INTERPRETING ISLAMIC POLITICAL PARTIES

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To
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Friend, colleague and mentor

CHAPTER 1

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OF OPPORTUNITIES
AND ORGANIZATION

WHEN DO ISLAMIST PARTIES
CHOOSE TO COMPETE ELECTORALLY?

Abdulkader H. Sinno and Ahmed Khanani

Today, almost every country with a substantial Muslim population has at least one Islamist party or organization. They sometimes face the option to participate in electoral competition whether free, flawed, or merely symbolic. Some, such as the Egyptian Ikhwan, the Malaysian PAS (Parti Islam seMalaysia), and Turkish Islamist parties like the now-defunct Refah, actively push for liberalization and fairer elections despite formidable hurdles erected by powerful parties or state institutions that do not wish to see them gain influence. Some, such as Hizbollah and several Pakistani Islamist parties, participate fully and successfully in generally fair elections. The Turkish Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* or *AK Parti*, or *AKP* in Turkish and for the rest of this chapter) and Palestinian Hamas have won parliamentary majorities. Some, like the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, are adamantly against elections. Others, such as the Pakistani Jama'at-e Islami and Hassan Turabi's National Islamic Front, changed their attitude toward political participation over time. This chapter aims to provide a consistent explanation of the differences among Islamist parties regarding their participation in electoral competition. In particular, it attempts to explain why some are willing to participate in electoral competition while others are not, why some even participate in elections organized by autocratic regimes that manipulate results and only allow the parliament limited powers, and why some have been pushing for fairer elections at great cost to themselves.

This chapter argues that two factors jointly explain the decision of Islamist parties or organizations to participate in contested elections: (1) the quality of the political opening and (2) the organizational structure of the Islamist party. Given the opportunity, complex Islamist organizations that are active in civil society, student organizations, the provision of welfare, and other services and Islamist organizations intertwined with complex social structures are much more likely to contest elections than centralized and networked organizations.

While this chapter deals exclusively with Islamist parties, it is not their Islamist ideology or discourse that defines them. What makes them a class of comparable cases for understanding their readiness to participate in electoral politics, if given the chance, is the availability of nonparticipatory strategies that could be more advantageous for them to adopt. In that sense, a model that would explain Islamist participation in electoral politics should also explain the participation of other parties with a potential to transform the social order through nonelectoral means, such as communist political parties in Western European countries during the Cold War. Such cases are beyond the scope of this chapter because the interest here is in recent developments in Muslim countries where such organizations tend to be Islamist. Yet it is important to stress that strategy and organization explain the behavior of the Islamist organizations considered, not their Islamism. If Arab nationalist parties still had the potential to undermine Arab regimes in an era of partial democratization and pseudoliberalization, then this chapter may very well have provided a similar analysis about them instead of Islamist parties.

This chapter begins with a discussion of existing explanations of Islamist parties' participation in electoral politics and then develops a unique theory illustrating it with evidence from different Muslim countries. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the significance and policy relevance of the findings.

THEORIES OF ISLAMIST PARTICIPATION IN ELECTORAL POLITICS

One approach to explain the participation or lack of participation by Islamist parties in electoral politics refers to their ideology or the ideological dimensions of their theology (see Kepel 1994, 193–94; Bukay 2007; Lewis 1996). Ideology is a poor explanatory variable because it is quite malleable when it comes to practices related to a party's survival, even in the case of parties generally perceived to be doctrinaire. The Jama'at-e Islami of Pakistan, for example, has shown considerable flexibility in interpreting the ambiguous views of its iconic founder Abu Al-A'la al Mawdudi on democracy and electoral participation. Different national branches of the Muslim Brotherhood have been pushing for fairer elections and participating in elections rigged against them despite the ideological tradition of isolationism in the writings of Sayyid Qutb who argued in *Ma'alim fil-Tariq (signposts)* that God's sovereignty leaves no room for systems that promote popular sovereignty. Both sides on the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's recent internal debates on issues such as whether a Copt or a woman can lead Egypt invoked religious rulings (Brown and Hamzawy 2008). The Tunisian al-Nahda adopted flexible interpretations of Islamic sources to develop an essentially liberal, nonviolent, democratic, and inclusive perspective (al-Ghannushi 1987). The Lebanese Hizbollah became a willing and successful participant in Lebanese elections because its leadership's adherence to the concept of *wilayat-i faqih* (Rule of the Jurist) allows the adjustment of doctrine to evolving circumstances (Hamzeh 2004, 27–43). Indeed, Hizbollah's participation in Lebanese elections came in the wake of a decision by the Supreme Leader in Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i, in the early 1990s that allowed Hizbollah to do so and de facto placed in abeyance the dream of establishing an Islamic state in Lebanon (Norton 2007, 98–101). Hizbollah's decision also came in the wake of extensive internal debates that led at least one fiery cleric to leave the party (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 46–58).

Another reason not to take ideology too seriously as an explanatory variable is the alliance pattern of Islamist parties when serving in parliament or during their attempts to democratize their countries' polities. They frequently enough ally themselves with parties and organizations that are ideological rivals or even nemeses for purely pragmatic reasons to diffuse arguments based only on ideology. The Lebanese Hizbollah, for example, allied itself with the Maronite Christian figure Michel Aoun and socialist and communist parties against fellow Muslim Fuad Seniora's government during the post-2006 political crisis (Norton 2007; Alagha 2006). The Jama'at-e Islami at one point allied itself with secular parties against the regime of Zia-ul-Haq even though he pursued an aggressive Islamization policy. Both the Jordanian Islamic Action Front (IAF) and Yemeni Islah collaborated with parties from across the ideological spectrum, including communists and socialists to counter measures by their countries' rulers to restrict freedoms and elections (Schwedler 2006, 110–14). The Egyptian Ikhwan allied with liberals, leftists, and Arab nationalists to counter the Egyptian regime's attempt to rig elections in 2005.[1]

