

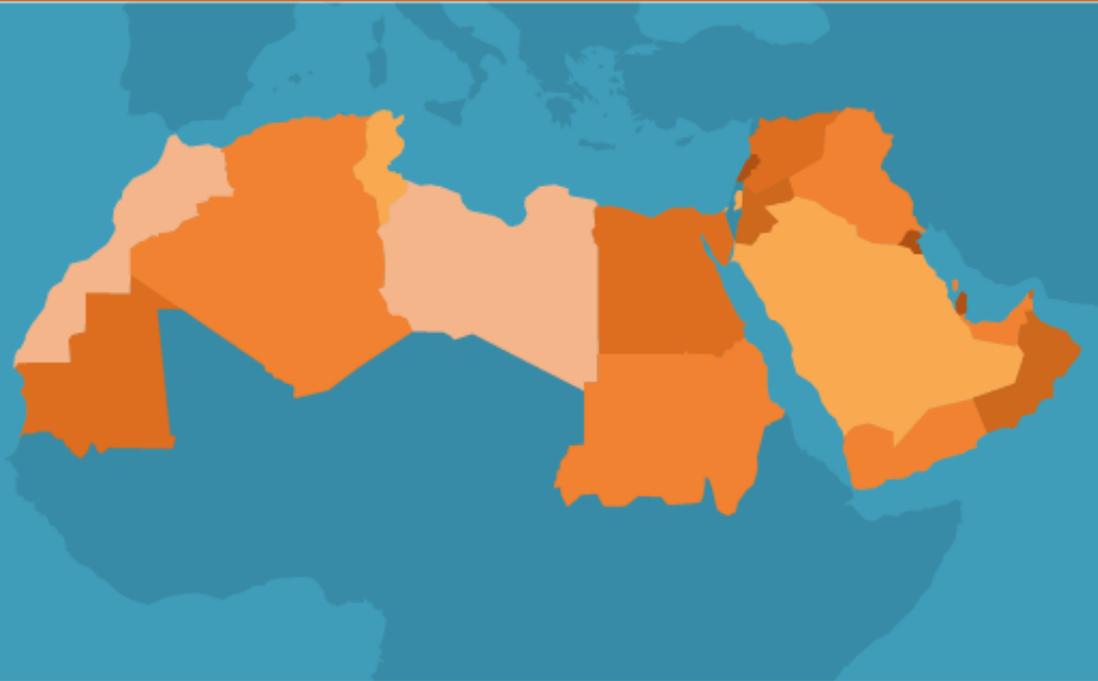
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Godly Governance:

*A Cross-National Examination of Religious Politics
in Arab Muslim-Majority Countries*

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الباروميتر العربي
ARAB BAROMETER



Godly Governance: A Cross-National Examination of Religious Politics in Arab Muslim-Majority Countries¹

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Abstract:

This paper seeks to investigate Muslim support for religious governance in Arab Muslim-Majority countries, focusing on the role of personal piety. It does so by exploring the relevant literature and deriving hypotheses from it, which are subsequently tested by using survey data of the Arab Barometer (Wave III and IV). The following analysis conducts hierarchical linear regression with the dependent variable ideological support for religious governance (Islamism). The analysis finds that religiosity indeed plays a major role in explaining support for religious governance, however this effect depends substantially on an individual's interpretation of their religion as well as the tendency to endorse patriarchal values. The findings of the analysis suggest that further studies in the field should account for the multidimensional impact of religiosity and avoid essentialist explanations that inextricably link Muslim religiosity to support for religious governance.

¹Note: Fabio Votta is currently enrolled as a graduate student of *Empirical Political- and Social Research* at the University of Stuttgart. This paper has not been published or accepted for publication at this time. In the interest of reproducibility, the entire code that was used to generate the content of this paper can be found in the following GitHub Repository: <https://github.com/favstats/GodlyGovernance>

1 Introduction

Ever since the upheavals following the 2011 Arab Spring revolutions and demonstrations, much has been written on Arab voting preferences and the political systems to follow dictatorships and authoritarian regimes in the Middle East. Given the importance of religion in the region, some scholars asked whether free and fair elections in Arab countries could indeed lead to liberal democratic outcomes or if secular-nationalist authoritarians would only be replaced by their authoritarian Islamist counterparts, letting the Arab Spring become an *Islamist Winter* (Totten, Schenker, & Abdul-Hussain, 2012, p. 23). As in the case of Egypt, the first free and fair elections in 2012 after the revolution brought the Muslim Brotherhood under Mohammed Mursi into power, who was subsequently perceived to be undermining the gains of the revolution by installing authoritarianism under the premise of an Islamist agenda. This situation ultimately culminated in a military coup supported by popular demonstrations, ousting the Islamists from power in 2013. This led to a crackdown on Islamist parties and organizations, including massacres and mass incarceration (cf. Arafa, 2015, pp. 859–860). While some state of stability has again been established in Egypt, the question still remains whether religious authoritarianism was again replaced by a militaristic and authoritarian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Seven years after the hopes of the Arab Spring the state of affairs seems meager. Syria has gone into the eighth year of civil war, while Lybia and Yemen too have devolved into conflict. Most markedly, Tunisia appears to be on the road of reconciling Islamism and democracy, with the Islamist Ennahda party making wide concessions to liberal democratic ideals (cf. Hamid, 2016, pp. 185–187). Notably, the problem of the pendulum swing between religious and secular-nationalist authoritarianism in the Arab world is not necessarily a new phenomenon. The impending threat of Islamist takeover has often served as a reason to crackdown on otherwise free elections. To name one example, the Algerian civil war in 1991 started with a military coup to prevent the democratically elected *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS) from coming into power (cf. Hamid, 2016, pp. 92–93).

Albeit this might raise negative prospects for the future of democracy in the Arab world, many studies have found that Arab citizens, despite all the upheavals, still overwhelmingly favor democracy (cf. Robbins, 2015, pp. 82–83). On the other hand, many claims have been made about the compatibility of Islam and democracy. Those who have argued that Islam itself is an impediment to democratization, often invoke religious leaders and scholars who consider the notion of democracy as un-Islamic (cf. Jawad, 2013, pp. 1–2). Other religious scholars have argued for democracy, especially based on the Islamic concepts of consultation (*shurah*) and consensus (*ijma*) (cf. Nafissi, 2005, p. 415). An interesting approach comes from Lily Zubaidah Rahim in her editorial book about Muslim secular democracy, where she promotes the idea of *wasatiyyah* (moderate, centrist, or middle path), which rejects both “assertive secularist states (France, Kemalist Turkey)” as well as “conservative Islamists and political elites who demand that the state be governed by

comprehensive sharia” (Rahim, 2013, p. 2).

In order to resolve the complex nexus between secularism and Islamism in the Arab world, it is helpful to look at the preferences of ordinary Arab citizens and how they see the relationship between Islam and politics. This paper therefore seeks to investigate the determinants of support for religious governance in Arab Muslim-Majority countries by exploring the relevant literature and deriving hypotheses from it, which are subsequently tested by using survey data of the Arab Barometer. An increasing range of scholars has already established some important research in this area. Most notably, Mark Tessler, who is a leading head of the Arab Barometer research project, has written extensively on the relationship between religion and politics in the Arab world and recently published a comprehensive book where he summarized his findings of various studies conducted in the Middle East (cf. Tessler, 2015).

