

# Religion, Ideology and Corruption in Muslim Majority Democracies: Experimental Evidence from Tunisia

M. Tahir Kilavuz  
*Marmara University*

*Nathanael G. Sumaktoyo*  
*University of Konstanz*

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# The Broader Project

## ◎ Main Question

- What is the role of religion in political behavior and attitudes of citizens in Muslim-majority democracies?

## ◎ Sub-questions

- What is the role of Islamist ideology in voting behavior?
- How do Muslims vote when they face trade-offs between
  - ◎ Religion and economic benefits
  - ◎ Religion and democracy
  - ◎ Religion and other political ideals

# The Broader Project

## ◎ Two theoretical issues in the literature

1. In the Muslim-majority contexts, the literature's focus on;
  - ◎ Either little or no attention to the role of religion
  - ◎ Or an essentialist approach to reduce Muslims' political behavior to religion
2. Role of religion in democracies
  - ◎ The literature so far is mostly based on European, North American and Latin American cases
  - ◎ Less so on Muslim-majority democracies

# The Broader Project

◎ Purpose of the project to respond to these two issues

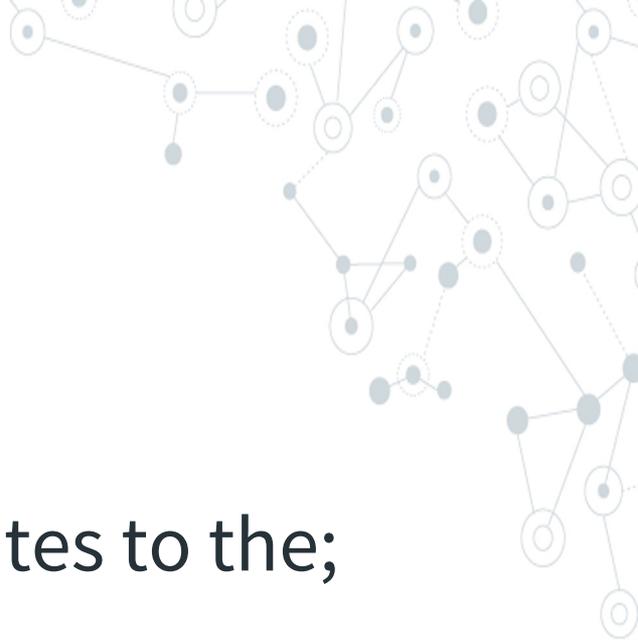
## 1. Approach to religion

- ◎ There is a need to unpack the role of religion in Muslim-majority contexts
- ◎ Treat it as one of the multiple factors that shape political behavior and attitudes

## 2. Role of religion in democracies

- ◎ There are Muslim-majority countries that are either democratic or electoral authoritarian
- ◎ Explore how voting behavior of Muslim citizens is shaped by religious factors

# The Broader Project

A decorative network diagram in the top right corner, consisting of various sized circles (nodes) connected by thin lines (edges). Some nodes are solid grey, while others are hollow white with a grey outline. The connections form a complex, branching structure.

- ◎ Therefore the project contributes to the;
    - The literature on Muslim-majority countries
      - ◎ The Middle East and North Africa, Southeast Asia etc.
    - The literature on voting behavior on developing world
    - The broader literature on religion and politics
- 
- A decorative network diagram in the bottom left corner, similar to the one in the top right, featuring nodes of different sizes and colors (solid grey and hollow white) connected by thin lines.

# The Broader Project

## ◎ One methodological issues in the literature

- Heavy reliance on qualitative methods on the religion and politics in the Muslim-majority contexts;
  - ◎ Valuable contributions over time
  - ◎ Helpful to produce thick descriptions
  - ◎ Yet,
    - Relatively low generalizability within the countries examined
    - Even lower generalizability across other Muslim-majority countries

# The Broader Project

- ◎ The project instead,
  - Uses quantitative and experimental methods to examine how religion shapes political behavior in Muslim-majority contexts
    - ◎ Helpful to generalize within and across cases
    - ◎ More reliable measures
    - ◎ Useful to carve out causal mechanisms through different experimental designs

