

**Workshop on Islamists and Local Politics**  
*Paper Abstracts*

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**The Striking Case of the PJD- A Rural Failure**  
Yasmina Abouzzohour (University of Oxford)

The Moroccan monarchy has emerged from the Arab uprisings stronger than ever, and its inclusion of the Islamist party into the political sphere has made the Kingdom a sort of exception to its anti-Islamist counterparts. A growing body of literature looks at the Justice and Development Party (PJD's) rise, its relationship with the regime and other parties, and its views on Islam and Islamism. Few sources, however, dwell on its low performance in the rural areas. During the 2011 and 2016 legislative elections, the PJD- the conservative Islamist leading party in Morocco since the post-Arab Spring elections- has won unexpected high votes. Despite its success, advanced organization, around the clock grass-root work, and charismatic leaders, the PJD has failed to win over the rural areas, where people still vote for the old elite parties (Istiqlal and USFP) or the monarchy backed party (PAM). This paper examines the PJD's rural failure by using data gathered during the author's fieldwork in Morocco from interviews and observation of vote polling in 2017 (August to October).

**Beyond Maiduguri: Understanding Boko Haram's Rule in Rural Communities  
of Northeastern Nigeria**  
Olabanji Akinola (University of Guelph)

In the past seven years, the meteoric rise of the Islamic fundamentalist group, Jama'at ahlis Sunnah lid Da'wat wal Jihad popularly known as Boko Haram, has baffled many scholars and observers across the globe. In less than a decade, Boko

Haram has evolved from a relatively obscure Salafi Jihadi group whose activities were mainly based in Maiduguri, a sprawling urban centre in northeastern Nigeria where the group was founded by its erstwhile leader, Muhammad Yusuf, in the early 2000s, to become a dreadful Islamic fundamentalist groups in the world with links to the Islamic State. Yet, while Boko Haram's rise to prominence is not in doubt, how and why the group was able to rapidly rise from a relatively obscure group to become one of the most violent Salafi Jihadist groups that are active in the world today continues to bewilder many scholars and analysts of Islamic fundamentalist movements. However, even though scholars and analysts have made attempts to explain some of the factors behind the rise of Boko Haram analyses of how, and why, Boko Haram was able to gain a massive followership in some rural communities of northeastern Nigeria, and was greatly opposed by some others, remains highly understudied. This is despite the fact that the two main activities that arguably brought Boko Haram to global prominence – the abduction of the 276 schoolgirls from Chibok in April 2014 and the declaration of its caliphate in Gwoza in August 2014 – took place in rural communities beyond Maiduguri. To this end, this paper provides an analysis on the emergence and existence of Boko Haram in rural communities in northeastern Nigeria, and examines how and why Boko Haram was able to become a formidable Islamic fundamentalist movement with a large followership in some rural communities, but with little or no support in others. It explores two interrelated questions: how did Boko Haram spread its Salafi Islamist ideology amongst rural communities in northeastern Nigeria; and why did some rural communities support Boko Haram's main objective of Islamizing Nigeria and other communities were opposed to it? In answering these two interrelated questions, the paper analyses how Boko Haram ruled and engaged with rural communities in northeastern Nigeria, especially after the group was displaced from Maiduguri following the 2009 violent confrontation with the Nigerian military during which Muhammad Yusuf, its founder and former leader, was killed.

## **Does Islamist Local Governance Differ? Evidence on Local Service Provision in Algeria**

Lindsay Benstead (Portland State University)

Detailed and systematic data on service provision by Islamist local governance is limited. At the same time, data are needed to answer crucial questions about Islamist governance and its role in fostering support for Islamist parties and movements in authoritarian regimes.

Why are Islamist parties more active service providers in some localities than others? Once elected, are Islamist local councillors more likely than those representing regime parties to serve the marginalized, including women, the poor, and those who are less politically engaged? Are the citizens' Islamist local

councillors help more likely to support political Islam and plan to vote for an Islamist party?

