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# Who votes for Islamists? A cross-national study of 10 Muslim-majority countries

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# Who votes for Islamists? A cross-national study of 10 Muslim-majority countries

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty

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Major: Political Science

Program of Study Committee:
David Andersen, Major Professor
Robert Urbatsch
Tessa Ditonto

The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this thesis. The Graduate College will ensure this thesis is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

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# DEDICATION

To my grandmother, who passed away during my studies. I will always love her and cherish her memory in my heart. May God rest her soul.

To my daughter, Watin, I hope that this thesis inspires you to accomplish great and wonderful things.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

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# ABSTRACT

The literature on Islamist voters is scarce. There are little emphases on Islamist voters and, conversely, plenty of scholarly works on Islamist movements and Islamists who support and sympathize with them. Therefore, this thesis aims to remedy this shortcoming in the political science literature and study Islamist voters as political animals. Precisely, the study is focused on underlining the main reasons that drive Islamist voters to the ballot box. Previous studies have studied the matter based upon clientelist and religious theoretical models and found conflicting evidence for the impact of these perspectives on Islamist voters. Thus, this paper seeks to employ cross-national regression analysis in 10 Muslim-majority countries to test the impact of religious and socio-economic factors on the political support received by Islamist parties. This study replicates previous works as well as expanding on the number of countries studied and synthesizing control variables from a couple of studies on profiles of Islamist voters. Concisely, the results of the regression models indicate strong support for the religious argument and, contrastingly, zero evidence for the perceived positive correlation between the impact of clientelism and support for Islamist candidates.

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

Islamist groups have, to varying degrees, a lot of support within some Muslim-majority countries and some of them have moved from leading prayers in mosques to governing in state capitals and preside over political institutions. Assuming power in the realms of religion and politics affect domestic, regional, and international affairs. Thus, understanding how these groups come to power and studying their electoral base are of profound significance to the political science literature. In addition, some Arab rulers have for decades warned their citizens against what they perceive as internal threats; yet, Islamist parties have been winning elections steadily and by a landslide in some Muslim-majority countries.

Even though Islamist parties exist in a spectrum from the far right, to the centrist, and to some degree, liberal-leaning, some Arab rulers, political commentators, and some political scientists treated them as mere ideologues and violent/terrorist actors. The study will delve into the discussions of what constitutes a political party as Islamist or otherwise. This will be emphasized upon in the Literature Review chapter. Furthermore, the thesis does not seek to vindicate Islamists, at large, nor does it aim toward convincing the readers to rethink Islamism; rather, it engages in the previous debate solely to produce a framework by which the parties in the party-support variable (the dependent variable) are chosen and quantitatively analyzed as legitimate political actors.

Relaying on "culturalist" explanations to explicate the existence of Islamist parties and the support they receive in the political arena is not an entirely good approach and model to adopt. Author Jillian Schwedler explains why that approach is flawed. She says that when we start that analysis from the previous starting point we will need to "repeat that the beliefs, norms,

and values of Islam (which in any case are varied) cannot explain the diverse experiences and practices of Islamist groups, let alone of the 1.4 billion Muslims worldwide .We argue that we should instead analyze Islamists as rational actors or perhaps focus on institutions, or regime repression, or the exclusions of globalization, or the politics of identity, or any of a number of alternative analytic frameworks"( Schwedler, 2011).[1] The theory follows her reasoning and seeks to answer the research question by adopting previous theoretical models that were employed to investigate what drives Islamist voters to the ballot box.

To elaborate, plenty of studies have covered Islamic movements and their sympathizers, nevertheless, there is a scarcity in the number of the studies that address the profile of Islamist voters as political animals. To my knowledge, there are, thus far, only three scholarly articles that have studied the issue of Islamist voters extensively. These studies follow different theoretical frameworks. The studies were driven by the following four theoretical frameworks: religiosity, clientelism, grievances, and horizontal network. The pioneering scholarly writing on Islamist voters was authored by Garcia-Rivero and Kotze in 2007.[2] Then, another study on Islamist voters was conducted in 2009.[3] Both of the previous studies focused on religiosity as the core explanation for the support that Islamist received in the countries they studied. The most comprehensive study, thus far, was done in 2012 and incorporated the other three theoretical models.[4]

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[1] Schwedler, J. (2011). Studying Political Islam. *International Journal of Middle East Studies, 43*(1), 135-137. doi:10.1017/S0020743810001248

[2] García-Rivero, C., & Kotzé, H. (2007). Electoral support for Islamic parties in the Middle East and North Africa. *Party Politics*, 13(5), 611-636.

[3] Robbins MDH (2009) What accounts for popular support for Islamist parties in the Arab World? Evidence from the Arab Barometer. *APSA Annual Meeting,* Toronto.

[4] Pellicer, M., & Wegner, E. (2014). Socio-economic voter profile and motives for Islamist support in Morocco. *Party Politics, 20*(1), 116-133.

The primary objective of the study undertaken is to provide a tested explanation to the support that Islamist candidates receive in their respective geography. I replicate, in some part, the first study that was done in 2007 to test the impact of religiosity on party-support. Moreover, I employ the first explanation in the third study to test the impact of clientelism on support for Islamist parties. Hence, the theory to answer the research question consists of both religious and clientelist explanations. I am interested in these two explanations because they are the most widely provided justifications for the support that Islamists receive in their receptive countries.

