Editorial

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the Muslim world is undergoing a political upheaval of historic proportions. The Arab Spring is one of the most recent and dramatic manifestations, with millions of men and women across the Arab world taking to the streets – often in the face of brutal repression – to demand the reform or overthrow of their authoritarian governments. Their bravery has already led to the ouster of four dictators – in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen – and the process is still far from over. But this uprising is only part of a much broader phenomenon, as a review of just the past five years demonstrates. In late 2008, largely free and fair elections ended two years of military-backed emergency rule in Bangladesh, and put the country back on a democratic track. In 2009, similar elections in Indonesia consolidated the democratic regime that had been in place there for just over a decade. That same year in Iran, by contrast, national elections, which were widely viewed as having been rigged, led to the so-called "Green Revolution" – the biggest prodemocratic uprising against the authoritarian regime there since the revolution of 1979. In 2010, Iraq held its second, and far more representative, elections since the overthrow of the Ba'athist regime. In 2011, national elections in Turkey that returned the AK Party to power with its largest electoral victory yet, coupled with ongoing judicial investigations into subversive activities by hard-line authoritarian elements, marked a decisive turning point in Turkey's democratic evolution. In 2012, the willingness of Senegal's president to step down peacefully after losing an election there seemed to confirm the victory of democracy in that country as well.

As the suppression of Iran's Green Revolution, the 2012 military coup that interrupted Mali's democratic experiment, and the ongoing violence in several of the other transitioning polities, indicate the process is neither smooth nor unidirectional. Several aspects of the current upheaval, however, are already clear. First and foremost, the political mobilization of the Muslim masses – the eruption of "people power" – is now an irreversible reality for the foreseeable future, so that only regimes that are genuinely representative and accountable can hope to enjoy any legitimacy in the future. Second, as public opinion poll after poll has demonstrated, democracy has become a hegemonic concept throughout the Muslim world as well – meaning that effective governance and opposition will need to take

place within its institutional and normative parameters. Third, as Table 1shows, judging by the most recent election results, in most of the Middle Eastern states at least, political parties rooted in an Islamist background are likely to garner the lion's share of electoral support for some time to come:

Table 1. Percentage of Islamist vote in Selected Countries

Country	Combined Islamist Vote (percent)[1]
Palestine (2006)	44
Iraq (2010)	48
Turkey (2011)	52
Tunisia (2011)	37
Egypt (2011–2012)	69

These realities, in turn, give rise to a series of consequential questions:

- How exactly do the most prominent figures of the new political and intellectual dispensation – figures such as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Rashid al-Ghannushi, and Yusuf al-Qaradawi – view the proper relationship between Islam and democracy?

- How deeply rooted is the normative evolution that has led mainstream Islamist parties – first in Turkey, and then in the Arab world – to accept the legitimacy of political diversity and pluralism, to affirm the people as the source of political authority, and to adopt democratic mechanisms such as parties and regular elections?

- To what extent can the "Turkish model," for example – a model in which a certain balance between Islamist populists and secular-nationalists succeeded in suppressing the hard-liners on both sides and thereby in consolidating the democratic process – be replicated in the newly transitioning polities of the Arab world?

- And what role can professionalized state institutions such as the military and judiciary play in this process? What are the implications of the unfolding transition for the rights of women, ethnic minorities, and non-Muslims in the region?

- How will the mainstream Islamists deal with other elements such as Sufis, Salafis, or revolutionary militants of the al-Qaeda type?

On a parallel track, the emergence of sizeable and increasingly organized Muslim communities in non-Muslim majority countries raises another set of consequential questions. The challenges of balancing between majoritarian democracy and minority rights, and of upholding tolerance over bigotry, are now approached from the opposite perspective by Muslims – a somewhat frightening but also potentially enriching experience for the further development of Islamic political thought. Particularly in the United States and other Western powers, moreover, Muslim communities can add their voices to the foreign policy debates of those countries, thereby perhaps helping to create a more benign international environment for the momentous transformations underway in the Muslim world. Muslims living in established democracies will also be able to contribute their insights not just about the benefits but also the inevitable pitfalls – moral, cultural, political – of democratic life, the better to prepare their coreligionists in the transitioning polities for what lies ahead.

This Issue

The articles appearing in this special issue of the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* constitute one set of attempts to begin addressing some of these questions. Yanwer Pribadi's article on the "*Kiai* in Madura: Their Roles in Local Politics in Indonesia" sets the stage by considering the interaction between a traditional institution of religious leadership on the one hand, and the rapidly evolving modern political world on the other. He

argues that traditional *kiai* leaders have adapted well to the modern world, are neither anti-modern nor antidemocratic, but rather crucial intermediaries between the modern state and villagers in Madura.