# The Broader Project

◎ The project contributed to the conduct of three sets of surveys (along with collaborators)

◎ Tunisia Political Attitudes Survey (2017)

- Face-to-face surveys in Tunisia
- Nationally Representative
- n=900

◎ Arab Regime Preferences Survey (2018)

- YouGov surveys in Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco
- Demographically Representative
- n=3000

◎ Tunisian Elite Survey (2019)

- Targeting different civil society and political parties in Tunisia
- n=250

# Study: Corruption and Voting Behavior

◎ Religion, Politics and Corruption in the Muslim majority democracies

◎ **Central Question:** How do voters in a Muslim-majority democracy react when they face with a choice on electing a corrupt politician?

- What is the role of religion and Islamism as a political ideology in punishing or overlooking corruption?
- Is it worth it for the political parties to fight corruption?

◎ Experimental evidence from Tunisia

# Why Does Corruption Matter?

- ◎ Negative consequences of corruption
  - Political consequences
  - Economic consequences
  - Social consequences
- ◎ Corruption and Muslim majority democracies
  - Mostly unstable
  - Middle or lower income cases
- ◎ Tunisia is an example of Muslim majority democracy with high corruption
  - Corruption of the regime before the revolution
  - "Democratization of corruption" after the revolution

# Why Does Corruption Matter?

## ◎ Anti-corruption efforts in Tunisia

- The National Anti-Corruption Authority (INLUCC)
- The failed Lustration Law
- Anti-corruption operations and arrests in 2017

## ◎ The Reconciliation Law

- A bill proposed in 2015 and blocked several times
- Finally passed in September 2017
- Provides amnesty to bureaucrats potentially for economic recovery

## ◎ Religion and corruption

Islamists as clean politicians and corruption

Islamist support for the Reconciliation Law

# Religion and Corruption

- ◎ Link between religion, ideology and political behavior (Pepinsky et. al. 2012)
- ◎ Islamists and corruption
  - "...[a]n authentic alternative to corrupt, exhausted and ineffectual regimes." (Esposito 1999)
  - Connection between voter religiosity, corruption and support for Islamists
  - Religious voters against nepotism and corruption

Some survey data, yet no systematic experimental analysis

# Research Design

## Original survey in Tunisia

- December 2017
- 900 respondents, nationally representative

	Not Corrupt	Corrupt
Islamist	Group 1	Group 3
Secularist	Group 2	Group 4

## 2x2 experimental design

**Islamist, not corrupt**

Suppose that there was candidate for the National Assembly running on a platform dedicated to **increase Islam's influence in politics**, will you vote for the candidate?

**Islamist, corrupt**

Suppose that there was candidate for the National Assembly running on a platform dedicated to **increase Islam's influence in politics** but is currently **under investigation for a corruption case**, will you vote for the candidate?

**Secularist, not corrupt**

Suppose that there was candidate for the National Assembly running on a platform dedicated to **reduce Islam's influence in politics**, will you vote for the candidate?

**Secularist, corrupt**

Suppose that there was candidate for the National Assembly running on a platform dedicated to **reduce Islam's influence in politics** but is currently **under investigation for a corruption case**, will you vote for the candidate?

# Hypotheses and Findings

- ◎ *H1a: More likely to vote for an Islamist candidate over a secularist one. (supported)*
- ◎ *H1b: More likely to vote for a non-corrupt candidate over a corrupt one. (supported)*

	<b>Model 1</b>
Islamist	1.157*** (0.200)
Under Corruption Investigation	-2.223*** (0.242)
Intercept	-1.377*** (0.163)
N	866
Pseudo R-Squared	0.181

# Hypotheses and Findings

- © *H2a: Citizens punish a corrupt Islamist candidate more than a corrupt secularist candidate. (not supported)*

	<b>Model 2</b>
Islamist	1.115*** (0.218)
Under Corruption Investigation	-2.415*** (0.484)
Islamist * Corruption	<b>0.263</b> <b>(0.559)</b>
Intercept	-1.351*** (0.171)
N	866
Pseudo R-Squared	0.181