Strategic debates among the leaders of Islamist organizations at key junctures also show a great deal of theological flexibility regarding issues of political participation. The leadership of Hamas, for example, engaged in vigorous debates and consultations about whether the organization should participate in both the 1996 and 2006 Palestinian legislative elections (it only participated in the latter).[2] Abassi Madani and Ali Benhadj

and the factions they represented disagreed on the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) participation in electoral politics in the early 1990s, and the inconclusive outcome of their contestation might have encouraged the military coup that ended the democratic experiment in the country (Kalyvas 2000). Leaders of the Jordanian IAF, the political party of the Muslim Brotherhood, even went so far as to argue that it is not desirable for Jordan to become an Islamic state because it is too small, is vulnerable, and needs American aid (Boulby 1999, 124–25). This ideological flexibility should not be surprising because the theological building blocs from the Koran and Sunnah relevant to develop a position on political participation in democratic politics (concepts of rule of God, vice regency and shura) are few and quite malleable.[3] Muslim scholars can easily, and reasonably, make arguments both in favor of and against participation in elections. Ideology and theology explain little in terms of Islamist participation in electoral politics.

Another explanation of Islamist participation in electoral politics, particularly favored by their critics, is that Islamists compete because they have a hidden agenda of undermining democracy and establishing a theocracy after they gain power through the ballot box.[4] The experiences of the past few decades seem to indicate that this argument is incorrect. Only in two cases did Islamist parties that participated in elections support nondemocratic regimes (Pakistan's Jama'at-e Islami and the successive political arms of Sudan's Muslim Brotherhood). The Jama'at supported Zia ul-Haq and the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood once supported a dictator and became involved with a coup by junior officers that ended a democratic episode. The Jama'at later defected from its arrangement with Zia ul-Haq in the mid-1980s and, since, has consistently supported democratic elections and a return to democracy, when Pervez Musharraf, former President of Pakistan, sidetracked elections. There is also strong evidence that at least some Islamist parties such as the Jordanian Islamic Action Front became more moderate after they participated in democratic institutions (Schwedler 2006).

The argument that Islamist parties would like to topple the democratic institutions that bring them to power is also not completely internally consistent. Elections bestow both international and domestic legitimacy upon winners. Conversely, a successful Islamist party that abrogates the democratic regime that brings it to power will risk losing part of its domestic support, will forsake the moral high ground and the ability to claim that it represents popular preferences, and will subject itself to possible international sanctions and isolation. Most Islamist parties that compete electorally (with the exception of Hamas, Hizbollah, and some Afghan and Iraqi parties) also do not have independent military means to project power. Acceptance of their influence over the institutions of the state may depend on their democratic credentials for a long time after they win elections (e.g., Turkey). They may be reluctant for people to view them as treacherous and untrustworthy if they abrogate elections after making public theological and practical arguments to explain their own participation in the election they won. Islamist parties must also have a competitive advantage in campaigning to win, an advantage they may lose if they choose other means for seizing power, and would therefore be unlikely to eliminate electoral competition. There is little reason to think that popular Islamist parties will risk all their gains and legitimacy by abolishing the very elections and democratic institutions that bring them to power.

A variant of the argument, particularly popular among secularist critics, is that Islamists compete in elections or desire to participate in them to undermine regimes, such as Ataturkism in Turkey that existed before liberalization took place (Hamzawy, Ottaway, and Brown 2007). This is likely true over the long run and expected from parties contesting elections. With the establishment of democratic competition, however, it will be possible to judge the popularity of Islamist parties' policies, dramatic as they may be, in cyclical elections. There is nothing unexpected or conspiratorial about elected officials desiring and advocating a new social order. This happened quite a few times in Western liberal democracies (e.g., laws bringing racial equality in the United States, weakening of several European monarchies, and adopting devolution in the United Kingdom), and there is little reason to fear it happening in Muslim countries. As Hamzawy et al. (2007) argue, previous Islamist participation in government and the fact that similar fears that accompanied the participation of Christian Democratic parties in European politics were without merit suggest that Islamists in government will not necessarily curtail individual freedoms or women and minority rights. In fact, the entire argument rings hollow because the human rights and freedoms that some fear the Islamists will subvert exist only in vestigial form in many of the countries where they aspire to run in fair elections. It is unlikely that the Muslim Brotherhood would make Egypt less free or respectful of human rights for all than it already is under the Hosni Mubarak regime for example.

Some also argue that exhaustion from the high costs of violence and a realization of its futility in achieving Islamist goals in the domestic arena bring groups such as Hizbollah and the Muslim Brotherhood to the parliamentary table (Shadid 2001, Wright 1992). This was certainly not the case with early and consistent Islamist democrats, who never attempted to use force such as most Indonesian Islamist parties, the Malaysian PAS and the Pakistani Jama'at. Not to mention those Islamists-turned-democrats that did use violence against rivals have already managed to change their own society before participating in elections. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood already managed to Islamize Egyptian society substantially

by the 1990s and Hizbollah galvanized and empowered the Shiite community in Lebanon, its natural constituency, by the time it first ran for election in 1992.[5] Hamas was more popular than Fatah when it participated in its first parliamentary elections in 2006, as the election results show, and it certainly did not abandon armed conflict.[6]

The explanation of Islamist parties' participation in electoral competition lies elsewhere. The next section offers a better explanation of the variation in Islamist parties' willingness to participate in electoral competition.

OPPORTUNITY AND ORGANIZATION

Most authors who discuss Islamist party participation in politics consider their decision making unitary. When they consider their organizational structure, they believe it depends on factors such as state persecution (Wictorowicz 2001). However this chapter borrows from Maurice Duverger's (1959) study of European parties and other studies that join organizational theory and strategic interaction (Sinno 2008) to argue that the structure of Islamist organizations strongly affects their ability to take advantage of political openings and therefore their readiness to participate in elections. More specifically, Islamist organizations and parties choose to participate in electoral competition, depending on the quality of the electoral opening and their organizational ability to benefit from it.