Previous studies have tested their hypotheses in only four countries. I intend to expand the number of countries to include five more countries.[5] Increasing the number of observations offer more nuances and, probably, more accurate results. The thesis relies on data driven from the 6th wave of the World Values Survey (WVS).[6] The data is cross-national; it includes 10,946 observations from 10 countries: Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Yemen, Iraq, Turkey, Libya, Palestine, and Jordan.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The next one will delve into the literature review, addressing past studies, models, frameworks, and theories concerning the issue of Islamist parties, and Islamist voters. The third chapter will present the theory, discuss the dependent, independent, and control variables as well as the hypotheses. The fourth one will explain the research design and methodology. The fifth one is about the regression models, the empirical test of the hypotheses, the presentation of the results, and discussion of the findings. Finally, the last chapter includes the conclusion.

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[5] I aimed to include more countries but unfortunately some of them were not asked the "party-support" question in their survey data. Therefore, I excluded the following countries form the data-set: Lebanon, Bahrain, and Kuwait.

[6] WORLD VALUES SURVEY Wave 6 2010-2014 OFFICIAL AGGREGATE v.20150418.
　　　World Values Survey Association (www.worldvaluessurvey.org). Aggregate File
　　　Producer: Asep/JDS, Madrid SPAIN.

**Key Words**

Political Islam, Islamism, Islamist voters, Clientelism, Religiosity, Muslim-majority countries

# CHAPTER 2

# LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is divided into three sections. First, a discussion about what is meant by Islamist parties in political science literature. Then, some discussion on Islamism and politics. Finally, exploring theoretical models that aim toward creating profiles for Islamist voters and explicating what drives them to the ballot box.

## What is an Islamist Party?

The term *political Islam* has gained momentum following the "Islamic" Revolution in Iran (Robbins, 2009). The term has since been defined in various ways. Author Knudsen states that "the shortest (and most encompassing) definition of political Islam is that it denotes [that] Islam used to a political end" (Knudsen, 2003).[7] Moreover, author Fuller offers a more nuanced definition: "Islamism [is] defined broadly as the belief that the Koran and the Hadith[8] have something important to say about the way society and governance should be ordered" (Fuller, 2002).[9] Likewise, author Denoeux provides detailed definition of what is meant by political Islam or Islamism (used interchangeably). Denoeux states that: "Islamism, in short is a form of instrumentalization of Islam by individuals, groups and organizations that pursue political objectives.  It provides political responses to today's societal challenges by imagining a future, the foundations for which rest on re-appropriated, reinvented concepts borrowed from the

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[7] Knudsen, J. Are. (2003). *Political Islam in the Middle East.* United States: Chr. Michelsen Institute.

[8] The Arabic word "Hadith" means traditions of the Prophet's life.

[9] Fuller, G. (2002). The future of Political Islam. *Foreign Affairs,* 81(2), 48-60.

Islamic tradition" (Denoeux, 2002).[10] In a word, it is, then, fair to conclude from the previous discussion that political Islam means engaging in the realm of politics with an Islamic reference.

The issue of what is meant by political Islam or Islamism does not conclude with stating a concise definition of the concept. To elaborate, it is imperative to distinguish between the different organizations that engage in politics with an Islamic reference. If the thesis selects Islamist parties to study the support they receive solely by this definition, then there will be a systemic and inherent problem with the selection process. For instance, if we select every Islamist organization that affects political affairs without further distinctions then Taliban (a violent/terrorist entity) would be viewed in the same light as Ennahda (a peaceful political party). To overcome this problem of "overfitting," the thesis categorizes those who fall under the umbrella of Islamism into three entities as articulated by author Robbins. Islamist groups, Islamist movements, and Islamist parties.

To elaborate, Islamist groups refers to a different body of Islamist organizations that is marked with having "a less formal structure" than the other two categories (Roy, 1994).[11] Within the previous category, we can find groups like Al-Qaida Taliban, and extremist organizations in general. With respect to Islamist movements, the best embodiment of this classification is the Muslim brotherhood movement. Furthermore, author Wiktorowicz, as Robbins explains his definition, views those organizations as "broad-based organizations seeking to influence society primarily through grassroots efforts" (Wiktorowicz 2004).[12] Lastly, Islamist parties refer to the

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[10] Denoeux, G. (2002). The forgotten swamp: Navigating political Islam. *Middle East Policy, 9*(2), 56-81.

[11] Roy, Oliver. (1994). *The failure of Political Islam.* London: I.B. Tauris

[12] Wiktorowicz, Quintan (2004). *Islamic activism: A social movement theory approach.*
Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Islamist organizations that participate peacefully and mainly in the political process. They seek to win elections in order to be able to affect laws and insert their ideology into the public domain (Robbins, 2009).

