



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

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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



- ◎ 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
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# 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
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# 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)

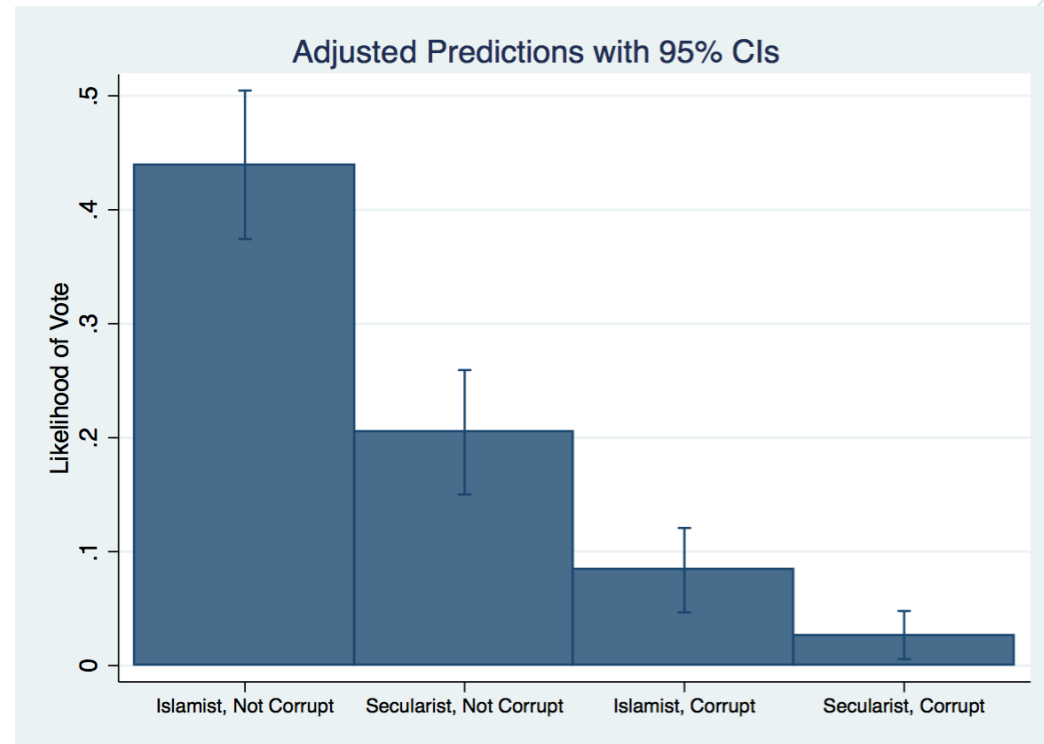
-1.037\*\*\*  
(0.300)

-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.*

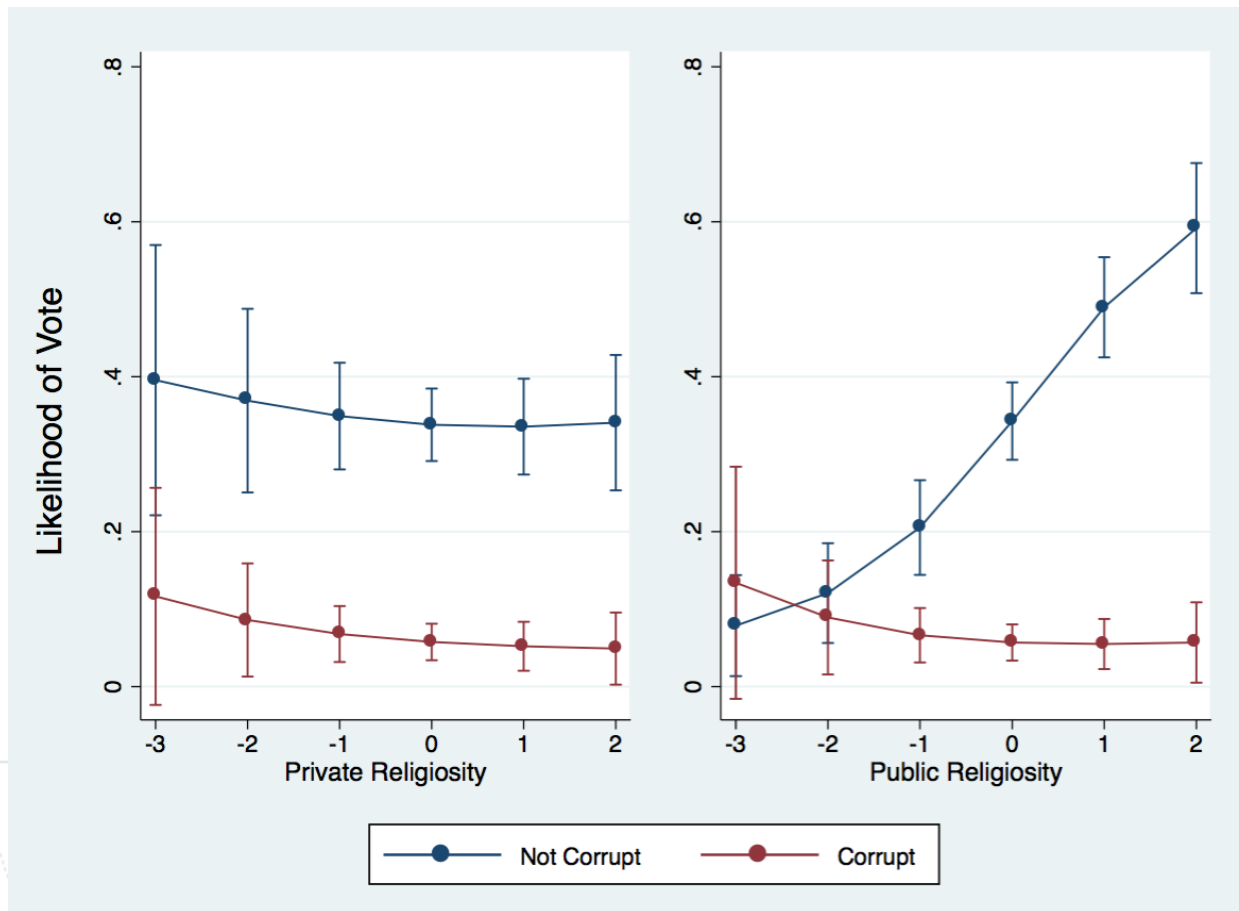
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Factor 1</b>	<b>Factor 2</b>	<b>Uniqueness</b>
Daily Prayer	<b>0.7443</b>	0.2021	0.4051
Mosque Attendance	<b>0.8049</b>	-0.1052	0.3411
Prefer Religious Party	-0.1409	<b>0.7664</b>	0.3928
Islamic Law (Sharia)	0.2663	<b>0.6531</b>	0.5025
Religion Important	0.3284	<b>0.4606</b>	0.6800