ASSUMPTIONS

To explain Islamist parties' willingness to participate in elections, it is necessary to make a number of assumptions. First, it is important to disregard the influence of Islamist ideology because Islamist thought is flexible on the issue of participation. It is equally important for Islamist parties to win popular support and lasting influence as to implement aspects of Sharia. In that sense, they are like any other political party with a desire to reshape the social order. Second, it is vital to understand Islamists as strategic actors who take advantage of local opportunities and attempt to reduce the effect of government-imposed restrictions. Third, the strategic calculations involved in the decision to participate in (or defect from) electoral competition can be quite complex and multidimensional. Among the most important considerations Islamist party leaders face are to balance immediate gains with long-term costs and vice versa, evaluate the effect of participation on complex rivalries, balance the need for urgent compromises with the long-term desire of adhering to ideological goals, and assess the merits of alternatives to electoral participation. The debates and discussions that take place among and within Islamist organizations when making decisions about participation reflect this complexity, which makes it difficult to produce simple general explanations, but acknowledging it moves us in the right direction.

OPENINGS AND STRATEGIES

As Gandhi and Przeworski (2007) tell us, authoritarian regimes develop institutions to increase the length of their own tenure. They make complex calculations about the origin and size of the threats to their power and develop the particular institutions necessary to diffuse the threat by soliciting cooperation or co-opting threatening actors. They try to cede as little as possible in the hope of maintaining control over the polity, but not so little as to allow rivals to bring down the regime. They may miscalculate at their own risk, but the goals of the calculation are straightforward. The institutions differ depending on the source of the perceived threat. However, from the perspective of Islamist parties, they often include the possibility of participating in a legitimizing electoral process that is more or less regulated and restricted by the powers-that-be and results in representation in parliamentary chambers, municipal councils, or other governing bodies whose influence could vary from the negligible to the highly meaningful and effective. While the possible types of openings could theoretically vary continuously along the two dimensions of fairness of elections and the quality of representation, we simplify them to two discrete categories in our model.

The first category of opening consists of free and fair elections with a strong parliament. Such an opening could occur when an occupier invades the country (e.g., Iraq after the United States invaded), withdraws (British in Malaya), is weakened (Palestinian areas), an autocratic regime collapses (end of Suharto's regime), or a civil war ends (Lebanon's Taif Agreement and postwar elections).

The second category of openings includes cases in which at least one of the following two conditions applies: (1) elections are restricted or (2) parliament has limited powers vis-à-vis the autocrat. Such openings happen when a vulnerable autocratic regime needs to solicit participation and reduce the size of a potential rival coalition. The scale of a restricted opening depends on the perceived popularity of the Islamist challengers, the number of challengers, the size of the emerging threat to the regime, the political and demographic landscape, the strength and loyalty of the coercive apparatus, international pressure, the alternatives available for the incumbent and the challengers, and the likelihood of a damaging conflict absent an opening. The regime may restrict the elections or the powers of the chambers (legislatures, assemblies of parliaments) to regulate how much influence it is ceding during the opening. For an Islamist party, the calculations involved in choosing to compete in elections depend, in part, on these two factors.

If the Islamist party's leadership expects elections to be generally fair and representation meaningful, then those Islamist parties with substantial support may choose to participate based on whether they feel the electoral system would translate their popular support into enough seats to justify the effort. They may also choose to participate if they project that popular support for their agenda will increase over time.

If, instead, elections are restricted by the powers-that-be or parliament is too weak, then the offer to participate is similar to what Selznick (1948, 34) defines as co-option (or co-optation)—"the process of absorbing new elements into the leadership or policy-determining structure of an organization as a means of averting threats to its stability or existence."[7] In this case, co-option is a strategy initiated by the state that consists of offering positive sanctions to threatening Islamist organizations or key individuals within them in return for accepting the norms of interaction it desires (e.g., that all differences be solved in the parliamentary arena or acceptance of the monarch's authority).

Co-option is a cooperative strategy that can result in a cooperative arrangement (henceforth referred to as a co-optive arrangement) that is not self-enforcing: both parties, the co-opter and the co-optee, have to offer something in return for what the other offers for a co-optive arrangement to succeed. The co-opter hopes to reduce risk by co-opting some rival organizations or their leaders. The co-optees could obtain substantial gains from a co-optive arrangement for a number of reasons. The co-optee's acceptance of the co-optive arrangement might be valuable to the co-opter if it is one of many challengers and could therefore provide a precedent for more important attempts at co-option. A co-optee could also be valuable if it provides two-step leverage over other organizations or groups.[8] Another form of two-step leverage consists of co-opting the leaders of an organization instead of the entire organization. This kind of co-option is highly cost-effective because it is much cheaper to co-opt one or a few individuals than an entire organization. Tribal politics sometimes facilitate personal co-optation because of the loyalty tribal leaders generally command among members of the tribe. In addition, an Islamist co-optee might confer legitimacy on the regime, the way the Pakistani Jama'at helped Zia ul-Haq, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood shored up King Hussein for a brief period during the first U.S.-Iraq War (Boulby 1999, 144–47), and the Sudanese Hassan al-Turabi legitimized the government of Jaafar Nimeiri.

Two factors differentiate co-option from alliance (the short-term aggregation of resources against a common rival). First, the co-opter generally offers positive sanctions in the hope of producing a co-optive agreement because the acceptance by a lesser organization of the norms of the hegemonic organization without concessions would be tantamount to surrender. Second, the co-opter must be more powerful than the co-optee, who must necessarily accept the hegemonic stature of the co-opter and the applicability of its norms to their future interaction. Either party could defect (not accept to continue to co-opt or to be co-opted), sometimes even after a co-optive arrangement is reached or even institutionalized, if incentives change. Institutionalization, however, generally makes the cost of defection higher.