This proposed memo draws on original data from a survey of 800 Algerians conducted in 2007 which asks citizens to recall the times that they asked current local and regional council members for services and the party the members represented. Preliminary analysis suggests that while Islamist local councilors are no more likely than other parties to help women and the poor, they are more likely to help citizens who say that they are supportive of political Islam. Those who are helped by local councilors from regime parties the National Liberation Front (FLN) and the National Rally for Democracy (RND) are more likely to believe that local councilors will be able to help them with problems in the future than those who asked Islamist councilors for help.

The memo will discuss implications for understanding why support for Islamist opposition parties develops and is sustained in single party dominant regimes. It will also theorize about how local service provision by Islamist parties might differ in monarchies and make suggestions for new survey questions to improve systematic study of the role Islamist mobilization and service provision plays in building support for Islamist movements.

### **Islamist Activism and Local Religious Ecologies: Evidence from the History of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood**

Steven Brooke (The University of Louisville) and Neil Ketchley (King's College London)

By the end of their first decade of existence the Muslim Brothers boasted over two hundred chapters encompassing Egypt's large cities, provincial towns, and small villages. How were the Muslim Brotherhood able to so quickly expand beyond the major population centers of Cairo, Alexandria, and the Suez Canal? And why were other social movements active at the time unable to match the Brotherhood's reach into Egypt's periphery? We systematically explore this question with a unique cache of historical data: weekly listings of the activities of Islamic associations culled from three contemporaneous periodicals, al-Fath, al-Nadhir, and Jaridat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun. These data show how, during its crucial formative period, leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood were fixtures at mosques throughout the length and breadth of the country. These served as ready-made entry points through which the group could reach large numbers of citizens. Further, by analyzing the topics of both Brotherhood leaders' formal sermons (khutba) and informal talks at those mosques, we show how the group strove to connect the practical concerns of local communities with broader religious themes and national political issues. By highlighting the importance of pre-existing religious ecologies, as well as the way

that local religious notables bridged Brotherhood leaders and populations, our work illuminates an important but often overlooked aspect of Islamist activism.

## **When are Islamist Parties Electorally Successful in Municipal Elections? Lessons from Morocco**

Janine A Clark (University of Guelph)

Examining the Party of Justice and Development (PJD) in four municipalities in Morocco – Chefchaouen, Erfoud, Tiflet and Kenitra – the paper questions the conditions under which Islamist parties are electorally successful in municipal elections. The paper embeds itself in the literature on Islamist social services and the role they play in support and, ultimately votes, for Islamist political parties. It argues that in the context of strong patron - client ties, providing social services under the banner of Islam/Islamism is neither sufficient nor necessary in garnering votes for Islamist political parties. While the provision of services is central to Islamist successes at the polls, these services need not be in the name of Islam/Islamism; indeed, they are equally effective and potentially more effective when devoid of religious references. Furthermore, while necessary, the provision of services is insufficient; for Islamist to gain votes at the local level where patron-clientelism is strong, they must demonstrate that they can not only ‘deliver the goods’ but that they have a convincing chance of winning the elections. In other words, voters will not risk losing their patrons for a party that does not have a clear chance of winning. The paper thus argues that the PJD’s electoral success at the municipal level is based on three interrelated factors. The first is PJD’s ‘politics of doing’ – the active improvement of citizens’ lives. While this ‘politics of doing’ may indeed be related to the provision of Islamist social services, it is commonly conducted in conjunction with other actors via non-Islamist organizations. The second and related factor is its ability to create electoral alliances with the civil society activists. In this regard, the PJDs ‘politics of doing’ not only reaches out to the beneficiaries of their efforts but also to non-Islamist activists with whom they are able to find common ground based on their shared interest in development outcomes. Non-Islamist activists bring name recognition and/or credibility to Islamist parties. The third factor is the ability of the local branches of the PJD to counter the political weight of entrenched local political patrons by using the institutional weight of the PJD at the national level to their advantage. Thus, in contrast to the typical pattern by which municipal councilors use municipal politics as a springboard to national level politics, Islamist candidates use national level politics as a springboard for municipal politics. As an example, Islamist candidates may run for national politics and after having secured a position as a Member of Parliament, use their prestige and clout to run and win municipal elections. The paper is based on fieldwork conducted between 2011 and 2014.