## Background Literature on Islamism and Politics

The heated discussion on Islamism and politics stems from the broader discussion on religions, at large, and its presence in the realm of politics. As Professor Ramadan describes it sometimes as a clash or confrontation not only by two domains of different moral codes, values, practices, and set of beliefs but also a virtual competition over authority. Two different brands of authority. They are: religious authority, and political authority (Ramadan, 2010).[13] Whereas, Dr. Hamid claims that the essence of the problem is the mere failure in distinguishing between different religious actors and rather viewing them from a monolithic lens for a verity of reasons that some of them can be purely out of convenience. Moreover, he asserts that religious actors exist in a spectrum. For instance, he argues that it is intellectually ambiguous to cluster the two following organizations or parties in the same category*;* Al-Qaeda, which is a violent/terrorist organization; and Ennahda Movement, which is peacefully participating and engaging in the political process in Tunisia (Hamid, 2014). [14]

The apparent or real vexing relationship between religions and politics has been for a long time a major source of noise and vehement debates. The debates surrounding the topic at hand can be, to some extent, best described as between those who assert that religions are incompatible with the realm of politics and those who claim that semi-hormonic relationship

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[13] Ramadan, T. (2010). *What I believe / Tariq Ramadan.* Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

[14] Hamid, S. (2014). *Temptations of power: Islamists and illiberal democracy in a new Middle East.* Oxford University Press.

could exit if it does not already exist. To illustrate, concerning the question of incompatibility, author Graham asserts that religions are not obsolete and rather reviving, he profoundly and fundamentally considers their place in the political arena to be counterproductive, dichotomous, and a "settled long ago" discussion. Moreover, he argues "generally that the domains of religious belief and political enactment have no common ground." Graham employs the principles of political liberalism as a buttress for his argument. In addition, his argument stems from the assertion that the two fields are distinctly different. The political domain is the one where we have no choice but to be involved in since we are unavoidably political agents (similar to Aristotle's statement that we are political animals) whereas, religion is a matter of one's choice. Further, if religious doctrines were to be incorporated in making laws that could render the laws to be unacceptable by segments of society who do not follow such doctrine. This inherent inability to follow the law harms the association between the two domains and affects how the public comes to common ground (Graham, 1983).[15]

Even though Dr. Hamid does not probably view the issue in question from the particular previous angle, in his book "Islamists and Illiberal Democracy in a New Middle East" he sounds agreeable to the last statement of Professor Graham. Hamid notes that popular parties in the Middle-East tend to incorporate social, political, and religious elements into their movements, like the Muslim brotherhood movement, and once they gain the support of electorate, they would highly, then, seek to insert their religious ideology into the section of society where they govern. They accomplish that when they sense that the general population could be agreeable or persuaded to accept such agenda (Hamid,2014).

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[15] Graham, Gordon. (1983). Religion and politics. *Philosophy, 58,* 203-213.

Furthermore, two authors, Razavi and Jenichen, are likewise proponents of the claim that politics and religions are not suited for marriage. They state strongly in their journal article "the unhappy marriage of religion and politics" that the danger of inserting religion into the political domain is as such not solely because of religion, rather in the way it can be utilized for instance, by nationalist politicians to render feminist struggles secondary to "larger national causes." The religion here could be used as a powerful instrument to "further amplify these dynamics by providing a 'divine' grounding for them (Razavi and Jenichen 2010).[16]

Culturalist theories or explanations could be understood as belonging to this camp of those who view a contradictory relationship between the cohabitation of religions and politics. When religious actors assume power, they do not merely engage in domestic affairs but also affect global politics. That is why author Samuel Huntington's theory could be plausibly injected to the discussion. He champions the theory of the Clash of Civilization and the core of his thesis argues that "[the] great division among humankind and the dominating source conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future" (Huntington, 1993).[17]

Author Huntington's theory of the Clash of Civilizations is cited here because it is the primary starting points for some of those who writes about the issue of religions, Islam in particular, and politics. Dr. Jillian Schwedler, an expert of political Islam, argues that when we

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[16] Jenichen, Anne., & Razavi, Jenichen. (2010). The unhappy marriage of Religion and politics: problems and pitfalls for gender equality. *Third World Quarterly*, 31(6) 833-850.

[17] Huntington, S. (1993). The clash of civilizations? *Foreign Affairs,* 72(3), 22-49. doi:10.2307/20045621.

start that analysis from the previous starting point we will need to "repeat that the beliefs, norms, and values of Islam (which in any case are varied) cannot explain the diverse experiences and practices of Islamist groups, let alone of the 1.4 billion Muslims worldwide .We argue that we should instead analyze Islamists as rational actors or perhaps focus on institutions, or regime repression, or the exclusions of globalization, or the politics of identity, or any of a number of alternative analytic frameworks"( Schwedler, 2011). She does not particularly belong to the other camp of the debate, but she offers a uniquely different approach in studying the matter that goes beyond simplistic and monolithic stance on Islamism and politics, but rather focuses on a deeper, complex, and more nuanced framework.

With respect to the other camp of semi-harmonic stance of religions and politics, professor Ramadan thinks a dichotomy between religions and politics is not necessary. In addition, he uses himself as an example in this regard and demonstrates that having multiple identities while being active in the domains of politics, society, and religion have not been a cause of strain and incompatibility. "I am a Swiss by nationality, Egyptian by memory, Muslim by religion, European by culture, universalistic by principle … There is no problem whatsoever: I live with those identities, and one or the other may take the lead depending on the context or occasion" (Ramadan, 2010).