Co-option is costly to the regime. It is costly because resources need to be offered to the co-opted Islamist organization and because power and information need to be shared with it.[9] The powers-that-be therefore need to assess candidates for co-optive arrangements carefully. An organization makes a good candidate for co-option if it is powerful enough to disturb the operations of the regime substantially or is likely to do so in the future; not powerful enough to take over the state from within or be capable of eliminating it; and the cost of co-opting it is less than the cost of fighting it.[10]

Still, co-option could be an attractive strategy for vulnerable regimes, as Jeffrey Pfeffer tells us in his study of the use of this strategy in the corporate world:

"Cooption is so often effective because it exposes the coopted representatives to informational social influence, and confronts them with conformity pressures and the necessity of justifying their actions. Cooptation provides labels and expectations that increase identification and commitment to the organization, gives the representatives a stake and legitimate position in the organization, and motivates them to be interested in the organization's survival and success."[11]

Whether it is advantageous or detrimental for an organization to be co-opted depends on the terms of the co-optive agreement (the positive sanctions and the norms adopted), as well as the opportunity cost of forfeiting other means of seizing power. The only kind of co-option that could be safely assumed to have negative consequences for an organization is the co-option of its leaders, not the organization itself—if the leaders are awarded positive sanctions instead of the organization. In addition, early co-optees tend to benefit more than subsequent ones because the regime wants to co-opt the minimum number of rivals necessary to remain in power to lower the cost of co-option, and it therefore might pay a premium to form a minimum organizational quorum.

An opening to participate in elections can therefore be attractive for an Islamist organization, even if elections were restricted and elected chambers weak.[12] One advantage to accept a co-optive offer is that elections, even if not quite fair, seem sanctified with an almost totemic legitimizing capacity domestically and internationally. Despite American, French, and Israeli attempts to undermine election outcomes before the anticipated FIS

victory in Algeria and Hamas victory in Palestine, both Islamist organizations were able to claim the higher moral ground because of the decidedly undemocratic behavior of opponents who claim to promote democracy. Accepting to be co-opted could also bring resources to the Islamist organization or ease the flow of resources from donors by reducing the element of state threat to the operations of the organization. The Islamist organization turned party could also benefit from having the state's coercive resources channeled against ideological rivals.

Accepting to participate in restricted elections or other co-optive arrangements is also costly for an Islamist organization. By accepting the norms of the powers-that-be, it becomes associated with an unpopular regime. The Islamist organization also risks internal schisms because some members might be influenced by conservative interpretations of Islamist thinkers such as Abu al-A`la al-Mawdudi or Sayyid Qutb or be attracted to those of intransigent ones such as Abdullah Azzam, Ayman al-Zawahiri, or Ali Benhadj (who compared democracy with *kufr*, or the rejection of Islam) when it comes to support for democracy.

STRUCTURE OF ISLAMIST ORGANIZATIONS

Four classes of Islamist organizations are identified on the basis of their functional structures. The first category is the centralized Islamist organizations with specialized branches that provide targeted services to segments of the population. The second is the tribal-based and patronage-based organizations. The third is the highly centralized vanguard type. The fourth is the decentralized or "networked" structures. Some organizations may have characteristics of more than one type, and the structures of others may evolve from one type to another over time.

Centralized Islamist organizations with specialized branches, such as the Egyptian Ikhwan and today's Palestinian Hamas, provide specialized services to different segments of the Muslim population. They may build schools and hospitals and provide financial aid to indigent families and students in need. They may provide relief services in case of war and natural disaster. The Muslim Brotherhood, for example, provided services much more effectively than the Egyptian government after the 1992 Cairo earthquake.[13] They tend to mobilize support within civil society organizations such as student government and professional syndicates (Wicktorowicz 2001; Wickham 2002). In some instances, they form armed branches that provide a public good such as resistance to foreign occupation (e.g., Ikhwan's resistance against the British occupation of the Suez Canal and Hizbollah's resistance against the Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon) for their communities. They often raise resources to maintain their broad activities from donations by supporters within

the country, from expatriates, and from supportive businesses such as Islamic banks and aid from Muslim states and other outside sponsors (Medani 2003). They are often highly bureaucratized, invest in human capital, attract considerable specialized talent over the years, and depend on broad-based financial support. They mobilize support based on their performance in the provision of services as well as their ideology.

Patronage-based Islamist organizations, including ones based on tribal and clan ties, also mobilize support on the basis of providing resources and channeling them down the lines of loyalty, as well as on the basis of ideology. The leadership maintains cohesion of the organization and recruits others by meting resources it acquires from foreign patrons, the state, or other sources. In turn, the larger the organization's membership, the more attractive it becomes to potential sponsors. Ties of patronage consist of exchange of loyalty for resources and are subject to continuous negotiation. The Afghan mujahideen parties of the 1980s were archetypes of such patronage-based parties (Sinno 2008) and so are the Islamist Pakistani Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) coalition and several Afghan and Iraqi parties today.

A third structural class consists of highly centralized vanguard-like Islamist organizations made up of committed members and do not focus on the provision of services. They are inspired from Sayyid Qutb's approach of forming countersocieties of believers within the broader Jahili (unbeliever) society; Mawdudi's focus is on Islamizing elites and sometimes from communist organizational models that were quite popular in past decades. This class would include the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Pakistani Jama`at, and the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood.[14] Such organizations mobilize mainly based on ideology, not the provision of resources and services. They are structurally comparable to non-Islamist organizations such as the Kurdish Workers' Party or *Partiya Karkerén Kurdistan* (PKK) in Turkey or Lenin's Bolsheviks.

The fourth class of Islamist organizations are networked ones (Wictorowicz 2001). Networks depend on the recruitment of ideologically committed members and do not focus on the provision of services or public goods for a larger constituency. Al Qaeda today is a prime example of the networked Islamist organization.

PREDICTIONS

Islamist parties choose to participate in electoral competition depending on the quality of the electoral opening and their ability to benefit from it. Figure 1.1 describes this chapter's predictions.

