Revisiting the Islamist-Secular divide:

Parties and Voters in the Arab World

Eva Wegner[1]
eva.wegner@ucd.ie
School of Politics & International Relations
University College Dublin

Francesco Cavatorta[2]
francesco.Cavatorta@pol.ulaval.ca
Department of Political Science
Université Laval, Québec (QC)

Abstract

Electoral politics in the Arab world are either portrayed as clientelistic affairs void of content or as highly ideological clashes between Islamist and secular-left forces. While both arguments are intuitively appealing, the empirical evidence is to date limited. This article seeks to contribute to the debate by investigating the extent of programmatic voter support for Islamist and secular-left parties in seven Arab countries with data from recent surveys by the Arab Barometer, Afro Barometer, and World Values Survey. Ideological congruence between voters and parties exists but is indeed limited to the Islamist-Secular core divide regarding the role of religion in politics and gender values. In contrast, there are virtually no differences in economic attitudes between respondents and there is no evidence of class-based voting, with Islamist and secular-left parties sharing the same voter base of better off, more educated, voters. Core results are robust across surveys.

Keywords: Political Islam, Middle East and North Africa, Electoral Behaviour, Pubic

Opinion,

INTRODUCTION

There are two competing narratives about the role of ideology in Arab politics. According to the first one, political competition is highly ideological, with the conflict between Islamist and Secular political and social forces being the decisive socio-political cleavage. Blaydes and Linzer (2012: 4-5) characterize this Islamist-Secular divide as "akin to the left–right ideological dimension that describes policy preferences in most Western democracies". In other words, it is viewed as the most important cleavage in Arab countries with profound consequences on political opinions and political competition. This perception is certainly reflected in research on Islamist movements and parties. Indeed, many studies start from the assumption that cooperation between Islamist and Secular forces is very difficult collaboration is often used as an indicator of Islamist ideological moderation (Cavatorta, 2009; Clark, 2006; Schwedler, 2006; Shehata, 2009; Wegner and Pellicer, 2011).

The second narrative focuses more directly on electoral politics and contends that electoral support in Arab countries is largely driven by clientelistic inducements, i.e. the promise and handing out of particularistic benefits to voters such as gifts, jobs, money, or other favors. According to this narrative, ideology is of little relevance. Voters are thought to have little to no ideological attachment and mainly hold parties accountable on their ability to deliver particularistic goods rather than on policy promises (Corstange, 2010; Lust, 2009). Accordingly, political parties in the Arab are mostly characterized as void of programmatic ambitions (Boukhars, 2010; Ibrahim and Lawson, 2010), operating to a considerable extent as clientelistic networks and transmission belts of 'bribes' to voters.

Although both narratives are intuitively compelling and may coexist, they cannot be equally and universally true. For the time being, there is only limited empirical evidence supporting either

2

one or the other. The Islamist-secular divide narrative generally takes irreconcilable divisions between Islamist and secular political movements for granted but scholars have hardly looked at whether the values held by supporters − activists, sympathizers and voters - do reflect such a divide. Virtually all extant research on this divide focuses on elites, such as leaders of Islamist and Secular/Left organizations and is based on interviews or analyses of the writings of the respective groups. It is, however, perfectly possible not only that elites overemphasize the divide for strategic reasons but also that an Islamist/Secular ideological divide might exist at the elite level but might not inform the attitudes and behavior of ordinary citizens.[1]

For the clientelism narrative, the argument is that if elections do not matter much in shaping policy outcomes, voters try to get at least some tangible return - money, employment, access to state resources - out of electoral participation (Gandhi and Lust-Okar, 2009). Certainly, observers of elections in Arab countries would agree that clientelistic inducements and expectations play an important role, but, thus far, there are only three studies that focus explicitly on the extent and nature of clientelistic linkages, namely on Lebanon (Corstange, 2010), Yemen (Corstange, 2016) and Jordan (Lust-Okar, 2006). However, these countries may be exceptional in that voting behavior in Lebanon is sectarian, in Yemen it is largely tribal and political parties in Jordan are particularly meaningless to voters with less than 5% of respondents indicating a party preference in the 2014 World Values Survey.

More generally, it is surprising how scarce research on voting behavior in the Middle East and North Africa still is. Most party studies focus on Islamist ideology and its compatibility with democratic principles (Schwedler, 2011) not on their electoral strategies.[2] Studies of the electorate have looked at drivers behind turnout (De Miguel et al., 2015) and at Islamist voters. Islamist voter studies come in three types. The first two types mirror the above narratives and focus on clientelism and voter values, respectively. Studies considering clientelism propose that the connection of Islamist parties to large charity organizations places them in a good position to

gain electoral support through 'charitable' handouts. This type of study focusses on voter characteristics such as education and poverty (Pellicer and Wegner, 2014). Value studies have looked at whether certain values – mainly anti-democratic values or religious piety - are correlated with support (Garcia-Rivero and Kotze, 2007; Robbins, 2010). A third type of study looks at Islamist voters as mainly protest voters, unhappy with the performance of regime and other parties and attracted by the anti-establishment and anti-corruption messages of Islamist parties (Mecham and Chernov Hwang, 2014). As most of these studies focus on individual countries and use different methods and data, findings on the features of the Islamist electorate have remained inconclusive. For their part, findings on Secular/Left voters are virtually nonexistent despite the historical significance of the Arab left across the region.

Against this background, this article investigates whether Islamist and Secular/Left parties represent distinctive sets of voters in the Arab World. In other words, we explore whether there is evidence that voters - not only activists - support these parties for programmatic reasons. This allows us to speak to two interrelated issues. Most importantly, the extent of programmatic support for Islamist and Secular/Leftist parties allows us to gauge the existence and nature of an Islamist-Secular divide at the voter level. Second, it allows us to – although only indirectly – to contribute to an assessment of the ubiquity of clientelistic motives for party support in the Arab world.

We operationalize programmatic support as the extent of ideological congruence between party and voter values. Essentially, if voter values and party ideology do not match, the rationale for casting a ballot for that party is likely to be clientelistic or in other ways unrelated to ideology. If voter values and party ideology are instead aligned, programmatic party identification is more likely – even if it might co-exist with other support motives. Whereas we give most weight to ideological congruence, we additionally identify programmatic voting by looking at parties' voter bases and the extent to which they are targeted by offers of vote-buying.

4

We combine data on seven Arab countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Palestine) from three recent surveys: Word Values Survey, Arab Barometer, and Afro Barometer. Not all countries are included in all three surveys, but we have at least two surveys - around 3000 observations - per country. Combining these three surveys enables us, on the one hand, to consider values covered by different surveys, and on the other to check the robustness of our findings for those items asked in all three. This allows for drawing conclusions that may hold beyond the specific dataset. For each country, we categorize parties as either Islamist, secular-left, or other.[3]

We find that ideological congruence exists but that it is by and large limited to an Islamist-Secular core content, with supporters of Islamist and Secular/Left parties having significantly different attitudes towards the role of religion in politics. Islamist voters are also more conservative regarding the role of women in society. Supporters of Islamist parties drive the larger part of this divide. We also find that they are less likely to be offered vote-buying incentives. In contrast, there are virtually no differences in economic attitudes between respondents and there is no evidence of a class divide in support for these parties, with Islamist and secular-left parties sharing essentially the same voter base of better-off, more educated, voters. In addition, we find that supporters of Islamist and Secular/Left parties share a number of attitudes with each other but not with the remainder of the respondents. Importantly, both parties' supporters are more favorable to democracy and globalization.