Furthermore, in the journal article "Tunisia's jasmine revolution: causes and impact" author El-Khawas provides an insight to the struggle and political dissonance that used to be a reality and an inevitable trajectory between Islamists parties at large and the "secular" state government. While the author was reciting and analyzing events before, after, and during the revolution, an inference can be made. Dictatorships are a chief cause of radicalization and discourse of fear. Ben Ali, the autocrat who was ousted after some 22 years of ruling, convinced

the populace of the threat of religiosity, and branded virtually every opponent to his rule as a

terrorist and fanatic. Religious fanatics cannot be utterly pardoned for the atrocities committed

under the name of their deity; yet observing the sheer volume of those who had been living in

exile for the fear of unjust sentencing in their land, one realizes the absurdity of Ben Ali's

government's accusations. People like Moncef Marzouki, who is a prominent secularist and

vehement advocate of human rights, were living in exile during Ben Ali's rule and were

considered criminals. After the revolution, it is interesting to discover that the well-known

secularist, Moncef Marzouki, was the first president of Tunisia. The fascinating fact in this

journal article was that the Islamist "moderate" party, Ennahda, who was condemned to unfair

trials and sentencing, living in exile, and presented to the public as an incoherent and backward

texture to the fabric of the Tunisian's society, was and has been an essential actor in the

country's successful transition to democracy. "Ennahda reached out to secular and liberal parties

to form a pluralist government. Although the PDP quickly declined the offer, Ennahda put

together a three-party coalition government and divided the top positions among them…

Ennahda supported Congress for the Republic Party's Marzouki to be the country's president."

This statement seems to be revolutionary and renders Tunisia - to a great extent- to be an almost

ideal model for the Middle-East and North Africa (MENA) in reconciliation between two

seemingly polarized political forces, secularists and Islamists, for the sake of safeguarding and

perpetuating the newly attained democracy. This was evident in the presidency and legislative

branch; the former was held by a prominent secularist and human rights activist President

Marzouki and the latter was dominated by the leading Islamist party "Ennahda" (El-Khawas,

2012).[18]

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[18] El-Khawas, Mohamed. (2012). Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution: Causes and impact.
*Mediterranean Quarterly,*

Evidence from past literature also presents us with unique examples of unlikely alliances made by different factions of religious actors in some Muslim majority countries. In time of war, author Yaphe sums the whole complexity of the Syrian civil war. In particular, the following two sentences appear to be very telling "Hezbollah is a critical component of Iran's deterrent posture. Preserving Assad is extremely important, but without assistance from Tehran and Moscow, Hezbollah probably can do little more to protect him" (Yaphe 2013).[19] The two sentences address the question of Assad's departure and the parties invested in his stay in power regardless of committed atrocities. The uniqueness about such statements is that they involve the mutual alliance based on religion and politics as well. This expands the literature to incorporate the study of how politics and religions' cohabitations contribute to the alleviation or worsening of dire problems.

Dr. Hamid examines the short-live democratic transitions in Egypt in a book he wrote after the uprisings in 2011. Hamid posits the notion of illiberal democracy and authored his book in a scholarly attempt to investigate the plausibility of democracy to emerge in the Middle-East, after the "Arab Spring" in a deferring style than it is in western democracy – that is, departing from the liberal norms. The differing style he is addressing is suggested to be a result of Islamists parties being on positions of powers after the toppling of some dictatorships in the region. In the book, the author explicates how popular groups like the Muslim Brotherhood, who in their founding tenants have characterized democracy as a foreign product have decided to embrace democracy and adhere peacefully to the electoral and ballot box's outcomes; furthermore, they were willing to make alliance with secular sections within their countries. We see a parallel

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[19] Yaphe, J., & National Defense University. (2013). Next steps in Syria. *Center for Strategic Research,*

pattern here between what El-Khawas witnessed in Tunisia and what happened in Egypt. Yet, in the Egyptian experiments, he then notes a critical observation that once the Muslim Brotherhood were in power, they were willing to incorporate and implement some of their ideology into society in particular in the constituents that they represent and believe in the core ideas the Brotherhood is advocating. Since this might give rise to tensions and frustration by those who do not align with the Brotherhood's policies, their actions warrant the characterization of democracy as illiberal (Hamid, 2014).

His book, and an article in Aljazeera Arabic website will be the main foundations for the selection of Islamists parties and the justifications for including them in the data-set. His book offers nuances about some of the political parties proclaiming themselves as Islamists; Aljazeera article lists some of the parties that are defined as Islamists in Muslim majority countries.

**Profiles of Islamist Voters**

While incredible amount of literature has been produced about Islam, Political Islam, and Islamist organizations, few ones have concentrated on Islamist voters per se. Three journal articles have, mainly, studied Islamist voters and what explains their support for Islamist parties. These writers tested their claims based upon the following theorical models or explanations. Religiosity, grievances, clientelism, and horizontal networks.

As mentioned in the introduction, three journal articles have written extensively about Islamist voters and explained their voting behaviors from four distinctive theoretical frameworks. Authors Garcia-Rivero and Kotze pioneered the literature on Islamists voters in 2007. Their article studied Islamist voters in particular. And distinguished between those who religiously sympathize with Islamists and those who politically cast their votes for them. The study of the latter group is a profound and significant contribution to the political science literature. They

empirically tested the impact of religiosity on support for Islamist parties in four countries. Their cardinal finding indicated that there is a positive relationship between supporting "more people with strong religious beliefs in public office" and casting one's vote for Islamist candidates (Garcia-Rivero & Kotze, 2007).

