Attitudes toward Islam's Place in Political Life:
Findings from the First and Second Arab Barometer Surveys

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The recent uprisings in the Arab world make clear that ordinary citizens in the Muslim Middle East are concerned about and often have strong views about the way their societies should be governed.

• Ordinary men and women in the Arab world are trying to take charge of their   societies -- to chart their own course and define their own destiny.

• And with political openings, despite variation and uncertainty, what people believe and want is increasingly important.

• They want governments that are accountable; and democracy, however well or poorly understood, is central to the thinking of huge majorities.

• What should be the role for Islam is less clear, however, and for the most part is quite contested.   Societies are divided on this question.

• Rigorous public opinion research can tell us not only *what* people think but also *why* they hold certain views – what predisposes people to favor or not favor an important role for Islam in government and political affairs.

Why Islam

Arabs and Muslims often say that Westerners are obsessed with Islam, believing that it breeds extremism and violence – the so-called Clash of Civilizations thesis. But while Arabs and Muslims are correct to complain that misinformation and stereotypes sometimes characterize Western thinking about Islam, the place of religion in the governance of Arab countries is in fact an important issue in domestic Arab politics – and now more than ever.

- Ali Gomaa, the Grand Mufti of Egypt: "Egypt's revolution has swept away decades of authoritarian rule but has also highlighted an issue that Egyptians will grapple with as they consolidate their democracy: the role of religion in political life."

- Hamadi Jebali, Secretary General of Tunisia's al-Nahda Party (and now Tunisian prime minister): "What kind of Democracy for the New Tunisia: Islamic or Secular?"

- Tariq Harb, Iraqi constitutional lawyer and media personality: "A central element in the struggle to define Iraq's emergent democracy is the question of how "to balance religion and secularism.""

Division of Opinion among Ordinary Citizens in Fourteen Arab Countries about the Role of Islam in Government and Politics
(Muslim respondents only here and after)

Item: Do you Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree with the Following Statement: (response in parentheses indicates support for "political Islam")	% Favoring Political Role for Islam
Men of religion should have no influence over the decisions of government (strongly disagree or disagree)	48.1%
Religious practice is a private matter and should be separated from socio-political life (strongly disagree or disagree)	43.9%
It would be better for our country if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office (strongly agree or agree)	50.3%

Country, Year and Number of Respondents in Twenty Surveys Carried Out in Fourteen Arab Countries between 2006 and 2011

Arab Barometer First and Second Wave [a]						
Country	Year	N		Country	Year	N
Jordan	2006	1143		Lebanon	2010	1392
Palestine	2006	1270		Qatar [b]	2010	1060
Algeria	2006	1300		Algeria	2011	1220
Morocco	2006	1277		Yemen	2011	1353
Kuwait	2006	750		Iraq	2011	1236
Iraq [b]	2006	2701		Saudi Arabia	2011	1405
Lebanon	2007	1200		Egypt	2011	1220
Yemen	2007	1182		Sudan	2011	1608
Bahrain	2009	500		Tunisia	2011	1196
Jordan	2010	1188				
Palestine	2010	1200		**Total**		**24,858**

[a] Most surveys used area probability sampling; data are weighted by age and education when needed.
[b] The 2006 Iraq survey and the 2010 Qatar survey were part of the World Values Survey.

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Introduction

The Arab Democracy Barometer was established in 2005 by the Institute for Social Research of the University of Michigan in close collaboration with institutions and scholars in the Arab world. It was also developed in consultation with Democracy Barometer projects in East Asia, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. (http://www.afrobarometer.org) Like other regional Democracy Barometers, the objectives of the Arab Barometer are to produce scientifically reliable data on the politically-relevant attitudes of ordinary citizens, to disseminate and apply survey findings in order to contribute to political reform, and to strengthen institutional capacity for public opinion research. [**More**]

Bridge

A number of cross-national and collaborative research initiatives in the Arab world and elsewhere are undertaking to assess citizen attitudes about public affairs, governance and social policy. These projects, including the Global Barometer and the World Values Survey, are concerned not only with what ordinary men and women think about important issues, they also seek to identify the factors that shape attitudes and values and that help to explain why different people have different views and perceptions. [**More**]