# Hypotheses and Findings

- ◎ *H2b: It is more likely for citizens to vote for a non-corrupt secularist candidate than a corrupt Islamist candidate. (supported)*

Base: Secularist, not corrupt

Islamist, not corrupt

Islamist, corrupt

Secularist, corrupt

Intercept

N

Pseudo R-Squared

## Model 3

1.115\*\*\*  
(0.218)

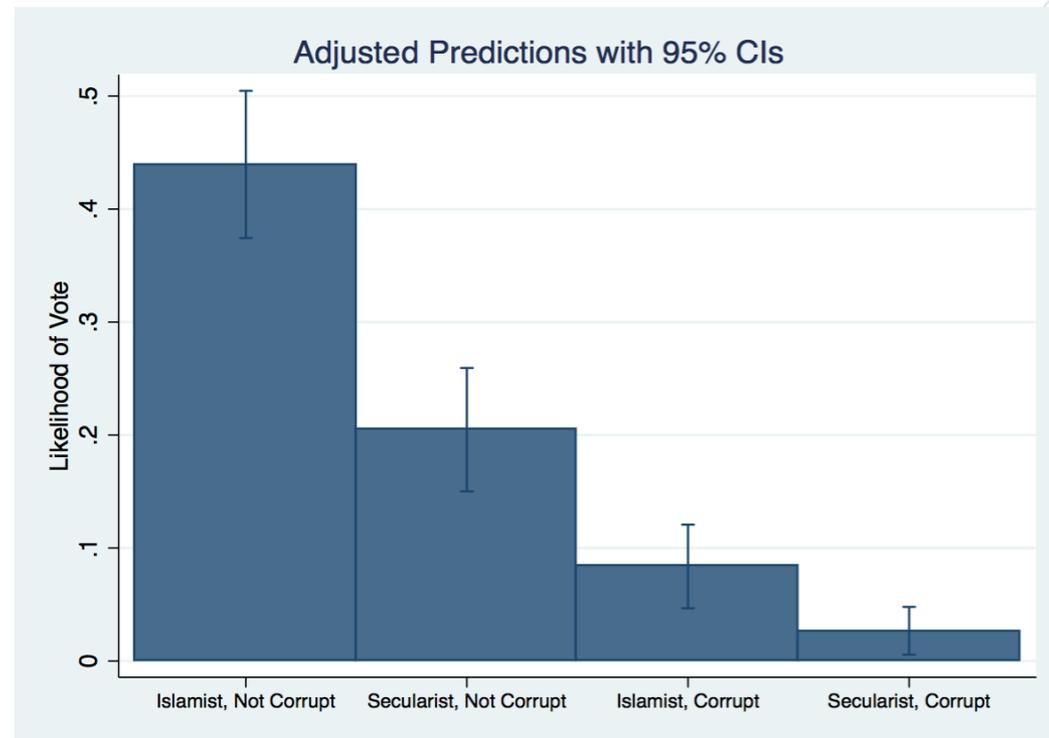
-1.037\*\*\*  
(0.300)

-2.415\*\*\*  
(0.484)

-1.351\*\*\*  
(0.171)

866

0.181



# Hypotheses and Findings

- ⊙ *H3a: Religious voters are more likely to vote for Islamist candidates. (supported)*
- ⊙ *H3b: Religious voters are more likely to punish corrupt candidates. (not supported)*

	<b>Model 4</b>
Islamist	-0.0651 (0.525)
Under Corruption Investigation	-1.855** (0.652)
Daily Prayers	-0.142 (0.134)
Islamist * Daily Prayers	<b>0.409*</b> (0.167)
Corruption * Daily Prayers	<b>-0.134</b> (0.204)

# Hypotheses and Findings

- ◎ *H3d: Voters with higher levels of public religiosity are more likely to punish corrupt candidates.*

