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Author(s): M. Steven Fish

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# ISLAM AND AUTHORITARIANISM

By M. STEVEN FISH\*

ARE predominantly Muslim societies distinctly disadvantaged in democratization? Some observers, noting what appears to be an especially high incidence of authoritarianism in the Islamic world, have held that Islam may be incompatible with open government.<sup>1</sup> Others have argued that Islam is not necessarily antithetical to democratization.<sup>2</sup> Yet few studies have attempted to establish empirically whether a democratic deficit really exists and, if so, how it can be explained.

The present article offers a straightforward cross-national examination of the relationship between Islam and regime type. After briefly sketching my conception of democracy, I conduct an empirical test of the determinants of political regime. The test provides strong support for the hypothesis that Muslim countries are democratic underachievers. The causal connection between Islam and regime type is then explored. Many conventional assumptions about Islam and politics do not

\* For a great deal of help on earlier drafts, the author is indebted to Christopher Ansell, Pradeep Chhibber, Omar Choudhry, Christopher Gelpi, Andrew Janos, Matthew Kroenig, Rose McDermott, David Nasatir, Conor O'Dwyer, James Robinson, Ani Sarkissian, Jason Seawright, Valerie Sperling, Robert Tignor, Daniel Treisman, and four anonymous reviewers. The author also appreciates helpful feedback received at the conference, "The New Era in World Politics after September 11," Princeton University, May 3, 2002. The author alone is responsible for all shortcomings that remain.

<sup>1</sup> Adrian Karatnycky, "Muslim Countries and the Democracy Gap," *Journal of Democracy* 13 (January 2002); John Waterbury, "Democracy without Democrats?" in Ghassan Salamé, ed., *Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1994); V. S. Naipaul, *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (New York: Random House, 1982); Elie Kedourie, *Democracy and Arab Political Culture* (London: Frank Cass, 1994); Judith Miller, *God Has Ninety-nine Names* (New York: Touchstone, 1997); Daniel Pipes, *In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Ali R. Abootalebi, "Islam, Islamists, and Democracy," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3 (March 1999); Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982); Glenn E. Robinson, "Can Islamists Be Democrats?" *Middle East Journal* 51 (Summer 1997); Mary Ann Tetreault, "Patterns of Culture and Democratization in Kuwait," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 30 (Summer 1995); Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, *Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights, and International Law* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1996); Robin Wright, "Two Visions of Reformation," *Journal of Democracy* 7 (April 1996); Charles Kurzman, ed., *Liberal Islam: A Sourcebook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Joel Beinin and Joe Stork, eds., *Political Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); François Burgat, *The Islamic Movement in North Africa* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997); Kevin Dwyer, *Arab Voices: The Human Rights Debate in the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

withstand scrutiny. Muslim societies are not more prone to political violence; nor are they less “secular” than non-Muslim societies; and interpersonal trust is not necessarily lower in Muslim societies. But one factor does help explain the democratic deficit: the subordination of women. I furnish elements of a provisional theory linking the station of females and regime type and I discuss the implications of the findings for democracy. I further contend that patriarchal social order in Muslim societies has an ironic character, since it cannot be accounted for in scriptural terms.

Many definitions of democracy are available. I adopt the electoral-procedural definition offered by Robert Dahl.<sup>3</sup> Dahl’s definition, which he labeled “polyarchy” since he regarded “democracy” as an unachievable ideal type, amounts to a list of “procedural minima.” These include elections as well as provisions to ensure that major policy decisions are vested in elected officials and that practically all adults have the right to run for office. Dahl also included the communicative and associational rights necessary for the electors to be informed and capable of organizing themselves for political participation.

An essentially Dahlian conception of democracy is adopted by Freedom House (FH), the world’s leading agency that evaluates countries according to the extent of political liberties and civil rights. Freedom House issues a freedom rating (hereafter FH score) on an annual basis for each of the world’s countries. Scores range from 1 (most free) to 7 (least free). For a more intuitive presentation, I reversed the scale so that higher numbers represent greater openness. I use a ten-year average of FH scores (the 1991–92 to the 2000–2001 surveys). This is the dependent variable. To check the findings, I also use an alternative measure of the dependent variable, namely, the Polity scores put out annually by the Polity Project. Data are available through 1998. I use an eight-year average (the 1991–98 scores). Polity scores range from 10 (most democratic) to –10 (most autocratic). The universe of cases is countries with populations over half a million for which scores on the dependent variable are available. FH scores are available for 157 countries; Polity scores, for 154 countries.

#### DETERMINANTS OF REGIME TYPE: HYPOTHESES

I test only hypotheses that are tractable to quantitative analysis and that are manifestly distinct from the dependent variable. Thus, I examine

<sup>3</sup> Dahl, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

only what are commonly regarded as structural and cultural variables, as well as several historical variables that are amenable to coding in “yes” or “no” terms. A further limitation of my study arises from the problem of case selection. Including all countries of the world with populations over half a million helps mitigate the problem, but the analysis is not free from selection bias. I test only relationships that obtain in contemporary politics. As I do not use a random sample from all of history, I cannot confidently extend inferences from my sample to the world at other times. Whether or not a study of, say, the interwar period or the late nineteenth century would turn up similar findings is an empirical problem that deserves attention, but one that cannot be addressed here. In short, this inquiry is bounded in terms of both the hypotheses it tests and the period of time to which it applies. If the present article has anything to offer at all, its contribution is provisional and temporally specific. The aim is to assess whether the hypothesis that links Islam to authoritarianism enjoys empirical support when one controls for other possible determinants of political regime.

I use a dummy variable for countries where *Islamic religious tradition* is predominant. In one country, Eritrea, each of two major confessions has an equivalent proportion of adherents. Eritrea is therefore excluded. In all other countries a majority or clear plurality of the population is associated with a single religious tradition. In forty-seven countries that tradition is Islam. Islamic countries of course cover a large portion of the globe—from Morocco to Malaysia and from Albania to Kyrgyzstan. Only a quarter of them are located in the Middle East, and in only about a third is Arabic the principal language. A “percentage Muslim” by country measure might seem to provide a superior alternative to a dummy variable, but I prefer the latter, for two reasons. First, data on religious composition differ across sources. Figures on “percentage Muslim” that are consistent across sources are available for only about half of the countries under examination. Whether the percentage of the population living in Belarus and Armenia is 0 percent or 5 percent Muslim is not something one can establish with confidence. Even the governments of these countries do not have good data—and might not publicize them if they did. Whether Macedonia is as little as one-sixth or as much as one-third Muslim is the source of bitter dispute in the country itself. In Egypt, according to official government figures, no more than about one in twenty people is Christian; but the Coptic church and some observers claim that the number is closer to one in eight.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *World Desk Reference* (New York: Dorling Kindersley, 2000); John Bowker, ed., *Oxford Concise Dictionary of World Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Whatever the disparities in data, however, one can state with confidence that Belarus, Armenia, and Macedonia are not predominantly Muslim countries and that Egypt is predominantly Muslim. Thus, while a dummy variable is a blunter measure than a ratio variable, the former has its own advantages in terms of reliability. Second, the dummy variable better suits my theoretical purposes. I am interested in whether Islamic societies are more or less resistant to democratization than others. I am not concerned with whether a society that is one-tenth Muslim is more or less likely to have an authoritarian regime than is a society that is one-eighth Muslim. I have no reason, based on either intuition or debates in the literature, to formulate a hypothesis about such a question. I do not wish to test whether *Muslims* per se are good or bad for democracy but rather am asking whether *polities whose populations are predominantly Muslim*—crudely put, “Muslim countries”—are more or less hospitable for democracy. My working assumption, therefore, is that the tipping point, if there is one, at which Islam matters for democracy is predominance, meaning that Islam is the country’s main religious tradition.

If the variable for Islam is not robust when one controls for other potentially important determinants of political regime, one cannot establish with confidence that religious tradition influences regime type. I control for six other variables.

The most widely embraced causal hypothesis in the study of political regimes posits a positive relationship between *economic development* and democratic attainment. Analysts associate higher levels of economic development with lower levels of social conflict, more sophisticated populations, and broader and deeper social support for popular rule.<sup>5</sup> Some recent empirical studies have found that economic development does not inexorably generate democracy but that the durability of democracy, once established, is greater in wealthier countries.<sup>6</sup> A standard measure of economic development is gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. I use log GDP per capita in 1990 to control for economic development. Data are available for all 157 countries.

What may be dubbed the *sociocultural division* hypothesis is em-

<sup>5</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960); Andrew C. Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000); Valerie Bunce, “Comparative Democratization: Big and Bounded Generalizations,” *Comparative Political Studies* 33 (August–September 2000); Andreas Schedler, “Measuring Democratic Consolidation,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36 (Spring 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, *Democracy and Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

braced almost as reflexively as the economic development hypothesis. Ethnically diverse societies are usually seen as disadvantaged and homogenous ones as fortunate.<sup>7</sup> According to this logic, ethnic differences divide society and make compromise and consensus difficult. Ethnic heterogeneity raises the risk of intercommunal violence, which can quickly undermine democracy. To measure sociocultural division, I use the ethnolinguistic fractionalization scores generated by the Ethnologue project:<sup>8</sup> 0 represents complete uniformity and 1 represents highest fractionalization. Countries range from the homogeneous Koreans (both .00) to highly fractionalized Papua New Guinea (.99). Data are available for all 157 countries.