The main research question of this paper states as follows: *Why do Muslim Arab citizens support religious governance and what role does religiosity play?* The following section shortly discusses the usage of terminology and introduces a definition of Islamism (Subsection 1.1). Subsequently, possible determinants of support for religious governance are derived from a review of relevant literature (Section 2). The next two sections discuss the Arab Barometer data, as well as the methodology used in this paper (Section 3) and present the results of the analysis (Section 4). In the end, the findings of the analysis will be summarized and the conclusion gives an answer to the research question (Section 5).

1.1 Towards a Definition of Islamism

Political Islam or Islamism² is a term that is often employed in various contexts to describe a range of political parties, organizations and movements, from the Ayatollah regime in Iran, mainstream political parties such as the Justice and Development Party in Turkey (AKP), to the the terror militia Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). On a first glance, those organizations seem to be quite different, both in substance and methodology, therefore one should be careful when ascribing a single term to all of these entities. What binds all of these groups and parties in a common nexus is the vocation of Islam as a social and political force, however broadly one might define the relevance of religion in the process. One should also be careful to not lump in pious Muslims into the nexus of Political Islam. A sincere follower of Islam could live his/her life in accordance with his or her interpretation of Islam, depending on which, religiosity may or may not have any political implication at all.

On defining Islamism, some scholars have focused on a definition based on certain actions of individuals: “[a]ll who seek to Islamize their environment, whether in relation to their lives in society, their family circumstances, or the workplace, may be described as Islamists” (Roy & Sfeir, 2007 VIII). Alternatively, Denoëux notes that Islamism can be seen as “a form of instrumentalization of

²Both terms will be used interchangeably.

Islam by individuals, groups and organizations that pursue political objectives” with the purpose of providing “political responses to today’s societal challenges by imaging a future, the foundations for which rest on reappropriated, reinvented concepts borrowed from Islamic tradition” (Denoeux, 2002, p. 61) and Bassam Tibi simply calls it “religionized politics” (Tibi, 2012, p. 22). Therefore, contrary to the lay use of the term Islamism common in public discourse and media, by no means all Islamists endorse or perpetrate terrorism nor do they believe in violence to achieve their goals. Islamist organizations range from groups providing charity and health services to parliamentary parties that endorse democratic principles and to those that only use democracy in order to come into power without sharing any of its core commitments (cf. March, 2015, p. 104). Lastly, Islamists who do endorse violence are often referred to as *Jihadists*, with the core distinction that they support and perpetrate violence as a means of achieving their often times revolutionary goals and see organizations that seek to accommodate themselves into democratic politics as sell-outs (cf. Moghadam, 2012, p. 100).

Others have focused on the importance of traditional Islamic law or *shari’a* as a basis of legislation (cf. Soage, 2009, p. 893), which can be referred to as shari’a law or shari’a governance when applied to politics. In such a political system the government’s legitimacy is not subject to democratic sovereignty and based on divine revelation, although this may not necessarily mean that some form of elections or democratic accountability couldn’t exist under an Islamist system (cf. Jawad, 2013, pp. 1-2). However as Abootalebi notes, it does imply that possible candidates or parties can only move within the restricted framework of shari’a as interpreted by a body of Islamic scholars, also referred to as *ulama*, who are given considerable power by applying their interpretations of scriptures that are used to be translated into law (cf. Abootalebi, 1999, pp. 15-16).

A different approach to categorize Islamism is used by Fuller, who describes it as a form of Muslim identity politics: “Political Islam seeks to create a single Islamic identity that takes precedence, at least in one’s moral life, over even the national identity” (Fuller, 2003, p. 17). According to Fuller, this entails a homogeneous and identitarian societal conception, according to which all citizen would belong to the political prescriptions of the “true faith”. From the perspective of this collectivist thinking, the importance of the individual is marginalized and is only valued as part of the religious community, or *umma*.

Lastly, Andrew March defines Islamism as “the range of modern political movements, ideological trends, and state-directed policies concerned with giving Islam an authoritative status in political life” (March, 2015, p. 104). Therefore, Islamism is an umbrella term for all political views and actions which strive to influence the social and political order in the name of Islam. As March notes, the ideological origin of the Islamist movement lies with Islamic revivalist efforts in the second half of the nineteenth century, which came as an reaction to Western influence and colonization and the organizational roots can be traced back to the Muslim Brotherhood founded in Egypt in 1928 (cf. March, 2015, pp. 106-107). All later currents were and are intended to make Islam not only a binding guideline for an individual but also for social

and political life. This means that beliefs and ideas pertaining to Islamism generally advocate some form of unity between state and religion (*dar-din-dawla*), which could be described as an institutionalization of religion (cf. March, 2015, p. 112). Given the implication of the literature, Islamism is defined in the following way:

Islamism is a political ideology comprising various political movements and policies based on a political interpretation of the religion of Islam with the aim of giving Islam an institutionalized and authoritative status in social and political life, which may include the implementation of shari'a governance and/or the establishment of an Islamic state (some form of government consisting of explicitly religious individuals or parties) based on a collectivist Islamic identity.

2 Theory

The following section will introduce different theories and possible explanations for the support for religious governance that were gathered from the relevant literature.

2.1 Secularization Theory

What is secularization? Demerath understands secularization in terms of degrees on a spectrum between “[...] conditions where religion is all dominant to conditions in which religion has disappeared altogether” (Demerath III., 2007, p. 61) and locates most existing societies somewhere in between these two extreme poles. Demerath III. (2007, p. 63) further notes that it is important to consider the analytical levels on which secularization can occur, namely on the:

Macro-level, concerning the whole society, culture and political structures,

Meso-level, concerning the influence and importance of religious institutions and organizations,

Micro-level, concerning individual forms of religious belief and behavior.

However, as Chavez argues, secularization can be understood primarily as the decline of religious institutional power rather than a permanent decline in religious beliefs on the individual level, as exemplified by the high religiosity rates in the distinctly secular political system of the United States of America (cf. Chaves, 1994, pp. 749-750). Therefore, secularization does not have to occur at all three levels simultaneously, nor does secularization on one level necessarily demand secularization at another level, even though of course the three levels are interrelated (cf. Casanova, 2006, p. 8). Thus, the following definition is proposed for this paper:

Secularization is the gradual process of institutional differentiation whereby religion is legally, normatively and/or bureaucratically segregated from the institutions of politics and societal power. This includes the decline of laws based on religious norms or scriptural justification, an increasing disapproval of religious leaders as political leaders and religious institutions and organizations influencing political decision making (cf. Demerath III., 2007, pp. 65–66; Casanova, 2006, p. 7).

How does this process of secularization come about? As Weber notes most famously, secularity is marked with a “disenchantment of the world” (Weber, n.d., p. 30), a worldview that is based on knowledge of this world rather than concerns for the supernatural. This is connected with the idea that through the process of rationalization, scientific progress and increasing awareness of natural explanations, traditional accounts found in religious scripture would become less and less relevant and thus superfluous. Therefore, the process of secularization became interwoven with modernization³, which led many early proponents of classical secularization theory to believe that religion will become “a private affair” (Luckmann, 1967, p. 86) and completely vanish from the public sphere (cf. Berger, 1967, p. 133). However, after the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, creating a modern-day theocracy, the non-wavering importance of Christian evangelicals in US politics and most recently the terror campaign by the self-declared caliphate in Iraq and Syria, the relevancy of religion and especially religious politics seems to have *increased*. After the apparent failure of secularization theory to explain this resurgence of religious politics and among many calls to do away with it altogether, the scholars Inglehart and Norris made it their goal to update the theory so that it is able to account for the cross-national variance of religiosity by postulating that “[s]ecularization is a tendency, not an iron law” (Norris & Inglehart, 2011, p. 5). They introduce the *security axiom* to account for the variance of religious behavior and belief, which according to them is the consequence of poor living conditions and the perception of threats to personal well-being (cf. Norris & Inglehart, 2011, pp. 13–14). In a world full of insecurity and perceived loss of control, religion is a powerful tool for guidance for those seeking to mitigate the effects of vulnerability.⁴ This new framing of secularization theory suggests that attaining material resources and stable living situations, as well as increasing education (as formerly suggested by classical secularization theory) will lead individuals to feel more empowered to deal with the uncertainty and real or perceived grievances of life, which in turn would not only decrease the need for religion to counteract vulnerability, but could also reduce the demand for a public and political role of religion.

