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Better elected Islamists than dictators?

A reader directs our attention to the [Intelligence Squared](#) debate putting the proposition before the house: [Better elected Islamists than dictators](#). For the affirmative are Reuel Marc Gerecht and Brian Katulus. For the negative are Daniel Pipes and Zuhr Jasser.

Intelligence Squared provides the premise of the debate: “The popular uprisings of the Arab Spring have left a leadership void that Islamist parties have been quick to fill. A longtime supporter of former strongmen like Egypt’s Mubarak and Tunisia’s Ben Ali, the U.S. now faces the uncomfortable result of Arab democracy—the rise of Islamist parties that are less amenable to the West than their autocratic predecessors. Will the Islamists, who once embraced violence, slowly liberalize as they face the difficulties of state leadership? Or will it mean the growth of anti-Americanism and radicalization in the region?”

The video runs nearly two hours, but after a ten-minute introduction, the debate is a fast-moving, entertaining and educational affair. Gerecht and Pipes in particular present a learned and spirited contrast from which one can learn.

I add three footnotes. First, allusions are made to a few books that warrant attention: Gerecht’s book [Know Thine Enemy: A Spy’s Journey Into Revolutionary Iran](#), written under the pseudonym Edward Shirley, and Pipes’s book [Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where It Comes From](#). I believe reference is also made to Gerecht’s [The Wave: Man, God and the Ballot Box In the Middle East](#).

Second, Gerecht and Pipes should be on university faculties teaching students who have a contribution to make to our country. That they are making their living at think tanks is a sad reflection on the state of higher education.

Third, Intelligence Squared has posted the results of the vote on the debate [here](#).