*Economic performance* is often held to influence political regime. Strong economic performance may protect fledgling democracies. Bad performance may generate popular dissatisfaction, alienate powerful social groups, and damage the cross-class alliances that stabilize democracy.<sup>9</sup> Yet the stability of authoritarian regimes may also be vulnerable to economic performance, meaning that bad performance may open possibilities for democratization.<sup>10</sup> The legitimacy of authoritarian regimes often rests on the promise of better economic performance alone, while open regimes also enjoy the legitimacy conferred by popular selection of the rulers and the state's respect for rights. Prolonged prosperity under an authoritarian regime may have contradictory effects. It might generate good will for the regime; but it might also raise popular expectations and increase the costs of repression as populations become more sophisticated. It may thereby ultimately undermine authoritarianism. There is no logical reason to expect strong economic performance in a democracy, by contrast, ever to undermine the democratic regime.<sup>11</sup> The preponderance of theory therefore suggests that sustained high rates of economic growth will help democratic regimes

<sup>7</sup> Donald L. Horowitz, "Democracy in Divided Societies," *Journal of Democracy* 4 (October 1993); Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth A. Shepsle, *Politics in Plural Societies* (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1972).

<sup>8</sup> Barbara F. Grimes, ed., *Ethnologue Languages of the World*, 14th ed. (Dallas: SIL International, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> Evelyn Huber, "The Future of Democracy in the Caribbean," in Jorge I. Domínguez, Robert A. Pastor, and R. DeLisle Worrell, eds., *Democracy in the Caribbean* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Michael Wallerstein, "The Collapse of Democracy in Brazil," *Latin American Research Review* 15, no. 3 (1980).

<sup>10</sup> Karen L. Remmer, "The Sustainability of Political Democracy: Lessons from South America," *Comparative Political Studies* 29 (December 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

and may either help or hurt authoritarian regimes. On balance, one would expect strong performance to be conducive to democratization. To measure economic performance, I use average annual percentage growth of GDP per capita from 1975 to 1998, data for which are available for 150 countries. Countries range from flourishing China (7.5) to unfortunate Azerbaijan (−9.8).

*British colonial heritage* has long been considered a boon for the prospects for popular rule. Myron Weiner asserted that the most empirically persuasive explanation for democracy in the developing world is British colonial heritage. According to Weiner, "The British tradition of imposing limits on government, of establishing norms for the conduct of those who exercise power, and of creating procedures for the management of conflict has had a powerful influence on the creation of democratic systems in the Third World."<sup>12</sup> The British are often also credited with leaving behind the Westminster model of parliamentarism, which some analysts regard as a strong constitutional basis for democracy.<sup>13</sup> A dummy variable is used for British colonial heritage. Thirty-one of the countries under examination are former British colonies.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, another type of legacy has also been seen as important: a *communist heritage*. Most scholars regard the effects of communist legacy as negative. According to many, communist party rule bequeathed an antidemocratic political culture.<sup>14</sup> Soviet-type regimes, to a greater extent than other types of authoritarianism, destroyed political and civil society,<sup>15</sup> leaving behind what Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan have called a "flattened landscape," a condition that "creates problems for political representation" in the post-Soviet period.<sup>16</sup> I use a dummy variable for postcommunist heritage and classify the twenty-eight countries of the former USSR, Mongolia, and post-communist Eastern Europe in this category.

<sup>12</sup> Myron Weiner, "Empirical Democratic Theory," in Myron Weiner and Ergun Özbudun, eds., *Competitive Elections in Developing Countries* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1987), 20.

<sup>13</sup> Guy Lardeyret, "The Problem with PR," in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, eds., *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, 2d ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 175–80; Anthony Payne, "Westminster Adapted: The Political Order of the Commonwealth Caribbean," in Domingez, Pastor, and Worrell (fn. 9).

<sup>14</sup> Ken Jowitt, "The Leninist Legacy," in Ivo Banac, ed., *Eastern Europe in Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992).

<sup>15</sup> Marc Morjé Howard, "Free Not to Participate: The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe," *Studies in Public Policy* no. 325 (Glasgow: University of Stathclyde, 2000); M. Steven Fish, *Democracy from Scratch: Opposition and Regime in the New Russian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

<sup>16</sup> Linz and Stepan (fn. 11), 247.

Natural resource endowment has been regarded as influencing political regime. Abundance of natural resources, and particularly of oil, has often been regarded as democracy's antagonist. It may enable the state to buy off society with low taxation and high welfare spending and thereby allay popular demand for political accountability. So too may it reduce political competition to a fight over control of the agencies that manage the distribution of oil rents. It may enable the state to sustain a large and powerful internal security apparatus capable of repressing challengers. Resource abundance may also distort modernization, spurring expansion of national income without inducing the socioeconomic changes that usually accompany an increase in wealth and that may favor democracy.<sup>17</sup> To control for this factor, I include a dummy variable for *membership in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries* (OPEC). OPEC is made up of eleven countries, ten of which are predominantly Muslim.

Table 1 shows the mean values of the dependent variable and the hypothesized predictors for Muslim and non-Muslim countries. It also provides a list of the countries whose populations are predominantly Muslim. As the table shows, predominantly Muslim countries score far worse than non-Muslim countries on the dependent variable, whether the latter is measured using FH scores or Polity scores. But so too do Muslim countries appear to have some disadvantages in terms of possible determinants of democracy that are not due to Islam per se. For example, ethnic diversity is somewhat higher in Muslim countries and a smaller percentage of Muslim countries have a history of British colonization. Analysis of the data is necessary to assess the relationship between Islam and political regime.

## ANALYSIS OF DATA

### RESULTS

I use OLS regressions. In the bivariate analyses, presented in Table 2, the sign of each regression coefficient, with the exception of the postcommunist variable, is in the expected direction. Islamic countries have worse FH scores. Higher economic development is associated with better FH scores; higher ethnic fractionalization, with worse FH scores; higher economic growth rates, with better FH scores; and OPEC membership, with worse FH scores. Former British colonies have better FH

<sup>17</sup> Michael L. Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" *World Politics* 53 (April 2001); Terry Lynn Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).



TABLE 1  
MEAN SCORES ON FREEDOM HOUSE SCORES, POLITY SCORES, AND  
HYPOTHESIZED DETERMINANTS OF REGIME TYPE FOR MUSLIM AND  
NON-MUSLIM COUNTRIES<sup>a</sup>

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Muslim Countries</i>	<i>Non-Muslim Countries</i>
Freedom House freedom rating, 1991–92 to 2000–2001 ten-year average; 7=most free, 1=least free) (N=47)	2.61 (N=47)	4.74 (N=109)
Polity score, 1991–98 (eight-year average; 10=most democratic, –10=most autocratic) (N=46)	–3.11 (N=46)	4.86 (N=107)
Economic development (log GDP per capita <sub>1990</sub> ; 2=lowest income, 4.66=highest income) (N=47)	3.00 (N=47)	3.32 (N=109)
Sociocultural division (ethnolinguistic fractionali- zation index; 0=most uniform, 1=most diverse) (N=47)	.55 (N=47)	.40 (N=109)
Economic performance (growth of GDP per capita <sub>1975–98</sub> ave annual change %) (N=43)	–0.73 (N=43)	0.78 (N=106)
British colonial heritage	7 of 47 countries (15%)	24 of 109 countries (22%)
Communist heritage	8 of 47 countries (17%)	20 of 109 countries (18%)
OPEC membership	10 of 47 countries (21%)	1 of 109 countries (1%)

SOURCES: For Freedom House scores, “Annual Survey of Freedom, Country Ratings, 1972–73 to 2000–01” (freedomhouse.org, accessed August 2001). For Polity scores, Ted R. Gurr, Monty G. Marshall, and Keith Jagers, Polity Data Archive (isere.colorado.edu/pub/datasets/polity98, accessed September 2001). For Islamic religious tradition, *CLA World Factbook 2000* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s, 2000); and *World Desk Reference* (New York: Dorling Kindersley, 2000). For economic development, United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); except data for Cuba, Djibouti, Eritrea, Germany, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Macedonia, Myanmar, and Qatar, which are from United Nations Statistics Division, “Indicators on Income and Economic Activity” (unstats.un.org, accessed April 2002). For sociocultural division, Barbara F. Grimes, ed., *Ethnologue Languages of the World*, 14<sup>th</sup> ed. (Dallas: SIL International, 2000). For economic performance, United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); except data for Iraq, Libya, and Myanmar, which are from *World Development Indicators 2001* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2001), and for Liberia, which are from *African Development Report 2001* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) (data on economic performance for Iraq, Libya, and Myanmar are for 1965–99; for Liberia, for 1980–1990).

<sup>a</sup>The countries whose predominant religious tradition is Islam are Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Burkina Faso, Chad, Comoros, Côte d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and Yemen.

TABLE 2  
BIVARIATE REGRESSIONS OF FREEDOM HOUSE SCORES  
ON HYPOTHESIZED DETERMINANTS<sup>a</sup>

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Adj. R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Number of Cases</i>
Islamic religious tradition (dummy variable)	-2.13***	.27	156
Economic development (log GDP per capita <sub>1990</sub> )	1.66***	.34	157
Sociocultural division (Ethnologue ethnolinguistic fractionalization index)	-1.90***	.09	157
Economic performance (growth of GDP per capita <sub>1975-98</sub> ave annual change %)	0.20***	.09	150
British colonial heritage (dummy variable)	0.27	.00	157
Communist heritage (dummy variable)	0.28	.00	157
OPEC membership (dummy variable)	-1.91***	.06	157

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

<sup>a</sup>Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients.

scores. There are large differences in the statistical significance of the variables. The variables for British colonial heritage and communist heritage are not statistically significant at the most undemanding level. The other variables are statistically significant.

The multivariate analyses are presented in Table 3. The first column presents the fully specified model. The other columns show trimmed models. Islam, economic development, and OPEC membership are statistically significant in all specifications. Muslim countries score well over one point worse in all specifications on a seven-point scale than do non-Muslim countries.