In 2009, author Robbins studied Islamist voting behaviors with emphasis on the role of religiosity as well. Although he employed religiosity in his statistical analysis, his findings did not concur with the previous study. Strikingly, his findings indicated that "in none of the cases is support for the implementation of the Shari'a statistically significant, although the relationship is positive." Moreover, he concluded his analysis by asserting that "individuals who desire a greater role for religion in the public sphere—but not necessarily the full implementation of Islamic law—would be more likely to support an Islamist party" (Robbins, 2009).

The third study on Islamist voters' behavior is a comprehensive one. It starts by first minimizing the significance of the previous studies' findings. To illustrate, authors Pellicer and Wegner asserted that what the other studies found is "a rather tautological result given that this is part of the core identity of Islamist parties" (Pellicer & Wegner, 2014). The authors, then, provided three theoretical frameworks to explain the phenomenon of Islmaist voters' support. They are: clientelism, grievances, and horizontal network.

With respect to clientelism, voters who belong to this classification are usually poor, and less educated. The relationship between them and Islamist parties is a "patron-client" type of relationship. Their study has found no evidence for this theoretical model. Grievances, in this framework, refers to voters who are described as having little wealth and higher level of education. Their statistical analysis found support for this theory and the proceeding one. To elaborate, horizontal network profile, the authors say the following: "as the core of the

organizations consists of educated, upwardly mobile, middle class individuals, horizontal recruitment implies that the same type of characteristics would apply to Islamist supporters" (Pellicer & Wegner, 2014).

The previous authors have indicated that religious and clientelist theoretical models are the most cited reasons to explain the behaviors of Islamist voters; therefore, the thesis seeks to answer the research question by testing these two claims in 10 Muslim-majority countries.

# CHAPTER 3

# THEORETICAL MODEL

## Theory

The theoretical model suggests that religious and clientelist factors could explain or predict Islamist voters behaviors (García-Rivero & Kotzé, 2007; Robbins, 2009; Pellicer & Wegner, 2014). The theory is driven from existing discussions in the Political Science literature. In particular, the earlier work of authors García-Rivero & Kotzé which has a central thesis that argued for the impact of religion on Islamist party supporters. Moreover, the other aspect of the theory addresses a profile of Islamist voters that was tested in the journal article authored by Pellicer and Wegner. I aim to replicate some parts of the previous studies to examine the impact of religiosity and clientelism on a larger sample of countries as well as more control variables collected from the above three scholarly writings.

The two terminologies are operationalized as follows. Religion in the context of this study, is measured by an individual's response to their level of religiosity.[20] Clientelism- similar to Pellicer & Wegner's interpretation- is measured by the individual respondent's level of education and social class. More emphases on how these two variables are recoded will be discussed in the proceeding chapter.

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[20] Not exactly similar to how it was measured in García-Rivero & Kotzé's study. The question in their study about the individual's response to whether religious people should be in public office is not asked in the newest wave of World Values survey. The question used instead of it is the closest one to capture a respondent's level of religiosity

## Hypotheses

Based upon the theoretical model, three hypotheses are formulated. The hypotheses claim that certain independent variables affect the dependent variable (support for Islamist parties). The hypotheses proposed are written as follows.

## The Null Hypothesis

*H0: There is no relationship between higher level of religiosity and voting for Islamist parties*

*H0; there is no relationship between lower level of education and support for Islamist parties*

*H0: There is no relationship between lower social class and support for Islamist parties*

## The alternative hypotheses

*H1: There is a positive correlation between religiosity and voting for Islamist candidates*

*H2: There is a positive association between lower level of education and support for Islamist parties*

*H3: Individuals who are in lower social class are more likely than their counterparts to vote for Islamist candidates*

## The religious argument

*H1: There is a positive correlation between higher level of religiosity and voting for Islamist candidates*

Th Findings of García-Rivero & Kotzé and Robbins studies found a critical impact of the role of religiosity on an individual's prospect on voting for an Islamist party. Although, they differ on the level of religiosity on that political decision, their researches were centered around

the effect of religion (García-Rivero & Kotzé, 2007; Robbins, 2009). Furthermore, the effect of

religiosity has been carried by several scholars as a logical explanation for the political support

that Islamist candidates receive. To illustrate, author Bouandel, in explaining the relative success

that Islamist parties had in Algeria in the early 90s, attributed that success to reasons that are

rooted in religiosity (Bouandel, 1993).[21] Furthermore, blurring the lines between what is

religious and what constitutes a political matter by Islamist parties to garner support is one

example of how impactful the concept of religiosity is (Wald et al., 2005).[22]

**The clientelist argument**

> *H2: There is a positive association between lower level of education and support Islamist*
> *parties*

> *H3: Individuals who are in lower social class are more likely than their counterparts to*
> *vote for Islamist candidates*

These two hypotheses refer to the impact that clientelism has on the prospect of voting

for an Islamist party. The concept underlines socio-economic factors that produce this argued

effect. Lower educational level and lower social class, as argued by authors Pellicer & Wegner,

are the properties of what clientelism suggests. Moreover, they explain that the clientelism's

claim "is generally placed in the context of the inability of Arab states to provide public goods

and employment for their citizens. Islamist groups have stepped in to provide education,

hospitals, jobs, clothing, low cost credit, etc., to the poor." These charitable activities are thought

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[21] Bouandel, Youcef. 1993. "The Algerian National Popular Assembly election of
December 1991." *Representation* 32 (Winter).