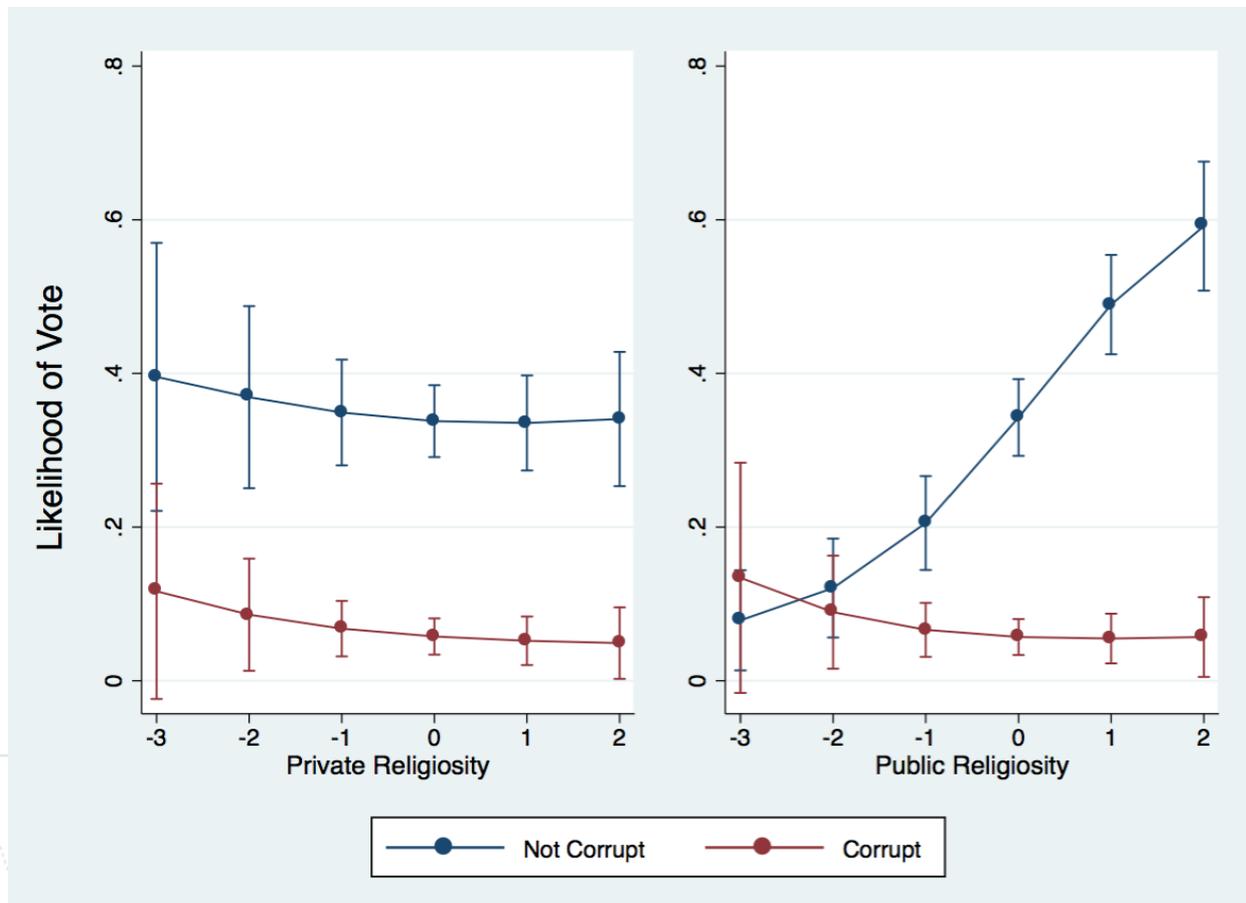
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Factor 1</b>	<b>Factor 2</b>	<b>Uniqueness</b>
Daily Prayer	<b>0.7443</b>	0.2021	0.4051
Mosque Attendance	<b>0.8049</b>	-0.1052	0.3411
Prefer Religious Party	-0.1409	<b>0.7664</b>	0.3928
Islamic Law (Sharia)	0.2663	<b>0.6531</b>	0.5025
Religion Important	0.3284	<b>0.4606</b>	0.6800

- ◎ *Factor 1: Private Religiosity*

- ◎ *Factor 2: Public Religiosity*

# Hypotheses and Findings

- ◎ *H3d: Voters with higher levels of public religiosity are more likely to punish corrupt candidates. (supported)*