## **Shifting Scales: the Localization of French Revivalist Islam**

Margot Dazey (University of Cambridge)

Often portrayed as centralized, hierarchical and disciplined structures, Muslim Brotherhood-related organizations in Europe tend to be studied from a macro-scale, elite-centered perspective. However, analyses of national-level politics and top-down dynamics fail to capture the intricate interplay between the central apparatus and local sections within Islamist movements. Through an historically-informed narrative, this paper traces the trajectory of one local association affiliated with the Union des organisations islamiques de France (UOIF), a prominent Muslim umbrella organization in the French Islamic landscape, drawing its ideological and organizational inspiration from the Muslim Brotherhood. More specifically, it seeks to unravel the internal workings of this UOIF association by uncovering two overlooked dimensions of “Islamist politics” at the local level. Following a horizontal line of enquiry, we will look at the association’s political exchange with local authorities, therefore exploring its efforts to craft independent policies, to gain respectability within the local establishment, and to counter the “Islamist stigma” faced by the UOIF in public debates at the national level. Following a vertical line of study, we will explore the association’s complex linkage with the central level of the UOIF in terms of membership management, decision-making and internal conflict resolution, thereby challenging monolithic portrayal of the organization. Rather than focusing on “external” forms of activism, this paper seeks to unpack the centralization/decentralization nexus within Islamist movements in a minority setting. It is based on a two-year ethnographic study within two provincial associations of the UOIF and builds on observations in mosques, Islamic centers, educational institutions, meetings, etc. as well as interviews with local activists and national leaders, archive work and analysis of the written and audio-visual material produced by the organization.

## **Preventing the Spread of Extremism through Understanding Pakistan's Rural Societies**

Mujtaba Ali Isani (University of Muenster)

In the summer of 2014, I conducted fieldwork in the rural areas of the southern province of Sindh in Pakistan.<sup>1</sup> Southern, rural Pakistan was seen as a bastion of Sufi Islam until recently when extremist fundamentalist forces have gained a foothold in the region. These parties have been a combination of Salafist imports such as the notorious Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan and the stricter Deobandi/Taliban sympathizing groups. The results have been augmented sectarian tensions and increased insecurity for Hindu minorities which had been living here for centuries. The emergence of alternative forces may be blamed on the failure of successive

corrupt governments to provide for the basic necessities to the local populations and the breaking down of traditional feudal hierarchies in the region. The dynamics of the rural areas of Pakistan were always thought to be quite different from the urban areas of Pakistan. Previously, political Islam movements in Pakistan such as Maulana Maududi's Jamaat-e-Islami made significant inroads in Pakistan's urban centers but failed to make an impact in the rural areas. It was thought that the political grievances of the urban middle classes were not understandable to the rural populations who suffered mainly from economic disadvantages. Also, most of the literature and media produced by these political Islam movements was not accessible to the rural populations due to their low education levels. With the decline of the traditional left-leaning political parties in Pakistan and with no real alternative to escape the corrupt government regimes, it seems as if many rural, southern Pakistanis are turning towards Islamist groups as alternatives. Moreover, mainstream parties have been, in some cases, guilty of overlooking this extremist turn if their parties are supported by these groups in any way. Whereas previously low education levels made the rural folk avoid political Islam movements, it seems as though the more extremist movements are finding it easier to persuade the population because of their low levels of knowledge. While individual socio-economic factors definitely matter, my evidence suggests that areas where the state institutions are the weakest, are places where extremist forces have assumed the most power.

### **Governing in the Meanwhile? Understanding Justice and Governance in the Syrian Insurgency**

Fouad Gehad Marei (Orient-Institut Beirut)

Based on fieldwork conducted between November 2012 and July 2013, this paper investigates mechanisms and practices of governing populations in contexts of protracted violent conflict and limited state authority. Focusing on the nascent justice sector in rebel-held areas in northern Syria, the paper presents empirical evidence of faith-driven, bottom-up and community-based initiatives mobilising local community actors independent of both the Syrian regime as well as rebel militias.

