort to maintain this source of legitimacy, regimes articulate innocuous frames that support regime interests and power. These frames do not call for broad societal or state transformations, but rather emphasize individual piety and concern for personal salvation, thus supporting a politically quiescent variant of Islam. At the same time, regimes also attempt to limit the institutional resources and public space available for the dissemination of alternative frames that could challenge regime legitimacy. State control of mosques, sermons, and other public religious institutions and practices is designed to amplify regime frames while muting other perspectives.

As with other social movements, the success of Islamic groups vis-à-vis the state to a large extent derives from the reputation of frame articulators and the use of publicly recognized symbols and language that tap into cultural experiences and collective memories. Failed modernization experiments and political repression have eroded popular support for regimes in the Muslim world; and although many Muslims still follow publicly employed *ulama* (religious scholars), *muftis* (Islamic legal experts), and *imams* (prayer leaders), “official Islam” has lost credibility among disaffected and marginalized communities. These collectivities instead frequently turn to “popular” Islam and reputable community leaders, including Islamic activists. To maximize access to these discontented populations, Islamists have in many cases melded religious themes with nonreligious elements to garner broad support among those who are merely seeking a change from the status quo rather than an Islamic transformation. Meriem Vergès (1997), for example, shows how the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria strategically framed itself as the heir to the revolutionary mantle of the war of independence. Using the language and symbols of the revolution, the FIS attempted to portray itself as a natural extension of the struggle while denouncing the regime as a usurper of Alge-

ria's historic memory. In less auspicious political conditions, Islamists may avoid publicly denouncing a regime and instead produce "clandestine frames" via safe social sites that can escape state surveillance (Tehami 1998).

The use of framing by Islamic groups reflects the cultural and ideational components of contentious politics; and while frames alone do not explain every dimension of collective action, they are important interpretive devices that translate grievances and perceived opportunities into the mobilization of resources and movement activism. To be sure, there are still boisterous debates about whether frames alone have an explanatory value, whether they are post-hoc justifications to take advantage of opportunities, the differences between "frames" and "framing," and the degree of analytic precision, but this area of research has provided a useful tool for examining the interaction of ideas and mobilization.

### Structure of *Islamic Activism*

This book should not be understood as a response to the September 11 terrorist attacks by al-Qaeda. The contributors to this book are all specialists in Islamic activism who have maintained an interest in social movement theory for a number of years. Many of the authors have already published work that synthesizes research on Islam and social movement theory and joined this project to further a shared research agenda with broader implications. Their comparative advantage lies in a synthesis between broader theoretical orientations and extensive fieldwork with Islamic activists. All of the authors have engaged in rigorous field research and thus bring to bear empirical prowess situated within comparative theoretical frameworks. Certainly, we hope this book will influence perceptions of Islamic activism in the post-September 11 period, but our driving purpose is to integrate two disparate areas of research in an effort to augment theory building. This book thus echoes earlier calls among area specialists for greater social science and comparative breadth (Tessler 1999).

The book is organized according to areas of research that we believe specialists on Islamic activism are well situated to address—violence and contention, networks and alliances, and culture and framing. Though there are many other possibilities, these three general areas are offered as a starting point for engaging social movement theory, an entrance into a theoretical foray where specialists may have something new to add to the debates. In addressing these areas, each of the chapters builds upon the various theoretical developments outlined above, in many cases addressing multiple theoretical concerns and issues.

In the process, the chapters cover diverse empirical ground that reflects the breadth of the contributors' research strengths. Topics range from the Iranian revolution to women's groups to Islamism and the marketplace. The authors'

specialties also allow the volume to address a variety of country contexts in North Africa, the Levant, and the Gulf. A total of eight countries are addressed, including two non-Arab countries (Turkey and Iran). Egypt is given emphasis (two chapters) because of its centrality in the development of research on Islamic activism, and Yemen receives treatment in two chapters because of its growing importance and the paucity of information on Islamic activism there. Two chapters deal specifically with Shi'ite activism. The wide coverage is intended to demonstrate the fecundity of a social movement theory approach for a variety of topics and contexts. In all cases, the chapters address one of the three research areas of focus—violence and contention, networks and alliances, and culture and framing; and each contributor attempts to contribute to ongoing social movement theory debates.