Our results provide a nuanced picture on the support for these two sets of parties. On the one hand, voters of Islamist parties display some clear features of programmatic attachment. On the other hand, our results temper the claim that the Islamist-secular divide systematically organizes policy preferences in the Arab world. Instead, this divide only appears to exist for ideological core content. This has significant implications for the literature on Arab politics because it provides a counter-narrative to the one that sees Islamists and secular leftists as inherently

opposed to each other on a wide range of issues, rendering coalition-making and vote-switching near impossible. At the same time, the clear differentiation of Islamist voters from other respondents on some core issues suggests that at least these voters are not *only* driven by clientelistic or protest motives for support.

While we believe that these findings provide an important nuance to the dominant narratives, our study has limitations. First, findings based on opinion surveys in Arab countries should be taken with a grain of salt. The (semi-)authoritarian context has an impact on respondents and affinity with Islamists, in particular, might not be truthfully expressed. We seek to address this problem by showing that the share of survey respondents supporting Islamist and secular-left parties exceeds their vote share in elections in most countries - suggesting that we are not looking at a distorted sample of core supporters or activists. A second limitation is that we are unable to determine how salient ideological factors are for the actual voting decision – we can only determine the extent to which a supporter's attitudes overlap with party ideology. Possibly, other factors are crucial for voting decisions such as candidate characteristics or the government's economic performance.[4] Third, we fully acknowledge that our study requires simplification. Thus, we could not include more subtle distinctions between additional party/voter types in the empirical analysis because many parties have very few supporters. This makes it impossible to differentiate, for example, between nationalist-left and secular-left parties. Lastly, it is important to highlight that our classification of Islamist and secular-left party platforms is – in the absence of a comprehensive coding effort of such platforms – a simplistic approximation of the values promoted by these parties. Nevertheless, considering the dearth of systematic research on voting behavior in the Arab countries, we hope that this study can be a first step on the way to more sophisticated research on electoral behavior in the region.

IDENTIFYING PROGRAMMATIC VOTING IN ARAB COUNTRIES

We approach programmatic voting in three, complementary ways. First, and most importantly, we seek to identify the existence of programmatic linkages through the extent of *ideological congruence* between party positions and the preferences of its voters. As Kitschelt (2012: 14–16) argues, programmatic party competition requires that parties develop and prioritize certain policies, voters understand these policies and make a choice "between parties based on their announced policy objectives". If voters' values and party ideology are aligned, some degree of programmatic party identification is likely – even if it might co-exist with clientelistic inducements. In contrast, if voters' values and party ideology are opposed, the rationale for casting a ballot for that party is likely to be clientelistic or personalistic. For identifying ideological congruence and distinctiveness, we establish the core positions of parties on key issues, based on the literature and their electoral platforms and assess whether the positions of their voters are in line with these ideologies.

Second, we investigate the socio-economic characteristics of a party's support base, although this may deliver ambiguous insights. On the one hand, socio-economic differences between parties' supporters could signal differences in policy preferences (Kitschelt, 2012). For example, if a party's electorate mostly belongs to a certain class, one could infer that this class is attracted by the party's economic policies. On the other hand, many studies have shown that poorer voters are most often targeted by clientelistic parties, either because they value a handout more than wealthier voters and are thus cheaper to buy or because they are more risk-averse (see, among many others Stokes et al., 2013). Thus, a predominantly poor voter base could indicate a clientelistic strategy instead of a class attracted by a party's redistributive policy platform.

Lastly, we look more directly at which party's voters are targeted with offers of vote-buying. This does not necessarily mean that their own party targets them with such offers (voters might also be approached as potential swing voters by other parties) or that they accept the bribe. It has been shown, however, that parties (brokers) carefully select recipients of clientelistic

inducements (Finan and Schechter 2012). Not being targeted thus implies that parties do not see these voters as beneficial targets, possibly because they have a higher party attachment.

These three indicators of programmatic voting have a clear hierarchy. We give most weight to identifiable policy differences between parties and voters because such differences would be difficult to reconcile with an explanation other than the ideological distinctiveness of parties and a certain level of programmatic attachment of voters. The demographic base and offers of vote-buying are secondary evidence, used to complement a picture that is emerging from the analysis of voter positions.

Policy Positions of Islamist and Secular-Left Parties

To date no systematic study of party manifestos and policies in Arab countries has been undertaken, limiting our ability to provide a very elaborate account of Islamist and Secular/Left party positions. Instead, we rely on a combination of a broad study of Islamist manifestos by Kurzman and Naqvi (2009) and case studies to establish expectations regarding programmatic voting.[5] We distinguish between socio-political positions (secularism, gender, democracy) and economic positions (redistribution, liberalization, globalization).

Table 1 below summarizes the type of differences we would expect if voters cast their ballot based on programmatic identification. We cannot always establish how much emphasis different parties in different countries place in campaigns or manifestos to each of these topics, but a tentative hierarchy is possible. Issues highlighted in bold in the table indicate that we consider them crucial for party identity and that lack of congruence would be a strong indicator against programmatic voting. Non-highlighted issues indicate difficulties in establishing the parties' positions – either because there is variation within party type or because little is known about them – so that voters might be more "confused" about their party's position and even programmatically minded voters may diverge from it.

8

Before discussing these policy differences in more detail, it is important to emphasise that the neat division between Islamist and Secular/Left parties is to some extent problematic and even prominent political figures in the two camps do not always see them as inherently incompatible (Ghannouchi, 2016). In addition, there are sharp divisions within the broader Islamist camp, for instance between Muslim Brotherhood-inspired parties and Salafi ones, with the latter often denying the Islamist credentials of the former (Al-Anani and Maszlee, 2013). Conversely, secular figures and parties have often argued that being labeled as such overlooks that they are also good Muslims and conferring the label Islamists to political movements simply overstates religiosity, giving such parties a normative advantage. Nevertheless, from an analytical perspective, the separation between Islamists and secularists makes sense insofar as the former employ religious precepts to guide public policies - even though their ideology might not be entirely religious (Delibas, 2009) - while the latter wish to relegate religion to the private sphere. For this study, we assume that there is a rather clear separation between Islamists and secular leftists due to their radically divergent understanding of the role religion should play in public policy and in the attainment of crucial political objectives. Lybarger (2007) for instance outlines how Palestinian political actors differ sharply on the role religion should play in the attainment of statehood. Within the secular camp, leftist parties with roots in the leftist politics of the 1960s are the ones the article focuses on because they represent a clear ideological alternative to Islamism and promote a type of secularism that often diverges with the one nationalists adopt.

Regarding *socio-political values*, Islamists are of course credited with seeking a larger role of religion in politics than the Secular/Left or others. The Secular/Left agenda supports this to a much lesser extent than either Islamists or others. At the same time, many parties have stopped advocating secular values openly (Khatib, 2011) in part because the language of religion is often equated with the language of morality (Spiegel, 2015) and therefore it becomes problematic to push a leftist liberal secular agenda on social matters as it could be construed as immoral. Even

programmatically minded secular-left voters would thus not need to be more "secular" than the average voter.

The rights of women are another major difference between Islamist and Secular/Left parties in many countries. According to the Kurzman and Naqvi data on Islamist platforms, Islamists mostly support a distinctive – instead of equal – role for women in society. Differences in Islamist and Secular/Left perspectives on women are often manifest in discussions around the personal status legislation that enshrines women's rights regarding marriage, divorce, or inheritance. Islamists have generally opposed progressive liberal reforms whereas Secular/Left parties have mobilized against what they call discriminatory and obscurantist legislation or at least supported progressive reforms (Wegner, 2011). Programmatically minded Islamist voters thus ought to be more conservative and programmatically driven. Secular/Left voters should be more progressive than the rest of society and frame women's rights through the language of individual rights and universal values.