To check the results I used an alternative measure for the dependent variable, substituting Polity scores for FH scores. Table 4 presents the results of the bivariate regressions and Table 5 those of the multivariate regressions. The results are consistent with those obtained using FH scores as the measure for the dependent variable. Again, only the variables for Islam, economic development, and OPEC membership are statistically significant. In the final model in Table 5, a predominantly Islamic tradition is associated with a reduction of seven points—one-third of the empirical range—in Polity score.

The negative results are as interesting as the positive ones. British colonial heritage does not necessarily provide significant advantages; nor does a Soviet-type past pose insurmountable disadvantages. Economic performance is not shown to be of great importance. Greater

TABLE 3  
REGRESSIONS OF FREEDOM HOUSE SCORES ON  
HYPOTHESIZED DETERMINANTS<sup>a</sup>

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>
Constant	0.17 (0.84)	-0.15 (0.70)	0.27 (0.81)	-0.15 (0.60)	0.19 (0.62)
Islamic religious tradition	-1.24*** (0.27)	-1.27*** (0.27)	-1.26*** (0.27)	-1.34*** (0.27)	-1.68*** (0.27)
Economic development	1.40*** (0.21)	1.48*** (0.19)	1.40*** (0.20)	1.50*** (0.17)	1.39*** (0.17)
Sociocultural division	-0.32 (0.43)		-0.30 (0.42)		
Economic performance	0.07 (0.05)	0.06 (0.04)	0.06 (0.04)		
British colonial heritage	0.25 (0.30)	0.18 (0.30)			
Communist heritage	0.20 (0.27)				
OPEC membership	-1.36** (0.46)	-1.46** (0.45)	-1.42** (0.46)	-1.53** (0.48)	
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.55	.55	.55	.55	.51
N	149	149	149	149	149

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

<sup>a</sup>Entries in this table and all others are unstandardized regression coefficients with White-corrected robust standard errors in parentheses.

ethnic uniformity does not provide a firmer basis for a more open political regime than does greater heterogeneity.

The strong, positive relationship between democracy and economic development is consistent with long-standing social-scientific thinking and is therefore unsurprising. The negative relationship between democracy and OPEC membership supports the hypothesis that abundance of oil may conduce authoritarianism.

Due perhaps to cultural sensitivity or to an understandable reluctance to characterize nearly one-third of the world's polities as intractably resistant to popular rule, scholars have tended to treat the relationship between Islam and democracy circumspectly and have steered clear of examining it rigorously. The evidence presented here, however, reveals a link that is too stark and robust to ignore, neglect, or dismiss.

TABLE 4  
BIVARIATE REGRESSIONS OF POLITY SCORES ON  
HYPOTHEZIZED DETERMINANTS<sup>a</sup>

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Adj.R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Number of Cases</i>
Islamic religious tradition (dummy variable)	-7.97***	.29	153
Economic development (log GDP per capita <sub>1990</sub> )	4.34***	.18	154
Sociocultural division (Ethnologue ethnolinguistic fractionalization index)	-6.88***	.09	154
Economic performance (growth of GDP per capita <sub>1975-98</sub> ave annual change %)	0.64**	.06	148
British colonial heritage (dummy variable)	0.33	.00	154
Communist heritage (dummy variable)	1.42	.00	154
OPEC membership (dummy variable)	-9.01***	.11	154

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

<sup>a</sup>Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients.

#### COMMENT ON DATA AND CONTROLS

A word is in order regarding the indicators used and the operations carried out to check the findings. In addition to substituting the Polity scores for the FH scores as a measure of the dependent variable, I also used alternative measures for two of the independent variables. The data for several of the independent variables are admittedly imperfect. Although the dummy variables and the data for economic performance are not highly problematic, the measures for economic development and sociocultural division are open to criticism.

GDP per capita is sometimes regarded as an inadequate measure of economic development. I therefore also used an alternative measure: the size of the agrarian proportion of the population. This statistic may capture *socioeconomic* conditions better than plain product per capita figures. I therefore used percentage of the population employed in agriculture, herding, and fishing rather than log GDP per capita in alternate specifications.<sup>18</sup> The findings are robust. The variable for agrarian population is substantively and statistically significant in all specifications. The regression coefficient for the Muslim variable is equally large and statistically significant when the alternative measure for development is used.

Ethnic fractionalization is even harder to measure than economic development, as ethnic identity is a notoriously slippery concept and

<sup>18</sup> The source of the data is *CIA World Factbook 2000* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2000).

TABLE 5  
REGRESSIONS OF POLITY SCORES ON HYPOTHESIZED DETERMINANTS

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>
Constant	-5.20 (3.15)	-6.96** (2.30)	-5.07 (3.05)	-7.25** (2.39)	-5.83* (2.53)
Islamic religious tradition	-5.28*** (1.23)	-5.49*** (1.24)	-5.31*** (1.22)	-5.63*** (1.22)	-7.02*** (1.12)
Economic development	3.25*** (0.78)	3.63*** (0.71)	3.31*** (0.76)	3.75*** (0.64)	3.30*** (0.69)
Sociocultural division	-1.93 (1.73)		-2.08 (1.66)		
Economic performance	0.19 (0.21)	0.14 (0.17)	0.12 (0.17)		
British colonial heritage	0.10 (1.22)	-0.26 (1.18)			
Communist heritage	0.95 (1.06)				
OPEC membership	-5.52*** (1.68)	-6.04** (2.66)	-5.81*** (1.67)	-6.19*** (1.75)	
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.45	.45	.46	.45	.41
N	147	147	147	147	147

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

observing it is inescapably complicated.<sup>19</sup> Social science does not yet—and perhaps never will—have the benefit of uncontroversial measures of ethnic fractionalization. The Ethnologue data that I use are based on ambitious and extensive research, but in order to check the effect of ethnic fractionalization I also conducted the analysis using several alternative measures. One is what might be called an ethnic homogeneity score, which is the percentage of the population accounted for by the largest national group.<sup>20</sup> The second is data on ethnolinguistic fractionalization published by Charles Taylor and Michael Hudson and recently refined by Matthew Krain.<sup>21</sup> All the same problems of relying

<sup>19</sup> Henry E. Brady and Cynthia S. Kaplan, "Categorically Wrong? Nominal versus Graded Measures of Ethnic Identity," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 35 (Fall 2000); David Laitin and Daniel Posner, "The Implications of Constructivism for Constructing Ethnic Fractionalization Indices," *Newsletter of the Comparative Politics Section of the American Political Science Association* 12 (Winter 2001), 13–17.

<sup>20</sup> The source of the data is Freedom House, *Freedom in the World, 1999–2000* (New York: Freedom House, 2000).

<sup>21</sup> Taylor and Hudson, *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators*, 2d ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972); Matthew Krain, "Ethnic Fractionalization Data" (wooster.edu/polisci/mkrain/Ethfrac, accessed September 2001); idem, "State-Sponsored Mass Murder," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41 (June 1997).

upon a measure of a subjective and contested concept obtain, but substituting alternative measures at least provides a check on the results. The findings are robust to the use of the other indicators. Ethnic composition does not influence regime type, and the Islam variable remains highly significant in substantive and statistical terms in all specifications.

Even given limitations in the quality of the data, it is possible to conclude from the analysis that predominantly Muslim countries may be especially prone to authoritarianism. The task ahead is to shed some light on the nature of the causal link.

#### THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ISLAM AND AUTHORITARIANISM: SOME PLAUSIBLE BUT UNSATISFACTORY IDEAS

Some claims may be dispensed with based on the above analysis. One is that there is no link between democratic deficit and Islam per se but that Muslim countries are far poorer than others and that underdevelopment therefore explains the relationship between Islam and authoritarianism. Muslim countries are indeed poorer than non-Muslim countries on average, but the empirical analysis controlled for development and Muslim countries still scored much lower on both FH scores and Polity scores. So too did the analysis control for economic performance; this variable is not decisive. OPEC membership was also included. While the variable for OPEC was substantively and statistically significant, it clearly did not account for all of the effects of Islam; oil rents alone probably do not explain the democratic deficit. Ethnic fractionalization was included as well. Predominantly Muslim countries are, on average, somewhat more ethnically diverse than non-Muslim countries. But the factor is not decisive in determining political regime; Muslim countries are not less democratic because they are more heterogeneous. The dummy variable for Islam is not picking up the effects of or serving as a proxy for any other variable tested here.

Some other possible explanations for the tie between Islam and authoritarianism, however, cannot be ruled out based on the preceding quantitative analysis. Here I inspect these ideas.

#### ARE MUSLIM SOCIETIES MORE PRONE TO POLITICAL VIOLENCE?

Over two and a half centuries ago, Montesquieu asserted that Islam had a violent streak that predisposed Muslim societies to authoritarianism: "The Christian religion is remote from pure despotism; the gentleness so recommended in the gospel stands opposed to the despotic

fury with which a prince would mete out his own justice and exercise his cruelties. . . . The Mohammedan religion, which speaks only with a sword, continues to act on men with the destructive spirit that founded it.”<sup>22</sup> Some scholars still embrace Montesquieu’s assessment. Samuel Huntington, for example, holds that Muslim societies are especially prone to political violence. If he is right, given the hazards that violence poses to popular rule, this problem may help explain democratic underachievement.<sup>23</sup>

Is Huntington right? Monty Marshall has assembled a comprehensive list of incidents of political violence in the world during the post-war period.<sup>24</sup> By Marshall’s account, there have been 207 episodes of major intrastate political violence. All of them occurred in countries included in the universe of cases under examination here. Of these events, 72—or 35 percent of the total—took place in Muslim countries. The data show that the Muslim world has had its fair share of political violence—indeed, a bit more than its fair share. But only a bit more. Since 30 percent of the world’s polities are predominantly Muslim, the evidence does not show that the Islamic world has been the site of a grossly disproportionate amount of political violence.