Country Reports - Palestine

In May 2006, The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) conducted a poll to measure Palestinian public attitudes towards democracy. The poll was conducted jointly with several Arab research centers and academic institutions and examined the pulse of the street regarding issues related to Arab transition to democracy. The poll was planned in cooperation with Dr. Mark Tessler from the University of Michigan and Dr. Amaney Jamal from Princeton University and was supervised by Dr. Khalil Shikaki from PSR. [**More (Arabic only)**]

Future Projects

In the first systematic survey of the Arab Barometer project, carried out in 2006, citizens in five Arab countries were asked to identify their most pressing concerns. Pooled data from the five countries (Palestinian Territories, Jordan, Morocco, Algeria and Kuwait) indicate that 54% of those surveyed consider economic problems to be most important. [**More**]

Responses to Questions about the Political Role of Islam among Individuals Who Do (84.4%) and Do Not (15.6%) Support Democracy

	Men of religion should have no influence over the decisions of government	
Democracy, whatever its limitations, is better than any other political system	**Strongly Agree/Agree**	**Disagree/Strongly Disagree**
Strongly Agree/Agree **Percentage of Row** **Percentage of Total**	Secular Democracy 56.6% 47.8%	Democracy with Islam 43.4% 36.6%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree **Percentage of Row** **Percentage of Total**	Secular Authoritarianism 52.1% 8.2%	Islamic Authoritarianism 47.9% 7.4%

Eight Countries Surveyed in 2006-2007 [a]		
	Men of religion should have no influence over the decisions of government	
Democracy, whatever its limitations, is better than any other political system	Strongly Agree/Agree	Disagree/Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree/Agree Percentage of Row Percentage of Total	Secular Democracy 52.4% 45.2%	**Democracy with Islam** **47.6%** **41.0%**
Disagree/Strongly Disagree Percentage of Row Percentage of Total	Secular Authoritarianism 44.7% 6.2%	Islamic Authoritarianism 55.3% 7.6%

Eleven Countries Surveyed in 2010-2011		
	Men of religion should have no influence over the decisions of government	
Democracy, whatever its limitations, is better than any other political system	Strongly Agree/Agree	Disagree/Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree/Agree Percentage of Row Percentage of Total	Secular Democracy 60.1% 49.9%	**Democracy with Islam** **39.1%** **33.2%**
Disagree/Strongly Disagree Percentage of Row Percentage of Total	Secular Authoritarianism 56.6% 9.6%	Islamic Authoritarianism 43.4% 7.3%

[a] Bahrain, surveyed in 2009 as part of the first Arab Barometer wave, is not included.

Jordan, Palestine, Algeria, Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq	Favors Democratic System	Favors Islam with Democracy
2006-2007	85.1	46.2
2010-2011	84.4	39.7
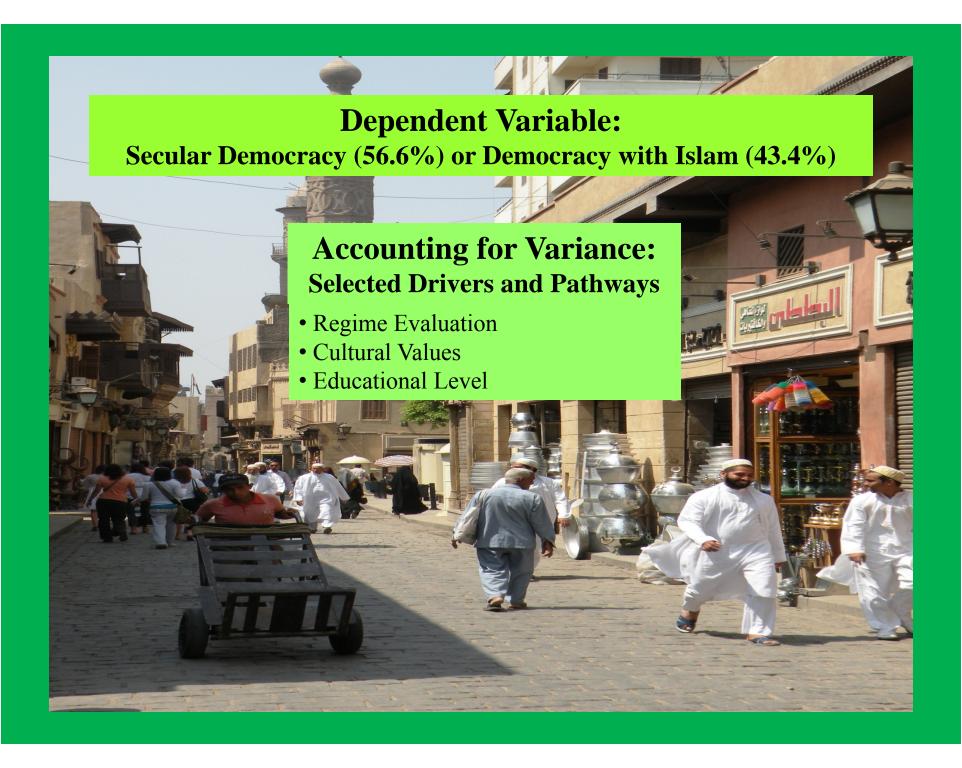
Country (AB2)	Year of Survey	Favors Democratic System	Favors Islam with Democracy
Lebanon	November-Dec. 2010	86.6	18.0
Jordan	December 2010	81.0	44.5
Palestine	December 2010	84.6	40.9
Sudan	December 2010	79.2	55.8
Qatar	December 2010	85.4	48.9
Yemen	February 20112011	83.1	62.9
Iraq	February-March 2011	86.7	50.3
Algeria	April-May 2011	84.3	23.4
Saudi Arabia	May-June 2011	72.0	30.4
Egypt	June-July 2011	78.7	**33.8**
Tunisia	September-Oct. 2011	89.5	**25.4**