Concerning support for democracy, establishing clear positions is less straightforward. Secular/Left parties and Western policy-makers are often suspicious of Islamists' commitment to democracy but the truthfulness of their commitment is not at stake in this article. Rather, the question is whether a clear position is articulated to the electorate, which could serve to gauge programmatic support. The Kurzman and Naqvi data show that Islamist party platforms tend to mention democracy favorably with some defining it in 'civil' terms and others with reference to Islamic principles. We lack similar information on Secular/Left parties but the general wisdom would be that they are supportive of a secular version of democracy. For both parties, it is unclear how much credibility they would have with the electorate. For the Islamists, this is due to generally negative perceptions of such parties' commitment to democracy and for the Secular/Left parties to the fact they have in practice often sided with dictators when it came to the repression of Islamists (Cook, 2005). We will thus characterize both their positions as

slightly more supportive of democracy than the average voter but without giving much weight to this issue.

Table 1: Indicators of Ideological Congruence

		Islamist	Secular/Left
Socio-political	Religion in politics	**more support**	less support
	Gender values	**more conservative**	**more progressive**
	Democracy	more support	more support
Economic	Economic redistribution	more support	**more support**
	Economic liberalization	more support	**less support**
	Globalization	more support	less support

Expectations regarding *economic issues* would put Secular/Left voters as more supportive of economic redistribution and less supportive of economic liberalization than the average citizen. There is little doubt that the Arab left is still very much focused on redistributive issues through the dominant role of the state and tends to view the policies international financial institutions suggest or impose with great suspicion. For example, the Algerian Worker's Party (*hizb al-`amal*) opposes the free market economy and calls for ending the association agreement with the EU and the WTO accession process (*Parti des Travailleurs*, 2014). Islamists have less developed attitudes in these matters, probably because there is no distinctive "Islamic" economic model (Gerges, 2012; Habibi, 2012). Indeed, in none of the analyzed Arab Islamist platforms, did the economy appear among the top three concerns (see Kurzman and Naqvi data). In his detailed analysis of political platforms of religious parties in Morocco, Egypt, and Turkey,

Yildirim (2010) argues that different Islamist party "types" promote different economic policies: Muslim Democratic Parties, such as the Moroccan Justice and Development Party or the Egyptian Wasat Party, are essentially 'Pro-Liberal Economy' in that they seek to increase economic opportunities for entrepreneurs. They, however, combines this with an emphasis on social safety nets so as not to alienate supporters from lower social strata. In contrast, reformist Islamist parties, such as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and its Freedom and Justice party, are "nationalist-protectionist" and support an interventionist state and policies (Yildirim, 2010). In general, the social and economic parts of the electoral platforms of these parties are less developed than those of the Muslim Democratic Parties.

While we have thus potentially two distinct types of economic platforms promoted by Islamist parties, it is unclear how much importance this has in practice. Recently, Lyra's study (2017) confirms that Islamist parties in Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco all have strongly advocated the creation of a business-friendly investment climate and cuts to public spending, and at the same time emphasized the need for redistribution and interventionist policies. This suggests that most Islamist parties have gone for an approach that combines traditionally left (strong state responsible for the poor) with traditionally right (promotion of economic liberalization and business friendly policies) positions (see also Wegner, 2011 on Morocco and Khattab, 2012 on Egypt).

We might thus expect that programmatic Islamist voters are supportive of economic liberalization and, possibly, of redistribution. At the same time, it remains quite unclear how much these policies have been marketed to the electorate. Islamist supporters without very distinctive positions would not stand necessarily against programmatic voting.

In sum, programmatically minded Islamist voters should be particularly identifiable regarding their views on the role of religion in politics and gender roles whereas secular-left voters should hold especially distinctive values on economic issues and, likely, gender roles.

DATA

The data used in this article come from Wave 6 of the World Values Survey, (WVS) Round 5 of the Afro Barometer, and Round 3 of the Arab Barometer. The WVS focuses on a large battery of social, political, and economic values, while the two Barometer surveys mostly seek to measure respondents' assessment of government performance and democracy. All data were collected between 2011 and 2014, that is during/after the Arab Spring but before the authoritarian backlash or widespread violence that occurred in countries such as Egypt, Libya, or Yemen. This implies that the surveys were undertaken at a time when citizens were likely to have expressed their views more freely than in any other period.

We combine the data into one dataset and create six simple additive indices that are at the core of the empirical analysis. A first set of indices measures socio-political values mentioned above, namely support for a greater role of religion in politics, gender equality, and democracy. The second set measures economic values, namely support for economic redistribution, economic competition, and (economic) globalization. We normalize these indices so that they have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one.[6]

Each survey also asks the respondent to name a party they would vote for if there were elections tomorrow.[7] It is important to note that – very much in line with real voting behavior in Arab countries – most respondents in these surveys indicated that they would not vote. We have coded parties into "Islamist", "Secular/Left", and "Others" (see table A.3 in the online appendix for the coding). Some of the coding choices in the Secular/Left camp are certainly debatable, but most of them concern very small parties and are thus unlikely to make a difference. In addition, the surveys also contain socio-economic variables, such as age, sex, education, income, and employment status that we use as controls and for evaluating the demographic profiles of the parties' voters.

Combining these three surveys has several advantages. First, our study can explore a wider range of attitudes compared to other studies. Second, we have more statistical power for those indices that can be constructed from all three surveys. Third, and most importantly, our findings can be considered more robust than those in extant studies based on opinion surveys. Studies relying on one survey are bound to build on a small, and possibly unrepresentative, sample because there are generally few respondents identifying with a party in surveys in Arab countries (consistent with high abstention rates). We can partly overcome this problem as we have three indices for which we can check the results from more than one survey. To preview this robustness check – we find that a similar picture emerges from each of these surveys, thus making us rather confident in the results presented. The fact that the questions on which these "robustness" indices are based appeared at different points of the respective questionnaires and were not asked in identical ways further increases our confidence.

At the same time, we face two typical challenges when it comes to research based on surveys in Arab countries. The first is that the share of supporters of Islamist and Secular/Left parties varies sometimes greatly between the surveys (see table 2). We therefore control for survey and country effects in all empirical models so that we compare supporters within countries and surveys. In this way, we ensure that it is not one survey (or country) with more numerous and perhaps peculiar Islamist (or Secular/Left) supporters driving the results.

Another issue that could potentially challenge our study is that respondents who indicate support for a party in an opinion survey might be committed core supporters whereas those respondents who vote for a party for other, possibly clientelistic, reasons are probably likely to state that they do not identify with a party in such a survey. If our sample consisted of committed core supporters our study would overstate the programmatic attachment of voters. However, the extent of this problem can easily be checked by comparing the share of respondents supporting a given party in the surveys with that party's vote share in the closest elections. If it were indeed

14

the case that the samples consisted of core supporters, one would expect lower support in the surveys compared to the elections – where both the core supporters and the clients turn out to vote. As can be seen in table 2, this is not the case with these data: in almost all cases support for Islamists and Secular/Left parties is either similar or even substantially higher in the surveys than in the actual elections. This sample is unlikely to contain overly committed supporters.

