

Special Feature:

Revisiting Islam and Politics in Egypt’s “New Republic”

Editor’s Preface

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This special feature revisits the relationship between Islam and politics in Egypt today. In July 2013, President Muḥammad Mursī, a former Muslim Brotherhood member, was ousted in a military coup known as the June 30 Revolution. He was replaced by ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Sīsī, former chairman of the Supreme Council of the Egyptian Armed Forces.

Since then, Egypt has been in the era of the “New Republic,” which has been advocated by President al-Sīsī as his major political slogan over ten years. It is characterized by the fact that the military president has come to power relying on secularism, while the Islamist forces, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, which had been in power before him, have been decimated. Islamism and Islamist movements have been excluded from “the formal political sphere.”

However, this does not necessarily mean further secularization of Egyptian politics and society. Rather under the “New Republic,” various forms of Islam have been seeking their own relations with politics, albeit in different forms. This special feature aims to reconsider the relationship between Islam and politics in Egypt today by capturing the dynamics of Islam still flourishing in Egypt from multiple perspectives, including Islamism, Salafism, nationalism, Jihadism and cross-border Islamic networks.

This special feature contains the following four papers.

First, Ueno’s paper will examine why the authoritarian regime of President Ḥusnī Mubārak, which was considered robust and stable, collapsed in the 2011 Arab uprisings—or the January 25 Revolution—employing theories of comparative politics and Middle Eastern area studies. The so-called “divided Structure of Contention,” which fostered prevention of potential political protest and opposition cooperation, *did* in fact cause divisions *within* the opposition parties and the Muslim Brotherhood, which in turn encouraged some of its members to engage in a form of collaboration that transcended organizations and movements. This study contributes to research on the root causes of the January 25 Revolution and provides fresh insights into how the Muslim Brotherhood was involved in it.

Second, Yoneda’s paper explores the Egyptian Salafist organization, *al-Da‘wa al-Salafiya* (DS), which became increasingly involved in the formal political sphere after the 2011 Arab uprisings. DS was considered to be “apolitical/quietist”; they were not inclined to engage in

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Egyptian politics. Nevertheless, after the resignation of President Mubārak, they established a political party, *Ḥizb al-Nūr* (the Nour Party: NP) and participated in parliamentary politics. This paper details how Egyptian Salafists changed their perceptions of politics and acted on them amidst the enormous political upheaval caused by the January 25 Revolution. Specifically, the democratic transition led DS to reinterpret “the mechanisms of democracy (*al-ālīyāt al-dīmuqrāṭīya*)” as a tenet that did not contradict their Islamic doctrine. This conclusion is significant in considering the political views and activities of Salafists not only in Egypt but also in other countries in the Middle East.

Third, Kondo’s paper focuses on “the mawlid bride dolls (*‘arūsa al-mawlid*)” to discuss the changing relationship between citizens’ nationalism and the state’s nationalism in Egypt today. Egyptian citizens and the state seem to share “the less elaborated narrative” under al-Sīsī’s “upgraded” authoritarian rule so that they seek to avoid conflicts between the state and society as well as within society. In this context, the narrative of the dolls is a typical case. However, the more the narrative was shared by the citizens and the state, the more “Salafists” and “extremists” criticized and condemned it, bringing about the destruction of such a less elaborated narrative. This study reveals the fact that Islam still has a significant influence on Egyptian nationalism and the social order even in the era of the “New Republic.”

Fourth, Yamaoka’s paper discusses *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (*Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr*: HT), which has had an ideological influence not only in Middle Eastern countries but also in various parts of the Islamic world. As an international Islamist organization, its activities are banned in many Arab countries, including Egypt, but it has its roots in the Muslim Brotherhood. This paper analyzes the contents of the HT’s “draft constitution” of the “Caliphal State,” which has not been adequately clarified in previous literature and strives to re-evaluate it as a “thought experiment.” This study concludes that the “draft constitution” presented a vision of an ideal Islamic state in the era of modern states and thus attempted to theorize its consistency with them.

This special issue portrays the rich and profound reality of Islam and politics in contemporary Egypt through the four articles that incorporate the latest research findings in their fields.

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