Some public opinion studies conducted in the Arab world and other countries seem to support this suggested relationship. For example, using the World

³Some scholars, however have suggested that this connection might be invalid and that there are “multiple modernities”, see Eisenstadt, Shmuel Noah (2000): “Multiple modernities.” *Daedalus* 129.1: 1-29.

⁴For a social psychologist account of this mechanism, see Hogg et al. 2011: “Religion in the face of uncertainty: An uncertainty-identity theory account of religiousness.” *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14.1: 72-83.

Value Survey, Norris found that education is positively related to supporting secularism and secular democracy (cf. Norris, 2013, p. 131). Robbins finds that lower socio-economic indicators are positively associated with supporting Islamist parties and Political Islam in Algeria, Morocco, and the Palestinian territories (cf. Robbins, 2009, pp. 27–28). Lastly, by combining a vast amount of studies conducted in the Middle East, Tessler shows that education has an overall negative effect on supporting Political Islam, however in secular regimes this only seems to be the case for older men and women (cf. Tessler, 2015, pp. 168–169). Thus, given the implications of the literature, the first set of hypotheses can be stated as follows:

Hypothesis H1a: Increasing individual material resources and reduction of existential insecurity marginalizes support for religious governance.

Hypothesis H1b: Increasing intellectual resources marginalize support for religious governance.

2.2 Parochialism

A very different approach to explain the connection between supporting religious governance and the relation to modernization processes is proposed by Ayubi, who states that Islamists are not fundamentally opposed to the ideas that globalization has brought to the Arab world, but their opposition to them arises because modernization had failed *them* as “they desired it so strongly and yet could not get it. Theirs is the proverbial case of ‘sour grape’: they hate modernity because they cannot get it!” (Ayubi, 1993, p. 134). This notion of Islamists as *sour grapes* is also found by LeVine, who states that many Arab societies cling to religious identities “in the face of an imposed neoliberal globalization which has yet to prove it can bring either democracy or freedom” (LeVine, 2013, p. 55). Globalization, the increasing global interconnectivity in economic and cultural affairs, has been argued to produce various counter-movements that seek to remedy negative effects on the poor and working class (economic globalization) and a dislocation of traditional values and indigenous cultures (cultural globalization) (cf. Haidt, 2016, pp. 46–47). The prevalence of such negative attitudes towards globalization has been proposed to be instrumental in the rise of various populist political figures of both the left and right, such as the late President of Venezuela Hugo Chavez (cf. Foer, 2006, pp. 104–105) and most recently US President Donald Trump (cf. Bartels, Oliver, & Rahn, 2016, p. 192). The effects of globalization can be witnessed everywhere where processes of internationalization have taken hold and not last in the Arab world, where it is often perceived as westernization and a continuation of Western imperialism under a new guise, from the economic encroachments of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan (cf. Spierings, 2014, pp. 432–433).

Mahmood argues that Islamist movements have been successful partly due to pious activists who felt that religion and tradition were losing its appeal due to increasing westernization, which had caused immorality to become

widespread (cf. Mahmood, 2011, pp. 44–47). In the terms of one of the most notable political theorists of Political Islam, Sayyid Qutb, this sense of disconnection of the moral sphere is considered to be *jahiliyya*, often translated as the “days of ignorance”. Traditionally, the term describes the condition of Arab tribes before the revelation of the Quran by the Prophet Muhammad, however it has been used by Qutb and following theorists to frame the current status of the world as similarly unenlightened (cf. Toth, 2013, p. 125). This new application of *jahiliyya* is not seen as a historical time period but as an on-going condition, which is said to include “both Western secularism and the local Muslim community permeated by Western influence [...]” and now often “stands for everything barbaric and evil: secularism, [...], democratic legislatures, [...] free (unrestricted) capitalist markets, usury, family disintegration [and] immorality” (Toth, 2013, p. 125). Notably, this notion of moral decline and depravity is also linked to the idea of democratization, as some Islamists maintain that democracy is an “imported solution”, which would lead believers away from divine legitimacy (cf. Tibi, 2012, pp. 96–97).

Thus it is proposed that Arab citizens who foster anti-globalization attitudes are more likely to endorse religious governance in order to emphasize what they see as their native and authentic culture against what is framed by Islamists as an attack on Islamic identity. The hypothesis for this section states as follows:

Hypothesis H2: Parochial viewpoints increase support for religious governance.

2.3 Patriarchal Values

Many studies have been conducted that examine the relationship between Islam and gender equality. Some scholars have suggested that the Islamic religion provides some special hindrances to women’s empowerment in the social, political and economic realm. Angrist identifies three main directions of such arguments: “[...] the substance of Islamic (shari’a) law, which treats men and women differently, [...] the ways in which politicians defer to conservative interpretations of shari’a law in order to build and/or consolidate their legitimacy” and the “contemporary regimes’ need to appease (or at least not inflame) important Islamist constituencies who favor a subordinate role for women” (Angrist, 2012, p. 51). Using empirical data to test this relationship, Rahman conducts a study where she finds that it is mostly the implementation of strict shari’a family law that hinders women’s sociopolitical empowerment in Muslim-Majority countries (cf. Rahman, 2012, p. 360). Furthermore, in line with the argumentation that anti-globalization increases support for religious governance, Moghadam argues that gender relations have become a political issue where Islamists “seek to recuperate traditional patterns, including patriarchal gender relations, in reaction to the ‘westernizing’ trends of globalization” (Moghadam, 2012, p. 49) and have made their case “incumbent on women’s behavior, dress, and appearance” (Moghadam, 2012, pp. 110–111). Indeed Fourati et al. show that more conservative attitudes towards women and the preference for modest clothing increase the likelihood to vote for the Islamist

party in Tunisia (Ennahda) (cf. Fourati, Gratton, & Grosjean, 2016, p. 62). On the other hand, some scholars have suggested that given the importance of religion in the region, women's empowerment can be more successfully achieved through a feminist interpretation of Islam, coining the term *Muslim feminism* which describes "the simultaneous support for women's equality, but a rejection of purely secular interpretation of gender roles and relations" (Fox, Alzwawi, & Refki, 2016, p. 43). However, as Alexander and Welzel quite impressively show in a cross-national study including Muslim respondents all across the world, traditional gender roles and patriarchal values are very widespread with Muslims (cf. Alexander & Welzel, 2011, p. 271). Given that Islamists often endorse such traditional gender roles, it is then hypothesized that they might be able to tap into the widespread support for patriarchal values and turn it into support for religious governance in order to enforce such beliefs (cf. Tessler, 2015, p. 134). Thus the hypothesis for this section is stated as follows:

Hypothesis H3: Patriarchal Values increase the support for religious governance.

