

John L. Esposito & Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think*. New York: Gallup Press, 2007. xvi + 204 pages.

Mansoor Moaddel, ed., *Values and Perceptions of the Islamic and Middle Eastern Publics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. xx + 355 pages.

A “Global War” or a “Global Struggle”?

Seven years now separate us from 9/11, and the United States apparently has a public relations problem. Though few in the press and even fewer scholars have embraced the U.S. government’s prescribed solution, since January 2008 the United States no longer has been officially engaged in a “Global War on Terrorism,” or GWOT. That month, at the direction of the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. government officials were directed to jettison the GWOT from their vocabulary. At least until January 2009, when new wordsmiths arrive in Washington, Homeland Security would have it be said that the United States is pursuing a “Global Struggle for Security and Progress,” the newly preferred war-moniker for the final Bush year.

In the precise sense George Orwell anticipated, in his 1946 essay “Politics and the English Language,” that “the great enemy of clear language is insincerity,”¹ this announcement of the death of the official term “GWOT” is insincere. On the ground in Afghanistan and Iraq, from the air in Pakistan and Somalia, and throughout the world in less visible ways, Muslims are still being detained and are still dying at the hands of the U.S. Armed Forces in the year 2008. Our state, if not our whole nation, remains at war. But naming it a “war on terrorism” is said to be breeding a misunderstanding of American purposes. In an age in which it is now officially inconvenient to refer to the enemies of the United States as “*jihadis*” or as “Islamists,” how shall we think about our potential adversaries? With descriptors such as “Islamic terrorist” and “*Salafist*” also forbidden, how shall we speak of the actual enemies of the United States?

In different ways, these two new books embrace the rationale for this search for a new lexicon. John Esposito and Dalia Mogahed use findings from survey research among Muslim publics to describe a struggle different from the one Americans have come to know. They argue: “Muslims truly reject terrorism” (p. 95), only a “fringe minority support it” (p. 182); so the modern collision of cultures must be “an ‘out group’ activity as any other violent crime” (p. 95). Both books demonstrate the authors’ perceptions of the inadequacy of code words such as “the clash of civilizations,” a phrase that spread in the decade following Samuel P. Huntington’s (of Harvard) use of the phrase as the title of a summer 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article.²

Esposito & Mogahed: Popular Press Masquerading as Scholarship

Esposito and Mogahed feign to present an academic study, but Gallup's preference for mass audiences has ensured that footnoting to their polls' findings, orientation to existing social science theories, and information about the surveys' methodologies are all minimized. An appendix supplies a brief (four-page) overview on this latter point, but it is cursory and is oddly paired with a chatty, ten-page second appendix that describes the history of carrying out these polls. Only high points of the methodologies emerge; and, while cryptic asides reveal, for example, that geographic "areas that threaten the safety of interviewing staff are excluded" (p. 169), no further guidance is provided regarding what this practice did to undermine the representativeness of any national sample in the heart of this research, the 2005–6 Gallup World Poll. Nor are full results of the national samples themselves ever provided in the book, limiting the utility of the volume to a *SERAS* reader who will look, in vain, to find particular information about the distinct views of those Muslims polled in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Uzbekistan, or other Asian states listed as included by Gallup.

A mere 166 pages of large-print text suffice for Esposito and Mogahed to extrapolate the opinions of one billion Muslims. Despite this brevity, direct quotations of anonymous individuals' views manage to be included on many pages, suggesting they emerged as responses to open-ended survey questions. Many didn't. Included among these illustrations are cherry-picked remarks lifted out of context from many other sources; and nearly all of the most arresting anecdotes have no connection to the Gallup surveys other than that they support the editors' perspective on what "Muslims really think." Stylistically, this book appears to have been designed to be leafed through while waiting in an airport, as its numerous boxed sidebars pack summaries of what seem to be key survey findings to assist those too busy to pore over the short book itself. Readers who penetrate the breezy, bullet point-riddled narrative will discover no complete tables, no charts comparing Asian Muslims' views with Middle Eastern Muslims' views; even a list of the questions asked in the actual surveys is absent from the book.

Most readers of Esposito and Mogahed, therefore, are likely to linger over sidebars that leap out to report what seem to be key facts. The impression conveyed advances most the belief that massive misunderstandings have guided the Bush administration's approach to the post-9/11 global security situation. Consider this arrestingly editorial sidebar on page 97: "There are 1.3 billion Muslims today worldwide. If the 7% (91 million) of the politically radicalized continue to feel politically dominated, occupied, and disrespected, the West will have little, if any, chance of changing their

minds.” That heady mix of (apparent) survey results and conjecture appears directly adjacent to this conclusion in the text that “about 9 in 10 Muslims are moderates.” On page 182, we learn that “there is no significant difference in the level of personal piety between the majority who condemn terrorism and the fringe minority who condone it.” Since tables that report the data from which these two insights emerged appear nowhere in the book, the reader cannot discover how large the “fringe” is in key places, e.g., Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, or Indonesia. And just what “moderate” means to Esposito and Mogahed proves equally elusive to the reader. Contradictions are never reconciled between what (by Western standards) appear to be modern views of Saudi women favoring the right to drive an automobile, on the one hand, and survey reports stressing a widespread embrace of a preference to be governed by Islamic *shari‘a* law, a decidedly anti-modern set of social and criminal codes, on the other hand.