The paper traces the emergence and eventual failure of the United Judicial Council (UJC), a judicial entity founded in 2012 to "establish justice", provide "law and order", and limit vigilante violence and looting as rebel brigades overran regime forces in Aleppo, Iblib and their environs. Empirical data presented in this paper shows that, the UJC, comprising of self-appointed preachers, Islamist-leaning legal practitioners and local community activists, adopted the codified, Sharia-inspired United Arab Criminal Code and established regularised/standardised court systems

and legal procedures in an attempt to govern everyday life in the absence of state authority in rebel-held territories.

The paper argues that, in the context of protracted civil conflict, insurgents' ability to establish effective and durable administrative structures in the Syrian insurgency depends on their ability to mobilise local community actors and take advantage of the social capital, autonomous organisation and networks developed in the pre-insurgency context. In the case of the UJC, this paper shows, Islamist and faith-based solidarities and networks formed the cornerstone of political activism intent on administering the everyday lives of civilians in the Syrian civil war. The case study presented in this paper shows that nascent rebel administrations failed to provide a viable alternative to the embattled Syrian state due to (1) their inability to subjugate rebel militias to their authority, (2) encroachments by more organised rebel groups including the Al-Nusra Front and the Islamic State, (3) regime advances in rebel-held territories, and (3) the programmatic interventions of international organisations and conflict stabilisation and transformation experts ('track-two actors').

### **The Electoral Connection in Turkish Local Politics: Municipal Service Delivery and Political Islam under the AKP**

Melissa Marschall (Rice University), Marwa Shalaby (Rice University) and Saadat Konak (University of Houston)

Distributive politics resides at the core of politician-citizen linkages in emerging democracies. Despite the existence of ostensibly democratic institutions in these countries, most political parties tend to attract voters by offering material benefits rather than advocating programmatic party platforms. Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi, AKP) is a prime example. Despite coming to power on a reformist platform that sought to fight three "Ys:" yoksulluk (poverty), yolsuzluk (corruption), and yasaklar (bans on civil/individual liberties), over time the AKP increasingly replaced programmatic politics with patronage, and even received the distinction as the most clientelistic political party from among 506 political parties worldwide (Kitschelt 2013). How can we explain this? Our previous work partially addresses this question by examining how the AKP distributed large-scale housing projects, made possible by Turkey's Mass Housing Authority (TOKI), to local governments in order to reward its electoral strongholds and consolidate its support. The proposed paper builds on this work by taking a more micro-level approach. Specifically, we will conduct a survey of municipal governments in Turkey to assess not only patterns and priorities of local service delivery, but to also gauge the attitudes and opinions of local government officials on issues of policy responsiveness, and the expanding role of Islamist policies in Turkish local and national politics. In particular, we seek to better understand how

municipal governments distribute public goods and services to different constituents within their districts, whether they use these resources to bolster or weaken Islamist groups, and how distributive patterns relate to both the partisan makeup and policy priorities of the municipal governments.

### **Local Activism Post-Tahrir Square: Comparing Islamist and non-Islamist Popular Committees in Egypt**

Asya El-Meehy (United Nations-ESCWA)

Egypt's local popular committees spontaneously emerged in response to governance vacuums, following the January 25th uprising. As committees in informal urban areas gradually assumed self-governing and contestation roles vis a vis the state authorities, they were hailed as a grassroots democratizing force and seeds of bottom-up decentralization. Activists in fact made concrete gains in securing access to public services, developing local infrastructure, and claiming social citizenship rights by collectively organizing in semi-formal loosely structured local popular committees. Yet little empirical work has been done on the mobilization patterns and evolution of this unique form of activism. What is the mobilization strategy and nature of grassroots organizing of the local committees? And, to what extent did Islamist committees diverge from non-Islamist ones? Based on comparative analysis of four neighbourhoods-- Ard El-Lewa, Imbaba, Omraneya and Kerdasa -- I argue that committees with predominantly Islamist activists diverged from non-Islamist ones in important ways. These include their ideological framings, internal organization, degree of institutionalization, relations with civil society actors, as well as collective forms of action vis a vis state authorities. Contrary to the literature, I propose that a higher degree of informalization was not necessarily positively correlated with the adoption of more radical repertoires. Rather, ideological framings, prior involvement in civil society activism, and links to outside actors, particularly the media and political parties, seem to shape committees' strategies.