Table 2: Shares of Islamist/ Secular/Left voters in latest elections and surveys

		Morocco	Algeria	Tunisia	Libya	Egypt	Palestine	Yemen
Latest Parl. Election		2011	2012	2014	2014	2012	2006	2003
Arab Barometer Survey		2014	2013	2013	2014	2013	2012	2013
WVS Survey		2011	2014	2013	2014	2013	2013	2014
Afro Barometer Survey		2013	2013	2013	-	2013	-	-
Islamist	**Election Share [i]**	**5%**	**2%**	**12%**	**4%**	**33%**	**24%**	**11%**
	Arab Barometer	11%	3%	23%	9%	7%	24%	18%
	WVS	4%	9%	15%	12%	14%	17%	10%
	Afro Barometer	13%	2%	15%	-	13%	-	-
Secular/Left	**Election Share [i]**	**3%**	**3%**	**19%**	**18%**	**6%**	**23%**	**3%**
	Arab Barometer	3%	7%	21%	17%	4%	35%	2%
	WVS	2%	14%	22%	14%	5%	41%	4%
	Afro Barometer	2%	5%	18%	-	10%	-	-

[i] Election share= Votes received/Voting Age Population. This includes potential voters that have not registered. This represents more accurately the survey sample than votes/votes casts, or even votes/ registered voters as the surveys do include respondents who have not registered.

RESULTS

For all analyses presented below, the empirical model consists of multinomial logistic regressions where the outcome variable is a categorical variable capturing support for the different party types (no party preference, Secular/Left, Islamist, other parties). The core explanatory variables are the different value indices discussed above for the analysis of ideological congruence, different demographic characteristics for the analysis focusing on the

parties' voter base, and a survey item (discussed below) from the Afro Barometer for the analysis of bribe offers. For ease of presentation we display the results as average marginal effects in coefficient plots.

In addition, given that Islamist and Secular/Left parties *do* display distinctive voter bases in term of age, sex, employment, education, and poverty we do include these demographic characteristics as controls in the analyses focusing on voter values and bribe offers. All models also control for country and survey. Unless otherwise indicated, the base outcome in all models is respondents not indicating a party preference. Because such respondents are by far the largest category in all surveys, we sometimes refer to them as the average respondent, or average voter in the discussion below.

Ideological Congruence between Voters and Parties

We compare the attitudes of voters of Islamist parties with those of Secular/Left parties and those of other respondents, namely voters of other parties and respondents without party preference.[8] We assess whether the values differ significantly in the direction suggested in table 1 above. For example, if Islamist supporters were more gender conservative than the average respondent and Secular/Left supporters more progressive, we would consider this as an important signal that some programmatic support is manifest for both parties.

The estimates in Figure 1 show items on the socio-political dimension: gender conservativeness, support for more religion in politics, and support for democracy. The 0 vertical line represents the respective base respondent, the horizontal axes display the extent to which the values of Islamist and Secular/Left supporters deviate from these. The left panel of Figure 1 shows the results for the whole sample with respondents without party preference as base outcome; the right panel shows the results from a reduced panel of respondents that indicated that they voted in the latest national election with Secular/Left voters as base outcome. This latter analysis

allows for three additional insights. First, it considers the possibility that programmatic considerations are only relevant for respondents who go to the polls. Second, it allows for a more nuanced picture on whose supporter's values are truly distinctive. Finally, it is a first robustness check on whether ideological congruence remains in a more restricted sample.

The left panel of figure1 shows a distinctive pattern.[9] For the role of religion in politics and women in society, Islamist and Secular/Left voters display attitudes consistent with ideological support as spelled out in table 1. Islamist voters strongly favor a greater role for religion in politics and are more gender conservative than the average respondent. Secular/Left voters have the opposite values. Regarding the third item, support for democracy, Secular/Left voters and Islamists display a higher level of support for it than the average respondent.

The right panel nuances this picture. It strongly confirms the distinctiveness of the supporters of Islamist parties in terms of gender conservatism and particularly regarding support for religion in politics. For these items Secular/Left voter's attitudes are, however, generally similar to those of supporters of other parties suggesting that they are possibly not basing their support decision on these items.
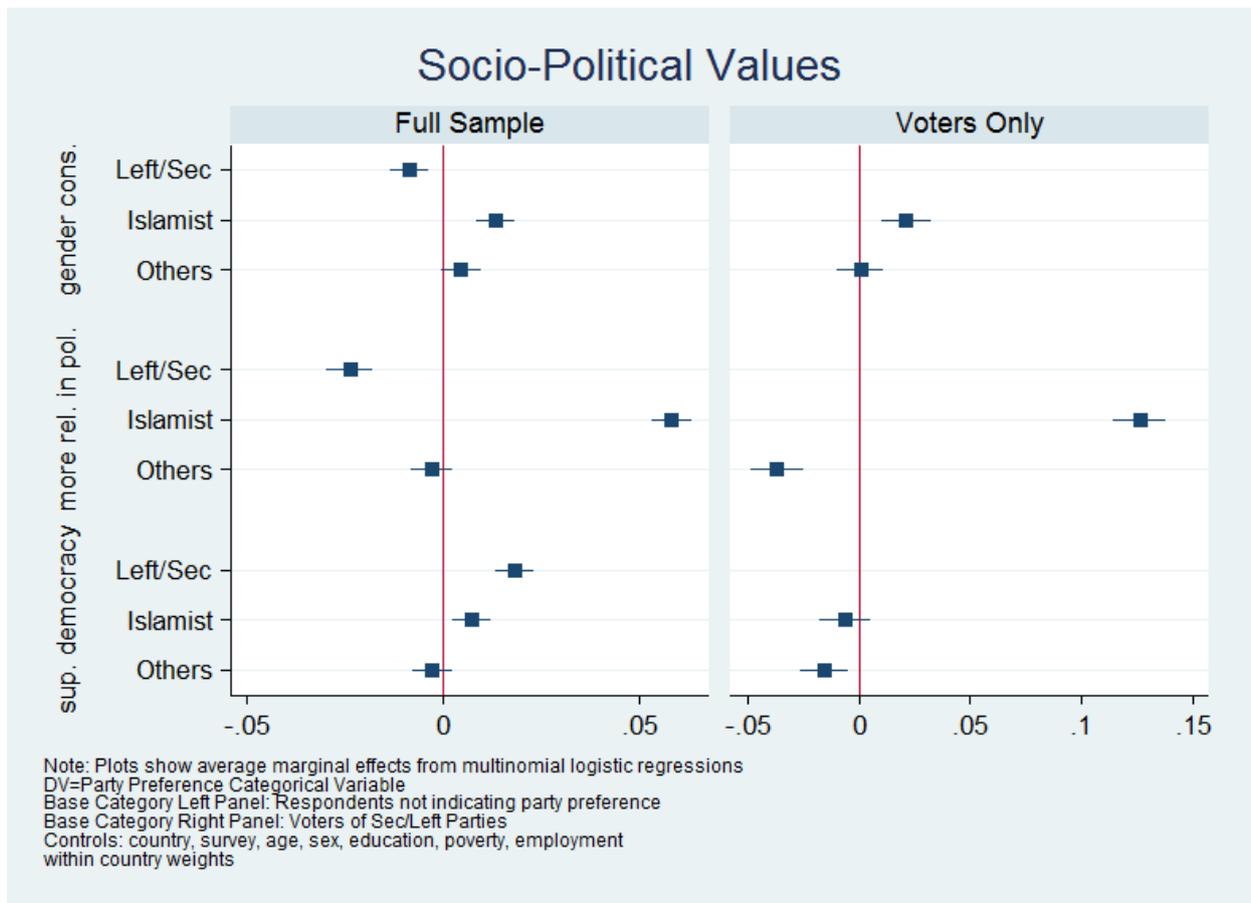
Socio-Political Values