Moaddel: Sound Scholarship, Useful Conclusions

The breezy and essentially *a priori* conclusions that abound in Esposito and Mogahed are nowhere to be found in the collection edited by Mansoor Moaddel, a volume that gives scholars much stronger guidance. *Values and Perceptions of the Islamic and Middle Eastern Publics* approaches very differently the issue of what Muslims think. Refreshingly, Asian Muslims are included to a greater degree than the title would suggest. Granted, some chapters will reinforce Asian scholars’ traditional tendencies to lump Asian residents’ perspectives together nominally (e.g., Jordanians, Iraqis) with those of residents of non-Asian, Arabian-derivative cultures (e.g., Algerians, Egyptians). In this vein, widely respected comparative political scientist Ronald Inglehart (University of Michigan) carefully presents results of a survey-based inquiry into attitudes toward democracy in four Arab states. But Inglehart also presents, in another chapter, complete data that compare the worldviews of Islamic publics; this latter chapter can usefully be read by an Asianist to compare South Asians’ views with those of other Muslims. Moreover, some of what seems to be focused solely on matters usually outside the purview of Asian studies also turns out to have heuristic value. At a time when the schism between Sunni and Shi‘a Muslims is gaining relevance in non-Middle Eastern states such as Pakistan, Inglehart, Mark Tessler (political science, University of Michigan), and editor Moaddel (sociology, Eastern Michigan University) have contributed an illuminating study of the impact of war on levels of xenophobia among social groups in Iraq.

The international team of contributors to the Moaddel study includes major figures in academic survey research. Ten of the twelve chapters are careful empirical studies. Among them, and of greatest interest to scholars of Asian studies, is an excellent seven-nation comparative inquiry into the

implications of attitudes toward economic justice in the context of *shari'a* law by senior sociologists Nancy J. Davis (DePauw University) and Robert V. Robinson (Indiana University). By including Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Indonesia in their survey, Davis and Robinson demonstrate to Asian-focused scholars the importance of weighing public opinion in these Asian countries in comparison to views of Middle Eastern (i.e., Jordanian, Saudi Arabian, Algerian, and Egyptian) publics. Interesting findings emerge. Regarding the importance of *shari'a* as a guide to government, the three Asian samples differ from each other more than they depart from the Middle Eastern publics' views. Majorities in all seven states view it as "important" or "very important" that "good government" be one that "should implement only the laws of the *shari'a*" (p. 141); but nearly a third of Bangladeshis (31.0 percent) and 21.6 percent of Indonesians—yet only 7.5 percent of Pakistanis—dissent from this majority view.

Some of the volume falls beyond even a generous definition of Asian studies, but engaged readers will nevertheless be drawn to read more about, for example, how Moroccans and Egyptians responded to 9/11 (Moaddel and the American University in Cairo's Abdul-Hamid Abdul-Latif). Thus the volume succeeds: All contributions proceed after having been built around solid orientations to recognizable academic literature across the social sciences. Each chapter speaks to the adequacy of major theories appropriate to its focus and to the study of Asia, ranging from modernization and development theories, to the impact of an oil-export economy on state formation (the "rentier state" hypothesis), to cross-regional debates about key features of democratic transitions. Throughout, the volume employs and reports clearly about appropriate methodologies to engage important questions, rooting its topical and contemporary focus in a manner to enlarge the needed realm required for policy thinking.

The editor has done a superb job orienting the book overall within accepted methods and questions central to comparative study in the social sciences. Of greatest personal interest is Tessler's comparative study of how Islamic identity has affected attitudes toward democracy in the North African Maghreb region plus the nominally Asian state of Jordan. The portrait that emerged shows considerable variation in the preferences of different national samples regarding the degree of proper influence for Islam over politics and public life. Greatest enthusiasm for religion in politics was found in Egypt, and lowest enthusiasm for it turned up in Algeria—i.e., in the setting in which the greatest amount of political violence has accompanied struggles between secular and Islamist groups. Two of the conclusions that emerge from Tessler's research merit special attention: "support for political Islam does not lead to unfavorable attitudes toward democracy" (p. 120), and "cultural explanations alleging that Islam discourages or even prevents the emergence of support for democracy are misguided, indeed,

misleading” (p. 122). Would this conclusion also be true in predominantly Muslim states in Asia? Further inquiries on these matters that focus on Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia will likely follow.

Reading into Guidance for the Future

Tessler carefully avoids leaping atop a soapbox to pronounce policy implications, but American readers in 2008 would be well advised to feel less constrained. As the nation debates alternative courses amid three taxing wars, guidance from those familiar with a sound analysis of facts surely should be preferred over guidance based solely on prejudice or half-baked marketing theories. Recent tinkering by the Bush administration in the realm of diction has suggested our war difficulties best can be finessed by essentially “re-branding” key terms used to describe a continuing, even broadening, conflict that must be won militarily. Closer attention to the analysis of the diverse preferences of Muslim peoples—such as those provided by the contributors to the Moaddel volume, on the other hand, might point us toward changed policies. In light of the short-lived but long-abandoned “Democracy in the Middle East” initiative of the George W. Bush era, one ironic feature of that change might well be a renewed emphasis on overcoming the several difficult obstacles to promoting genuine democracy not only in the Middle East but also throughout the Muslim world, including in South and Southeast Asia.

GORDON L. BOWEN
Mary Baldwin College

Notes

¹George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language.” Reprinted in *Essays*, ed. John Carey (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 954–67: 964.

²Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22–49.