Of course, the issue of electoral participation is moot for Islamist parties in countries without elections such as Tunisia, Syria, or Saudi Arabia.
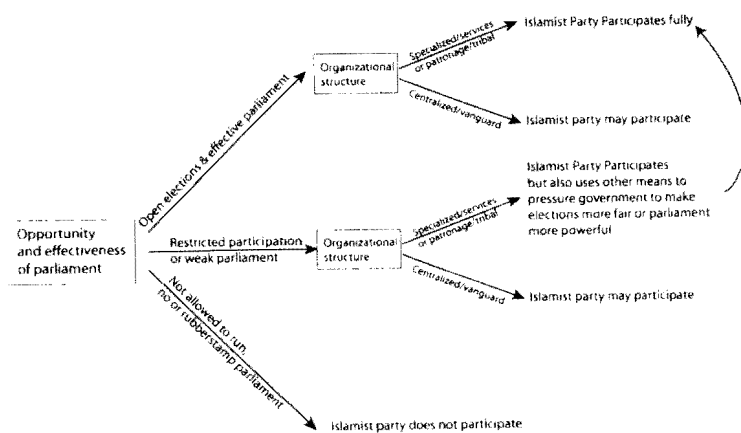
Figure 1.1. Expected Effect of Opportunity and Organization Structure on Islamist Participation in Electoral Politics

In such countries, Islamist parties are likely to pursue political change through confrontation, education, propaganda, social mobilization, or underground politics. Some may still push for electoral participation in spite of overwhelming odds (e.g., the Tunisian al-Nahda).

Service-Oriented and Patronage-Based Islamist Parties

The expectation is for Islamist parties that provide social services or bene-fit from ties of clientage to participate enthusiastically where elections are fair and representation meaningful and to push for liberalization where democratic practices are restricted by the regime. Service-oriented orga-nizations can count on broad popular support because of their ability to provide services, their reputation, and their provision of public goods. Patronage-based organizations can do the same by distributing resources and perhaps leveraging ties of tribal kinship. Their service branches, or net-works of solidarity, provide these Islamist organizations with an accurate sense of the number and commitment of voters willing to support them and make participation less risky. Service-oriented organizations also have dedicated cadres who can easily make the transition to effective campaign-ers and, if successful, to public officials in state institutions.[15] Leaders and cadres of service-oriented parties may have already developed an ethos of service that empowers them to do well once they hold public office. The two types of organizations would benefit from representation because the resources they may gain from being in parliament would enhance the effectiveness of the activities that made them popular in the first place and

would therefore allow them to consolidate and expand their base of sup-port. They would also gain national and international legitimacy and access to the institutions of the state. If an Islamist organization also forfeits mili-tant means to develop a competitive edge in the provision of services, then representation through elections becomes the only way for it to influence the political process.

If elections are fair and representation meaningful, service-oriented and patronage-based Islamist organizations, like others, could hope that substantial representation would allow them to play one of four roles in the polity: become the majority party (e.g., FIS, Hamas, AKP), one of the large parties (Hizbollah), a pivotal party for ruling coalitions (MMA), or the legitimizing party in a deeply religious country. They have no reason not to participate in fair and meaningful elections and every incentive to push for such elections when facing reluctant regimes.

If elections are manipulated by the regime or if parliament is weak, service-oriented and patronage-based Islamist parties may participate in elections, but would also push for liberalization—they cannot be fully co-opted. They may be even more enthusiastic than liberal parties may, if any exists in the country, to push for liberalization because they would increase their strong competitive advantage in mobilization if they gain the freedom to recruit, to advertise, and to compete without state pres-sure. They may even resort to protests and other acts of resistance if the state resorts to heavy-handed measures to manipulate elections or to deprive them of an electoral victory.

It may not be customary to think of Islamists as the most eager lib-erals, but evidence from Muslim countries seems to support the view that service-oriented and patronage-based Islamist parties indeed fight hard to make elections more fair and elected chambers more powerful in their countries. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood allied with the much weaker Egyptian liberals and leftists and has been actively trying to con-vince the reluctant Mubarak regime to liberalize.[16] The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood has been actively protesting the manipulation of elections and gerrymandering by the monarchy and its supporters.[17] In Iraq, Aya-tollah Ali al-Sistani forced the hand of the Bush Administration to go ahead with the election because the patronage and service-based Shia parties he supported were poised to achieve an electoral victory.[18] Both Hamas and Hizbollah continue to cling to democratic institutions and support their legitimacy even as they confront their domestic opponents. Turkish Islamists have been consistently trying to push for increased dem-ocratic institutions.

In summary, service-oriented and patronage-based Islamist parties today are staunch supporters of fair elections and meaningful representa-tion. This is not a statement about the virtue or liberal predispositions

of Islamists, it is a prediction based on empirical evidence and structural incentives. Conversely, it does not denigrate Islamists to indicate that their liberalism is the product of strong structural incentives instead of liberal thought. Pragmatic politicians are just as likely as idealistic liberals are to drive democratic transitions around the world.

Centralized and Networked Parties

A centralized or networked Islamist organization may be indifferent to choice between a co-optive offer from the regime (limited elections or weak parliament) or genuine democratization. A co-optive arrangement with the regime would allow it to be influential well beyond its popular support. The regime would benefit from the Islamic credentials of its Islamist ally to shore up its own legitimacy within the population, and the co-opted Islamist party will gain influence over state institutions and Islamize society through them. Zia ul-Haq's co-option of the Pakistani Jammat and Nimeiri's co-option of the Sudanese Islamic Charter Front (the Muslim Brotherhood's party) are two examples of such co-optive arrangements. The downside of these arrangements, as both Islamist parties discovered, is that their symbiotic relationship with unpopular rulers (they would not have needed to co-opt an Islamist party if they felt they had enough popular support) diminishes their own popularity. When this happens, they defect from the co-optive arrangement either to oppose the regime militarily or to join other organizations advocating fair elections. Advocating the adoption of elections is more attractive if the Islamist party already gave up its militant activities and elections are already accepted as a legitimate way to select leadership in the country. This is indeed what the Jama`at and Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood did.