	Full Sample	Voters Only

gender cons.
- Left/Sec
- Islamist
- Others

sup. democracy more rel. in pol.
- Left/Sec
- Islamist
- Others

- Left/Sec
- Islamist
- Others

Note: Plots show average marginal effects from multinomial logistic regressions
DV=Party Preference Categorical Variable
Base Category Left Panel: Respondents not indicating party preference
Base Category Right Panel: Voters of Sec/Left Parties
Controls: country, survey, age, sex, education, poverty, employment
within country weights

Figure 1

Figure 2 shows attitudes towards the economy: redistribution, economic liberalization, and globalization. Contrary to the socio-political dimension, there is virtually no difference between Islamist and Secular/Left voters. Also different from socio-political values, this lack of distinctiveness between Islamist and Secular/Left supporters gets further reinforced when considering voters only in the right panel in figure 2. Whatever divide there is between supporters of these parties, it clearly does not extend to economic issues.

Compared to the average respondent, secular-left voters are more supportive of redistribution – which would be aligned with expectations of programmatic support, but also of economic globalization, which goes against the alter-globalization discourse of Secular/Left parties.
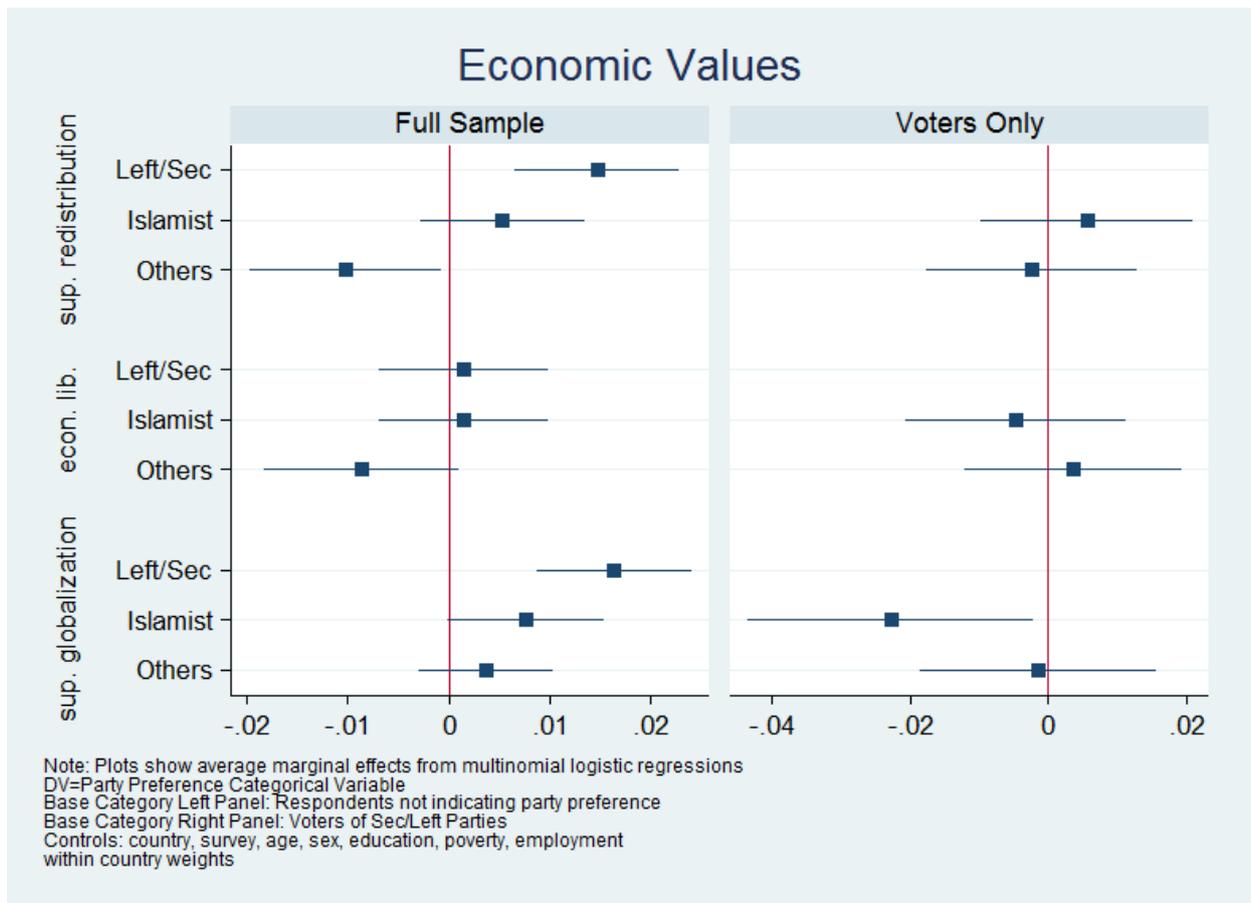
Figure 2

The extent of ideological party-voter congruence thus shows a mixed picture. Programmatic voter identification with both types of parties is taking place when it comes to what can be labeled identity politics, i.e. the role of religion in public policy-making and women. This is particularly strong for supporters of Islamist parties, very large when it comes of the role of religion in politics, and emerges even more strongly when considering actual voters only. Preferences regarding the organization of the economy show no real differences between respondents of Islamist and secular-left voters. This could be due to the lack of distinctiveness of these positions and suggests that electoral support for these parties is largely based on social/ identity issues.

Voter Demographics – Support base of Islamist and Secular/Left parties.

 The second dimension to examine potential programmatic support is voter demographics. As explained above, there are two, somewhat contradictory, ways in which voter demographics can be telling about the type of party-voter linkages. On the one hand, class based support (for example the poor supporting left parties) could be an indicator that particular social classes feel represented by a party's policies. On the other hand, a support base of mainly poorer voters could be an indicator of a clientelistic voter base because it is easier to 'buy' their votes.