[22] Wald, K., Silverman, A., & Fridy, K. (2005). MAKING SENSE OF RELIGION IN POLITICAL LIFE. Annual
Review of Political Science, 8(1), 121-143.

to be what author Zubaida describes as "networks of patronage and clientship" (Zubaida, 1992:

9).[23] I aim to test the previous hypotheses with data from the 6th wave of the WVS.

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[23] Zubaida, S. (1992). Islam, the state and democracy: Contrasting conceptions of society in Egypt. *Middle East Report,* (179), 2-10.

# CHAPTER 4

# METHODOLOGY

## Research Design

To test the claims that were driven from the theoretical model, I use a cross-national statistical analysis methodology with a country fixed effect to account for comparable variations within countries with respect to the different numbers of Islamist parties in each one of them. Moreover, I estimate two regression models that seek to test the effect of religiosity and clientelism on the dependent variable (support for Islamist parties). I conduct my empirical test using data extracted from the 6th wave of the World Values Survey. The initial goal was to work with 13 Muslim-majority countries, but I faced some limitations, therefore, I decided to continue working with only 10 countries. In the first three journal articles on Islamist voters, the number of countries included in the data-set did not surpass five. While replicating the some of the models of these past studies, I intend to add more countries and more control variables selected from previous studies on the topic at hand.

I work with one dependent variable (Islamist parties), and other independent and control variables. Religiosity, Level of education and Social Class are three main independent variables. The other control variables are: Age, Sex, Confidence in religious institution, Confidence in government institution, and Employment status. All the 9 variables are collected from the 6th wave of WVS and adopted form the first three scholarly literature on Islamist voters (García-Rivero & Kotzé, 2007; Robbins, 2009; Pellicer & Wegner, 2014). In the first regression, I will test the effect of religiosity. In the second model, I will test impact of clientelism, exemplified in lower level of education and lower social class.

**Variables**

**Dependent Variable**

There is one dependent variable that seeks to capture support for Islamist parties or otherwise in 10-Muslim majority countries. This DV was extracted form the following question in the 6th wave. "V228: f there were a national election tomorrow, for which party on this list would you vote?" To address the propensity of political parties in each country, I added a country fixed effect in my analysis. I, also, recoded the responses to dichotomous variables in which "1" would mean an individual casted his or her vote for an Islmaist party, and "0" means otherwise.

**Independent variables**

Three main independent variables: Religiosity, Level of education, and Social class. Religiosity is extracted from the proceeding question. "V147: Independently of whether you attend religious services or not, would you say you are?" This variable is transferred to an ordinal categorical variable where "1" would mean both *An atheist* and *Not a religious person*, "2" means *Not asked*,[24] "3" means *A religious person*. Level of education is taken from the following question. V248. "What is the highest educational level that you have attained?" I recoded it as an ordinal variable ranging from "1" = *University level education with degree*, to "9" = *No formal education*. Finally, social class is driven from the question 238. It reads: "People sometimes describe themselves as belonging to the working class, the middle class, or the upper or lower class. Would you describe yourself as belonging to the()" It is, as well, recoded as ordinal variable with 5 levels, ranges from 1 to 5 with "1" = *Upper-class*, and "5" = *Lower-class*.

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[24] This is an arbitrary level of religiosity. Excluding it form the data-set would affect a lot of responses form Egypt and remove it from the analysis. Therefore, I kept it.

**Control variables**

 I add 5 control variables to the regression models to account for biases as well as other explanations for the effect on the prospect of support for Islamist parties. These variables are: Age, Sex, Confidence in religious institutions, Confidence in government institution, and Employment status. Age and Sex are key demographic factors that exist in almost all past studies on the matter. Variable Sex is converted to a dichotomous variable in which "2" = *Male*, and "1" = *Female*. Confidence in religious institutions and Confidence in government institutions are both recoded as dichotomous variables but with different indications. To elaborate, in the former variable "1" = *Not at all* and *Not very much* and "2" means *A great deal* and *Quite a lot*. In the latter variables, the assignments of the indicators are reversed. Finally, Employment status, is transformed to an ordinal categorical variable with a five-point scale ranging from 1 to 5 as shown in the next page.

Table 1: Summary of how dependent, independent, and control variables are recoded

| Label | Concept | Variable Type and Range |
|---|---|---|
| Islamism Parties | If there were a national election tomorrow, for which party on this list would you vote? | Recorded to dichotomous<br>0 = Non-Islamist<br>1 = Islamist |
| Religiosity | Independently of whether you attend religious services or not, would you say you are ()? | Ordinal categorical<br>Ranging from 1:3<br>1= An atheist & Not a religious person, 2= Not asked, 3 =A religious person |
| Social Class | Would you describe yourself as belonging to the (Social Class)? | Ordinal Categorical<br>Ranging from 1:5<br>1= Upper class, 2= Upper middle class, 3= Lower middle class, 4= Working class, 5= Lower class |
| Level of Education | Level of Education | Ordinal Categorical<br>Ranging from 1:9<br>1= University-level education with degree, 9= No formal education |
| Sex | Sex | Dichotomous<br>1= Male<br>2= Female |
| Age | Age | Numerical |
| Confidence in Religious Institutions | Level of Confidence in Religious Institutions | Dichotomous<br>1= Not at all & Not very much<br>2= Quite a lot & A great deal |
| Confidence in Government Institutions | Level of Confidence in Government Institutions | Dichotomous<br>1= Quite a lot & A great deal<br>2= Not at all & Not very much |
| Employment Status | Employment Status | Ordinal Categorical<br>Ranging from 1:5<br>1= Employed, 2= Student, 3=Housewife, 4= Retired/pensioned, 5=Unemployed |
| Countries | Countries names | Nominal categorical<br>10 countries: Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Turkey, Iraq, Yemen, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, and Palestine. Lebanon, Kuwait, and Bahrain excluded |