### *Violence and Contention*

Perhaps no other topic has received more attention recently than the use of violence by Islamic groups. In the aftermath of 9/11, scholars, policy makers, and the general American public struggled to fathom the rationale and motivation for the use of mass violence. Concern about Islamic violence was further heightened by the proliferation of suicide bomb attacks by Hamas beginning in the spring of 2002. For many, especially those with little knowledge about Islamic activism, such events and episodes tend to confirm the worst stereotypes about Islamic contention and Islam in general. Self-proclaimed “experts” on “Islamic terrorism” frequently are of little help, since few have actually met their subjects and therefore rely on open public sources such as newspapers and Internet resources, which are often superficial, uninformed, and biased.

In contradistinction to popular perceptions of radical Islamic groups as irrational, “crazy,” or deviant, these groups frequently follow a particular dynamic that mirrors the rational calculus of other non-Islamic social movement actors who have used violence as part of their repertoire of contention. In the first section of this book, all of the chapters demonstrate the strategic and tactical dimensions to the use of violence by groups as varied as the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in Algeria, the Gama'a Islamiyya (Islamic Group) in Egypt, Hamas, and Shi'ites who revolted during the 1990s in Bahrain. In each of these different country settings, the use of violence was, to a large extent, a tactical response to shifting opportunity structures and emerged under particular conditions and circumstances.

Mohammed Hafez's opening chapter on the GIA in Algeria effectively represents this argument with an extreme case (chapter 1). During the 1990s, the GIA was responsible for an outbreak of civilian massacres that were notorious for their brutality. Members of the GIA descended on villages in the dead of night and massacred women, children, the elderly, and others, using

machetes and burning many of the victims alive. The sheer viciousness was reminiscent of ethnic genocide and raises important questions about the use of violence in contention, especially the indiscriminate killing of noncombatants. Hafez argues that such massacres are most likely to occur where the political opportunity structure is characterized by repression and three related conditions converge: (1) state repression creates a political environment of bifurcation and brutality; (2) insurgents create exclusive organizations to shield themselves from repression; and (3) rebels promote anti-system frames to motivate collective action to overthrow agents of repression. Repression creates a sense of injustice, legitimates a call to arms, and forces insurgents into clandestine organizations that become increasingly isolated from the rest of society and countervailing pressures. Where the regime is framed as fundamentally corrupt through anti-system frames, these radical, encapsulated organizations become further radicalized through a growing belief in total war.

Although the low intensity insurgency led by the Gama'a Islamiyya in Egypt during the 1990s was not colored by massacres (aside from the attack in Luxor in 1997), the dynamics of violence were quite similar. As in Algeria, regime repression seems to have had a causal effect. However, Mohammed Hafez and Quintan Wiktorowicz (chapter 2) argue for a more specific understanding of repression that breaks it down into relevant dimensions. In particular, they argue that repression is most likely to engender violent movement responses where the movement is excluded from institutional politics and suffers *indiscriminate, reactive* state repression (as opposed to *selective, preemptive* repression). Political exclusion is likely to provide credibility for those in the movement who argue for violence because it limits the number of reasonable tactical options, especially those related to system reform. The Egyptian regime accelerated its exclusion of even moderate Islamic groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, thus inadvertently weakening calls for reform. At the same time, the regime's repression against the Gama'a Islamiyya was reactive and took place after the movement had already developed organizational resources and mobilization capacity. In part as a counter to leftist forces, the regime had previously allowed the Gama'a organizational space, and the movement took advantage by organizing social services, "taking over" mosques, and developing relationships with local communities. As a result, by the early 1990s, the Gama'a not only had something to lose, but the movement also had developed resources and a capacity to protect its interests. The fact that the regime's repression was indiscriminate and targeted non-activists, including Gama'a families and supportive bystanders, lent credence to arguments that the system could only be changed through violence.