2.4 The Role of Religiosity

A commonly proposed explanation for the support for Political Islam is that devout Muslims simply support religious governance out of their religious convictions. However, this explanation lacks scientific value as it cannot account for the subgroup of religious Muslims who do not support Political Islam and at times openly oppose the intermingling of religion with the state. This proposed relationship also falls in danger to become tautological and essentialist in nature, leading to explanations that Muslims support Political Islam *because they are Muslims*. Tessler describes the problematic nature of such arguments as this "mistakenly assume[s] that there are clear and uncontested definitions of what constitute [...] "Muslim" orientations" and "[...] ignores the significant differences that exist between Arab and Muslim countries, as well as the equally important individual-level variation that exists within countries [...] associated with age, education, class, gender, ethnicity, and residence" (Tessler, 2015, pp. 54-55). For example, Bratton finds that the support for shari'a governance in Nigeria is highest among the least devout and only half of religious Muslims share this preference (cf. Bratton, 2003, p. 500). Furthermore, prominent Islamic scholars like Abdullahi An-Naim have proposed that the state has to be neutral and secular in order to guarantee voluntary practice of Islam (cf. An-Naim, 2008, pp. 1-2) and Esposito and Mogahed note that the Gallup Poll survey "indicate[s] that wanting Shari'a does not automatically translate into wanting theocracy" (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007, p. 50) as many who want religiously legitimated laws also endorse democratic principles. Therefore, it is important not to conflate personal religiosity, which entails prayer, mosque attendance, and fasting, with the desire of a specific political system on the grounds of religious convictions.

Nevertheless, one should also not make the mistake to assume no relation-

ship between religiosity and support for a religious system. As Shadi Hamid comments after having interviewed several members of the Muslim Brotherhood, many Muslims have joined the Islamist movement because they want to become better Muslims and see the political application of their faith as a fulfillment of this desire (cf. Hamid, 2016, pp. 9–10). The key differentiation in this paper is that Political Islam is just one of many ways how one might express religiosity and that one should not mistakingly assume that there isn't any significant variation of religious peoples' political preferences in the Arab and Muslim world. It is thus reasonable to theorize that religiosity leads to support for religious governance, however this should not imply that it necessarily has to. Most importantly, within Muslim discourse there is a vibrant dialog on Islamic thought and liberal secular interpretations of Islam exist, which challenge the conservative and theocratic Islam that often dominates the Islamist discourse (An-Naim, 2008; El Fadl, 2014; Hashemi, 2009; Khorchide & Hartmann, 2014; Kurzman, 1998; Sachedina, 2001). For example, Khorchide emphasizes Islamic humanism (cf. Khorchide & Hartmann, 2014, pp. 139–142), El Fadl has made the case for reviving rationalist interpretations of Islam (cf. El Fadl, 2014, pp. 51–52) and Hashemi seeks to reconcile liberal secular democracy with Islamic religiosity (cf. Hashemi, 2009, pp. 171–177). Such liberal and humanist viewpoints are often at odds with Islamist interpretations of Islam, as Islamism necessitates a certain interpretation to become part of law and thus demands that religious beliefs be enforced through “coercion by the state” (An-Naim, 2008, p. 2). Given the implications of this literature, it can be assumed that liberal interpretations of Islam are likely to reduce the support for religious governance.

In line with the previous discussion about patriarchal values (Section 2.3), it is further theorized that religiosity might significantly interact with attitudes towards women. Accordingly, it could be argued that religious individuals with patriarchal sentiments are more likely to support religious governance than their more gender egalitarian counterparts who do not support traditional gender roles. Lastly, more liberal interpretations of Islam are assumed to have a diminished or even reversed effect on the impact of religiosity. The following Hypothesis are thus formulated:

Hypothesis H4a: Religiosity increases the support for religious governance.

Hypothesis H4b: Liberal interpretations of Islam decrease the support for religious governance.

Hypothesis H4c: If an individual endorses patriarchal values, religiosity has a stronger effect on the support for religious governance than for individuals who endorse more gender egalitarian views.

Hypothesis H4d: If an individual endorses liberal interpretations of Islam, religiosity has a diminished or even reversed effect on the support for religious governance.

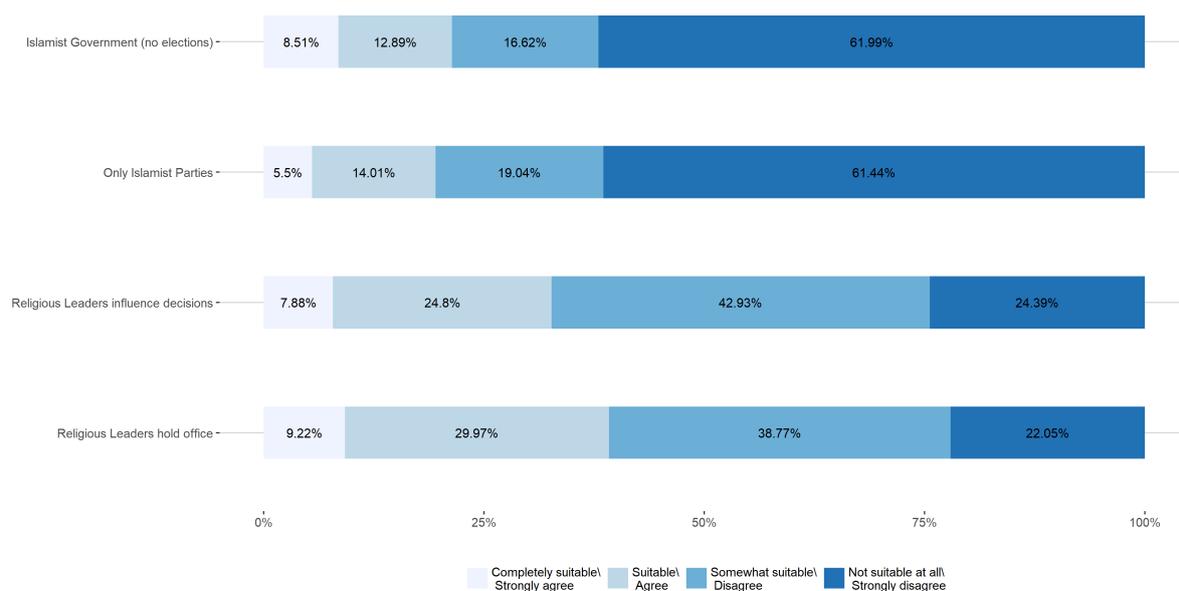
3 Methodology

This section will introduce the research design and methods that are used to test the hypotheses. The analysis in this paper is based on the *Arab Barometer Wave 3 and 4* datasets, which are freely available online.⁵ Given the paper’s focus on Islamic religiosity, only self-identified Muslim respondents will be analyzed. The final dataset includes Muslim respondents from 12 Arab countries.⁶ The analysis seeks to find predictors for the ideological support for religious governance (*Support for Islamism*) in Arab Muslim-Majority countries. First, a principal component analysis is conducted to construct a dependent variable that measures the support for Islamism. Then, the statistical methodology for the main analysis will be introduced. The subject of interest in this paper is the individual, however since the individual respondents are not independent of each other but clustered into 12 Arab countries, a multilevel analysis is appropriate to test the adequacy of the hypotheses. As sample size varies between countries, all analyses in the following sections have been done with the provided weight to ensure nationally representative samples.

Ideological Support for Religious Governance

As a first step, the Arab Barometer was screened under the theoretical definition of Islamism, selecting relevant variables that suggest a connection between religion and politics. Four such variables have been judged to be relevant.