# CHAPTER 5

# EMPIRICAL TEST

## Regression Models

I estimate two regression models based upon the theoretical frameworks. The first one is about the religiosity effect on support for Islamist parties. To elaborate, it aims to test whether self-proclaimed religiosity transfers to the ballot box in favor of Islamist parties. The second one is about the clientelist theory and seeks to examine whether there are positive correlations between lower level of education as well as lower social-class and likelihood of voting for Islamists. Both models are multiple regressions.

**Model 1**

$$Support\ for\ Islamist\ Parties = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Religiosity +$$

$$\beta_2 Confidence\ in\ religious\ institutions + \beta_3\ Countries + \ \varepsilon$$

**Model 2**

$$Support\ for\ Islamist\ Parties = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Level\ of\ Education + \beta_2 Social\ Class +$$

$$\beta_3 Religiosity + \beta_4 Confidence\ in\ religous\ institutions + \beta_5 Age + \beta_6 Sex +$$

$$\beta_7 Countries + \beta_8 Employment\ status + \beta_9 Confidence\ in\ government\ institutions + \ \varepsilon$$

## Results and findings

Table 1. Regression models for the effect of the theoretical model on Support for Islamist Parties

|  | (1) | (2) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Intercept | 0.035 (2.32) * | 0.037 (1.06) * |
| Religiosity3 | 0.056 (6.04) *** | 0.055 (5.75) *** |
| Confidence in religious institutions2 | -0.001 (-1.36) | -0.007 (-1.04) |
| Lower education |  | -0.039 (-2.83) ** |
| Social class2 |  | -0.009 (-0.31) |
| Social class3 |  | -0.017 (-0.62) |
| Social class4 |  | -0.017 (-0.63) |
| Social class5 |  | -0.008 (-0.28) |
| Age |  | 0.0003 (1.45) |
| Sex |  | 0.003 (0.47) |
| Observation | 10,946 |  |

The t-statistics in parenthesis. The significant code as follows: *$p \leq .05$, **$p \leq .01$, ***$p \leq 0.001$

With respect to the first model, the effect of religiosity on support for Islamist parties is palpable. Furthermore, the regression output indicates a positive relationship between an individual in the third level of the variable religiosity "a religious person" and the likelihood of casting his or her votes for an Islamist candidate. To illustrate, the co-efficient for the correlation is 0.056 which indicates that for every unit increase in the level of religiosity, we expect a 6% increase in support for Islamist parties. The co-efficient is at 0.001% of statistical significance. This result reaffirms past studies on Islamist voters' behaviors. Primarily the study that was conducted by García-Rivero and Kotzé. The first model is designed to replicate the primary model in their study (García-Rivero & Kotzé, 2007). Even though some scholars, such as Pellicer & Wegner, have stressed that the previous finding is "a rather tautological" given that religiosity is the core of what Islamism means, it is a significant predictor because it shows that self-identification with higher level of religiosity could lead to actual electoral support.

What is, likewise, noteworthy in the table of the regression is that it shows that the relationship is negative[25] between "higher level of confidence in religious institutions" and the prospect of voting for Islamist. This might be in part due to some Arab citizens frustration with the governments of their countries and assuming that such establishment is but an instrument in the hands of the ruling class and not an independent institution. Hence, their perception of their governments' level of democracy and transparency may affect their judgment of these kind of institutions.

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[25] I should note that there is no statistical significance in this relationship, yet, the output was intriguing to address.

The second model – concerning the theoretical framework of clientelism- does not produce an outcome that negates existing empirical studies in the political science literature. Particularly, the study that was engineered by Pellicer & Wegner. They concluded their study by highlighting that there is no evidence to buttress the theoretical claims for the impact of clientelism on Islamist voters' behaviors. I designed the second model in a manner that replicates what they did but with a larger sum of observations; yet, the results are the same.

To illustrate, Pellicer & Wegner explains that clientelism is best exemplified in individuals who occupy a lower place in the realm of education and socio-economy (Pellicer & Wegner, 2014). Therefore, I ran the model by utilizing these two main variables. The empirical outcome indicated that most of the correlations between the independent and control variables and the party-support variable are negative and not statistically significant.[26]

The only statistically significant correlation is between the 9th level of education "No formal education" and the dependent variable. The co-efficient is -0.039. It indicates that, on average, those with low educational level are statistically less likely to vote for Islamist parties. The statistical significance is at 0.01%

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[26] Control variables such as "Confidence in government institutions" and "Employment status" were dropped from the table because they did not produce statistically significant outcome, nor did they contribute to the existing discussions in literature.