Still, centralized and networked Islamist parties are not likely to push as hard as service-oriented and patronage-based ones for freer elections because they don't stand to benefit from them as much and because their structures are better suited to survive the persecution of autocratic regimes. In fact, such structures are often adopted in the hope that they might enable the organization to survive in such an adverse environment. A lack of democratic opening also validates their choice of organizational structures designed for confrontation with the regime instead of struc tures designed for future possible participation in electoral politics. More important, their membership is more selective and relies on committed cadres. If they do participate in elections, they can only attract voters on the basis of ideological appeal instead of the more potent mix of ideo- logical appeal and long-standing ties available to service and patronage organizations.

Centralized and networked parties are likely to vacillate between choosing co-optive arrangements and fair democratic elections because the comparative advantages of the two options, when available, are not as clear to them as they are for service-oriented and patronage-based ones.

Figure 1.2 shows what Islamist parties familiar to us do based on our predictions.

The different Islamist parties in Figure 1.2 do participate in the way this theory predicts. Islamist parties that provide services or are based on patronage actively participate in elections in which there are gener- ally open and fair elections and push for fairer elections where they are restricted. Hamas overmatched the Palestinian Liberation Organization in the provision of services and public goods such as resistance to occupa- tion by the time it chose to contest elections. Hamas was particularly con- cerned with protecting and benefiting from its service organizations as it formulated its electoral strategy (Michal and Sela 2000). Hizbollah has the best-developed network of services in Lebanon (Hamzeh 2004) and has participated in Lebanese elections despite Syrian pressure to cede seats to Syria's ally Amal (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 54). Hizbollah has also been pushing for electoral reforms that would lead to better representation of its share of support among Lebanon's Shia (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002, 56).

Iraqi Shia Islamist parties had every incentive to participate in elec- tions—their highest religious authority (Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani) declared voting a religious duty—and they even pushed the United States to estab- lish an electoral regime.[19] Being elected allowed them to become conduits of resources made available through the state and by outside donors by
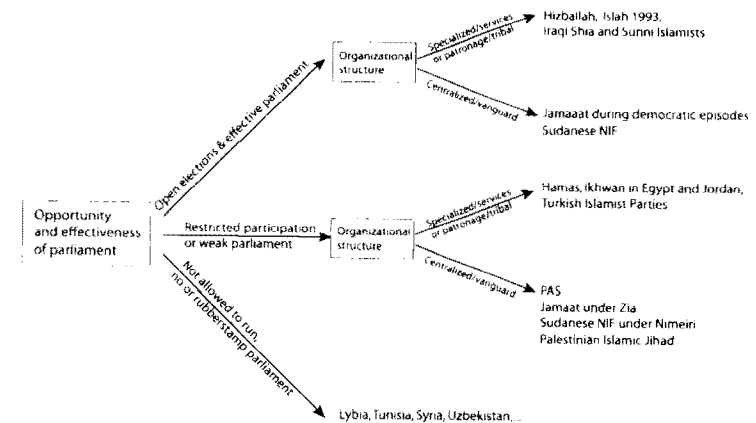

Figure 1.2. Cases

dominating ministries, providing security to their constituents in the context of a violent sectarian war and, in the case of the Sadrists, the public good of resisting occupation.

The Egyptian and Jordanian Muslim Brotherhoods also have sprawling service networks and actively push for fairer elections and political openings in spite of the restrictions their countries' regimes put on their activities (Wictorowicz 2001; Schwedler 2006). While the two branches of the Muslim Brotherhood are not themselves political parties, voters know that the candidates fielded under the banner of the Islamic Action Front in Jordan and various allied parties in Egyptian elections are affiliated with the brotherhood. Similarly, in Turkey, Islamist parties such as Refah and Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi do not provide services independently, but benefit from the tremendous effect of educational institutions, service organizations, and other such Islamic-oriented activities on Turkish society.

Islamist parties that do not provide social services on a large scale are less inclined to participate in elections or to push for increased democratization and are more easily persuaded by co-optive offers. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which lacked the service organizations of Hamas, for example, did not participate in the Palestinian elections as did Hamas. The Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood and the Pakistani Jama'at both waffled between support for free democratic elections and co-optive arrangements with autocratic regimes.

A broad range of political parties participated in Sudan's two democratic episodes, which preceded the May 1969 coup that brought Colonel Jaafar Nimeiri to power (el-Battahani 2002). While the larger Islamist Sudanese parties based on patronage ties (Umma and Democratic Unionist Party) did not actively support the Nimeiri regime, the vanguard-like Islamist Sudanese Islamic Charter Front did. The political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood led by Hassan al-Turabi, agreed to join a co-optive arrangement with Nimeiri. Turabi hoped to penetrate state institutions, to restructure his organization, to spread its reach while weakening rivals, and to promote Islamization through state institutions (Hamdi 1998, 18–26). Nimeiri appointed al-Turabi attorney general, decreed Sharia law, allowed the Islamization of the armed forces and the creation of powerful Islamic courts staffed in part by Ikhwan members, and facilitated the growth of Islamic banking that led to the growth of a class of wealthy Ikhwan sympathizers (el-Affendi 1991). Despite these advantages, support for Nimeiri was costly to the Ikhwan, as evidenced by their loss of support in their traditional strongholds—student and professional organizations and labor unions. They lost student elections at the University of Khartoum to a broad coalition in 1979 and lost them at Khartoum and Omdurman Islamic universities in 1984 (el-Affendi 1991, 119–21, 128).