Fred Lawson (chapter 3) addresses the use of violence within the overall context of a protest cycle in Bahrain during the 1990s that included violent *and* nonviolent dissent. Rather than isolating violence as a tactic, Lawson

seeks to explain *changes* in repertoires, particularly transitions toward and away from violence. In tracing the different phases of the Shi'ite uprising against the Sunni-dominated al-Khalifa regime, he finds that contrary to the expectation of most social movement theorists, violence was not necessarily pervasive during the last stages of protest when mass mobilization declined. Instead, the pattern of violence in the different stages seems best explained in terms of regime responses to challenger initiatives. Harsh regime response measures that limited moderate tactics tended to radicalize the rebellion and push tactics toward violence. This understanding shifts attention away from macro-level opportunity structures to the micro-level of tactics and regime-challenger interactions.

Glenn Robinson's chapter on Hamas is the final selection in this part of the book (chapter 4). Robinson follows the general theme of this section that Islamic activists who use violence are rational tacticians who respond to exogenous contingencies. Although frequently labeled a terrorist group, Hamas is a social movement that, like the Gama'a in Egypt, provides an assortment of social services for the Palestinian community. Its leadership is well educated, modern, and rational—hardly the vision of the radical fanatic. A narrow focus on the violence misses the larger dynamics of the movement, which are better understood in terms of social movement mobilization. From this perspective, Robinson shows how a social movement framework, which focuses on political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and cultural framings, is an effective tool for providing a comprehensive understanding of Hamas. This helps “deorientalize” groups like Hamas by pointing to commonalities shared with other social movements, violent and nonviolent alike. The chapter also highlights the need to sharply distinguish terrorist groups with strict political agendas from “terrorist groups,” such as Hamas and Hizbullah, that are more effectively understood as complex social movements. Labels such as “terrorism” may serve to obfuscate more than they clarify.

### *Networks and Alliances*

Islamic activists are embedded in complex network-oriented societies that tend to favor informality over formalized institutionalization. Whereas Western social movements typically mobilize through SMOs, movements in Muslim societies are more likely to utilize the dense associational networks of personal relationships that characterize much of politics, economic activity, and culture. Even formal Islamic organizations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, are constituted by dynamic networks that extend beyond the parameters of formal organizational space to connect activists to other Islamists, friends, families, and associates.

The reliance on network-based activism among many Islamic activists

makes the topic relatively opaque for research. Press reports, organizational charts, and secondary material are often insufficient for delineating and studying these networks and their relationship to contention since networks are by their nature embedded in personal interactions and social relationships. To complicate matters further, repressive conditions in Muslim societies mean that networks are often as much a tactical evasion of public surveillance as they are an organic manifestation of the structure of society. Even those well acquainted with Islamic activism encounter difficulties accessing these networks for study, since access is contingent upon a degree of trust and familiarity that takes time to build.

Many of the authors in this volume have conducted extensive fieldwork explicitly designed to gain access to these networks and assess their impact on the dynamics of contention, fieldwork that is measured in terms of months and years, not days or weeks. Understanding only comes about through repeated interactions, the cultivation of friendships and trust, and through patience and endurance. This puts specialists engaged in political or social anthropology with experience in the field in a unique position to augment and expand social movement debates on the role of networks. Although social movement theory has elucidated the role of networks at the level of recruitment, far less is known about how networks influence social movements beyond the initial recruitment process.

Diane Singerman, whose work on popular networks in Cairo has inspired a great deal of research on network-based activism in the Middle East (see Singerman 1995), explores the cultural resonance of networks and the ways in which they signify authenticity, legitimacy, and efficacy for Muslim communities (chapter 5). Because they are culturally legitimate, networks serve as resources for movement building, even if they remain hidden or submerged as the movement grows and expands. The use of less formal institutions for Islamic activists is increasingly important as regimes throughout the Middle East “criminalize politics” and choose strategies of control, co-optation, and repression rather than inclusionary politics. Through these informal institutions, Islamic activists mobilize and construct collective identities that inspire solidarity within a context of repression and authoritarian politics.