Figure 3 shows the results for both the full sample (left panel) and voters only (right panel). The results are clear and striking. Virtually the same voter groups support both Islamist and Secular/Left parties. They are more likely to be male, educated, employed, and less likely to be poor than non-voters. Supporters of Secular/Left parties even seem more educated than supporters of Islamist parties, but the difference is small and possibly insignificant. In contrast, voters of other parties pretty much resemble non-voters, the only exception being that voters of other parties are older than the average respondent.
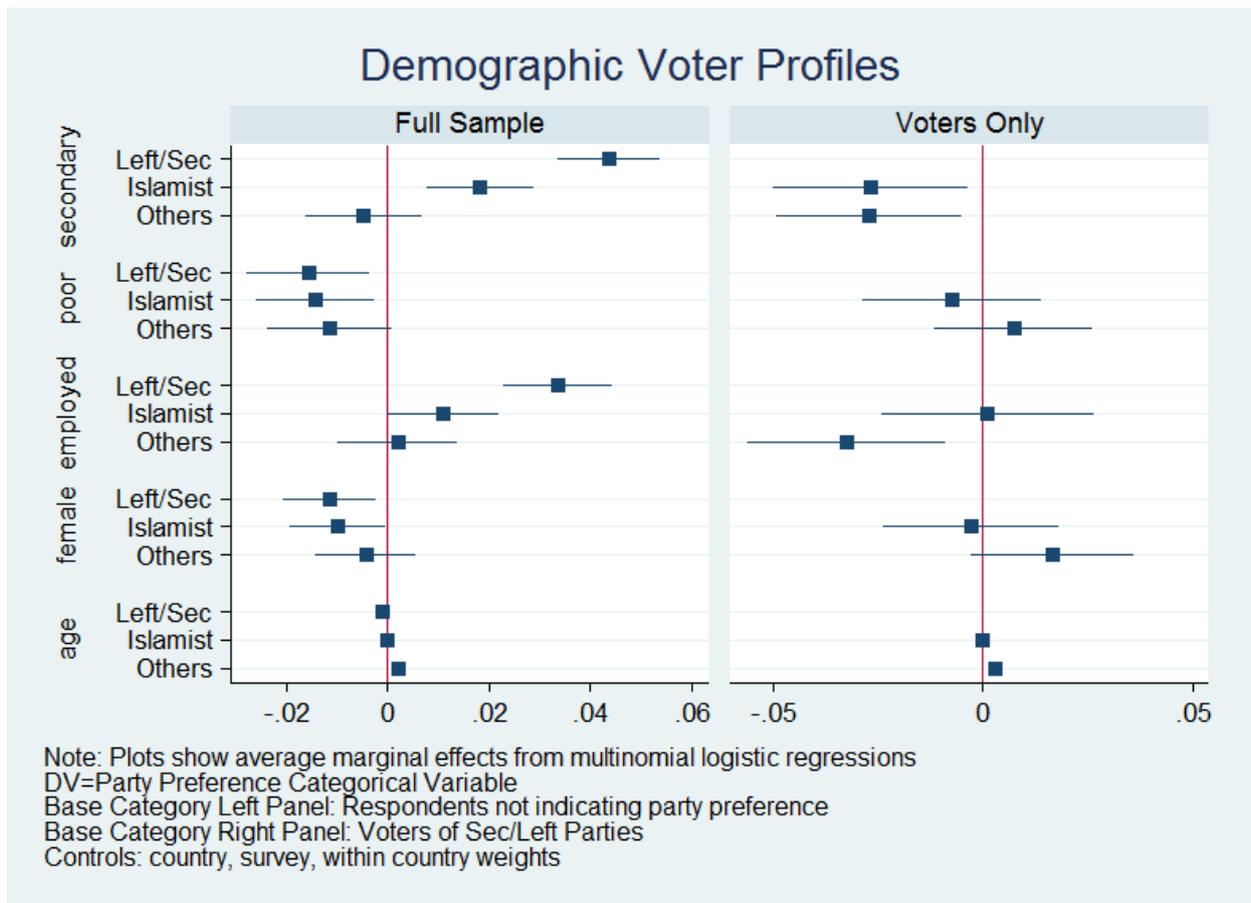
Demographic Voter Profiles

Figure 3

First, this middle-class type of profile of Islamist and Secular/Left supporters suggests that their votes are more expensive (and thus possibly less likely to be bought). Second, and more importantly, this *shared* middle-class profile suggests that support for these two types of parties is not class driven, a finding that is in line with the lack of party identification based on economic policies. The fact that supporters of Islamist and Secular/Left parties are better-off voters suggests that the identity issues that seem so relevant for support for these parties are issues that are mostly of concern to wealthier respondents, i.e. to those who can *afford* to care about them.

Election Incentives

Ideological congruence and the demographic profile of Islamist and Secular/Left parties suggest that programmatic voting considerations are not altogether absent in Arab countries. In addition, the Afro Barometer survey has an item that asks how often respondents have been offered "something, like food or a gift or money, in return for your vote" during the latest election.

The survey item is of course far from perfect. First, answers to this question do not tell us whether an actual exchange has taken place, as voters may have received an offer but did not accept it. Second, other forms of clientelism may take place without an actual exchange on election day. Third, admitting to having been offered a bribe could suffer from social desirability bias and this bias could be systematic, for example with more educated respondents being more aware that vote-buying is illegal. While we cannot address the first two issues, the latter is less problematic. Given the similar demographic profile of Islamist and Secular/Left supporters, we can be relatively confident that differences between *these* two parties are not driven by systematic bias.

The sample consists of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt because the question was only asked in the Afro Barometer. The results are shown in figure 4. There are no differences between Secular/Left voters, other voters, and respondents who do not support a political party. In contrast, being a supporter of an Islamist party makes a respondent considerably less likely to be offered a bribe in exchange for his/her vote.
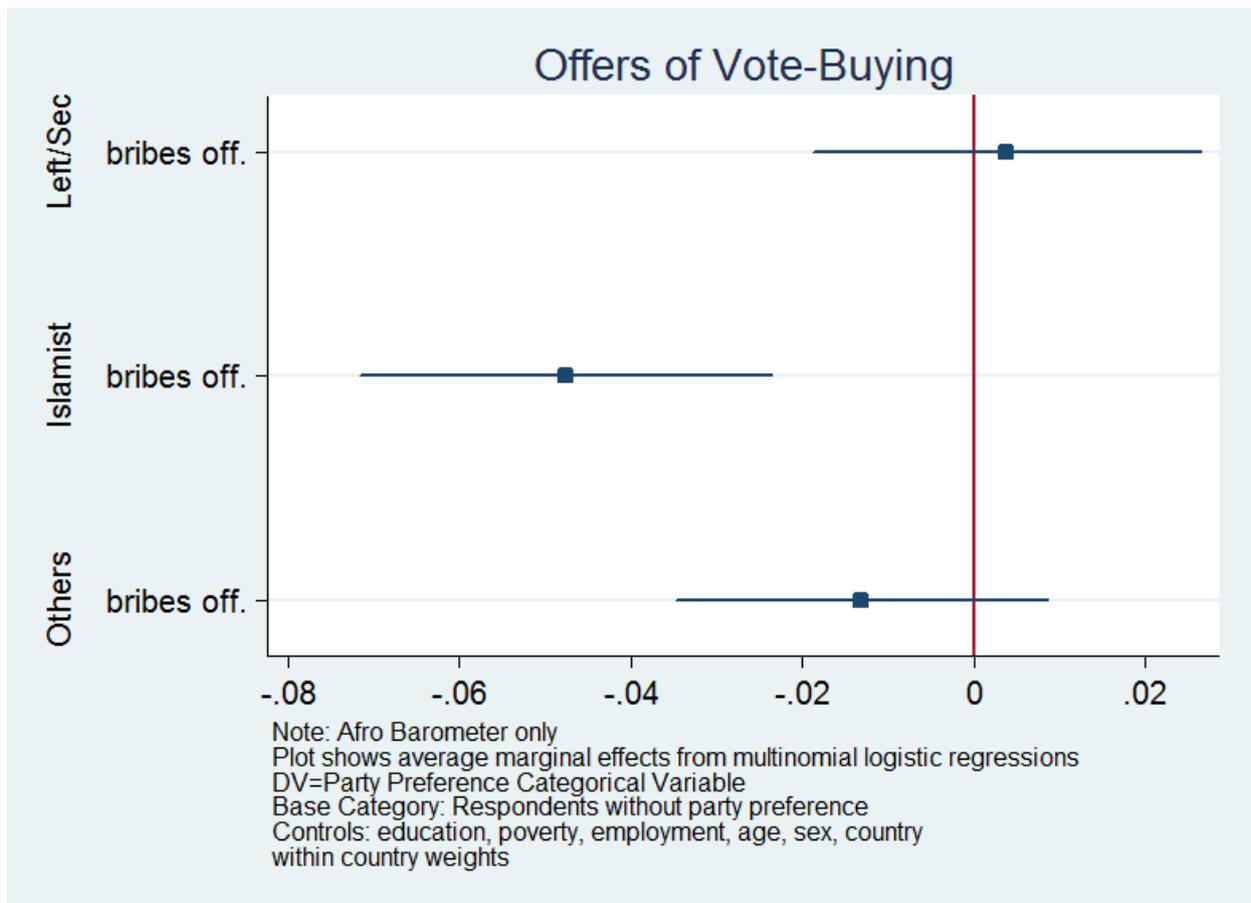
Offers of Vote-Buying