Figure 1: Overview of Variables Used for Index Construction



⁵<http://www.arabbarometer.org/instruments-and-data-files0>

⁶Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen

The first two items relate to the degree to which a respondent wishes for the government to be Islamist in nature. The battery question reads as follows: “I will mention some of the political systems currently in place in various Middle Eastern and North African countries. I would like to know to what extent you think these systems would be appropriate for your country” with the following four-point response options: “Very Suitable”, “Suitable”, “Somewhat Suitable” and “Not Suitable at all”. The statements read: “A parliamentary system in which only Islamist parties compete in parliamentary elections” (q518a2), “A parliamentary system based on Islamic law in which only Islamist parties compete in elections” (q518b2)⁷, “A system governed by Islamic law without elections or political parties” (q5184).

The second two sets of items are concerned with the role that religious leaders should play in politics. The question reads: “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?” allowing for a four-point response with the possible answers of: “Strongly Agree”, “Somewhat Agree”, “Somewhat Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree”. The corresponding statements read: “Your country is better off if religious people hold public positions in the state” (q6062) and “Religious leaders (imams, preachers, priests) should have influence over government decisions” (q6063). An overview of the variables used to construct the index can be found in Figure 1.

Table 1: Principal Component Analysis

Variable	Loadings
Religious Leaders influence decisions	0.74
Religious Leaders hold office	0.78
Only Islamist Parties	0.70
Islamist Government (no elections)	0.69
<i>Variance explained: 53%</i>	
<i>Cronbach's α: 0.70</i>	

Varimax rotation.

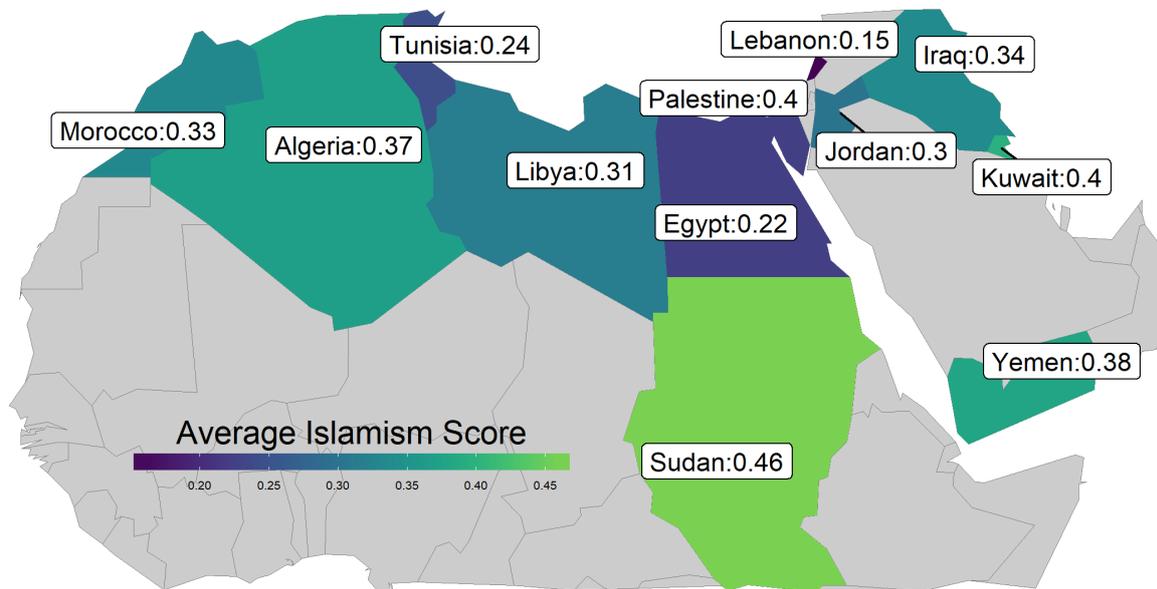
All variables have been recoded in such a way that higher values indicate support for religious governance (Islamic law as the basis of legislation, the government consisting of Islamists and desiring religious leadership) and lower values for those that do not support religious governance. Subsequently, a principal component analysis was conducted (results are shown in Table 1), yielding factor loadings above 0.6. A reliability analysis shows that Cronbach's α (=0.70) and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (=0.68) give good indication for unidimensionality. As a last step, the final index was recoded on a scale from 0 to 1.

Let's take a look at the Support for Islamism score distribution by country. In Figure 2, one can see a map of the MENA region colored in by their average

⁷Items have been split, where half of the respondents were given q518a2 (Form A) and the other half answered q518b2 (Form B). However for the purposes of this analysis, this split is unimportant, and the items have been recombined.

score. With an average score of 0.15, Lebanon shows the lowest value, followed by Egypt (Mean = 0.22) and Tunisia (Mean = 0.24). The highest average score can be found in Sudan (Mean = 0.46), closely followed by Palestine and Kuwait, both of which show a score of 0.4 and Yemen (Mean = 0.38).

Figure 2: Support for Islamism - MENA Map



Operationalization of Hypotheses

The following section gives a short overview over the items that were selected to operationalize the hypotheses from the theoretical section.

Personal Piety

Religiosity has many aspects. In order to capture the multidimensionality of religiosity, the following variables have been used to combine them into one summary index:

- q6101 Do you pray daily? (5-Point Scale)
- q6106 Do you listen to or read the Quran? (5-Point Scale)

Answers range from 1 = Always to 5 = Never. The final index named *Personal Piety* is a 10-point response scale and has been recoded from 0 to 1 (with 0 indicating the irreligious and 1 the most religious).

Socio-Economic Factors for Secularization Theory

The selected socio-economic factors comprise the following variables:

- q1016 I will read you some statements related to your household income. Which of these statements comes closest to describing your household income?

- Our household income covers our expenses well and we are able to save.
 - Our household income covers our expenses without notable difficulties.
 - Our household income does not cover our expenses and we face some difficulties in meeting our needs.
 - Our household income does not cover our expenses and we face significant difficulties in meeting our needs.
- q1004 Do you work? (0/1)
 - q1003 Level of education

Given that the numeric (household) income items from the Arab Barometer have many missing values (which is not unusual for survey questions related to income), it was decided to use the 4-scale variable that measures *Financial Security*. The question about the current employment status is coded into a dummy variable named *Employment*, where 1 denotes being employed and 0 being unemployed. Unfortunately, the survey questions for *Education* were slightly different in Yemen and Tunisia (having 8 and 6 categories respectively, compared to the 7 categories for all other countries), therefore this variable has been recoded to have five categories in order to ensure comparability.⁸ Finally, each variable has been normalized on a range from 0 to 1.

Parochialism

The following item has been chosen to measure the degree of *Parochialism*:

- q701b People differ whether the increase in the global connectivity is a good thing. Do you think that the increase in global connectivity is a good or a bad thing for the society?
 - 1 = Very good
 - 5 = Very Bad

Again, the last two variables have been recoded on a 0 to 1 scale in the direction expected by the hypotheses (global connectivity being a negative force for society).

Patriarchal Values

The index of *Patriarchal Values* consists of the following three variables asking about women's status in society:

- I will read a set of statements that relate to the status of women in our society to you in order to gauge the extent of your agreement or

⁸Education has now the following levels: Illiterate/No formal education, Elementary, Preparatory/Basic/Pre-High School, Secondary/Mid-level diploma (professional or technical), Bachelor and above.

disagreement with each statement. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

- q6012 A married woman can work outside the home. (4-Point scale)
- q6013 In general, men are better at political leadership than women. (4-Point scale)
- q6014 University education for males is more important than university education for females. (4-Point scale)

All of the items were combined using compository logic and coded in such a way that they endorse more patriarchal attitudes (disapproval of married women working outside the home, women being worse political leaders than men and endorsing sex segregation in universities). As Welzel and Inglehart note, there are two quality criteria for combinatory constructs: "Theoretically, the combination must make sense such that the components meaningfully complement each other under an overarching idea. Empirically, the combination must make a difference in that it maps closer on its expected antecedents or consequences than does each of its components." (Welzel & Inglehart, 2016, p. 1076). Both of the criteria are fulfilled, as each of the variables has less predictive power than when they are combined and endorsing a marginalized and/or segregated role for women in society can be combined theoretically under the concept of Patriarchal Values. The final index was standardized from 0 to 1 and is measured on a ten-point scale.