They were blamed for many of the regime's transgressions, and the organization suffered from internal tensions as the rank-and-file expressed discontent about supporting such an unpopular regime. When Nimeiri felt that the Ikhwan were becoming too strong, he turned against them, but was overthrown himself in a coup that ushered in a new democratic episode.

After the fall of the Nimeiri regime in 1985, Turabi dissolved the Islamic Charter Front and reorganized it into the National Islamic Front (NIF) to contest the 1986 elections. NIF ranked third in the election, and Turabi joined the government. Turabi's NIF, however, joined forces with the military junta that ended this democratic episode. Some say that NIF was behind the 1989 coup. Either way, NIF and Turabi became intertwined with the government structure when other parties, based on patronage and tribal ties continued to push for a return to elections. While the military leaders and Turabi ultimately parted ways because of Turabi's attempt to weaken President Omar Hasan al-Bashir, this co-optive arrangement helped establish the junta by giving it Islamic legitimacy and led to a dramatic Islamization of the country.

Another nonservice organization, the Pakistani Jama'at, supported democratization and participated in competitive elections on many occasions during Pakistan's long history of seesawing between democracy and authoritarianism. It helped mobilize popular opposition to authoritarian rule in 1962 to 1965. In 1969, it led the Democratic Action Committee, which demanded an end to Ayub Khan's authoritarian rule. In 1977, it served as the main force in the Pakistan National Alliance's struggle against the Bhutto regime and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's increasingly autocratic rule (Nasr 1995). In addition to pushing for democratization and competing actively during democratic episodes (1951–1958, 1971–1977, 1988–1999), it also supported authoritarian regimes at different times (1969–1971, 1977–1985).

The Jama'at was quite popular in 1977 because it played a leading role in resisting Bhutto's regime, but the army coup led by General Zia ul-Haq ended serious electoral completion. Zia co-opted the Jama'at and other Islamist parties by implementing many of the Islamization measures they favored but avoided holding elections they desired. By doing so, Zia acquired Islamic legitimacy in a mostly devoutly Muslim country and divided opposition to his rule. The Jama'at accepted this co-optive arrangement until its leadership realized that it began to cost the party considerable popular support, at which point it distanced itself from Zia and criticized the extent of his powers, his abrogation of democratic elections, and even the way he implemented Islamization (Nasr 1995; Esposito 1987, 167–76). The Jama'at could gauge its loss of support from its electoral performance in the restricted election of 1985 in

which it won only ten parliamentary seats even though the large Pakistan People's Party boycotted the election. By 1985, the Jama`at was actively opposing Zia's rule and promoting a return to democracy.

PAS is exceptional in the sense that it pushes for increased democratization and persistently participates in elections without having the benefit of a service organization in spite of practices by the dominant United Malays National Organization (UMNO) that bias elections against the Islamist party. The reason is simple: the Malay state under UMNO provides effective services for the ethnic Malay segment of the population that both parties target, and there are no realistic political alternatives to electoral participation in Malaysia. PAS distinguished itself in the past on an ideological level, but even it seems to be moving toward the provision of services as well.

ACADEMIC SIGNIFICANCE AND POLICY CONSEQUENCES

The intent of this exploratory chapter is to propose a theory of electoral participation by Islamist parties based on knowledge of about ten or so such organizations. While this group of Islamist organizations is likely to be representative of most such organizations, it will only become certain that these predictions generally hold after testing this theory on a comprehensive data set of Islamist organizations.

Still, it seems reasonable to share some conclusions about the academic significance of the argument and its relevance to policy. A key insight is that, if correct, Islamist organizations are like any other organizations that disagree with an autocratic regime in regards to their response to co-optive offers or a democratic opening. What matters most are organizational structures, not the particular oppositional ideology the organization adopts. The argument would have applied to communist, Arab nationalist, or other organizations that challenge their countries' regimes if they were still significant in an era of democratic openings and regimes trying to widen their bases of support. Maurice Duverger's classic study, *Political Parties*, implies that this might well have been the case in Europe during the first half of the twentieth century. Sathis Kalyvas (2000) shows how the comparison of the democratic participation of religious parties from different continents, religions, and eras can be informative.

From a policy standpoint, the present argument suggests that concerned Western governments should support democratic participation of Islamist parties that are service oriented and patronage based. This is a salient issue with high stakes. French and American support for the military coup that scuttled the Algerian democratic election that was going to bring the Islamist FIS to power in 1992 started a civil war that killed more than 120,000 Algerians, motivated terrorist attacks in France, and produced much skepticism regarding France and the United States' claims of supporting democracy. American and Israeli attempts to reinstate the Palestinian Liberation Organization after it lost the 2006 elections to Hamas led to a damaging Palestinian civil war and the division of institutions between the West Bank and Gaza.

These findings also speak to the urgent debate in the West about whether the United States should prod the regime of President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt to allow free elections in which the Muslim Brotherhood and others would compete without restrictions.[20] Despite its claim that it has an agenda of promoting democracy in the Middle East, the Bush Administration had been reluctant to pressure the Mubarak regime and others to allow freer elections out of fear that successful Islamists would adopt an anti-American agenda. The cost of supporting strongmen while claiming to want to promote democracy, of course, is to increase popular hostility against the United States in the Muslim world and to risk having U.S. allies overthrown in revolutions that will send regimes on a long-term anti-American trajectory, similar to the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood would likely win fair and free elections in the future, but its political agenda will be more anti-American if the United States keeps supporting the Mubarak regime despite its anti-Democratic stance. An organization geared toward services like the Muslim Brotherhood will likely produce a dedicated, less corrupt, more efficient and more transparent regime than the current one—exactly the kind the United States claims it would like to see in the Middle East. It is also unlikely to do away with elections and democracy because it has a strong competitive advantage in this type of competition over Egyptian liberals, Arab nationalists, Wafd party members, leftists, and the current regime's supporters. The same argument would apply to service-oriented Islamist parties elsewhere.