Another useful source of data is the set of “governance indicators” that Daniel Kaufmann and colleagues have created based on extensive surveys.<sup>25</sup> One of their governance indicators is “political stability/lack of violence.” Scores range from about –2.5 to 2.5, with higher values corresponding to better outcomes (less violence and political instability born of violence). The data are imperfect but provide another window on the problem.

To assess Muslim countries in comparative context, I conducted an analysis of variance test (ANOVA), comparing the mean scores on the stability/lack of violence index for Muslim and Catholic countries. Here and with the other variables examined below, I compare these two groups before proceeding to examine Muslim countries versus all others. I use Catholic countries as a comparative referent in part because they, like Muslim countries, have often been characterized as resistant

<sup>22</sup> Charles Louis de Secondat (Montesquieu), *The Spirit of the Laws*, ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 461–62.

<sup>23</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the Modern World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

<sup>24</sup> Monty G. Marshall, “Major Episodes of Political Violence, 1946–1999” (members.aol.com/CSPmngm/warlist, accessed December 2001).

<sup>25</sup> Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay, and Pablo Zoido-Lobaton, “Composite Indicator Dataset,” from “Governance Matters,” World Bank Policy Research Department Working Paper no. 2195 (worldbank.org/wbi/governance/gov\_data, accessed May 2001).

TABLE 6  
DIFFERENCE IN MEAN STABILITY/LACK OF VIOLENCE AND TRUST SCORES  
FOR CATHOLIC AND MUSLIM COUNTRIES<sup>a</sup>

	<i>Stability/Lack of Violence Score</i>	<i>Trust Score (Mean Percentage of Respondents Saying That People Can Be Trusted)</i>
Muslim countries	-0.45	20.3
Catholic countries	0.22	24.9
<i>F</i>	11.11	0.80

SOURCES: Data for stability/lack of violence index: Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay, and Pablo Zoido-Lobaton, "Composite Indicator Dataset" from "Governance Matters," World Bank Policy Research Department Working Paper no. 2195 ([worldbank.org/wbi/governance/gov\\_data](http://worldbank.org/wbi/governance/gov_data), accessed May 2001). For trust scores: *World Values Survey*, data provided by Ronald Inglehart, chair of the World Values Surveys Executive Committee, 2002.

<sup>a</sup>Sample for stability/lack of violence analysis is 84 countries (43 Muslim); sample for trust analysis is 36 countries (7 Muslim).

to democracy (as well as to good governance, economic development, and other desirable things).<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, like Muslim countries, Catholic countries, which include many nations of Latin America and Africa as well as of Southern and Eastern Europe, constitute a large and extremely diverse group.

The results are shown in left-side column of numbers in Table 6. There is a statistically significant difference between the categories, with Muslim countries suffering from more violence. But when one controls for level of economic development the difference loses statistical significance. Model 1 in Table 7 shows the results of a multivariate regression using Catholic and Muslim countries as the universe of cases. It includes the dummy variable for Muslim countries; Catholic countries are the excluded category. It shows that when one controls for economic development, violence is not significantly lower/stability not greater in Catholic countries than in Muslim countries. The second regression, shown in model 2, compares Muslim countries with the rest of the world, including not only Catholic countries but also all others. Economic development is indeed related to stability/lack of violence, with higher income associated with greater stability/less violence. But the Islam variable is not statistically significant. When one controls for

<sup>26</sup> Lipset (fn. 5); Rafael La Porta, Florencio Lopez-De-Silanes, Andrei Shleifer, and Robert Vishney, "The Quality of Government," *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization* 15 (April 1999); Samuel P. Huntington, "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" *Political Science Quarterly* 99 (Summer 1984).



TABLE 7  
REGRESSIONS OF STABILITY/LACK OF VIOLENCE AND TRUST SCORES ON  
HYPOTHESIZED DETERMINANTS<sup>a</sup>

	<i>Dependent Variable: Stability/Lack of Violence</i>		<i>Dependent Variable: Trust</i>	
	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
Constant	-3.45*** (0.58)	-2.94*** (0.34)	-39.48* (16.46)	-18.41 (16.91)
Economic development	1.03*** (0.15)	0.89*** (0.09)	16.98*** (4.45)	12.75** (4.40)
Islamic religious tradition	-0.12 (0.19)	-0.21 (0.15)	11.51 (6.94)	2.46 (6.24)
Sample	MC	all	MC	all
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.45	.43	.34	.24
N	84	145	36	59

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

<sup>a</sup>MC = Muslim and Catholic countries; all = all available countries.

economic development, the evidence for a link between Islam and violence is weak at best.

How, then, does Huntington reach his conclusions, which my own findings contradict? Huntington has different standards for the evaluation of data. He arrives at "overwhelming" evidence for the greater violence of Muslim societies by totaling up "ethnopolitical conflicts" in 1993-94 and "ethnic conflicts" in 1993, then within each group dividing the site of strife into Muslim and non-Muslim societies. Huntington emphasizes "intercivilizational" violence, by which he means conflict between Muslim and non-Muslim countries. His evidence on intercivilizational strife seems unequivocal: two-thirds of conflicts (thirty-six of fifty-one cases) were between Muslim and non-Muslim countries. But Huntington takes the further step of saying that "intracivilizational" conflict is also much more common in the Muslim world. He not only argues that "Islam's borders are bloody" but also adds, "and so are its innards." Its innards are most important for our purposes. But here the data are ambiguous. In the category of "intracivilizational" strife, only eighteen of fifty-eight conflicts—or 31 percent—were in Muslim societies. Given that 30 percent of the world's polities are predominantly Muslim, Huntington's evidence is less than overwhelming. Indeed, his evidence on intracivilizational conflict provides no support for his argument, though he does not allow this detail to interfere with his generalizations. Finally, Huntington fails to con-

trol for any other variables. Simple correlation, presented in the form of unanalyzed descriptive statistics, serves as his empirical evidence.<sup>27</sup>

### IS INTERPERSONAL TRUST LOWER IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES?

Many social scientists have linked interpersonal trust and democracy. Ronald Inglehart has found a positive correlation between the percentage of respondents who say in the World Values Surveys that people can be trusted, on the one hand, and country averages on FH scores from 1972 to 1997, on the other.<sup>28</sup> I used the data from the most recent available wave of World Values Surveys, which were conducted in the 1990s, to measure trust. An ANOVA test using the seven Muslim countries and the twenty-nine Catholic countries for which data are available shows that the level of trust in Muslim countries is not substantially lower than in Catholic countries, as is shown in the right-hand column of Table 6. The first multivariate regression, shown in model 3 in Table 7, uses Catholic and Muslim countries as the universe of cases. It controls for economic development and includes the dummy variable for Muslim countries with Catholic countries as the excluded category. Trust is not lower in Muslim countries than in Catholic countries. Model 4 in Table 7 presents the results of a regression that compares Muslim countries with the rest of the world; again, there is no significant difference in levels of trust.

### ARE MUSLIM POLITIES LESS "SECULAR"?

A commonly embraced but rarely scrutinized argument holds that religious and secular authority are joined in Islamic societies, both in the popular imagination and in institutional practice, and that this fusion helps explain the democratic deficit. Jamal al-Suwaidi asserts that "Muslims have continued to assume that only a 'religious leader' can provide good government for the Muslim community."<sup>29</sup> According to Huntington, "God and Caesar, church and state, spiritual and temporal authority, have been a prevailing dualism in Western culture." In contrast, "In Islam God is Caesar."<sup>30</sup>

Two assumptions underlie this thinking. The first is that religion is more important to Muslims than it is to adherents of other faiths and

<sup>27</sup> Huntington (fn. 23), 256–58.

<sup>28</sup> Inglehart, "Trust, Well-Being and Democracy," in Mark E. Warren, ed., *Democracy and Trust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>29</sup> Al-Suwaidi, "Arab and Western Conceptions of Democracy," in David Garnham and Mark Tessler, eds., *Democracy, War, and Peace in the Middle East* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 87.

<sup>30</sup> Huntington (fn. 23), 70. For a similar argument, see Bernard Lewis, "Islam and Liberal Democracy: A Historical Overview," *Journal of Democracy* 7 (April 1996).

that this difference is reflected in political preferences and authority structures. Muslims are more Muslim than Christians are Christian, and political life in predominantly Muslim societies is far more heavily saturated with religion. The second assumption is that religiosity *per se* is the ally of authoritarianism, and secularism of democracy.