# Hypotheses and Findings

© *H4c: Religious voters punish a corrupt Islamist candidate more than a corrupt secularist candidate. (not supported)*

	<b>Model 8</b>
Public Religiosity	0.158 (0.184)
Islamist	1.183*** (0.247)
Under Corruption Investigation	-2.393*** (0.561)
Islamist * Public Religiosity	0.938*** (0.269)
Corruption * Public Religiosity	-0.873 (0.479)
Islamist * Corruption	0.211 (0.636)
Islamist * Corruption * Public Religiosity	<b>-0.165</b> (0.577)
Intercept	-1.332*** (0.187)
N	739
Pseudo R-Squared	0.242

# Summary Findings

- ◎ Candidate ideology matters
  - Islamists are favored
- ◎ Candidate corruption matters
  - Voters punish corrupt politicians
- ◎ Substantively corruption matters more than ideology
  - Non-corrupt secularist is favored over corrupt Islamist

# Summary Findings

## ◎ Voter public religiosity matters

- High public religiosity -> more likely to punish corruption
- Supports the studies that make a distinction on public and private forms of religiosity
  - ◎ And how they affect political behavior

## ◎ Tunisian and Muslim majority democracy context

- All parties should avoid corruption
- Islamists, more specifically, should avoid association with corruption

# Extension on Corruption

- ◎ How do citizens perceive a trade-off between a desired pragmatic outcome and an idealistic political behavior?
  - Economic development vs. punishment on corruption
  - Is fight against corruption more salient than pragmatic benefits?

## ◎ Context: The Reconciliation Law

Provides amnesty to bureaucrats potentially for economic recovery

# Extension on Corruption

- ◎ A secondary experimental design
  - Emphasizing potential benefits and costs of the reconciliation law

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**Control Group**

Do you support the reconciliation law?

**Corruption Treatment**

Do you support the reconciliation law that many say will **provide amnesty to corruption**?

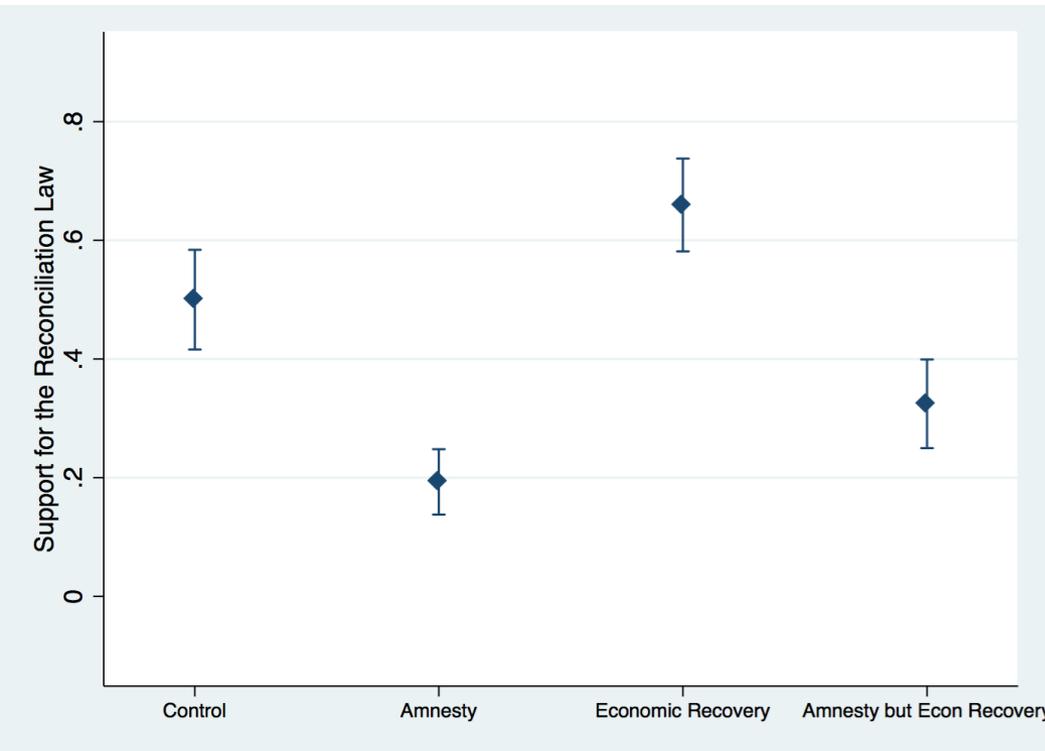
**Economic Recovery Treatment**

Do you support the reconciliation law that many say will **help economic recovery**?