Table 2. Frequencies of some of the independent and control variables

| Variable | Categories | Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Social Class | Lower class | 13.1 |
| | Working Class | 24.9 |
| | Lower middle class | 39.6 |
| | Upper middle class | 20.8 |
| | Upper class | 1.6 |
| Level of Education | 1 | 14.5 |
| | 2 | 7.6 |
| | 3 | 13.9 |
| | 4 | 7.4 |
| | 5 | 10.2 |
| | 6 | 0.414 |
| | 7 | 13.7 |
| | 8 | 9.8 |
| | 9 | 16 |
| Religiosity | An atheist & Not a religious person | 0.5 |
| | Not Asked | 12.3 |
| | A religious person | 71.2 |
| Sex | Male | 49 |
| | Female | 51 |
| Employment Status | Employed | 45.1 |
| | Student | 10.6 |
| | Housewife | 30.3 |
| | Retired/pensioned | 6.6 |
| | Unemployed | 7.5 |
| Confidence in government institutions | A great deal & Quite a lot | 41 |
| | Not at all & Not much | 59 |
| Confidence in religious institutions | Not at all & Not much | 59 |
| | A great deal & Quite a lot | 41 |

# CHAPTER 6

# CONCLUSION

Who votes for Islamists? A question that turned out to be rather, deceptively, easy to tackle. The dearth of scholarly articles and empirical studies on, specifically, the behaviors of Islamist voters is a call for serious concerns. To elaborate, these parties occupy unique, not necessarily good or bad, statutes within Muslim-majority countries and have, indeed, affected domestic, regional, and international affairs. The literature that have been produced about Islamist parties and organizations are thorough, eliminating, timely, and eye-opening. Nevertheless, it is equally profound to study their base, what explains their political behaviors, and motivate their electoral engagement.

The thesis before you is a humble contribution in this regard and relies, heavily, on existing discussions on Islamism and politics. Quite frankly, writing on this topic has educated me more than I expected and rendered me questioning some of my untested assumptions about issues pertaining to Muslim-majority countries.

The theoretical framework that generated the hypotheses about the effect of religiosity, low education, and low social class, is neither sound nor invalid in its entirety. To illustrate, the argument for the profound impact of the role of religion on an average individual's political participation in Muslim-majority countries turned out to be accurate and empirically supported as highlighted in the previous chapter. However, the impact of clientelism was on the contrary.

In a word, I am content that my theisis does not tell the whole story about the issue at hand and that future studies would probably be more accurate in analyzing and understanding the phenomenon. Further emphasis on the political climate, founding elections, social, and

behavioral attitudes may prove to be more valid in answering the research question. Moreover, it would be more profound if a future research studied the issue from a gender-based perspective since that would offer more nuances, explanations, and a pioneering contribution to the political science literature on female Islamist voters.

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# APPENDIX A

# THE SURVEY QUESTIONS

The questions are extracted from the 6th wave of the World Values Survey.

| V108 | [H]ow much confidence [do] you have in (religious institutions)? | 1) A great deal<br>2) Quite a lot<br>3) Not very much<br>4) Not at all |
|---|---|---|
| V115 | [H]ow much confidence [do] you have in (government institutions)? | 1) A great deal<br>2) Quite a lot<br>3) Not very much<br>4) Not at all |
| V147 | Independently of whether you attend religious services or not, would you say you are: | 1) A religious person<br>2) Not a religious person<br>3) An atheist |
| V228 | If there were a national election tomorrow, for which party on this list would you vote? Just call out the number on this card. If DON'T KNOW: Which party appeals to you most? | 1) Part1<br>2) Party2<br>3) etc. |
| V229 | Are you employed now or not? If yes, about how many hours a week? If more than one job: only for the main job. | 1) Full time employee (30 hours a week or more)<br>2) Part time employee (les than 30 hours a week)<br>3) Self employed<br>4) Retired/pensioned<br>5) Housewife not otherwise employed<br>6) Student<br>7)Unemployed<br>8) Other |
| V238 | Would you describe yourself as belonging to the: | 1) Upper class<br>2) Upper middle class<br>3) Lower middle class<br>4) Working class<br>5) Lower Class |
| V240 | (*Code respondent's sex by observation*): | 1) Male<br>2) Female |
| V242 | This means you are____years old. | (Write in age in two digits) |

| V248 | What is the highest educational level that you have attained? | 1) No formal education<br>2) Incomplete primary school<br>3) Complete primary school<br>4) Incomplete secondary school: technical/vocational type<br>5) Complete secondary school: technical/vocational type<br>6) Incomplete secondary: university-preparatory type<br>7) Complete secondary: university-preparatory type<br>8) Some university-level education, without degree<br>9) University-level education, with degree |

# APPENDIX B

# LIST OF ISLAMIST PARTIES

| Country | Islamist Party |
|---------|----------------|
| Algeria | El Islah movement |
|         | Ennahda |
|         | The Movement for the Society of Peace |
| Egypt | Freedom and Justice Party |
|       | Al Nour Party |
| Tunisia | Ennahda (TN) |
| Libya | Justice and Construction |
| Iraq | Iraqi National Accord movement |
|      | Iraqi supreme Islamic council |
|      | Iraqi Islamic Party |
|      | AL da'wa party |
| Palestine | Hamas |
|           | Islamic Jihad |
| Jordan | The Islamic Action Front |
|        | Moderate Islamic Party |
|        | Arab Islamic Democratic Movement Party |
|        | Justice and Reform Party |
| Yemen | Yemeni Congregation for Reform |
| Turkey | Justice and Development Party (TK) |
| Morocco | The Justice and Development Party |