JILLIAN SCHWEDLER, *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Pp. 276. $84.00 cloth, $29.99 paper.

REVIEWED BY FLAGG MILLER, Department of Religious Studies, University of California at Davis, Davis, Calif.; e-mail: fmiller@ucdavis.edu
doi:10.1017/S0020743808081579

Throughout the 1990s, U.S. foreign-policy experts identified the Middle East as ripe for "democratization." The assignation not only gave a humane rationale to neoliberal economic initiatives but also justified ranking countries along a scale of transitions that were held to be "successful," "stalled," or "failed." In the latter cases, analysts pointed to the obstinacy of religious conservatives in adapting to the more reasonable paths of modern civil reformers, giving rise to narratives of clashes between Islamist "radicals" and "moderates" that continue to structure many assessments of political Islam today. Jillian Schwedler's comparative study of major Islamist parties in Jordan and Yemen provides a bold and refreshing set of arguments for moving beyond stultified typologies of political pluralism.

Seeking to correct the tendency of such typologies to ignore participants' own frameworks of political discourse and action, *Faith in Moderation* shows how commitments toward pluralism and religious tolerance are made through legal activities, formal political structures, and narratives of justifiable action that rarely receive attention in the literature on democratic transitions. Schwedler's focus on two major Islamist parties in Jordan and Yemen (the Islamic Action Front [IAF] and the Reform Congregation respectively) provides a generative comparative framework, the more so given the author's extensive research over thirty-eight months from 1995 to 2003.

Schwedler's thesis is formulated carefully. Much appreciated are bold, policy-oriented questions at the beginning of many chapters that lend valuable comparative leverage to her analysis of specific cases. Chapter 1, for example, challenges conventional wisdom with the following question: does inclusion in pluralist political processes really lead political actors to gradually adopt "a more open and tolerant worldview?" (p. 21). Schwedler's principal criticism is directed at a range of problematic assumptions taken by inclusion-moderation theorists, such as the equation of neutral public discourses with pro-Western voices and the association of dissenters with the "radicals" who must be "included." Such approaches not only fail to acknowledge the diversity of reformist discourses that have long been employed by Islamists but also provide no theories for explaining how native frameworks of inclusion or exclusion work in different contexts, function in relation to each other, or change over time. In order to understand how moderation takes root, Schwedler suggests, one must attend to variables of discourse and legalization that operate beyond the control of formal state institutions and processes of governance.

Chapters 2 and 3 locate these variables in shifting political opportunity structures, processes of internal group organization and decision making, and efforts to establish boundaries for justifiable action. Focusing on limited political liberalization in Jordan and Yemen during the 1990s, Schwedler argues that the IAF and the Reform Congregation gained strength not as a result of greater participation enabled by democratization but rather by cooperation with state elites in suppressing socialist dissent (especially from Palestinians in Jordan and southern-based opposition groups in Yemen). The implications of such Islamist gains for "moderation" broadly writ are explored in the rest of the book.

Chapters 3 through 6 advance Schwedler's principal thesis that although political liberalization has led the IAF to engage rather deeply with discourses of moderation, Yemen's Reform Congregation has resisted moderation and indeed has fueled public support for antipluralist ideology. Part of this argument is substantiated in Chapter 3 by comparing the much longer

collaboration between the Muslim Brotherhood and the state in Jordan with the sudden, top-down foundation of the Reform Congregation in Yemen. Whereas the IAF drew effectively from the Muslim Brotherhood's long-established credibility as an advocate for Muslim civil reform, modeling much of its organization and platforms accordingly, Yemen's Reform Congregation cobbled together a far more disparate assembly of Islamists, tribesmen, and merchants; it was mobilized more toward helping the administration disarm socialist opponents than toward rallying popular support for Islamic reform.

Chapters 4 and 5 are, to my mind, some of the most valuable of the book, especially where they use creative source material to examine the contrasting commitments of the Jordanian and Yemeni Islamists. Such material includes popular narratives of the function of democracy and Islam in political life and of organizational efforts to justify political actions that end up profoundly conditioning political discourse and shaping future horizons of reform.

At times, Schwedler's aim of highlighting the Reform Congregation's conservatism leads her to underemphasize the pluralist legacies of Yemeni nationalism. This is especially the case with southern Yemen. Ideologies from Maoism to Ba'thism, for example, were adopted by religious elites (*sayyids*) as well as laborers in rural and urban areas since the 1960s. Also, contrary to her claim that "[u]nlike Jordan, North and South Yemen each lacked a single dominant national political narrative before unification" (p. 136), southern Yemenis across the country had received extensive exposure to nationalist ideals through vigorous labor unions, literacy campaigns, and cultural education programs since the 1960s. Still, Schwedler's primary objective of demonstrating the ways conservative elements in the Reform Congregation have quashed such pluralist legacies, especially through collaboration with the ruling government party, is well developed.

The book's index could have been prepared more carefully. "Shaykh 'Abd Allah ibn Husayn al-Ahmar" is curiously filed with S entries (for "Shaykh") rather than A, and footnoted material is indexed haphazardly ("Dib" is noted but not "Wedeen." p. 119). The rest of the manuscript is fairly well prepared, underscoring the fine quality of Schwedler's contribution.