

2008 Workshop "Islam and Democracy in Asia"

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The Center for Asian Democracy hosted the "Islam and Democracy in Asia" workshop at the University of Louisville in Louisville, Kentucky on March 13-14, 2008. The workshop was designed to explore the relationship between Islam and democracy within the context of Asian cultures and institutions. Competition to participate in the workshop was high. The fourteen paper proposals were selected from over 120 received from scholars all over the world. Presenters included not only scholars, but also practitioners, such as diplomats. Although most presenters are from scholarly institutions in North America and Europe, over half of them have their ethnic origins in Asia. The fourteen paper presenters selected were provided with a package of free local accommodation, travel expense and honoraria. Some international scholars offered to come at their own expenses in order to participate. The workshop was closed to the general public and only about forty guests were selected to participate in discussions with the presenters.

Topics of the papers presented vary. Three papers are about theories that explore the relationship between Islam and democracy: "Islam and Democracy: An Examination of Muslims' Political Culture," by Moataz A. Fattah, Central Michigan University; "The Sovereignty of God: Constitutional Processes in Islam and Christianity," Mark Gould, Haverford College; "Islamic Governance and the Democratic Process," Muqtedar Khan, University of Delaware. One paper focuses on the historical development of Muslim communities in South Asia: "Social Tensions and Communal Relations in India: Muslim Communities of Gujarat During the 17th and 18th Centuries," Ghulam Nadri, Georgia State University. Another paper is a field study report: "Tracking Al Qaeda and Taliban Suicide Bombers in Afghanistan: A Field Report on Taliban Radicalization," Brian Williams, University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth.

The rest of the nine papers are empirical scholarly essays in the context of either Asia in general, or those Asian countries that have substantial Muslim populations: "Islam and Democracy in Asia: What Can We Learn from Underdog Thinking," Laure Paquette, Lakehead University, Canada; "Islam and Pakistan," Ambassador Touqir Hussain, Georgetown University; "Bangladesh: New Front-line State in the Struggle Between Aspiring Pluralist Democracy and Expanding Political Islam," Ambassador Tariq Karim, George Washington University; "Islamism and Democratization in Indonesia," Felix Heiduk, German Institute for International and Security Affairs; "Contracting Political Space, Widening Political Participation: Islam and Democracy in Post9/11 Malaysia," Bridget Welsh, Johns Hopkins University; "Muslim and Indian Democratic Experience," Omar Khalidi, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; "Everyday Islam in Electoral Processes in Central Asia," Rafis Abazov, Columbia University; "Islam and the Development of a Democratic Society in Tajikistan," David Straub, Indiana University at Bloomington; "China and Central Asia: Developing Relations and Their Impact on Democracy," Morris Rossabi, City University of New York.

Seven UofL faculty served as the chairs/discussants of the panels: Rodger Payne, Margaret D'Silva, Robert St. Clair, Charles Ziegler, Allen Furr, Yuxin Ma and John Mcleod.

The participants enthusiastically praised the workshop. Dr. Omar Khalidi praised the workshop as “a healthy mix of theory of Islam and democracy as well as its application to a number of countries through case studies.” He also pointed out the importance of the workshop by saying that “Asia has more Muslims than does the Middle East, making the topic highly relevant to Asian studies and political science.” Dr. Laure Paquette said that the workshop “was certainly distinguished by vigorous discussion, possibly the most vigorous I've encountered in my career. I thought it was laudably interdisciplinary, ranging from specialists in architecture through economists.” She also pointed out that the papers are of high caliber, partly because the paper presenters are international. She praised the “broad coverage, including coverage of Muslim areas not often covered in mainstream study of politics, canny choices of problems to address.” Ambassador Tariq A. Karim called the workshop “a privilege and a great learning experience.” Helen Lang, a local community leader, echoed Rafis Abazov, from Columbia University, in saying that the workshop “was one of the best structured workshops she has attended....timely, well run, on time, efficient.”

The host, the Center for Asian Democracy at the University of Louisville established in 2006 with a substantial endowment, recruits at least three visiting scholars a year, runs a speakers' series, publishes a book series on Asia, and is hiring an endowed chair on Asian studies. [Inquiries about the workshop can be sent to: Dr. Shiping Hua, the center director at: \[shiping.hua@louisville.edu\]\(mailto:shiping.hua@louisville.edu\). Download the brochure \(PDF\).](#)

Rafis Abazov, Adjunct Professor at the Harriman Institute, Columbia University
[“Everyday Islam in Electoral Process In Central Asia”](#)

Moataz A. Fattah, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Central Michigan University
[“Islam and Democracy: An Examination of Muslims' Political Culture”](#)

Mark Gould, Chair and Professor of Sociology, Haverford College
[“The Sovereignty of God: Constitutional Processes in Islam and Christianity”](#)

Felix Heiduk, Research Associate, German Institute for International and Security Affairs Berlin, Germany
[“Islamism and Democratization in Indonesia”](#)

Touqir Hussain, retired Ambassador, Adjunct Professor, Georgetown University
[“Islam in Pakistan”](#)

Tariq Karim, Retired Ambassador, Lecturer in Government and Politics, University of Maryland
[“Bangladesh: new front-line state in the struggle between aspiring pluralist democracy and expanding political Islam”](#)

Omar Khalidi, Librarian for Aga Khan Program, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

[“Muslims and Indian Democratic Experience”](#)

Muqtedar Khan, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Delaware; Nonresident Fellow, Brookings Institution

[“Islamic Governance and the Democratic Processes”](#)

Ghulam Nadri, Assistant Professor of South Asian History, Georgia State University

[“Social tensions and communal relations in India: Muslim communities of Gujarat during the 17th and 18th centuries”](#)

Laure Paquette, Professor of Political Science, Lakehead University, Canada

[“Islam and Democracy in Asia: What Can We Learn from Underdog Thinking”](#)

Morris Rossabi, Professor of History, Queens College

[“China and Central Asia: Developing Relations and their Impact on Democracy”](#)

David Straub, Central Eurasian Studies Department, Indiana University, Bloomington

[“Islam and the Development of a Democratic Society in Tajikistan”](#)

Bridget Welsh, Assistant Professor of Southeast Asian Studies, Johns Hopkins University

[“Contracting Political Space, Widening Political Participation: Islam and Democracy in Post 9/11 Malaysia”](#)

Brian Williams, Associate Professor of History, University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth,

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