Brief examination leaves room for skepticism regarding both assumptions. First, the notion that Muslims are more “religious” is completely dependent on subjective perspective. To a New Yorker in Mecca or a Berliner in Teheran, the idea that Islam is more deeply ingrained in Muslim societies than Christianity is in Christian societies may seem irrefutable. But to a Mississippian in Kazakhstan, a South African in Azerbaijan, a Pole in Syria, or an Irish person in Java, the situation might not be so clear. Indeed, it may be equally unclear to a Kazakh in Mississippi, an Azeri in South Africa, a Syrian in Poland, or a Javanese in Ireland. The fundamentals of one’s own culture, at any rate, naturally seem less conspicuous, imposing, and exotic—indeed, less “fundamental”—than do those of other cultures. The present author, who was raised in small cities in the American South and Midwest, does not view churches blanketing the landscape or Christian television and radio networks filling the airwaves as particularly striking. While traveling in Muslim countries, however, the author regards the sight of people facing Mecca together in prayer as a formidable demonstration of mass religiosity. Some of the author’s associates who grew up in predominantly Muslim societies have a different view. While in the United States, they regard what the author sees as unobtrusive manifestations of everyday social life as signs that American society is saturated with (Christian) religious influence. Their outlook is akin to that of As’ad AbuKhalil, who has rightly criticized “the mistaken association between secularism and Christianity.”<sup>31</sup>

One may also question Huntington’s notion that political and religious authority are strictly separated in the West and fused in the Muslim world. The separation of God and Caesar is far less complete in predominantly Christian countries than many Americans realize. Until 1995 all long-standing European democracies with a substantial Lutheran majority had established state churches. In Germany church and state are intertwined in education, taxation, social service provision, and finance. Nor does a rigorous separation between church and state prevail in many countries where Catholic traditions predominate. One would be hard pressed to find it in Poland, Ireland, Brazil, or Chile.

<sup>31</sup> AbuKhalil, “Against the Taboos of Islam,” in Charles E. Butterworth and I. William Zartman, eds., *Between the State and Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 115.

Nor, needless to say, are religion and the state separated in Israel. What is more, the extent to which "God is Caesar" in the Muslim world is often greatly exaggerated. Religious and political power may be joined in, say, Iran and Taliban-era Afghanistan. But these polities are atypical. It is difficult to state with confidence that the fusion of sacred and temporal power is substantially and consistently greater in former Soviet Central Asia, North Africa, Muslim West Africa, Muslim Southeast Asia, Bangladesh, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Albania than it is in non-Muslim countries. If, moreover, al-Suwaidi is correct to say that Muslims seek a religious leader to guide the political community, one would expect most political heroes in the Islamic world to be religious leaders. But many of the Muslim world's most popular politicians—including Indonesia's Sukarno and Megawati Sukarnoputri, Pakistan's Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto, Malaysia's Mohamad Mahathir, Senegal's Léopold Senghor, Mali's Alpha Oumar Konaré, and Egypt's Gamal Abd al-Nasir—hardly fit that profile. If by "religious leader" al-Suwaidi means not a religious authority but merely a person who professes to hold some religious belief, he is on firmer ground. But in this case, Muslims are unexceptional. What are the chances of a self-proclaimed atheist becoming president of Costa Rica, the Philippines, or the United States? Social scientists in predominantly Christian societies may ignore candidates' religion; much of the rest of the electorate does not.

In short, the assumption that religion is consistently more important to Muslims than it is to adherents of other faiths and that this difference is clearly reflected in social and political life is open to doubt.

Of course I might be wrong. The evidence I have adduced on this point is the best I can muster, but it is scarcely definitive. Rigorously assessing the weight of religion in popular consciousness is exceedingly difficult; here we truly see through a glass darkly. The shortage of data is acute. The World Values Surveys query people on their religious activities and the importance of religion in their lives. But to date there still are precious little data on Muslim countries; the data available on religion in the surveys are almost all from predominantly Christian societies. Perhaps religion is really more important in Muslim countries than it is elsewhere. Would this fact then explain the greater incidence of authoritarianism in Islamic countries? This question touches on the second assumption mentioned above—namely, that religiosity per se is the ally of authoritarianism, and secularism of democracy. In some classical theories of modernization, secularization is often portrayed as

progress itself—a claim rarely questioned and hence seldom examined in social science. But how sound is it?

Examining countries outside the advanced industrial world helps shed some light on the matter. As of 1994, 110 of the 157 countries under examination here had annual incomes per capita at purchasing power parity that did not exceed \$6000. They account for about four-fifths of the world's population. Among these countries, only nine maintained FH scores in each of the ten annual surveys between 1991–92 and 2000–2001 that qualified them as “free” polities. All of them—Benin, Botswana, Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Lithuania, Mongolia, Namibia, and Poland—are exceptions to the “rule” that democracy is a luxury that only rich countries can afford or can sustain for longer than a fleeting spell.

This is a diverse group; its members are united by little other than their exceptionally open politics. If secularism were especially conducive to democratization, however, one would expect to find another regularity within this group: a preponderance of relatively secular societies.

But the reality is inconsistent with this expectation. Benin is the world's stronghold of Vodou, which permeates the country's social life and politics. Religion also occupies a prominent place in Botswana. As in Benin, traditional native religions are of great importance, though successful efforts by missionaries among the chiefs in the mid- and late nineteenth century established a tradition of strong Christian religiosity among the elite. Costa Rica is deeply religious; over two-thirds of the population are practicing Catholics. Jamaica is a confessional mosaic in which most people actively practice their religion. Namibia is, as Philip Steenkamp notes, “the most Christian of African countries”; an absolute majority is active in churches. Poland and Lithuania are arguably the most religious societies in the postcommunist world. Catholicism, deeply rooted in both, played a central organizational and spiritual role in the anticommunist resistance. Bulgaria and Mongolia, which are in fact relatively secular societies, are the exceptions to the pattern of high religiosity among the developing world's most open polities.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Abdi Ismail Samatar, *An African Miracle* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1999); John A. Booth, *Costa Rica: Quest for Democracy* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1998); Hemchand Gossai and Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, eds., *Religion, Culture, and Tradition in the Caribbean* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Grzegorz Ekiert, *The State against Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); V. Stanley Vardys and Judith B. Sedaitis, *Lithuania: The Rebel Nation* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1997). Quoted passage from Philip Steenkamp, “The Churches,” in Colin Leys and John S. Saul, eds., *Namibia's Liberation Struggle* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1995), 94.

In sum, there are ample grounds for skepticism regarding the claim that people in predominantly Muslim societies are more observant religionists than people elsewhere; so too is there plenty of room for questioning the usual association of secularism with democracy and religiosity with authoritarianism. At the very least, it would seem wise to heed Alfred Stepan's caveat that "the concept of secularism must be radically rethought" as it relates to modernity and democracy.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, the question remains unanswered: how does Islam disfavor democracy?

### THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ISLAM AND AUTHORITARIANISM: A HYPOTHESIS THAT WORKS

#### THE PROBLEM OF FEMALE SUBORDINATION

In one demonstrable way, Muslim societies are distinct in a manner that may affect politics: the treatment and status of women and girls. Some scholars, relying on ethnographic research and deep knowledge of specific societies, have noted what appears to be an unusual degree of subordination of women in Muslim societies. Some have suggested that this factor may affect life not only in the family and immediate community but also at higher levels as well.<sup>34</sup> Several scholars have begun subjecting the problem of women's status and democracy to rigorous investigation, but they have relied mostly on public opinion surveys.<sup>35</sup> Such studies are potentially of great value. Here, however, I rely on indicators other than those gleaned from either in-depth ethnography or opinion surveys.

I use multiple indicators to assess the station of women. The first is the difference between male and female literacy rates. I assume that a larger gap in favor of males reflects lower esteem for the education of girls and negatively affects the life chances of females relative to males.

<sup>33</sup> Stepan, *Arguing Comparative Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 222.

<sup>34</sup> Jan Goodwin, *Price of Honor: Muslim Women Lift the Veil of Silence in the Islamic World* (New York: Penguin, 1995); Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 6–8, 32–39; Ali Zay'our, *The Psychoanalysis of the Arab Self* (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'ah, 1977), cited in Sharabi, 41–42; Ann Elizabeth Mayer, *Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1998); Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Yesim Arat, "Feminists, Islamists, and Political Change in Turkey," *Political Psychology* 19 (March 1998); *Arab Human Development Report 2002* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2002).

<sup>35</sup> Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, "Cultural Barriers to Equal Representation," *Journal of Democracy* 12 (July 2001); Katherine Meyer, Helen Rizzo, and Yousef Ali, "Islam and the Extension of Citizenship Rights to Women in Kuwait," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37 (March 1998); Mark Tessler, "Islam and Democracy in the Middle East: The Impact of Religious Orientations on Attitudes toward Democracy in Four Arab Countries," *Comparative Politics* 34 (April 2002).

TABLE 8  
DIFFERENCE IN MEAN LITERACY GAP, SEX RATIO, WOMEN IN  
GOVERNMENT, AND THE GENDER EMPOWERMENT MEASURE FOR  
CATHOLIC AND MUSLIM COUNTRIES<sup>a</sup>

	<i>Literacy Gap, 1990 (Male Literacy Rate Minus Female Literacy rate)</i>	<i>Sex Ratio, 2000 (Mean Number of Males per 100 Females)</i>	<i>Women in Govern- ment, 1998 (Mean Percent of Ministerial and Sub- ministerial Officials)</i>	<i>Gender Em- powerment Measure, 1998</i>
Muslim countries	18.7	102	5.2	.29
Catholic countries	4.3	97	12.2	.50
<i>F</i>	60.80	13.05	38.12	74.59

SOURCES: Data for literacy rates: World Bank, *Genderstats* (genderstats.worldbank.org, accessed March 2002); and *CLA World Factbook 2000* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2000). For sex ratio: U.S. Census Bureau, International Database Summary Demographic Data (census.gov/ipc/www/idbsum, assessed January 2002). For women in government: United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). The UNDP measures women in government in terms of "women in government at all levels" (p. 267), which refers to "ministers, secretaries of state and heads of central banks and cabinet agencies," as well as "deputy and vice ministers (or their equivalent); permanent secretaries (or their equivalent); deputy permanent secretaries, directors and advisers (or their equivalent)." For the Gender Empowerment Measure, United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1998* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>a</sup>Sample for literacy gap analysis is 89 countries (46 Muslim); sample for sex ratio analysis is 88 countries (45 Muslim); sample for women in government is 90 countries (47 Muslim); sample for Gender Empowerment Measure is 54 countries (20 Muslim).