What Support for "Political Islam" Does and Does Not Measure

Item: Do you Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree with the Following Statement:	Factor Loading
Men of religion should have no influence over the decisions of government (strongly disagree or disagree)	0.841
Religious practice is a private matter and should be separated from socio-political life (strongly disagree or disagree)	0.543
It would be better for our country if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office (strongly agree or agree)	-0.832

Other Reasons Islamist Parties Receive Support (or Votes)

• Effective Mobilization (busses in Tunisia)
• Preferred Foreign Policy
• Credentials as Opposition (know RCD in Tunisia)
• Believed to be Honest (49.4% trust Ennahda > others)
• Egypt: one-third say they'll vote for Brotherhood (Fall 2011)

Dependent Variable:
Secular Democracy (56.6%) or Democracy with Islam (43.4%)

Accounting for Variance:
Selected Drivers and Pathways

- Regime Evaluation
- Cultural Values
- Educational Level

H1. Individuals who are more dissatisfied with the character and performance of their political institutions and officials are more likely than are individuals with higher levels of political satisfaction to favor a political formula that gives Islam an important role.

Rationale: What Drives the Relationship?

• Desire for a consequential alternative to political status quo

• Desire for the emphasis on equality, justice, help for the needy, and rule of law found in Islam

The salience or direction of H1 may depend on the character of the regime by which the country is governed – on whether it does or does not have an important Islamic connection?

H1a. Individuals who are more dissatisfied with the character and performance of their political institutions and officials are more likely than are individuals with higher levels of political satisfaction to ***favor*** a political formula that gives Islam an important role ***if they are citizens of a country governed by a secular regime***.

H1b. Individuals who are more dissatisfied with the character and performance of their political institutions and officials are more likely than are individuals with higher levels of political satisfaction to **oppose** a political formula that gives Islam an important role ***if they are citizens of a country governed by a regime with a strong Islamic connection***.

Items Measuring of Regime Evaluation

I'm going to name a number of institutions. For each one, please tell me how much trust you have in them. Is it a great deal of trust, quite a lot of trust, not very much trust, or none at all?
• Prime Minister
• Courts/Justice System
• Parliament
• The Police
• Military

Indicate how satisfied you are with the performance of the current [country name] government. Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not very satisfied, not at all satisfied?

I'm going to read a number of statements about government responsiveness. For each one, please tell me whether you agree strongly, agree, disagree, or disagree strongly
• Our political leaders care about ordinary citizens

H2. Individuals who hold more traditional and conservative views on social and cultural issues, such as gender equality and the status of women, are more likely to believe that Islam should have an important role in political affairs than are individuals who take a more liberal position on these issues.

Rationale: What Drives the Relationship?

- Perceived value congruence
- Expectation of favorable social policy or legislation

Items Measuring Support for Gender Equality

The following questions concern your personal opinions about the principles that should determine the behavior and situation of women in our society. For each of the statements listed below, please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree.

