

Full Course Title: Century Foundation: How Does Power Affect Islamist Ideology?

Course Title for Registration System: Century Found.: Islamists & Power

Course Number: SIPAU9000.004

Faculty Advisor: Thanassis Cambanis

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Meeting Date/s Times: Mondays 4:10P – 6:00P

Location: IAB 501A

Office Hours: TBD

Credits: 3

Course Overview:

Brief description of client:

The Century Foundation, a non-partisan think tank based in New York City that studies, among other things, the challenge of "restoring America's international credibility as an effective and cooperative leader in responding to global security and economic dangers."

Client Project Director Contact Information
Michael Wahid Hanna, fellow and program officer
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Background

Mr. Hanna runs several Century Foundation initiatives, including a project seeking a regional solution for the Afghan conflict, bringing together influential interlocutors from all the major organizations and governments involved in Afghanistan and trying to create workable solutions to pass on to the political echelon. He is one of the most prominent analytical voices on the Arab spring, and has researched and written extensively about Iraq, Israel-Palestine and Egypt.

From The Century Foundation's website:

The Century Foundation, founded in 1919 by the progressive businessman Edward A. Filene, is a nonprofit public policy research institution committed to the belief that a mix of effective government, open democracy, and free markets is the most effective solution to the major challenges facing the United States. Our staff, fellows, and contract authors produce publications and participate in events that (1) explain and analyze public issues in plain language, (2) provide facts and opinions about the strengths and weaknesses of different policy strategies, and (3) develop and call attention to distinctive ideas that can work.

The Century Foundation's long history of providing reliable and insightful analysis, as well as our

decades of experience in convening bipartisan, diverse task forces and working groups, particularly distinguishes us from other think tanks. Political forces have swung dramatically during the passing decades and surely will again in the future. But our commitment to offering reason and facts in the pursuit of national progress endures.

Summary of project:

The goal of this project is to fill a void in the literature for policy makers, with two primary goals:

1. Clarifying distinctions among the growing, and variegated, body of powerful political groups that self-identify as "Islamist."
2. Seeking possible ways to moderate Islamist groups, drawing on the experiences of Islamist movements that have taken municipal power in a wide variety of contexts. These disparate cases have yet to be compared, and little writing has explored the nexus of municipal governance and Islamist ideology.

The team will build on last year's project, adding two new case studies: Turkey (probably Istanbul) and Gaza. The team will update and harmonize the data from all four cases. Finally, the team will study and make recommendations for a clearer terminology for policy-makers to apply to Islamist political groups.

We will analyze the lessons learned from the ascension of Islamist groups to municipal power in several different contexts, and to compile some clear recommendations for US policy makers who wish to encourage nonviolence and political moderation.

An extensive body of data has emerged over the last decades concerning the behavior and ideology of Islamist groups that have won local power and deliver public goods and services to their constituents and to a broader community. This body of information includes government reports, think tank reports, academic studies, journal articles, and in some cases, journalism.

Most writing has focused on Hamas, to the exclusion of the other Islamist movements that have acquired a growing share of local (and sometimes national) power, especially in Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, Jordan, Lebanon, the Gulf, and the Palestinian territories. Very little work has synthesized the very narrow studies done by some scholars and organizations. Very little work has tried to describe the lower grass-roots or town-hall level practice of Islamist groups.

Now that Islamist groups have proved their staying power, policy makers are looking for policy tools to moderate change. We can help provide an understanding of what the transition to Islamist governance might mean.

There is currently a dearth of literature that looks broadly at the question of how governing - in particular at the local or municipal level - affects Islamist movements and their ideology. Our findings will be of acute interest to many communities of policy-makers:

- State department officials working on democracy promotion and human rights
- Regional officers working on countries where Islamist parties have become indelible players in the political scene (Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq, Jordan, West Bank/Gaza, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, etc.)
- Defense Department officials handling policy in areas dominated by Islamists, and concerned about strategic relationships with states that host potent Islamist movements

- Counter-terrorism officials who believe there's a link between poor governance, authoritarianism and the rise of violent takfiri Salafists

The purpose of this project is to select exemplary case studies from different contexts, and then to compile a thorough narrative of each case. The team will then make a comparative analysis, from which it will draw lessons learned and recommendations that can guide US policy makers whose goal is to promote nonviolence and political moderation.

The central research questions are:

- How does political Islam accommodate itself to power?
- What factors correlate with an increase in extremism? What factors correlate with an increase in moderation?
- How does wielding local power affect the national ideology of Islamist movements?
- In cases where movements have moderated upon taking power, what were the mechanics by which they moderated?
- Are there outside levers that actors such as the United States can affect?

The student team will work closely with the New York-based client to find and compile the documentary evidence to assemble the case studies.

The final product will include:

1. A concise policy memorandum, no more than 20 pages in length, geared toward recommending concrete steps that policy makers can take based on the case study analysis.
2. A longer narrative report with the narratives and harmonized data from all four cases.

The research team will present the memorandum at a session at the New York headquarters of The Century Foundation.

Deliverables and Timetable

January 2009: Workshop begins

Feb. 1: Detailed work plan, teams begin data collection

March 1: Mid-term briefing to client

March 10: Mid-term assessments from instructor to students

By middle of March: Data collection should be complete

Team begins collaborative process of analyzing results, determining lessons learned, crafting recommendations

Mid-April: Draft report to Century Foundation, adviser

April: Capstone presentations at SIPA

End of April: Client presentation in New York. Final paper submitted to client five days before presentation.

Special skills/knowledge needed by team members:

Students must be able to devote at least four hours a week to meeting as a group – once during the scheduled class time and one other time when the adviser will not be present. During the final six

weeks of the project two weekly group meetings will be necessary. Students should make sure their schedule allows such flexibility and that they are sufficiently interested in the research question to devote time to it.

Teamwork and work ethic are the vital ingredients of success. We are looking for a combination of complementary skills and experience. Each student ought to have a cross section of the listed skills, as well as proficiency in English.

- Independent research, investigation, interviewing
- Legal work, rights analysis
- Archival research (FRUS, National Archives)
- Clear persuasive writing
- Policy analysis. Experience with Department of State, Congress, Executive Branch
- Regional expertise
- Foreign languages, especially languages useful for our case studies: Arabic, Dari, Pashtu, Urdu, Turkish

Initial meeting(s) with your student team in late November or early December, if applicable:

Dates for meetings with client, if already scheduled:

Student selection: [All eligible students may apply for up to five workshops through a special online application process from October 15th until October 31st. Assignment of students will be coordinated by the Office of Academic Affairs, and relevant faculty will be consulted about team membership for their workshop(s).]

Grading (students receive an individual grade):

Grades for the workshop will be based on the following criteria:

- Quality of individual written work (10%)
- Quality of participation in class, Peer review (20%)
- Feedback from the client (20%)
- Overall professionalism, including timeliness, ability to work with team, etc. (20%)
- Quality of team's final report and briefing (30%)

***Academic Integrity Statement*:**

The School of International & Public Affairs does not tolerate cheating and/or plagiarism in any form. Those students who violate the Code of Academic & Professional Conduct will be subject to the Dean's Disciplinary Procedures. Cut and paste the following link into your browser to view the Code of Academic & Professional Conduct online.

http://sipa.columbia.edu/resources_services/student_affairs/academic_policies/deans_discipline_policy.html

Please familiarize yourself with the proper methods of citation and attribution. The School provides some useful resources online; we strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with these various styles before conducting your research:

http://sipa.columbia.edu/resources_services/student_affairs/academic_policies/code_of_conduct.html

Violations of the Code of Academic & Professional Conduct should be reported to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.