Liberal Islam

Liberal Islam is coded by using the following items from the Arab Barometer:

- The opinions of Islamic jurists and religious scholars differ and I want to ask to what extent you agree or disagree with some of these issues?
 - Democracy is a system that contradicts the teachings of Islam. (q6071)
 - Gender-mixed education should be allowed in universities. (q6074)
 - Women should wear modest clothes without needing to wear hijab. (q6076)

Recalling Welzel and Inglehart's criteria for compository indices, a good index requires 1) Strong theoretical justification and 2) external validity. Both of these criteria are fulfilled with this index. There are strong theoretical reasons on which to combine these variables, as they all ask about endorsements of specific interpretations of Islam and they can be coded in a certain direction that implies a more liberal and progressive interpretation (endorsing democracy, equal rights between Muslims and Non-Muslims, gender mixed education and women not needing to veil). For the second criteria, an analysis was conducted with the single variables as well as the compository index. While all predictors were significant and effectual individually, together they yielded an even stronger result, justifying the combination under compository logic.

Table 2: Summary Statistics

	Variable	N	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max
1	Islamism	13495	0.32	0.22	0.27	0	1
2	Sex (Male/Female)	13495	0.47	0.5	0	0	1
3	Age	13495	0.25	0.17	0.22	0	1
4	Year 2012 (0/1)	13495	0.05	0.23	0	0	1
5	Year 2013 (0/1)	13495	0.42	0.49	0	0	1
6	Year 2014 (0/1)	13495	0.13	0.34	0	0	1
7	Financial Security	13495	0.46	0.31	0.33	0	1
8	Employment (0/1)	13495	0.47	0.5	0	0	1
9	Education	13495	0.52	0.25	0.6	0	1
10	Parochialism	13495	0.25	0.26	0.25	0	1
11	Personal Piety	13495	0.79	0.21	0.88	0	1
12	Patriarchal Values	13495	0.39	0.21	0.33	0	1
13	Liberal Islam	13495	0.61	0.2	0.67	0	1

Control Variables

Lastly, five control variables were added. A dummy for sex is coded as *Male*, whereby 0 indicates male sex and 1 female sex. *Age* is included as control variable as well, with respondents ranging from 18 to 89 years. Further, the models include three time dummies for the years 2012, 2013 and 2014 with the reference category being 2016. Table 2 in the shows summary statistics for all independent and dependent variables used in this analysis.⁹

Statistical Methodology

Given that the data used in this paper is hierarchical in nature, meaning that individuals are nested into countries, the application of a multilevel analysis becomes suitable (cf. Gelman & Hill, 2006, p. 237). Since OLS regression assumes that individual data points are independent of each other, standard errors tend to be underestimated if contextual relationships between individuals are not taken into account. The great advantage of conducting a multilevel analysis is that it can remedy the distortions of standard errors that would occur when using OLS regression on hierarchical data (cf. Steenbergen & Jones, 2002, p. 7). When using multilevel models, the question of centering predictors arises. Two such methods are commonly practiced: grand-mean centering (centering the predictors around their overall mean across countries) and group-mean centering (centering the predictors around the average for each individual country). Enders and Torighi, for example, recommend that multilevel analysis which focuses on the individual level (as is the case this paper) should be group-mean centered because it erases all between-country variation, yielding a clean “estimate of the pooled within-cluster (i.e., Level 1)

⁹It is also relevant to note that the number of missing values is quite high (15.54% of all cases are missing). Future research might be able to apply imputation techniques to remedy this problem.

regression coefficient” (Enders & Tofighi, 2007, p. 128). However, more recent scholarship has been skeptical of the group-mean centering procedure and found it to introduce significant bias without providing the suggested benefits and even recommends to abandon the practice (cf. Kelley, Evans, Lowman, & Lykes, 2017, pp. 280–281). In order to assess the viability of centering in the following analysis, the results of using grand-mean centered predictors and group-mean centered predictors were compared and it was found that group-mean centering did not alter the results in a significant way. Given that there was no considerable change, it was decided to normalize all variables from 0 to 1, as a rather non-controversial transformation.

4 Analysis

The following section explores the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Multilevel regressions are conducted in order to test the proposed hypotheses.

Multilevel Regression

First, a random-intercept null model is conducted to assess whether multilevel modeling is warranted (cf. Hox, 2010, p. 300). The intraclass correlation (ICC) for the null model shows that indeed 14.66% of the variance of Islamism is bound on the country-level. The results strongly indicate that a multilevel regression is appropriate for the analysis. The results of all estimated multilevel models are shown in Table 3. A sequential approach was chosen to check each model and its coefficients for robustness. Models 1 through 5 continually add one variable to the model, and Model 6 shows the main model with all variables. Model 7 and 8 show estimated interaction effects, conducted separately as to avoid issues of multicollinearity. Given that the results of Models 1 through 5 remain quite robust, the interpretation will focus on the complete model, Model 6. A likelihood ratio test between Model 5 and 6 confirms the improved model fit of Model 6, $\chi^2(1) = 622.44; p > 0.001$. The between-country variance for Model 6 is estimated to be $\tau_{00} = 0.01$ and the within-country between-individual variance is estimated as $\sigma^2 = 0.04$. Lastly, no severe violations of residual assumptions can be found.

Recalling the first set of hypotheses pertaining to the *Secularization Theory*, it was theorized that increasing an individual’s material resources and reducing existential insecurity would marginalize support for religious governance (Hypothesis H1a). Looking at the coefficients for Financial Security and Employment in Model 6, mixed evidence can be found for Hypothesis H1a. As hypothesized, being employed is found to have a significant negative effect on supporting Islamism, albeit a quite small one ($b = -0.01, SE = 0.00, p < 0.01$). The coefficient for Financial Security on the other hand shows no significant effect. Thus, Hypothesis H1a has to be rejected for Financial Security, however being employed shows the expected negative effect on support

for Islamism and gives some evidence for Hypothesis H1a. As expected by classical secularization theory, Education is found to negatively influence the support for Islamism ($b = -0.04$, $SE = 0.01$, $p < 0.001$). Hypothesis H1b can thus be accepted so far.

Recalling the second hypothesis, Parochialism was expected to have a positive effect on the support for religious governance (Hypothesis H2). Indeed Model 6 shows a significant and positive relationship as suggested ($b = 0.07$, $SE = 0.01$, $p < 0.001$), leading to the conclusion that Hypothesis H2 can be accepted.

The next hypothesis suggested that endorsement of Patriarchal Values would increase the support for religious governance (Hypothesis H3). As theorized, the coefficient for Patriarchal Values is indeed significant and shows a quite strong positive influence on support for Islamism ($b = 0.18$, $SE = 0.19$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, Hypothesis H3 can be accepted.