- ◎ *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**

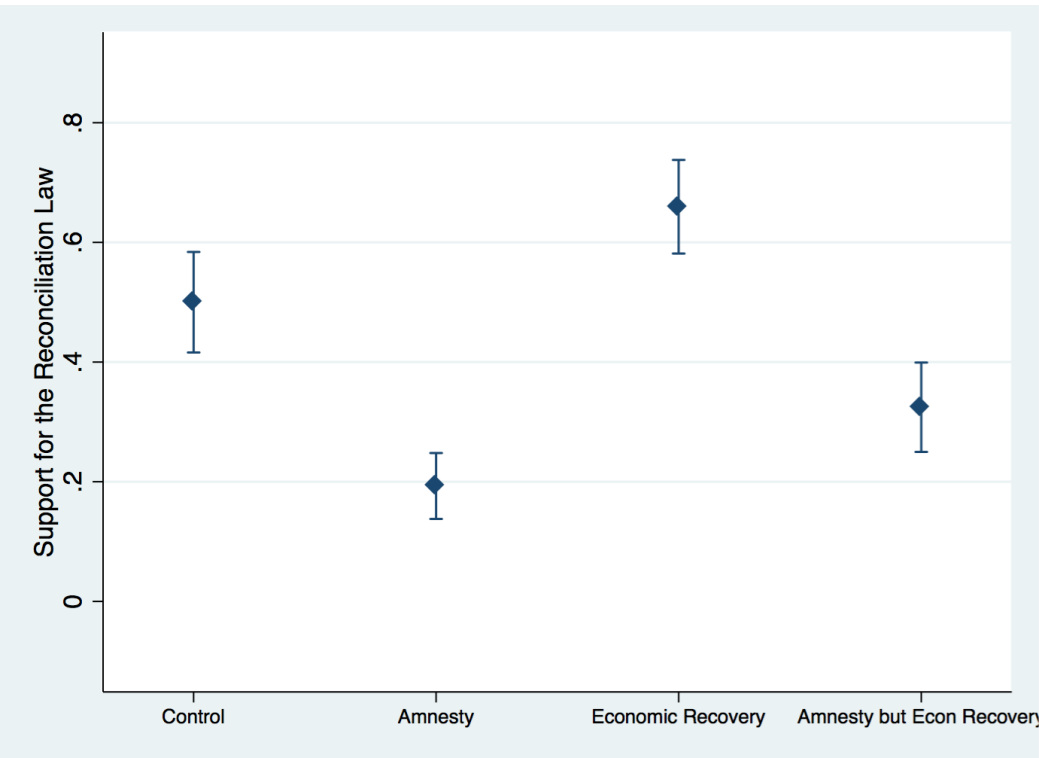
Do you support the reconciliation law that many say will **help economic recovery?**

**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


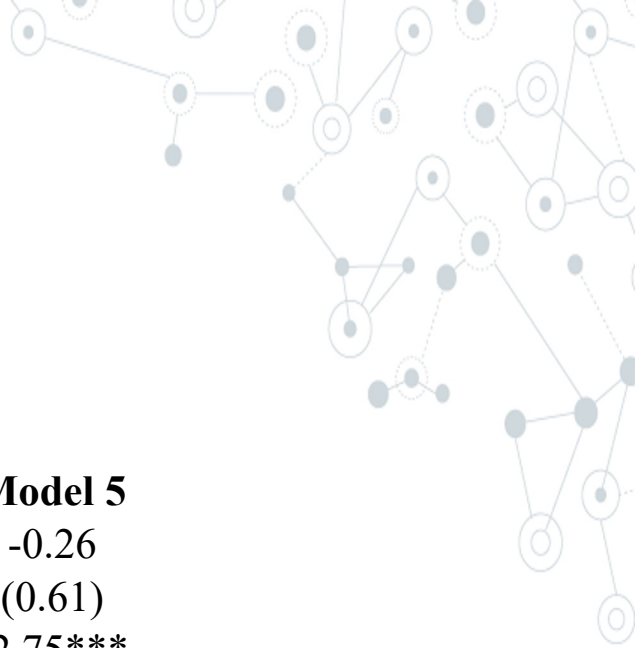
# Appendix – Corruption and Benefits

	<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