I use data for literacy rates in 1990. The first (leftmost) column of Table 8 shows the ANOVA test for Catholic and Muslim countries. The difference between the groups is large and statistically significant. Model 1 in Table 9 shows the results of a regression that includes economic development, uses Catholic and Muslim countries as the universe of cases, and treats Catholic countries as the excluded category. The difference between Catholic and Muslim countries retains statistical significance when one controls for income. Model 2 in Table 9 presents the results of the regression that includes all countries for which there are data. The Islam variable is statistically significant and its coefficient is large. The gap in literacy rates between men and women is on average over six percentage points larger in Muslim countries than in non-Muslim countries, controlling for income per capita.

Since Islam appears to affect differences in literacy rates, it is worthwhile pushing the analysis to the next logical step, which requires test-

TABLE 9  
REGRESSIONS OF LITERACY GAP, SEX RATIO, WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT,  
AND THE GENDER EMPOWERMENT MEASURE ON HYPOTHESIZED  
DETERMINANTS<sup>a</sup>

	<i>Dependent Variable: Literacy Gap</i>		<i>Dependent Variable: Sex Ratio</i>		<i>Dependent Variable: Women in Government</i>		<i>Dependent Variable: Gender Empowerment Measure</i>	
	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>	<i>Model 7</i>	<i>Model 8</i>
Constant	26.98*** (6.01)	42.69*** (3.90)	86.56*** (6.87)	95.82*** (3.11)	15.50*** (3.68)	5.07 (2.75)	0.12 (0.09)	-0.05 (0.07)
Economic development	-6.46*** (1.58)	-10.21*** (1.04)	2.99 (1.95)	0.53 (0.92)	-0.95 (0.99)	1.83* (0.87)	0.10*** (0.02)	0.15*** (0.02)
Islamic religious tradition	11.10*** (2.09)	6.65*** (1.77)	6.68** (2.21)	4.65** (1.56)	-7.46*** (1.23)	-5.35*** (0.95)	-0.15*** (0.03)	-0.11*** (0.03)
Sample	MC	all	MC	all	MC	all	MC	all
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.51	.47	.17	.11	.29	.19	.73	.64
N	89	153	88	154	90	155	54	92

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

<sup>a</sup>MC = Muslim and Catholic countries; all = all available countries

ing the effects of the difference in literacy rates on FH scores. The first two models in Table 10 present the results. The first shows a regression of FH scores on log GDP per capita and the Muslim variable for all countries for which data are also available on literacy rates. Both economic development and Islam are highly significant in substantive and statistical terms. The second model adds the differential in literacy rates. The variable is significant in substantive and statistical terms, and its inclusion produces a moderate reduction in the coefficient for the Muslim variable. As model 2 in Table 10 shows, controlling for economic development and Islam, each percentage point in the literacy gap is associated with a change of .04 points in FH score. Thus, the difference between no literacy gap between men and women and a gap of 20 percentage points is associated with a reduction of 0.8, or about one-eighth of the empirical range, in the FH score.

Another measure of the status of women is the population sex ratio, which is the number of males per 100 females. A higher sex ratio often reflects lower status for and poorer treatment of women and girls. As



TABLE 10  
REGRESSIONS OF FREEDOM HOUSE SCORES ON  
HYPOTHESIZED DETERMINANTS

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>	<i>Model 7</i>	<i>Model 8</i>
<i>Constant</i>	0.14 (0.63)	1.81* (0.91)	-0.21 (0.62)	5.90*** (1.62)	0.23 (0.62)	-0.19 (0.56)	0.51 (0.82)	0.67 (0.83)
Economic development	1.39*** (0.17)	0.99*** (0.23)	1.49*** (0.17)	1.52*** (0.16)	1.37*** (0.17)	1.21*** (0.16)	1.36*** (0.22)	0.88* (0.38)
Islamic religious tradition	-1.70*** (0.27)	-1.43*** (0.27)	-1.55*** (0.27)	-1.25*** (0.26)	-1.71*** (0.26)	-1.27*** (0.25)	-1.66*** (0.37)	-1.29*** (0.36)
Literacy gap		-0.04** (0.01)						
Sex ratio				-0.06*** (0.02)				
Women in government						0.08*** (0.02)		
Gender empowerment measure								3.32* (1.51)
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.50	.53	.51	.54	.50	.57	.55	.58
N		153		154		155		92

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

the Population Reference Bureau states in a recent report, a deficit of females relative to males often stems from “various forms of lifelong discrimination against girls and women—particularly inferior nutrition and health care early in life and during childbearing years,” as well as from “sex-selective abortions or infanticide.”<sup>36</sup> The second column of numbers in Table 8 shows that there is a substantial difference between Muslim and Catholic countries in sex ratio. Qatar and the United Arab

<sup>36</sup> Population Reference Bureau, *Women of Our World 2002* (prb.org, accessed June 2002). See also Mini Phillip and Kathakali S. Bagchi, *The Endangered Half* (New Delhi: Vedams, 1995); Barbara D. Miller, “Female-Selective Abortion in Asia: Patterns, Policies, and Debates,” *American Anthropologist* 103 (December 2001); Baochang Gu and Krishna Roy, “Sex Ratio at Birth in China, with Reference to Other Areas in East Asia,” *Asia-Pacific Population Journal* 10, no. 3 (1995); Ulla Larsen, Woojin Chung, and Monica Das Gupta, “Fertility and Son Preference in Korea,” *Population Studies* 52 (November 1998); Jonathan Berkowitz and Jack Snyder, “Racism and Sexism in Medically Assisted Conception,” *Bioethics* 12 (January 1998); S. Sudha and S. Irudaya Rajan, “Female Demographic Disadvantage in India, 1981–1991: Sex Selective Abortions and Female Infanticide,” *Development and Change* 30 (July 1999).

Emirates are excluded from the analysis, since they are outliers that have very high sex ratios due in part to the large number of (predominantly male) resident workers from abroad. Even without these cases, the difference in sex ratios between Muslim and Catholic countries is large and statistically significant, as is the difference between Muslim and all non-Muslim countries. Models 3 and 4 in Table 9 show this finding. Table 10 shows that in a regression using FH scores as the dependent variable, sex ratio differences are statistically significant even when controlling for Islam and level of development. The difference between a sex ratio of 105/100 and 95/100 is associated with a differential of .6 in the dependent variable. Inclusion of the sex ratio variable also reduces the magnitude of the regression coefficient of the Islam variable.

The fundamental patriarchalism that is evident in literacy rate differentials and sex ratio is also found at high levels of government.<sup>37</sup> The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) furnishes data on the percentage of high-ranking positions in executive branch agencies occupied by women.<sup>38</sup> The third column in Table 8 shows the disparity between Muslim and Catholic countries. Models 5 and 6 in Table 9 show that the difference between Muslim and Catholic countries, as well as between Muslim and all non-Muslim countries, is large even when one controls for economic development. When FH scores are treated as the dependent variable and the women-in-government variable is included as a predictor in multiple regression, the latter variable is statistically significant and its regression coefficient large. Its inclusion diminishes the regression coefficient of the Muslim variable substantially. The results are reported in models 5 and 6 in Table 10. Each additional 1 percent of officialdom that is occupied by women is associated with an improvement of .08 in the FH score. Thus, the difference between a government that is 5 percent women and one that is 25 percent women is associated with a difference of 1.6 points—nearly one-quarter of the empirical range—in the dependent variable.

Further evidence may be found in analysis of the Gender Empowerment Measure (hereafter GEM) used in UNDP studies. The GEM, an index that extends from 0 (low) to 1 (high), measures women's incomes, status in the workplace, and presence in the legislature. The relevant re-

<sup>37</sup> For a more extensive comparative discussion of women in high government, see Andrew Reynolds, "Women in the Legislatures and Executives of the World: Knocking at the Highest Glass Ceiling," *World Politics* 51 (July 1999).

<sup>38</sup> United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

sults, shown in the far-right column of Table 8, in models 7 and 8 in Table 9, and in models 7 and 8 in Table 10, only reinforce the findings presented for the other variables. Women's status is, on the whole, inferior in Muslim societies; and this factor appears to account for part of the link between Islam and authoritarianism.

I am not remotely qualified to comment on whether women "really want" the treatment they and their daughters receive in Muslim societies. This thorny matter is far beyond the scope of the present discussion. There is a vigorous debate among knowledgeable scholars over women's rights, roles, and lives in the Muslim world.<sup>39</sup> Here I have attempted to assess only whether available quantitative data indicate that the status of women and girls accounts for part of the link between Islam and authoritarianism.

The findings support the hypothesis. In the analyses in which FH scores are the dependent variable, the regression coefficient of the Islam variable diminishes in each regression when the measures for female status are included. There is an obvious danger of bias due to endogeneity, particularly in the case of the variables for women in government and the GEM. Treatment and station of women may be conditioned by regime type, with more democratic regimes providing the basis for better treatment of and higher status for women and girls. Exploratory analysis using two-stage least squares (2SLS) regression produced substantively identical results, but good instruments are admittedly difficult to find for this research problem. Despite the hazards of endogeneity, the direction of causation may well run from the treatment of females to regime type. The possible bases for this connection are the subject of the following brief discussion.