Lastly, religiosity was expected to have a positive influence on the support for religious governance (Hypothesis H4a) while liberal interpretations of Islam were theorized to have a negative effect (Hypothesis H4b). The empirical evidence in Model 6 seems to support this relationship. Personal Piety has a

Table 3: Multilevel Regression - Results

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Intercept	.31*** (.03)	.36*** (.03)	.32*** (.03)	.23*** (.03)	.12*** (.02)	.29*** (.02)	.34*** (.03)	.22*** (.03)
Control Variables								
Sex (Male/Female)	.01* (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	-.01* (.00)	.02*** (.00)	.02*** (.00)	.02*** (.00)	.02*** (.00)
Age	.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.02* (.01)	-.06*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)
Year 2012 (0/1)	.00 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.02 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)
Year 2013 (0/1)	.04*** (.00)	.03*** (.01)	.04*** (.01)	.03*** (.01)	.03*** (.00)	.04*** (.00)	.04*** (.00)	.04*** (.00)
Year 2014 (0/1)	-.03 (.02)	-.03 (.02)	-.02 (.02)	-.03 (.02)	-.03 (.02)	-.02 (.02)	-.02 (.02)	-.02 (.02)
Variables of Interest								
Employment (0/1)		-.01** (.00)	-.01** (.00)	-.01** (.00)	-.01** (.00)	-.01*** (.00)	-.01** (.00)	-.01*** (.00)
Financial Security		-.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)
Education		-.07*** (.01)	-.06*** (.01)	-.06*** (.01)	-.04*** (.01)	-.04*** (.01)	-.04*** (.01)	-.04*** (.01)
Parochialism			.12*** (.01)	.12*** (.01)	.10*** (.01)	.07*** (.01)	.07*** (.01)	.07*** (.01)
Personal Piety				.15*** (.01)	.14*** (.01)	.13*** (.01)	.06*** (.02)	.21*** (.03)
Patriarchal Values					.23*** (.01)	.18*** (.01)	.04 (.03)	.18*** (.01)
Liberal Islam						-.23*** (.01)	-.23*** (.01)	-.12*** (.03)
Interactions								
Personal Piety × Patriarchal Values							.18*** (.03)	
Personal Piety × Liberal Islam								-.14*** (.04)
AIC	-2380.97	-2441.68	-2748.84	-3025.47	-3695.83	-4308.06	-4328.58	-4314.46
BIC	-2320.89	-2359.07	-2658.71	-2927.84	-3590.69	-4195.41	-4208.42	-4194.30
Log Likelihood	1198.49	1231.84	1386.42	1525.73	1861.92	2169.03	2180.29	2173.23
Num. obs.	13495	13495	13495	13495	13495	13495	13495	13495
Num. groups: cntry	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
Var: cntry (Intercept)	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01
Var: Residual	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, † $p < 0.1$. Models show unstandardized b-coefficients. All variables normalized (0-1).

Reference category for year dummies is 2016. Data weighted to nationally representative samples.

significant and rather substantial positive effect on the support for Islamism ($b = 0.13$, $SE = 0.01$, $p < 0.001$) while liberal interpretations of Islam are strongly negatively associated with the support for Islamism ($b = -0.23$, $SE = 0.01$, $p \leq 0.001$). Thus, Hypothesis H4a and H4b can be accepted.

Figure 3 shows the coefficients for Model in a coefficient plot, sorted by their effect size. One can clearly observe that the variables pertaining religiosity are the strongest in Model 6 and in all estimated models overall. This gives substantial evidence for the importance of religion and its interpretation when it comes to predicting the support for Islamism.

As a next step, the results of the moderation effects in Models 7 and 8 in Table 3 are examined. A likelihood ratio test between Model 6 and Model 7/8, confirm the improved model fit of Model 7 and 8 in respect to Model 6, $\chi^2(1) = 27.46$; $p > 0.001$ and $\chi^2(1) = 13.14$; $p > 0.001$. Accordingly, all interaction effects are found to be significant. Model 7 estimates an interaction between Personal Piety and Patriarchal Values, as suggested by Hypothesis H4c. The interaction is indeed significant in the expected direction, indicating that higher patriarchal values increase the effect that religiosity has on the support for Islamism ($b = 0.18$, $SE = 0.03$, $p < 0.001$). The plot on the left-hand side of Figure 4 visualizes the interaction effect and shows that Personal Piety increases the support for Islamism for those strongly endorsing Patriarchal Values, while religiosity has a diminished effect on the support for Islamism for individuals with more gender egalitarian values. Accordingly, it can be said that Hypothesis H4c is supported by the empirical evidence.

Figure 3: Coefficient Plot based on Model 6

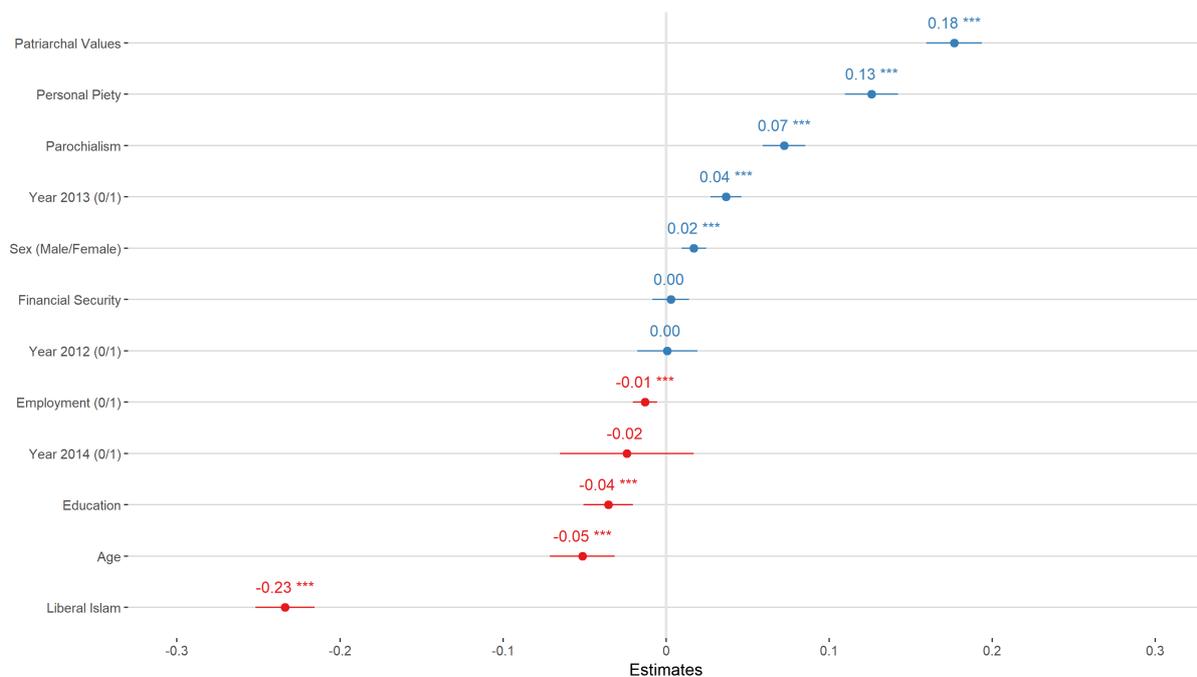
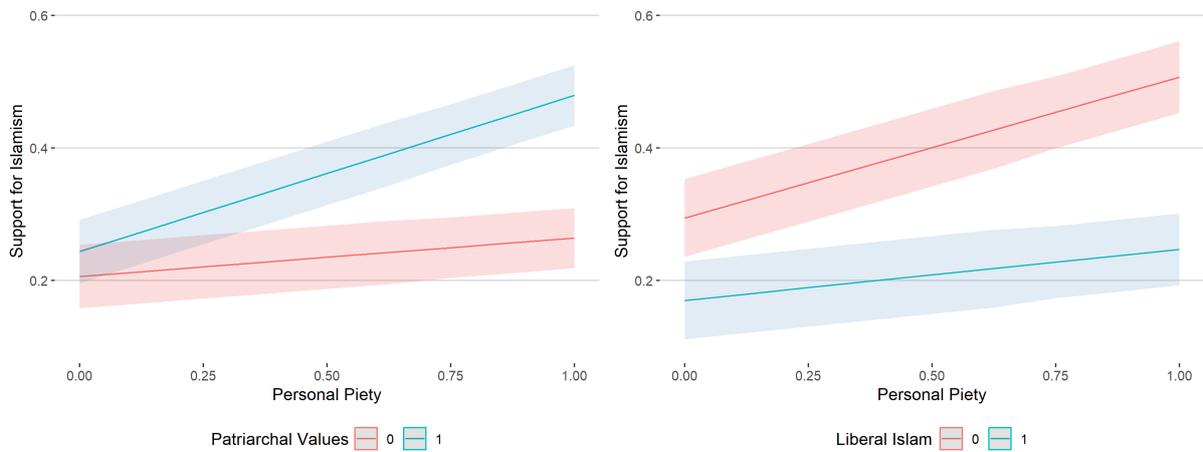