Janine Clark’s study (chapter 6) of Islamist women in Yemen explores how individual members of dominant Islamic SMOs, such as Hizb al-Islah and the Islah Charitable Society, use social networks and informal institutions as vehicles for Islamic activism. In particular, SMO activists use *nadwas* (Qur’anic study groups) to reproduce the movement message, support SMO agendas and activities, and engage women through personal relationships. Because *nadwas* are embedded in social networks, they provide informal institutional resources and comfortable micromobilization contexts where women can participate in forms of activism that are not directly tied to formal movement

organizations. In many cases, SMO activists break down existing social network ties and reconstruct new relationships through *nadwa* activities to foster supportive communities and networks of shared meaning. Networks are thus more than recruiting devices; they are informal resources that can be utilized by SMOs to support movement goals. From this perspective, networks are not just umbilical cords that provide sustenance to movements through recruitment; they can be actively manipulated, and thus impacted and reshaped, by formal organizations.

Both Benjamin Smith (chapter 7) and Jillian Schwedler (chapter 8) explore a different kind of network: alliance relationships. Their chapters highlight the fact that networks are not always shared by like-minded individuals and that connections and linkages may result out of tactical considerations or because two actors share a common goal or enemy. Smith cautions against an assumption that all of the actors involved in the “Islamic movement” during the Iranian revolution were equally motivated by religion. While certain members of the *bazaari* (merchant) community did share the ideology of Khomeini and his supporters, evidence indicates that groups in the bazaar joined the revolution through different organizations and for different reasons. Even though political entrepreneurs may have “borrowed” the resources of the bazaar, as a collectivity the bazaar still retained those resources for its own purposes and later used them to protect the merchant class from incursions and economic threats by the Islamic state. The alliance between the ulama and the bazaar was therefore a temporary relationship, one that was subject to change depending upon the strategic interests of the partners.

This kind of alliance and network of convenience among Islamic and non-Islamic activists was also found in Yemen. Jillian Schwedler’s chapter shows how the regime sought to use the Islah Party (an Islamic political party) as a strategic ally in party politics to offset the Yemini Socialist Party (YSP) after unification and political liberalization. Embedded in a continuing North-South political struggle, the Northern-dominated ruling party sought to stymie the political aspirations of the YSP, which represented the former political ruling class of Southern Yemen. This initial alliance helped propel the Islah Party to national prominence and provided the Islamic movement with powerful political access and positions. However, as both Schwedler and Smith demonstrate, alliances of this nature are prone to defections if one of the partners no longer deems the relationship as in its best interest. In Iran, the bazaaris defected when their economic interests were threatened by the state. In Yemen, the regime withdrew from the alliance with Islah once it was clear that it no longer needed the movement to offset the socialists from the South. After the civil war in 1994, the political power of the YSP weakened, and the regime determined that it could dominate politics without resorting to alliances or partners. The result was a decline in Islah influence and power.



*Culture and Framing*

Islamic activism is rooted in the symbolism, language, and cultural history of Muslim society and as a result has successfully resonated with increasingly disillusioned populations suffering from political exclusion, economic deprivation, and a sense of growing impotence at the expense of outside powers and a faceless process of globalization. Much of the work of Islamic activism is devoted to creating frames that motivate, inspire, and demand loyalty. But because Islamic activism operates in contexts of repression, the dynamics of framing may differ from similar processes in Western, liberal democracies. Since work on this area of research in the Muslim world is only now beginning, this possible difference is really an empirical question. Specialists on Islamic activism, historically well versed in the arguments and frames of activism, can use their expertise to answer such questions and further theory.

Carrie Wickham (chapter 9) examines framing within the context of recruitment and Islamic outreach. Whereas most social movement theorists argue that successful recruitment results from selective incentives and the gravity of social networks and relationships, Wickham's study of Islamic outreach to lower-middle-class graduates in Egypt indicates that ideas also matter. In particular, while individual (or rational) interests often attracted graduates to the movement initially, it was the ability of the movement to frame activism as a "moral obligation" that led to its success, especially with respect to recruitment into high-risk activism. "Moral obligation" frames encouraged graduates to embrace an ideology that mandates participation as a moral duty, demands self-sacrifice, and encourages unflinching commitment. The appeal of the frame derived from dynamics familiar to social movement scholars: (1) its resonance with the life experiences of graduates; (2) the credibility and effectiveness of the Islamic agents responsible for articulating and transmitting the frame; and (3) the reinforcement of the frame through intensive, small group interactions that built solidarity, trust, and loyalty. The success of the frame led to what Wickham calls the "transvaluation of values"—a reordering of the priorities that guide individual action. Belonging to the movement was no longer about selective incentives and personal relationships; it was about the morality of religious activism.