Note: Afro Barometer only
Plot shows average marginal effects from multinomial logistic regressions
DV=Party Preference Categorical Variable
Base Category: Respondents without party preference
Controls: education, poverty, employment, age, sex, country
within country weights

Figure 4

Robustness

The results presented in this paper are based on data from three different surveys. As shown in

the descriptive statistics, these surveys have sometimes significantly different shares of Islamist/

Secular/Left voters by country. An important concern is thus whether any of these surveys has a

peculiar sample of Islamists or other voters that may be driving the results. We cannot fully

address this concern. However, there are two indices – gender roles and support for democracy -

that can be constructed from all three surveys, and an additional one – role of religion in politics

– that can be constructed from two of these surveys.

As shown in figure 5, the three surveys mostly yield similar results for these indices. Although

the coefficients do not always reach conventional significance levels, they all go in the direction

shown in the aggregate analysis. The consistent results we find for most of values across the three surveys – in spite of different questions order, different wording, and different shares of Islamist and Secular/Left voters – increases our confidence in the robustness of our findings.
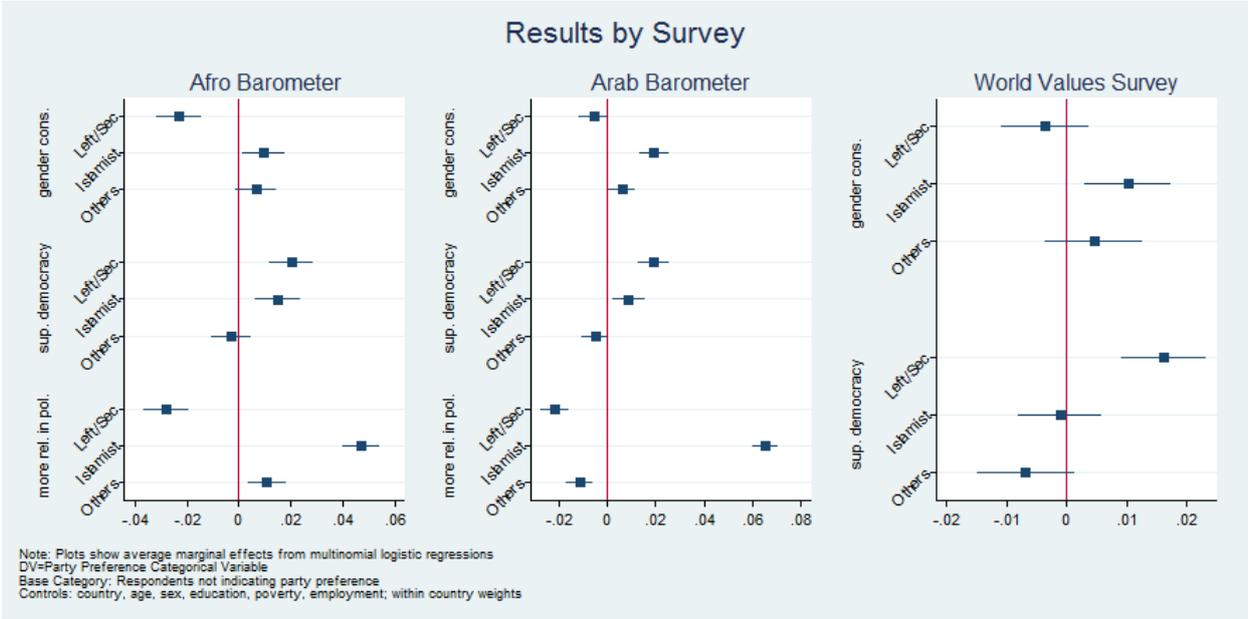

Figure 5

Discussion

Taking the results on ideological congruence, demographic characteristics and vote-buying together, a relatively consistent picture emerges (see table 3). First, programmatic support is not altogether absent when it comes to voting for Islamist and Secular/Left parties. This is supported first and most importantly by the clear, and partly substantial, differences of voter positions on identity politics, and second, by the middle-class type of profile of Islamist and Secular/Left voters. Second, Islamist voters clearly emerge as the most programmatically driven. The ideological congruence between them and party ideology was more developed than for Secular/Left voters, and, while they had the same demographic profile, Islamists also had

24

substantially less offers of vote-buying. This relatively tight link between Islamist voters and Islamist parties suggests that Islamist voters do indeed feel represented ideologically by these parties to some extent. In contrast, the absence of ideological congruence on economic issues in the Secular/Left camp and the fact that Secular/Left broadly shared the similar values on gender and religion with supporters of other parties suggests a lower level of programmatic support for this party type.

Table 3: Summary Results

	Islamist Voters	Secular/Left Voters
Ideological Congruence	high	low- medium
Demographic Base	Not distinctive but not prone to clientelism	Not distinctive but not prone to clientelism
Offers Vote-buying	lower	Average

On a more general level, the virtual absence of differences on economic issues for supporters of different parties stands in stark contrast with the strong emphasis on economic grievances in the literature studying the causes of the Arab spring (Achcar, 2013). This result is particularly interesting in light of the Arab uprisings and their aftermath. Despite a consensus that poor socio-economic conditions drove the uprisings, mobilization following the fall of the regimes tended to focus indeed on identity issues. Thus, processes of transition succeeded if compromises around such identity issues could be reached. Where they succeeded, democratic structures were built – Tunisia – and where they failed – Egypt – authoritarian rule returned. With this is mind, it is not surprising that scholars find for instance in post-revolutionary Tunisia that the marginalization of economic issues in the political process leads to the disaffection of

large sectors of the population from electoral politics, seen as a middle-class compromise over identity issues (Merone, 2015). The apparent absence of a serious political debate on economic issues and the development of recognizable economic policies by political parties might negatively affect the prospects of stability in these countries because it implies that parties do not invest in policies that address the economic grievances that drove the Arab Spring. The contradictory messages regarding the economy that Islamist parties for instance send to voters are quite telling.

Finally, our findings suggest that the Islamist-secular divide is restricted to identity politics. Rather than organizing society and politics in other relevant dimensions, this divide is limited to disagreements over the role of religion and social issues such as gender roles. These are certainly important questions, but the absence of spillovers to other issues suggests that there might be more common ground between Islamists and other parties than often assumed.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article investigated the linkages between Islamist and secular-left parties and their voters in the Arab world. It identified the existence of programmatic voting for these parties by looking at party-voter ideological congruence, support bases, and vote-buying. The findings suggest that support for these parties has some programmatic characteristics, especially for supporters of Islamist parties but that the ideological attachment of voters is by and large limited to a cleavage about the role of religion in politics and gender values.