**Trade-off Treatment**

Do you support the reconciliation law that many say will **help economic recovery** and at the same time **provide amnesty to corruption**?

# Extension on Corruption



- For the control condition, about half of the respondents show support for the reconciliation law
- Priming respondents with the fact that the law provides amnesty for corrupt officials significantly decreases support
- Priming respondents with the benefit of economic recovery significantly increases support
- However, priming respondents with the trade-off also significantly decreases support
  - This shows even though the pragmatic benefit is desirable, it is not to the level of giving amnesty to corruption
  - This extension once again shows the salience of corruption as an issue area

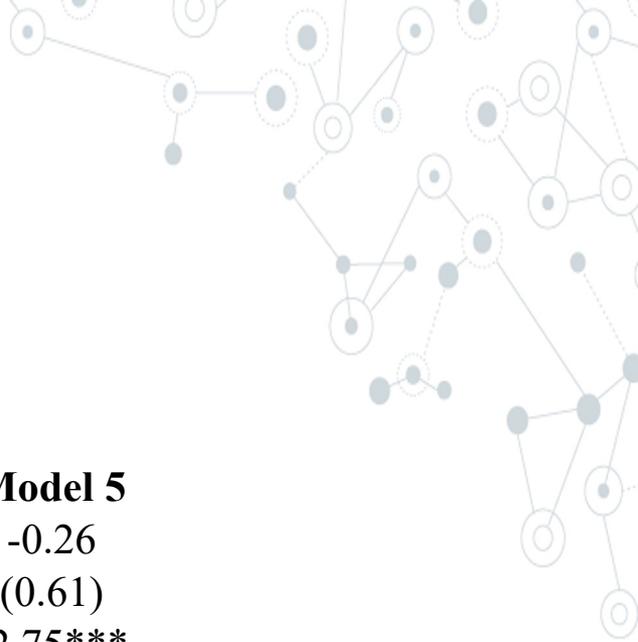
# Appendix – Corruption and Benefits

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>
Islamist	1.38*** (0.33)	1.49*** (0.35)
Under Corruption Investigation	-1.85*** (0.36)	-2.22*** (0.40)
Regionalism (North/South)	0.44 (0.35)	
Islam * Regionalism	-0.35 (0.42)	
Corruption * Regionalism	-0.65 (0.49)	
Urban		0.063 (0.35)
Islam * Urban		-0.52 (0.43)
Corruption * Urban		-0.012 (0.50)
Intercept	-1.66*** (0.28)	-1.42*** (0.29)
N	866	866
Pseudo R-Squared	0.184	0.185

# Appendix – Socioeconomic Factors

	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>
Islamist	1.13** (0.40)	0.72 (0.50)
Under Corruption Investigation	-2.25*** (0.48)	-1.60** (0.57)
Economic Satisfaction	-0.039 (0.16)	
Islam * Econ. Satisfaction	0.0076 (0.20)	
Corruption * Econ. Satisfaction	0.015 (0.25)	
Income		-0.14 (0.14)
Islam * Income		0.19 (0.17)
Corruption * Income		-0.24 (0.21)
Intercept	-1.30*** (0.32)	-0.95* (0.42)
N	859	715
Pseudo R-Squared	0.180	0.192

# Appendix – Cultural Values



	<b>Model 5</b>
Islamist	-0.26 (0.61)
Under Corruption Investigation	-2.75*** (0.80)
Traditional Values	-0.82 (0.72)
Islam * Trad. Values	2.15* (0.88)
Corruption * Trad. Values	0.73 (1.08)
Intercept	-0.84 (0.49)
N	866
Pseudo R-Squared	0.193