### **Why is the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM), the most Influential Political Organization in Kuwait?**

Yuree Noh (University of California, Los Angeles)

This paper sheds light on the branch of the Muslim Brotherhood that has received little attention. In a country characterized by the ban on political parties and the weakness of civil society, the ICM has successfully established itself as one of the



most important players in the Kuwaiti political scene. I argue that the ICM was able to grow politically by first becoming active in the social arena. The MB in Kuwait invested extensively in activities at the grassroots level such as targeting the youth and carrying out charity work to increase their influence in the society. Consequently, the ICM was able to enter parliament, form a sizable coalition with its allies, and to influence the lawmaking process. I also investigate why the Kuwaiti ruling family did not view the MB as a danger and let it grow. Drawing from the comparisons of the branches of the Muslim Brotherhood in Algeria, Egypt, and Jordan, I also contend that the MBs are not always considered as a threat to the regime; rather, depending on the types of authoritarian governance, some leaders use the MBs in their “divide-and-conquer” strategy to consolidate their rule. My paper concludes by discussing implications for understanding the importance of grassroots activities on political outcomes.

### **The Non-Economic Functions of Insurgent Taxation: Evidence from the Islamic State in Syria**

Mara Revkin (Yale University)

Previous studies of rebel governance predict that armed groups with access to exploitable resources will engage in short-term, opportunistic looting rather than invest in building the complex bureaucracies that are necessary for taxation and long-term governance (Weinstein 2006; Collier and Hoeffler 2004). A related argument, often made in the “resource curse” literature, is that complex tax systems are most likely to be found in resource-poor states where governments have no alternative but to extract revenue from their populations (Ross 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2003). Such claims rely on an implicit assumption that the sole purpose of taxation is to collect revenue. I challenge this assumption with new data from the case of the Islamic State (hereafter “IS”), an insurgent group that taxes civilians in resource-rich areas of Syria, Iraq, and Libya, at levels that do not appear to be economically rational. For example, IS financial records from the province of Deir Ezzor, which contains the largest oil field in Syria, indicate that IS obtained more than twice as much revenue from taxation (\$6.1 million over a one-month period) as it did from oil and gas sales (\$2.3 million over the same period) in that province. IS’s behavior in Deir Ezzor is surprising because the imposition of taxes is associated with significant costs. First, effective taxation requires the creation of a bureaucratic apparatus that is capable of documenting the assets and economic transactions of the population. Second, taxes are universally disliked and are therefore a source of friction between state and society. Given these high costs, why would an insurgent group go through the trouble and expense of collecting taxes in areas where abundant resources should make taxation unnecessary? In this paper, I argue that the puzzle of taxation in resource-rich areas can be explained by taking into account the non-economic benefits of taxation for

insurgent groups. In addition to the obvious role of taxation in collecting revenue, I theorize that the tax policies imposed by insurgent groups may promote governance through at least three different mechanisms: (1) social control, (2) collective identity formation, and (3) demographic engineering. If I am correct that revenue collection is not the sole purpose of insurgent tax policies, we would expect to find evidence that IS is just as likely to collect taxes in resource-rich areas as it is in resource-poor areas—because even though taxation is not economically necessary in the latter areas, it still provides important non-economic benefits for state-building. I test this hypothesis with an original dataset that maps the imposition of seven different types of tax policies at monthly intervals across the 18 different Syrian districts in urban as well as rural areas that IS has controlled and governed since 2013. The dataset was constructed from diverse primary sources including interviews with 112 Syrian civilians and combatants who have personally experienced IS governance; Twitter data generated by users in Syria; local news reports; and archival documents generated by IS institutions. Quantitative analysis of this data supports my theory. Not only is IS just as likely to impose taxes in resource-rich areas as it is in resource-poor areas, but the group imposes several different types of taxes in these areas. This finding calls into question existing theories that predict low levels of institutionalized taxation in resource-rich areas. Additionally, I support my theory through an in-depth case study of the resource-rich and primarily rural district of al-Mayadin, which is home to the largest oil field in Syria and therefore a “hard test” of my theory. I illustrate how the imposition of seven different types of tax policies in al-Mayadin—(1) income taxes, (2) border taxes, (3) excise taxes, (4) fines, (5), license fees, (6) property taxes, and (7) service fees—yielded non-economic benefits for IS’s state-building project through the mechanisms of social control, collective identity formation, and demographic engineering.