Figure 4: Interaction Effects



Lastly, Model 8 seeks to test Hypothesis H4d, theorizing that liberal interpretations of Islam have a moderating effect on religiosity. As suggested, a significant negative interaction effect was found ($b = -0.14$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < 0.001$). The plot on the right-hand side of Figure 4 sheds more light on this interaction: endorsing illiberal interpretations of Islam increases the effect of religiosity while liberal interpretations of Islam marginalize the effect that high religiosity has on the support for Islamism. Thus, Hypothesis H4d can be considered to be accepted.

5 Conclusions

The paper concludes with first discussing some limitations that had to be made, followed by a discussion of the results and final remarks about future research.

Limitations

The paper constructed various indices in order to estimate the support for religious governance. Doing so, left a lot of missing values in the dataset used for the analysis. While there were more than enough cases left for the estimation (13495 out of 21915 cases for the multilevel regression), it should be seen very critically to lose so many cases in the process of modeling and index construction. This is especially the case for the data in this paper, as some of the missing value patterns are possibly not missing at random and might depend on some unobserved contingent factors. This might have affected the generalizability and biased the coefficients of the estimated models, therefore the analysis and conclusions drawn from it should be read with caution until future research might be able to remedy this problem through imputation techniques for non-missing at random patterns, as suggested by Resseguier

and his colleagues (cf. Resseguier, Giorgi, & Paoletti, 2011, pp. 282–283). Furthermore, after considering the relevant literature, it was decided that country-level variables would only skew the estimators and confidence intervals in the multilevel analysis (cf. Stegmueller, 2013, p. 758). Future research seeking to include country-level variables might be able to estimate Bayesian models that are less vulnerable to violations of small sample sizes and have a more accurate plausibility test than the frequentist p-value approach (cf. Stegmueller, 2013, pp. 758–759). Given the many indices used in this analysis, another possible estimation could be based on structural equation modeling, which makes it possible to include all variables used for index construction in the same model.

Conclusion and Future Research

The goal of this paper was to estimate predictors that would explain the preference for religious governance in Arab Muslim-Majority countries. The guiding research question that led throughout the paper was: *Why do Muslim Arab citizen support religious governance and what role does religiosity play?* In order to answer the research question, possible explanations were derived from the literature and a dependent variable was constructed to gage the support for religious governance: ideological support for religious governance (*Support for Islamism*). To test the hypotheses derived from the literature, multilevel regressions were modeled, which allowed for possible variance between countries.

The results of the multilevel regression yield some evidence for the hypotheses. Table 4 gives an overview of the results. First, secularization theory does not seem to apply in the theorized way. Mixed evidence can be found for Hypothesis H1a: Financial Security yielded no significant effect, however being employed did decrease the estimated Islamism score. On the other hand, higher education is negatively associated with support for religious governance, a relationship that other studies have also found (cf. Robbins, 2009; Tessler, 2015, pp. 168–169).

Therefore, it can be concluded that rationalization processes through education seem to generally decrease the support for religious governance, as would be expected by classical secularization theory.

Next, it was theorized by Hypothesis H2 that Parochialism might have a positive effect on the support for religious governance. In fact, Parochialism seems to increase the support for Islamism as shown in Model 3 through 6. In conclusion, it can be said that Hypothesis H2 can be accepted for the purposes of this study.

A similar picture for Hypothesis H3 concerning the role of Patriarchal Values emerges. Endorsing traditional gender roles seems to increase the support for religious governance and yields one of the strongest effects. Therefore Hypothesis H3 can be accepted by this study.

One of the main focus of this paper was to assess the role of religiosity in

Table 4: Summary of Results

	Hypotheses	Multilevel Linear Model
H1: Secularization Theory	<i>H1a: Increasing individual material resources and reduction of existential insecurity marginalizes support for religious governance.</i>	Mixed Evidence
	<i>H1b: Increasing intellectual resources marginalizes support for religious governance.</i>	✓
H2: Parochialism	<i>H2: Parochial viewpoints increase support for religious governance.</i>	✓
H3: Patriarchal Values	<i>H3: Patriarchal Values increase the support for religious governance.</i>	✓
H4: The Role of Religion and Liberal Interpretations of Islam	<i>H4a: Religiosity increases the support for religious governance.</i>	✓
	<i>H4b: Liberal interpretations of Islam decrease the support for religious governance.</i>	✓
	<i>H4c: If an individual endorses patriarchal values, religiosity has a stronger effect on the support for religious governance than individuals who endorse more gender egalitarian views.</i>	✓
	<i>H4d: If an individual endorses liberal interpretations of Islam, religiosity has a diminished or even reversed effect on the support for religious governance.</i>	✓

supporting religious governance and to avoid essentialist and tautological explanations while doing so. The analysis was able to find that *religion matters* and it matters *a great deal* when it comes to explaining the support for religious governance in Arab Muslim-Majority countries. As theorized by Hypothesis H4a, religiosity robustly predicted the support for religious governance. However, as the analysis was able to show, it is not any kind of religiosity that increases the support for religious governance, as this effect seems to depend on the individual understanding of religion. Liberal interpretations of Islam are found to decrease the support for religious governance leading to the conclusion that Hypothesis H4b can be fully accepted. Now, this might be said to be mostly due to lesser religious individuals who have a more liberal interpretation of their religion, yet the visualization of the interaction effects tell a different story. The moderating effect of liberal interpretations of Islam and less patriarchal views is *strongest for the most religious individuals* while it does not change much of the support for Islamism for irreligious individuals. This strongly validates the idea that religiosity does not necessarily mean an increase in supporting religious governance, as it depends on contingent factors of differing interpretations and patriarchal tendencies. The findings of the analysis suggest that essentialist explanations, which inextricably link Muslim religiosity to the support of religious governance, are inappropriate and further studies in the field should account for the very diverse interpretations and multidimensionality of religion and religiosity in that context. The implication of this leads to an acceptance of Hypothesis H4c and H4d.

Future research could focus on the differences of supporting religious governance ideologically and preferring or voting for an Islamist or religious party. As shown by the descriptive analysis, much variation has been found between countries as well. Future research could pick out individual cases or subsets of

the data and seek to explain more qualitatively what accounts for support for religious governance in the specific context of an individual country.

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