#### THE LINK BETWEEN THE STATION OF FEMALES AND POLITICAL REGIME: SOME PROVISIONAL THEORY

Precisely how the status and treatment of women and girls affects political regime must be the subject of a great deal more research before firm conclusions may be drawn. Here I can suggest only several tenta-

<sup>39</sup> For example, Mahnaz Afkhami, ed., *Faith and Freedom: Women's Rights in the Muslim World* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1995); Mahnaz Afkhami and Erika Friedl, eds., *In the Eye of the Storm: Women in Post-Revolutionary Iran* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1994); Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Alison Baker, *Voices of Resistance: Oral Histories of Moroccan Women* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); Y. Y. Haddad and John L. Esposito, eds., *Islam, Gender, and Social Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Rosemarie Skaine, *The Women of Afghanistan under the Taliban* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2001); Arlene E. MacLeod, *Accommodating Protest: Working Women, the New Veiling, and Change in Cairo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Ziba Mir-Hosseini, *Islam and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

tive ideas. Sociological, psychological, and demographic explanations offer some promise. Differentials between male and female literacy rates and sex-ratio imbalances reflect social relations in the family and the immediate community, and the character of these relations may reproduce themselves at higher levels. Several leading writers have argued that the repressiveness and unquestioned dominance of the father in the family and of the male in relations between men and women replicate themselves in broader society, creating a culture of domination, intolerance, and dependency in social and political life.<sup>40</sup> The notion of isomorphism between primary social relations and those that obtain in broader society has a long history in social science. One must of course approach the idea with caution; some culturalist theories that assumed congruence between the family and the polity have not fared well in light of evidence. Still, the possibility of a connection should not be ignored. Individuals who are more accustomed to rigidly hierarchical relations in their personal lives may be less prone to resist such patterns of authority in politics. The generalization applies to the wielders of authority as much as to the objects. One of Martin Luther King's favorite sayings was that in order to hold a man down, one needed to stay down there with him. One might reformulate the adage as, in order to hold women down, a man needed to stay down there with them—meaning, of course, that oppression as a habit of life blocks the oppressor's own advancement and freedom.

Furthermore, men behave differently under organizational conditions in which women are present and under those in which they are not. Segregation of the sexes in the school, the workplace, and places of leisure creates a fundamentally different setting for social relations—and for authority relations among males—than does integration. What is more, the social marginalization of women may remove distinctive voices and influences from politics. Some political psychologists have found that women are superior to men in some aspects of building consensus.<sup>41</sup> Other researchers have shown that men hold attitudes that are more conducive to authoritarianism. An important recent study showed that men have a stronger “social dominance” orientation than women; women are generally less comfortable with hierarchy and in-

<sup>40</sup> Sharabi (fn. 34); Abdellah Hammoudi, *The Victim and Its Masks* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 46–47, 150–51; idem, *Master and Disciple: The Cultural Foundations of Moroccan Authoritarianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); David S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor* (New York: Norton, 1999), 410–15.

<sup>41</sup> Rose McDermott and Jonathan A. Cowden, “The Effects of Uncertainty and Sex in a Crisis Simulation Game,” *International Interactions* 27, no. 4 (2001).

equality.<sup>42</sup> Some scholars have found that women tend to be more averse to extremism and violence in politics.<sup>43</sup> If such findings are valid, the relegation of women to the sidelines of public life—which illiteracy has the effect of doing and which the women-in-government variable and the GEM help measure—circumscribes the influence of antiauthoritarian voices. The question is not whether Margaret Thatcher or Indira Gandhi governed with a feminine touch that distinguished her from her male colleagues; it is, instead, whether gaping sex differentials in literacy rates in the general population may shape social life in a manner that influences politics.

Patriarchy's purely demographic manifestations may also affect politics. Sex ratios, analyzed above, have not heretofore attracted much attention in political science, but they may prove crucial for understanding politics in coming decades. Of the thirty-two countries with sex ratios that exceed 102/100, twenty-two are predominantly Muslim. In a few oil-rich countries of the Persian Gulf, imbalances may be attributed to large numbers of (mostly male) guest workers. Most of the foreign workers are themselves from other Muslim countries, however, and their absence from home lowers the sex ratio for their home countries. It is not clear precisely to what extent labor migrations affect overall sex ratios. In any case, in most countries with high sex ratios labor migrations do not affect the numbers. In Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, and Pakistan, for example, all of which have sex ratios over 104/100, the imbalance cannot be explained without reference to neglect of girls' health care and nutrition and sex-selective abortion. Extremely high sex ratios themselves make for a social time bomb and may dim the prospects for popular rule. They may create conditions under which young men are more likely to join militant groups and engage in threatening, anomic behavior that provokes official repression. Late marriages for males, who in some Muslim countries must by custom be economically capable of supporting wives who do not work, may contribute to male aggression and frustration, but sheer numbers exacerbate the problem. Countries with sex ratios that

<sup>42</sup> Felicia Pratto, L. M. Stallworth, and Jim Sidanius, "The Gender Gap: Differences in Political Attitudes and Social Dominance Orientation," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 36 (March 1997).

<sup>43</sup> Pamela Johnston Conover and Virginia Sapiro, "Gender, Feminist Consciousness and War," *American Journal of Political Science* 37 (November 1993); Carol Gilligan, "In a Different Voice: Women's Conceptions of Self and Morality," in Diana Tietjens Meyers, *Feminist Social Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Janet Flammang, *Women's Political Voice* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997); Barbara Crossette, "Living in a World without Women," *New York Times*, November 4, 2001.

exceed 103/100—which include Afghanistan, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, and Syria—are not bereft of mass social stress and movements of militant religious brotherhoods.

Just as understanding the causal mechanism linking female subordination and authoritarianism requires a great deal more study, so too is further investigation necessary to grasp fully the link between Islam and authoritarianism more generally. Even as the above analysis provides evidence that the station of women helps explain the relationship between Islam and regime type, it by no means furnishes a complete picture. Indeed, the regressions presented in Table 10 suggest that the station of women *is not* the only factor contributing to the effect of Islam on regime type. The coefficient of the Islam variable declines in magnitude when the variables measuring the status of women are included, but the former does not diminish by more than one-third in any of the equations. The treatment of women and girls may be an important part of the story, but it is very likely only one of several factors. Natural resource endowment may explain some of the problem as well, as the analysis showed above. Some candidate factors that are often adduced to explain political regime type, such as a British colonial past and sociocultural diversity, were shown to have little explanatory power. Others, however, are much harder to test statistically and were not included in the analysis. The structure of social networks is one such factor. Some writers have noted what appears to be the unusual tenacity of clan and tribal relations in Muslim societies and have argued that such ties are inimical to democracy.<sup>44</sup> Other scholars have shown that Soviet-type regimes decimated familialism in non-Muslim areas but could not do so in predominantly Muslim parts of the communist world.<sup>45</sup> One social scientist has recently investigated how specific facets of kin-based political power affect the position of women. In a rigorous qualitative comparison of three North African countries, she has illuminated how variation in state-formation, state-building, and nation-building experiences may affect kin-based political power and help account for cross-national differences in women's status.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Saad Eddin Ibrahim, cited in Iliya Harik, "Democratic Thought in the Arab World," in Butterworth and Zartman (fn. 31), 143–44.

<sup>45</sup> Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Muriel Atkin, "Thwarted Democratization in Tajikistan," in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrot, eds., *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Kathleen Collins, *Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Change in Central Asia* (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1999).

<sup>46</sup> Mounira M. Charrad, *States and Women's Rights: The Making of Postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

The resilience and durability of primordial ties may help explain the resistance of Muslim countries to democratization. But some specialists have argued, by contrast, that clan cleavages and networks may furnish social bases for the growth of civic associations and the extension of citizenship rights and may, under some circumstances, promote democratization.<sup>47</sup> Advancement of understanding will undoubtedly require a great deal more research, including both cross-national analysis and single-country and small-N studies. There is still a lot to explain.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRACY

The findings may hold implications for democracy's prospects, both within and outside the Muslim world. First, they point to the need to study variation in the extent of sex disparities across Muslim countries. Some countries have sex ratios of 104/100 or higher, gaps between male and female literacy rates of 20 or more percentage points, and rates of women's participation in high office that do not exceed the mean for all Muslim countries. They include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Libya, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and Syria. In some other polities conditions are less starkly unfavorable but on balance still inauspicious. Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Nigeria, Sudan, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen each have sex ratios in the 102–3/100 range and large literacy gaps, and only in Turkey is women's participation in government well above the Muslim mean. Morocco does not have an unbalanced sex ratio, but the literacy gap is wide and women's participation in government is not substantially above the Muslim average. In Iran and Jordan the literacy gap is not as severe as in many other Muslim countries, but women are virtually absent from high politics and the sex ratio is dramatically unbalanced. Several of these countries—most notably, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Turkey—have some traditions and institutions of open government and are often seen as the Islamic world's leading candidates for thoroughgoing, lasting democratization. The present analysis provides grounds for skepticism regarding the chances for robust democracy in any of these polities.

Democracy's prospects may be more favorable elsewhere. Despite the prominence of Megawati Sukarnoputri, whose inherited personal

<sup>47</sup> Eva Bellin, "Civil Society: Effective Tool for the Analysis of Middle East Politics?" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 27 (September 1994); Sheila Carapico, *Civil Society in Yemen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Dennis Galvan, "Political Turnover and Social Change in Senegal," *Journal of Democracy* 12 (July 2001); Linda L. Layne, "Tribesmen as Citizens," in Layne, ed., *Elections in the Middle East* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1987); Timothy J. Piro, "Liberal Professionals in the Arab World," in Butterworth and Zartman (fn. 31).

authority carried her to the pinnacle of state, women are not well represented in high government in Indonesia. But other conditions are more auspicious: the sex ratio is not unbalanced and the literacy gap is smaller than the Muslim average. The picture is mixed in other countries as well. Malaysia's sex ratio is only mildly unbalanced, the literacy gap is moderate, and women are relatively well represented in government. In the small, wealthy states of the Persian Gulf, sex ratios are extremely lopsided and women are absent or virtually absent from high politics. But in these countries the literacy gap is moderate or even nonexistent—a condition that might provide a substantial advantage for possible future democratization. Burkina Faso, Gambia, and Mali have no sex ratio problem and, by Muslim standards, only moderate literacy gaps. They also have high rates of female political participation in government. These countries, or some portion of them, may help soften the link between Islam and authoritarianism—in part because they do not bear the full complement of stark sexual inequalities common in many other Muslim countries. Other factors, including levels of economic development and dependence on oil exports, will of course affect democracy's prospects as well.