- On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do
- A university education is more important for a boy than a girl

H3. Education may be another determinant of the views people hold about Islam's role in government and political affairs
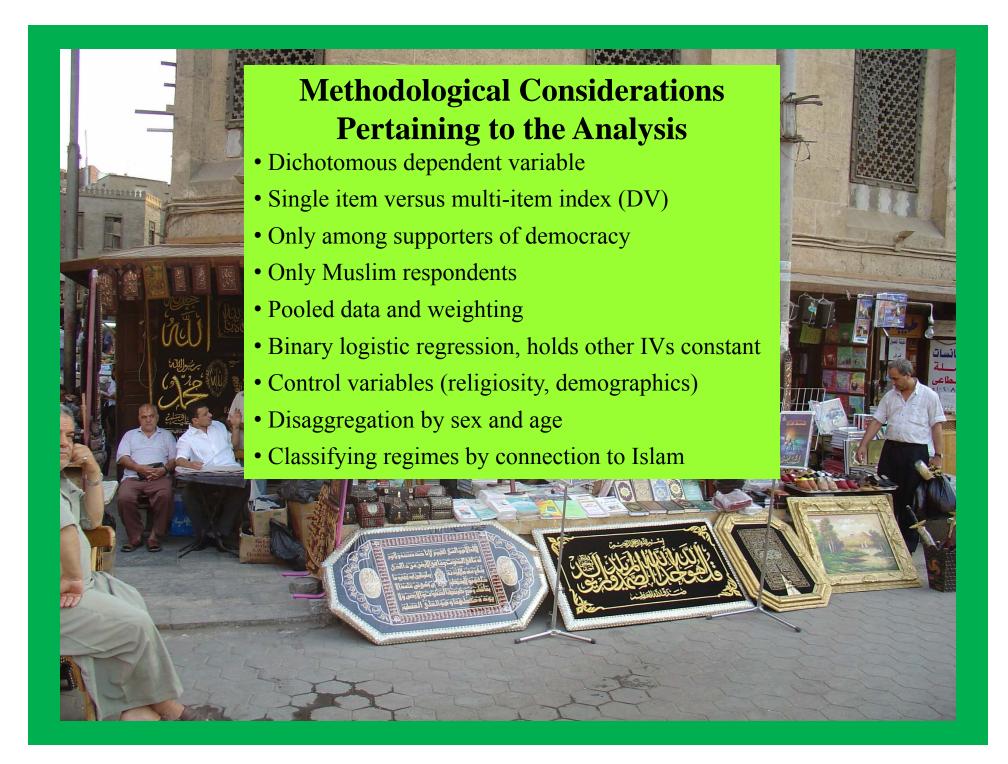
But does a *higher* or *lower* level of education "push" toward greater support for political Islam? Why?

Lower	Higher
-- Exposure and worldview	-- Unfulfilled expectations
-- Status and opportunities	-- Political consciousness
-- Justice, help and protect weak in Islam	

H3a. Individuals who are *less well-educated* are more likely than individuals who are better educated to favor a political formula that gives Islam an important role.

H3b. Individuals who are *better educated* are more likely than individuals who are less well-educated to favor a political formula that gives Islam an important role.

Methodological Considerations Pertaining to the Analysis

- Dichotomous dependent variable
- Single item versus multi-item index (DV)
- Only among supporters of democracy
- Only Muslim respondents
- Pooled data and weighting
- Binary logistic regression, holds other IVs constant
- Control variables (religiosity, demographics)
- Disaggregation by sex and age
- Classifying regimes by connection to Islam

Binary Logistic Regression Analysis among Countries with Regimes that Have and Countries that Do Not Have a Strong Islamist Connection

	All	Men	Women	18-34	Over 34
Regimes without Strong Islamist Connection					
Positive Evaluation of Regime	**-.051** (.025)	**-.112** (.000)	.027 (.436)	-.001 (.987)	**-.099** (.002)
Higher Support for Gender Equality	**-.233** (.000)	**-.144** (.000)	**-.335** (.000)	**-.249** (.000)	**-.212** (.000)
Higher Level of Education	**-.089** (.000)	**-.092** (.003)	**-.078** (.023)	.019 (.593)	**-.125** (.000)
Regimes with Strong Islamist Connection [a]					
Positive Evaluation of Regime	**.344** (.000)	**.313** (.000)	**.373** (.000)	**.368** (.000)	**.321** (.000)
Higher Support for Gender Equality	**-.148** (.000)	**-.121** (.005)	**-.216** (.000)	**-.121** (.007)	**-.209** (.000)
Higher Level of Education	**-.142** (.000)	-.075 (.100)	**-.197** (.000)	-.081 (.110)	**-.138** (.002)