This argument also informs the decision making of Islamist organizations that consider accepting a co-optive offer from an autocratic regime. The experiences of the Sudanese Ikhwan and the Pakistani Jama`at show the long-term risks involved in joining such a co-optive arrangement in spite of short-term incentives. The two organizations defected when they realized how much popular support they lost. Supporting a democratic regime is more beneficial in the long term, even for centralized and networked Islamist institutions, despite the lure of immediate gains in the area of promoting Sharia (Islamic law).

In summary, it is not ideology, theology, hidden agendas, or exhaustion driving Islamists to become democrats—it is strategic calculations based on advantages that functional structure confers in elections that do.

NOTES

1. For a critique of this cooperation, see Manar Shorbagy, "Understanding Kefaya: The New Politics in Egypt," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2007): 39–60.

2. Shaul Michal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters* (London: Hurst, 2007), 208–11. The Hamas leadership in Syria, including Khaled Meshal, opposed the group's participation in the 2006 election but Mesh`al's second in command, Mussa Abu Marzuk and the leadership in the Occupied Territories supported participation, but more so in Gaza than in the West Bank. See Arnon Regular, "Hamas to Take Part in PA Parliamentary Elections in July," *Haaretz*, March 13, 2005. For the debate regarding participation in the 1996 election, see Khalil Shikaki, "The Palestinian Elections: An Assessment," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no. 3 (1996): 20.

3. For a discussion of the theological building blocks of an embrace of democratic practices in Islam, see John Obert Voll and John L. Esposito, "Islam's Democratic Essence," *Middle East Quarterly*, September 1994, http://www.meforum.org/article/151.

4. See, for example, Bernard Lewis, "Islam and Liberal Democracy," *Atlantic Monthly*, February 1993, 89–98; and Martin Kramer, "Islam vs. Democracy," *Commentary*, January 1993, 35–42. See also Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 112, regarding Hizbollah's participation in Lebanese elections.

5. See Geneive Abdo, *No God but God: Egypt and the Triumph of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), regarding Egypt. Islamization in Shiite areas of Lebanon became highly visible through wearing Islamic attire, growing beards, and using Hizbollah symbols, starting in the late 1980s.

6. Hamas won 44 percent of the popular vote and 56 percent of the seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council. Fatah won 42 percent of the popular vote and 34 percent of the seats.

7. Selznick, P. TVA and the Grassroots: A Study of Politics and Organization. Berkely: Berkely University Press (1949) is a classic case study of co-option as strategy. See Michael Saward, *Co-optive Politics and State Legitimacy* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1992), for a rare discussion of this important strategy and its general application to international relations and strategic interaction in general. See Abdulkader Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 2008), for a discussion of co-option in conflict environments. Co-option is a widely used strategy that has garnered too little academic attention.

8. See Martin Gargiulo, "Two-Step Leverage: Managing Constraint in Organizational Politics," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 38 (1993): 1–19, for a discussion of two-step leverage and indirect co-optive behavior in organizational politics.

9. On the effect of co-option on power within the co-opting organization, see Jeffrey Pfeffer, *Power in Organizations* (Marshfield, MA: Pitman, 1981), 166 ff.

10. Some would tell you that organizations other than adversaries could be co-opted. This is a loose use of the term and seems to imply alliance more than co-option.

11. Pfeffer 1981, 167.

12. The distinction between open and fair elections on the one hand and co-optive offers on the other is close to the concepts of "unified structures of contestations" and "divided structures of contestation" proposed by Ellen Lust-Okar, *Structuring Conflict in the Arab World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). See also Jillian Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), chap. 2), for a discussion of "political liberalization as a mechanism of political control."

13. Chris Hedges, "Cairo Journal; After the Earthquake, a Rumbling of Discontent," *New York Times*, October 21, 1992, http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E0CE0D9133BF932A15753C1A964958260. See also Martin Degg, "The 1992 'Cairo Earthquake': Cause, Effect and Response" *Disasters* 17, no. 3 (September 1993): 226–38.

14. See Khalid B. Sayeed, "The Jama' at-i-Islami Movement in Pakistan," *Pacific Affairs* 30, no. 1 (1957): 59–68, and S. V. R. Nasr, "Democracy and Islamic Revivalism," *Political Science Quarterly* 110, no. 2 (1995): 281–28), for descriptions of the organization of Jama`at at different stages. See Abdelwahab el-Affendi, *Turabi's Revolution: Islam and Power in Sudan* (London: Grey Seal, 1991), 88, 115, on the organization of the Sudanese Ikhwan over time.

15. See Mandy Turner, "Building Democracy in Palestine: Liberal Peace Theory and the Election of Hamas," *Democratization* 13, no. 5 (2006): 739–55, on how Hamas cadres made the transition from social service providers to campaigners to municipal administrators.

16. "Egypt's Brotherhood Calls for Opposition Alliance," *Reuters*, June 28, 2005.

17. See Schwedler (2006). See also Hassan M. Fattah. "Jordan Islamists Stir Tensions by Displaying Election Skills," *New York Times*, May 12, 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/12/world/middleeast/12jordan.html. Hassan M. Fattah and Suha Maayeh, "Islamic Opposition Group Pulls Out of Elections in Jordan," *New York Times*, August 1, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/01/world/middleeast/01jordan.html.

18. Alex Berenson, "Iraq's Shiites Insist on Democracy. Washington Cringes," *New York Times*, November 30, 2003, http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C0CE4DC123AF933A05752C1A9659C8B63.

19. Noah Feldman, "Now for the Hard Part in Iraq: Order Out of Disorder," *Financial Times*, February 1, 2005, http://www.newamerica.net/publications/articles/2005/now_for_the_hard_part_in_iraq.

20. See, for example, Marc Lynch, "Urgent: Brothers in Arms," *Foreign Policy* 162 (September/October 2007): 70–74, and John Walsh, "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood: Understanding Centrist Islam," *Harvard International Review* 24, no. 4 (2003): 32–37, 2003.