Gwenn Okruhlik (chapter 10) draws on social movement concepts such as cognitive liberation, framing, cultural tool kits, and cultural repertoires to explain how Islamists in Saudi Arabia shifted cultural understandings about permissible forms of activism. Within the conservative society of the kingdom, only Islam could provide the language and medium for contention and oppositional activities because of its cultural authenticity and resonance. The use of the *nasih*, or "memorandum of advice," by an assortment of Islamic activists fundamentally reshaped societal discourse and debate by opening

space for criticism through a mode of contention routed in religious legitimacy and sanctioned by Islamic sources and scholars. Okruhlik argues that the *nasih* provided cognitive liberation for ordinary Saudis because permission for conversation about formally taboo topics came in an Islamic vocabulary. While the Islamic opposition in Saudi Arabia did not topple the regime, it did successfully restructure discourse and meaning.

The last chapter in this section is Hakan Yavuz's study of the impact of economic liberalization on Islamic activism in Turkey (chapter 11). The program of economic liberalization created a variety of new "opportunity spaces"—"social sites and vehicles for activism and the dissemination of meaning, identity, and cultural codes." New vehicles for meaning production included television, newspapers, magazines, financial institutions, and businesses. Yet despite these new opportunities for affecting culture in Turkey, which has been tightly regulated by the Kemalist secularization project, not all Islamic groups responded the same way to market openings. Society-oriented movements, which seek to challenge dominant culture codes and shift networks of shared meaning in society, took advantage of the changes, to a large extent because they were supported by economic groups capable of mobilizing into capitalist venues. State-centered Islamic groups, which seek transformation from above through the state, did not fare as well. Because support for state-centered movements derives from less privileged socioeconomic groups, these movements have always emphasized socioeconomic justice. This goal, however, was undermined by economic liberalization, which disrupted welfare policies. The result was that state-oriented movements generally opposed the reform measures. Yavuz's chapter combines political economy, a political opportunity structure approach, and an emphasis on cultural contention to highlight the differential impact of large-scale change on various movement groups, even if these groups share a common cultural reference point.

### Conclusion

In addressing these three general areas, our hope is to contribute to theory building in both social movement theory and the study of Islamic activism. This introduction has argued that the divisions between these two traditions are not all that wide and that parallel developments intimate possibilities for cross-fertilization. Charles Kurzman seconds this view in the conclusion and points to similar paradigmatic developments, especially concerning the relationship between the researcher and the subject. In both the study of collective action and Islam, scholars moved from a view of the subject as irrational to a perspective that emphasized rationality. In social movement research this was precipitated by the entry of movement activists into the academy. In research on Islamic activism, the shift derived from a transition away from Ori-

entalism to an approach that emphasized the authenticity and rationality of indigenous subject voices. This was accompanied by the entry of Muslim scholars into academic debates and discourse. As these two areas of research move in similar directions, the “chasm” (as Kurzman calls it) between them is narrowing.

This book, however, should be viewed only as a first step, an opening for debate and dialogue and an effort to be more consciously theoretical. We fully recognize that theory is dynamic and that there are a variety of ongoing developments and even contention about the social movement theory project itself (see, e.g., McAdam et al. 2001), but social movement theory still flourishes and is exploring new directions. New work on “passionate politics” (Goodwin et al. 2001), for example, may join with broader trends in comparative politics to incorporate emotions into social science (even rational choice) approaches (see, e.g., Monroe 2001). And other possibilities still abound. The study of Islamic activism has much to learn from all of these developments. We hope it can offer much to teach as well.

### Notes

Parts of this chapter are adapted from “Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory: Toward a New Direction for Research,” *Mediterranean Politics* (2003).

1. This survival is not limited to informal social networks. Munson (2001), for example, shows how the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt utilized a decentralized (formal) organizational structure that facilitated movement survival during periods of regime repression.

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