In addition to directing attention to potentially important variation within the Muslim world, the present article raises questions regarding democracy's future in some non-Muslim countries. Large literacy gaps, lopsided, male-dominant sex ratios, and scarcity of women in high politics are especially acute in Muslim countries, but these conditions are by no means distinctively Muslim. The world's two largest polities, neither of them predominantly Muslim, suffer from all three conditions. In India the literacy gap in 1990 was 26 percentage points; in China, 19. Women's participation in government in both countries is meager. In India the proportion of women in high officialdom is the same as the mean for Muslim countries; in China it is even lower. The sex ratio in each country exceeds 106/100. In India infanticide and neglect of girls' health is rampant, and child mortality for girls greatly exceeds that for boys. There is controversy over the rate of infanticide in present-day China, but little question that neglect of girls' health care remains dire. What is more, sex-selective abortion has risen steeply since the widespread introduction of ultrasound and amniocentesis in the 1980s. The at-birth sex ratio in China now stands at an astoundingly disproportionate 117/100. In neither India nor China are rates of infanticide, neglect of girls' health care and education, or prenatal sex selection markedly lower among the majority Hindus and Han Chinese than among the Muslim minorities. In neither country is imbal-



ance in the sex ratio a new phenomenon. Further, in both the problem is growing more acute rather than abating, as urbanization and other aspects of modernization have not done anything to mitigate the problem.<sup>48</sup>

India's open politics would seem to challenge the arguments advanced in this article. Indeed, the Indian experience shows that the problems of patriarchy analyzed here do not necessarily spell doom for open government. India has a well-established reputation for violating social-scientific generalizations; perhaps it is unsurprising that it is also exceptional in terms of the link between societal patriarchy and political regime. Nonetheless, the findings of this article furnish grounds for skepticism regarding the viability of democracy in India. Ethnic divisions and poverty are usually seen as the most formidable challenges to Indian democracy. The findings reported here suggest the merits of adding sex ratio and the sex gap in literacy rates to the list of challenges. Sex ratio has become the focus of intense discussion in India. Many Indian scholars, journalists, and government officials consider the problem, which is growing more acute by the year with the spread of inexpensive ultrasound machines, a social catastrophe in the making. They are working to force the issue to the top of the public agenda.<sup>49</sup> If conditions in India may darken the prospects for the endurance of democracy, those in China may undermine possibilities for its emergence. Sex ratio in some regions of China now exceeds 140/100 and the sex disparity nationally is widening rapidly. "Bachelor villages," inhabited predominantly by men, already cover parts of the Chinese countryside in several regions. Police officials report a steep rise in crime in these

<sup>48</sup> Fred Arnold, Minja Kim Choe, and T. K. Roy, "Son Preference, the Family-Building Process and Child Mortality in India," *Population Studies* 52 (November 1998); Sabu M. George and Ranbir S. Dahiya, "Female Foeticide in Rural Haryana," *Economic and Political Weekly* 33, 32 (August 14, 1998), 2191-98; Monica Das Gupta and P. N. Mari Bhat, "Fertility Decline and Increased Manifestation of Sex Bias in India," *Population Studies* 51 (November 1997); Gita Aravamudan, "Chilling Deaths," *Week* (India), January 24, 1999 (the-week.com, accessed December 2001); Gilbert Rozman, *Population and Marketing Settlements in Ch'ing China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Yi Zeng et al., "Causes and Implications of the Recent Increase in the Reported Sex-Ratio at Birth in China," *Population and Development Review* 19 (June 1993); Sten Johansson and Ola Nygren, "The Missing Girls of China," *Population and Development Review* 17 (March 1991); Erik Eckholm, "Desire for Sons Drives Use of Prenatal Scans in China," *New York Times*, June 22, 2002; J. H. Chu, "Prenatal Sex Determination and Sex-Selective Abortion in Rural Central China," *Population and Development Review* 27 (June 2001).

<sup>49</sup> Malini Karkal, "Invisibility of the Girl Child in India," *Indian Journal of Social Work* 52 (January 1991); "Female Infanticide Continues Unchecked, Unheard," *Times of India*, November 6, 2000; Sudha Ramachandran, "New Technologies, Old Prejudices Blamed for India's Vanishing Girls," *Panos* (London), September 2001 (panos.org.uk, accessed March 2002); Sampath Kumar, "Changing Views on Female Infanticide," *BBC News*, December 11, 2001 (news.bbc.co.uk, accessed April 2002); R. P. Ravindra, "The Campaign against Sex Determination Tests," in Chhaya Datar, ed., *The Struggle against Violence* (Calcutta: Shree, 1993).

areas, as well as an explosion of trade in kidnapped women and trafficking in women from Vietnam and North Korea. While Chinese leaders are perhaps less concerned than some of their Indian counterparts about the implications for democracy, they are indeed alarmed by threats to social order.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, the findings presented in this article highlight a fundamental difference between two types of societies: on the one hand, those that have a reputation for male dominance and emphasis on clan and family honor but that nevertheless do not exhibit large sex disparities in basic indicators, and, on the other hand, those that do exhibit such disparities. Southern Europe and countries with Iberian colonial heritage are often regarded as highly patriarchal. But in few places in these areas does one find gaping differentials in the basic indicators used here. Levels of economic development as well as *overall* illiteracy rates are broadly similar in Turkey, Mexico, and Brazil. Yet the literacy gap in these countries is 22, 5, and 2 percent, respectively; the sex ratio is 102/100 in Turkey and 97/100 in both Mexico and Brazil. Levels of economic development and overall literacy rates are higher in Jordan and Iran than they are in Honduras and Nicaragua. Yet the literacy gap is 18 percent in both Jordan and Iran, while there is virtually no literacy gap in Honduras or Nicaragua. Sex ratio is 105/100 in both Jordan and Iran; it is 100/100 in Honduras and 97/100 in Nicaragua. Women make up about 1 percent of high officialdom in the former countries and over 10 percent in the latter. Syria and the Philippines have nearly identical national incomes per capita. In Syria the sex ratio is 104/100, the literacy gap is 35 percentage points, and women fill one in thirty high-ranking posts in government. In the Philippines the sex ratio is 99/100, the literacy gap is 1 percent, and women occupy one in six top government jobs. These examples are in no way exceptional; they are representative and broadly illustrative. In short, patriarchy varies. A culture may in some senses be male dominated but still eschew prenatal sex selection and value the health and basic education of girls as much or nearly as much as the health and basic education of boys. Alternatively, a culture may assign disparate weights to the value of male and female life. The difference may have implications for political regime.

<sup>50</sup> Xingwang Zhou, "Artificial Sex Selection Can Create Disorder in Society: There Is a Natural Ratio of Males to Females," *Worker's Daily* [*Gongren Ribao*], August 9, 1999 (usembassy-china.org.cn, accessed March 2002); State Family Planning Commission of China, "Further Efforts to Seek Solutions for Problems in the Population Structure" (2001) (sfpc.gov.cn, accessed March 2002); John Pomfret, "In China's Countryside, 'It's a Boy!' Too Often," *Washington Post*, May 29, 2001; Maureen J. Graham, Ulla Larsen, and Xiping Xu, "Son Preference in Anhui Province, China," *International Family Planning Perspectives* 24 (June 1998).

## THE IRONY OF FEMALE SUBORDINATION

Nothing could be less heartening to democratic idealists than the notion that a particular religion is inimical to democracy. Religious traditions are usually constants within societies; they are variables only across societies. Societies usually are "stuck" with their religious traditions and the social and psychological orientations they encode and reproduce.

Yet religious practices and the salience of particular beliefs can change. Even if Muslim countries are more male dominated in some respects than non-Muslim countries, there is no logical reason why such a state of affairs must be immutable. Rigid segregation according to sex and male domination does not have a firm scriptural basis.<sup>51</sup> The Koran provides no justification whatsoever for practices such as female genital mutilation and it condemns all infanticide as a heinous sin, even if it is motivated by a fear of want (17:31; 81:1–14). Much of the Koran's instruction on marriage, divorce, and other aspects of relations between the sexes (for example, 2:222–41; 4:3; 4:128; 33:1–5; 58:1–4) is more liberal than the *sharia* (religious law) as practiced in some modern-day Muslim societies. It is therefore as dubious to try to locate the sources of social practice and order in scripture in Islamic settings as it is to try to locate them there in Christian and Jewish settings, because as with all holy injunction based on sacred text, interpretive traditions are powerful and ultimately determine practice. The status of women in Muslim societies is thus both paradoxical and mutable.

At the present time, however, the evidence shows that Muslim countries are markedly more authoritarian than non-Muslim societies, even when one controls for other potentially influential factors; and the station of women, more than other factors that predominate in Western thinking about religious systems and politics, links Islam and the democratic deficit.

<sup>51</sup> See Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 2d ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979), 38–40, 231–32; idem, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 13–20; Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite* (Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus, 1992); Farid Esack, *Qur'an Liberation and Pluralism* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997); Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).