### **Explaining the Dog That Does Not Bark: Why Do Some Localities in Turkey Remain Resistant to Islamist Political Mobilization?**

Evren Celik Wiltse (South Dakota State University)

Most studies on the rise of political Islam in Turkey have embraced a large, national level of analysis. From the now classic “center-periphery” paradigm of Serif Mardin (1973) to more recent works (Gulalp 2001, Arat 2005, Turam 2007, Yavuz 2007, Gumuscu 2010, Tugal 2015), scholars focused on the transformation of state-society relations in Turkey with particular reference to the successful bottom up mobilization efforts of political Islam in large urban centers. Innovative researchers, such as Turam (2004) even expanded her analysis to include the transnational outreach of Turkish Islamist movements. An important and shared characteristic of these studies that try to explain the rise of political Islam in Turkey is the applicability of their key explanatory variables to the nation at large. Turkish state’s particularly secularist disposition, effective mobilization of Islamist movements and

parties as a reaction to top-down secularism, rise of conservative business networks, labor unions or women's organizations all offer excellent explanations to the strengthening of Islamist movements in Turkey. While most of these studies successfully explain the raise of Islamist movements, many of them are not particularly sensitive to local variation and agency. In particular, they do not explain why despite the rising tide of Islamist movements and politics in Turkey certain pockets remain immune to this religious political waive. This paper tries to explain the relative immunity of certain localities in Turkey with reference to the distinct regional socio-cultural and economic characteristics. It argues that, having a distinct regional socio-cultural identity and economic means to sustain that lifestyle can make communities relatively immune to the effective inroads of Islamist movements. The paper is based on fieldwork conducted in urban and rural parts of Edirne & Kirklareli in northwestern Turkey.

**Municipal Management and Service Delivery as Strategies of Legitimation:  
Hezbollah's Local Development Politics in South-Lebanon**  
Diana Zeidan (École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales)

In the late nineties, Hezbollah leaders decided to participate in Lebanese municipal elections in the name of Islamic morals and values. The context of marginalisation as well as the multiplication of foreign development interventions in rural areas pushed Hezbollah elected mayors to quickly adopt a pragmatic approach to their municipal duties, promoting themselves as efficient managers of local development policies. The religious referent has been dimmed and replaced by a consensual discourse on proximity, probity and efficiency. After the 2006 war, Hezbollah emerged as a key planning actor in the reconstruction process in south-Lebanon. The Islamist party also became a necessary partner for most relief agencies and reconstruction donors. In the realm of political clientelism in Lebanon, Hezbollah's Jihad Al-Binaa technical experts (the reconstruction and development wing of the party), acted as political brokers to regulate reconstruction efforts and communal life, while negotiating with international donors roles and positioning through development projects. As the new technocratic elite within Hezbollah, Jihad Al-Binaa experts seized the opportunity of the attention given to local politics after the 2006 war to position themselves within the pre-existing clientelistic networks. The combination of clientelism and local dependence on development aid created very strong incentives to bring forward changes to the local repertoire of contention and reconfiguring networks of dependencies. This contribution on understanding Hezbollah's making of local policies in south-Lebanon helps to unpack Islamist discourse on marginalization and discrimination, and demonstrates how Islamist parties are, in many cases, in a continuous search of legitimacy from central governments and the international community in order to maintain their leadership over policy making within their local communities.