Fait Muedini's "Sufism, Politics, and the Arab Spring" extends this line of analysis to the Arab Spring by showing how Sufis in Syria and Egypt – another traditional grouping often viewed as apolitical – are finding themselves, like everybody else in their communities, impelled to take a stand on the contested political issues of the day. Here again, simplistic dichotomies of "traditional" and "modern," "apolitical" and "politically engaged," are called into question by an analysis of how actors of different types are led by their concerns and aspirations into the turbulent political arenas of our time – and this process in turn helps to shape the contours of the new order that is emerging.

Ahmed Elewa adopts a more theoretical approach to this question in his article, "Articulating 'Responsibility' as a Prerequisite for the Arab Spring." Here, he investigates the centrality of "responsibility" as a concept in contemporary Islamic discourse, and its role in catalyzing and activating citizens into political action. His article reveals that the use of the concept "responsibility," although present in classical exegeses and *fiqh* nevertheless represents an Arabization and Islamization of a Western concept. He argues that responsibility became a key mobilizing theme in the lead up to the Arab Spring, and that it encapsulates a promise of meeting the real needs of citizens.

Elhum Haghighat then draws our attention to a crucial dimension of political and social development in her article "The Paradox Between Women's Educational Attainment and Social Mobility in the Middle East and North Africa." Pointing out that contrary to the expectations of Modernization Theory, for example, increased access to educational opportunities by women in the Middle East and North Africa has not correlated with a broader improvement in socioeconomic status and mobility. Unless the emerging political actors in the region – and the Islamists foremost among them – take into account and address this troubling phenomenon, she suggests, the full promise of the Arab Spring cannot be realized.

The final two articles of this special issue then turn to the challenges facing Muslim minorities abroad. In her article "On the Visual Apartheid in Western Europe: Architectural Hegemony in the German Urban Landscape," Courtney Dorroll analyzes the inclusion and exclusion of Muslim immigrants in contemporary German public discourse through the lens of

architecture – in particular, the debates surrounding mosque construction in various German cities.

And in "The Position of the *Niqab* (Face Veil) in Australia under Australian and Islamic Laws," Asmi Wood approaches the same general issue of cultural and religious coexistence, only this time via an investigation of the compatibility between the two legal traditions as they relate to Islamic garb. He seeks to provide the Australian judicial system a range of Islamically-grounded perspectives on *hijab* and *niqab* that judges and lawyers can refer to when dealing with Muslim litigants in the court system. His article will be of use and interest in other jurisdictions, as all Western legal systems currently face similar questions of how to deal with face- and head-coverings in the legal process.

All of these articles relate to the concept of "political change" understood in a broad way, to encompass regime or governmental change – issues that must be addressed by governments (as in legislative needs) and, finally, social issues that provide a sculpting landscape in which politics is carried out (that is, the societal terrain). It is our hope that opening an investigation into these issues will help enable Muslims to begin thinking through the challenges that face them in the most constructive ways, and to mold polities in the twenty-first century that allow their citizens to flourish.

In the forum section, we are happy to present a relevant piece, Daniel Hummel's "Islam and the Constitutions in Newly Reformed Countries in the Middle East: Putting an End to Tyrannical Rule." Writing a few months before the Egyptian elections, Hummel reflects on the role of Islam and the constitutions of Egypt and Libya; how Islamic elements must respect and be sensitive to non-Muslims when they try to balance between Islamic law and the constitution; and how the constitutions must be inclusive for the benefit of all citizens.

Finally, we are glad to announce that at the end of this issue, there is a "Call for Papers" for 2013 special issue on the topic of "Islamist Spring? Islamists and the State: New Paradigms and Engagements." We invite all our readers who are experts on this subject to consider contributing their research.

Note

1. These are the percentages of the popular vote won by Hamas in Palestine; by Shī'ah, Sunni, and Kurdish parties that self-identify in Islamic terms in Iraq; by the AK Party (49.8 percent), the Felicity Party, and People's Voice Party in Turkey; by al-Nahda in Tunisia; and by the Democratic Alliance for Egypt (dominated by the Muslim

Brotherhood: 37.5 percent), the Islamist Bloc (dominated by the Nur Party), and the Al-Wasat Party in Egypt.

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