The table presents logit coefficients ($\hat{\beta}$) with probability values in parentheses. Relationships that are statistically significant at the .05 level or below are in bold. The dependent variable is coded 0=lower support for political Islam: strongly agree or agree that "men of religion should not have influence over the decisions of government"; and 1=higher support for political Islam: strongly disagree or disagree that "men of religion should not have influence over the decisions of government."

[a] Palestine 2006, Lebanon 2010, Iraq 2006 and 2010, Saudi Arabia 2011, Sudan 2011

H2. Individuals who hold more traditional and conservative views on social and cultural issues, such as gender equality and the status of women, are disproportionately likely to believe that Islam should play an important role in political affairs

• **Findings.** Low support for gender equality, and quite possibly conservative social values more generally, push toward support for political Islam.

• **Disaggregation and Conditionalities.** H2 has explanatory power both under differing political conditions and among all population categories examined.

• **Causal Story?** Perceptions of value congruence and policy expectations play a role in shaping views of political Islam.

H1. Individuals who have negative evaluations of the governing regime are more likely than individuals who have a positive assessment of the governing regime to have a favorable view of political Islam

Findings. The competing hypotheses of H1a and H1b are both supported.

• **H1a.** A negative regime assessment *increases* the likelihood of support for political Islam in countries governed by a regime *without* an Islamic connection.

• **H1b.** A negative regime assessment *decreases* the likelihood of support for political Islam in countries governed a regime *with* an Islamic connection.

Disaggregation and Conditionalities.

• **H1a.** A negative regime assessment *increases* the likelihood of support for political Islam in countries governed by a regime *without* an Islamic connection only among *men* and *older* individuals.

• **H1b.** A negative regime assessment *decreases* the likelihood of support for political Islam in countries governed a regime *with* an Islamic connection among *all* population categories.

Causal Stories?

• **H1a.** Findings about *older* individuals under "secular" regimes may reflect a greater sense of regional history, including before and during the Islamic resurgence. Among *men*, the pathway may reflect greater political consciousness and activism.

• **H1b.** Findings about *women* and *younger* individuals under regimes with an Islamic connection may suggest an additional causal story, perhaps that women and younger people feel more restricted and thus seek a non-Islamic alternative for social as well as political reasons.

H3a and H3b. **Less well-educated (or better educated) individuals are more likely to have a favorable view of political Islam.**

Findings. H3a is supported. H3b is not supported.

H3a. *Less* well-educated individuals both under regimes without and under regimes with an Islamic connection are disproportionately likely to favor a political role for Islam. While there are no overall conditioning effects associated with the regime's Islamic connection, H3a it is not confirmed for all population categories.

H3b. There are no instances in which *better* educated individuals are disproportionately likely to favor a political role for Islam.

Disaggregation and Conditionalities.

H3a is consistently supported among *older* individuals, both those in countries governed by a regime without an Islamic connection and those in countries governed by a regime with an Islamic connection. In neither case is H3a supported by younger individuals.

H3a is supported by *both men and women* in countries governed by a regime without an Islamic connection but *only among women* in countries governed by a regime with an Islamic connection.

Causal Stories?

Possible drivers include: *low status* and fewer opportunities; more *limited exposure* and worldview; *Islam's emphasis* on justice and protection of weak.

Older suggests exposure and worldview; and since older individuals support political Islam when the regime has an Islamic connection, it probably is not discontent with the status quo resulting from low status.

Women but not men under regimes with an Islamic connection suggests fewer opportunities for exposure (such as employment) that reduce the relative influence of education (?).

Next Steps

• Expand the database: 46 surveys, earlier and non-Arab countries

• Additional measure of dependent variable: indices, continuous

• Additional individual-level hypotheses and independent variables: tolerance, economic situation, civic engagement

• Separate (not pooled) analysis for each survey

• Two-level analysis to identify conditioning effects of country and temporal characteristics

• Further reflection and investigation of pathways