Our findings point at the need for more systematic studies of voter values, party mobilization, more precise parties' policy positions and voting behavior in the region. Although many parties operate in semi-authoritarian settings and may thus not be able to implement the policies they advocate to the electorate, it is important to understand which topics are at the core of party mobilization and which ones resonate with the electorate in the Arab world because this

influences behavior when and if the political space opens up. Considering the authoritarian backlash in different countries that targets Islamist parties in particular, it is also important to get a better grasp of those social groups whose formal political participation and representation is again restricted and the types of values being excluded from public debate.

References

Achcar, Gilbert (2013) The people want: a radical exploration of the Arab Uprising. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Blaydes, Lisa and Drew A. Linzer (2012) Elite Competition, Religiosity, and Anti-Americanism in the Islamic World. American Political Science Review 106(2): 225–243.

Boukhars, Anouar (2010) Politics in Morocco: Executive Monarchy and Enlightened Authoritarianism. London: Routledge.

Cavatorta, Francesco (2009) Divided They Stand, Divided They Fail: Opposition Politics in Morocco. Democratization 16(1): 137–156.

Clark, Janine Astrid (2006) The Conditions of Islamist Moderation: Unpacking Cross-Ideological Cooperation in Jordan. International Journal of Middle East Studies 38(4): 539–560.

Corstange, Daniel (2010) Vote Buying under Competition and Monopsony: Evidence from a List Experiment in Lebanon, Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC.

Corstange, Daniel (2016) The Price of a Vote in the Middle East. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cook, Steven (2005) The right way to promote Arab reform. Foreign Affairs 84(2): 91-102.

Delibas, Kayhan (2009) Conceptualizing Islamic Movements: The Case of Turkey. International

Political Science Review 30(1): 89-103.

Finan, Frederico and Laura Schechter (2012) Vote-Buying and Reciprocity. Econometrica 80(2): 863–881.

Garcia-Rivero, Carlos and Hennie Kotze (2007) Electoral Support for Islamic Parties in the Middle East and North Africa. Party Politics 13(5): 611–636.

Gerges, Fawaz (2012) The New Capitalists: Islamists' Political Economy. Available at: https://www.opendemocracy.net/fawaz-gerges/new-capitalists-islamists-political-economy

Ghannouchi, Rachid (2016) From Political Islam to Muslim Democracy. The Ennahda party and the Future of Tunisia. Foreign Affairs 95(5): 58-67.

Gandhi, Jennifer and Ellen Lust-Okar (2009) Elections Under Authoritarianism. Annual Review of Political Science 12: 403–422.

Habibi, Nader (2012) The Economic Agendas and Expected Economic Policies of Islamists in Egypt and Tunisia. Brandeis University, Middle East Brief (67), available at: https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/MEB67.pdf

Ibrahim, Saad and Kay Lawson (2010) Political Parties and Democracy: The Arab World. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.

De Miguel, Carolina, Amaney Jamal and Mark Tessler (2015) Elections in the Arab World: Why Do Citizens Turn Out? Comparative Political Studies 48(11): 1355-1388.

Khattab, Abdallah Shehata (2012) Macroeconomic Challenges in Egypt After Revolution: Do Islamic Parties Have a Vision? Emerging New Economic Policy Makers in the Arab Mediterranean: Economic Agendas of Islamic Actors Proceedings, July: 3–4.

Kitschelt, Herbert (2012) Research and Dialogue on Programmatic Parties and Party Systems Final Report, Duke University, available at: https://sites.duke.edu/democracylinkage/files/2014/12/3.2.Kitschelt.pdf

Kurzman, Charles and Ijlal Naqvi (2009) Islamic Political Parties and Parliamentary Elections. United States Institute of Peace Working Paper 15.

Lust, Ellen (2009) Competitive Clientelism in the Middle East. *Journal of Democracy* 20(3): 122–135.

Lust-Okar, Ellen (2006) Elections under Authoritarianism: Preliminary Lessons from Jordan. *Democratization* 13(3): 456–471.

Lybarger, Loren (2007) Identity and religion in Palestine. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Lyra, Aguinaldo (2017) Fusing Islamism and Neoliberalism in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco: A Study into the Economic Policies of Three Islamist Parties. MA Thesis, Leiden University, The Netherlands, available at: https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/52373/MA%20Thesis%20A.Lyra.pdf?sequence=1

Mecham, Quinn and Julie Chernov Hwang (2014) Conclusion. The New Dynamism of Islamist Parties. In Quinn Mecham and Julied Chernov Hwang (eds.) Islamist parties and political normalization in the Muslim world. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Parti des Travailleurs (2014) Programme Electoral. Available at : http://www.pt.dz/?Programme-electoral

Pellicer, Miquel and Eva Wegner (2014) Socio-Economic Voter Profile and Motives for Islamist Support in Morocco. Party Politics 20(1): 116–133.

Robbins, Michael (2010) What Accounts for the Success of Islamist Parties in the Arab World? Dubai School of Government Working Paper (10–01).

Schwedler, Jillian (2006) Faith in Moderation : Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shehata, Dina (2009) Islamists and Secularists in Egypt: Opposition, Conflict and Cooperation.

London: Routledge.

Stokes, Susan, Thad Dunning, Marcelo Nazareno, and Valeria Brusco (2013) Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism: The Puzzle of Distributive Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yildirim, A. Kadir (2010) Muslim Democratic Parties: Economic Liberalization and Islamist Moderation in the Middle East. PhD Dissertation, Furman University, USA.

Wegner, Eva (2011) Islamist Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes: The Party of Justice and Development in Morocco. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press.

Wegner, Eva and Miquel Pellicer (2011) Left-Islamist Opposition Cooperation in Morocco. *British Journal of Middle East Studies* 38(3): 303–322.

---

[1] Most scholars take Islamist and Left elites at face value when they argue that they do not want to cooperate for ideological reasons. Wegner and Pellicer (2009) suggest that both parties might overemphasize the divide for other reasons, such as for example, concerns that the other party in the alliance might have more support.

[2] Turkey is an exception.

[3] The discussion of the selection criteria can be found in the appendix together with the list of parties.

[4] Generally, large majorities of survey respondents indicate economic factors such as poverty and unemployment as the country's most important problem.

[5] Kurzman and Naqvi (2009) undertake a basic coding of Islamist manifestos on a limited number of items, such as support for democracy, free trade and the welfare state, and the role of shariah, minorities and women. For these items, they provide a rough assessment on how central they are to the manifesto. They rely on very varied materials, sometimes manifestos of less than a page, sometimes elaborate election platforms. Their data also includes non-Arab Islamist parties and earlier electoral platforms. We limit our use of their data to countries that are included in our dataset (namely Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, and Palestine) and the latest platform included in their data.

[6] The exact wording of the questions used to construct each index and the coding are provided in table A.1 in the online appendix. Table A.2 displays simple descriptive statistics for the respective items.

[7] The exact wording for this question is 1) Afro Barometer: "If a legislative election were held tomorrow, which

party's candidate would you vote for?" 2) Arab Barometer: "Which of the existing parties is closest to representing your political, social and economic aspirations?", 3) WVS: "Which party would you vote for if there were a national election tomorrow?"

[8] Supporters of other parties are either supporters of pro-regime parties, such as the PAM in Morocco, the FLN in Algeria, or the GPC in Yemen or parties that cannot be allocated to either the Islamist or, Secular/Left camp, e.g. the Istiqlal party in Morocco that is socially conservative but not Islamist.

[9] Tables with detailed results are in the online appendix. For figure 1, consult tables A.4, A.5, and A.6, for figure 2, tables A.7., A.8, and A.9, for figure 3 table A.11, for figure 4 table A.12, and for figure 5, tables A.13.1, A.13.2, and A.13.3.