

Religiosity and Islamic Rule in Iran

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We investigate the relationship between religiosity and support for Islamic rule in the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). Are high levels of religiosity associated with an ideology characterized by clerical rule, supremacy of Islamic law, and state enforcement of Islam? The data come from a random sampling survey conducted in Tehran in August 2003. It covers a range of questions on religiosity, social, and political attitudes, and has a sample of 412 respondents. The analyses show that religiosity is closely affiliated with an ideological understanding of Islam in Tehran. Interestingly, political dissatisfaction does not negatively affect this association. Shi'ism in Iran has evolved from a "world-shaking" force into a "world-legitimizing" force.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between religious beliefs and political attitudes among Muslim publics has recently been at the forefront of academic and public debates. Previous research has shown that facile generalizations about Islamic beliefs and political attitudes do not hold. Most of the studies using survey data focused on the question of whether Muslim beliefs, practices, and mindsets translate into negative evaluations of democratic governance. This article investigates the relationship between religiosity and attitudes toward Islamic rule in the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). It addresses two questions: (1) Do high levels of religiosity translate into the espousal of Islamic rule in Iran? and (2) What factors, in general, affect public support for Islamic rule in Iran? These questions are particularly relevant in Iran where a theocratic regime with claims to absolute religious-political knowledge has been in power for more than 25 years. The article is based on a survey of values and political attitudes conducted in Iran's capital, Tehran, in August 2003.

The article is organized in five sections. The first section summarizes the findings of the previous research based on surveys conducted in Muslim-majority countries. Following that is a brief analysis of the relationship between Islam and political rule in the IRI. The third section introduces the Tehran survey. The core of the article introduces the dependent and independent variables and presents the multiple regression analysis that addresses the primary research questions. The final section discusses the implications of the findings in comparative perspective.

BELIEFS AND POLITICAL ATTITUDES OF MUSLIM PUBLICS

The question of whether high levels of piety or religious attendance are associated with certain types of political attitudes and behavior has been a major area of interest for scholars. Scholars have addressed this question on the basis of survey data, especially in the United States and West Europe. They have studied how religious affiliations affect issue stances (Hayes 1995; Jelen 1993), partisanship (Wald 2003:158–200), and voting turnout (Wald, Kellstedt, and Leege 1993), how intensity of religious beliefs results in different levels of political participation (McDonough,

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Shin, and Moises 1998), and how it shapes voting patterns (Layman 1997) and political views across national boundaries (Wald and Martinez 2001). The findings demonstrate that the relationship between religiosity and political attitudes and behavior is historically and institutionally conditioned.

Studies of public opinion and belief systems in Muslim-majority countries have recently proliferated. So far, research has mostly concentrated on the relationship between religiosity and democratic attitudes. Recent survey findings from Muslim-majority countries provide empirical evidence that Islamic beliefs do not lead to negative attitudes toward democracy. Survey evidence from Egypt, Kuwait, and Palestine demonstrates that neither Islamic piety nor support for political Islam has an impact on attitudes toward democracy (Tessler 2002). Similarly, frequency of mosque attendance and support for political Islam are not relevant in explaining attitudes toward democracy in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco (Tessler 2003). Survey evidence from Kuwait shows that preference for democracy actually increased from 1994 to 1998 (Meyer, Rizzo, and Ali 2007). Another study that builds on World Values Surveys (WVSs) argues that the cultural cleavage between Muslim societies and the West is not about democracy but about gender equality and sexual liberation (Norris and Inglehart 2003, 2004). Studies from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia, and Mali, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda in Sub-Saharan Africa conclude that neither Muslim denomination nor intensity of Islamic beliefs leads to negative evaluations of democracy (Anonymous 2002; Rose 2002). Furthermore, a study comparing attitudes toward democracy between Muslim and Eastern Orthodox populations finds that religion plays only a minor role in people's evaluations of democracy as an ideal (Hofmann 2004). Finally, survey evidence from Algeria, post-Saddam Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine reveals that support for secular or Islamic democracy is substantially higher than for secular or Islamic authoritarianism (Tessler and Gao 2005).

While existing studies contribute to scholarly knowledge of Muslim publics' perception of democracy, they leave several interesting questions unaddressed. In particular, the question of whether high levels of religiosity correspond to support for Islamic rule has not been thoroughly investigated. Do individual levels of Islamic religiosity foster espousal of Islamic ideology? This question is pertinent in understanding political developments in certain parts of the Muslim world given the strength and public appeal of Islamic movements. The answers to the question will help us in understanding in what ways Islam holds sway over public opinion. It is especially intriguing to investigate whether Islamic piety is associated with support for Islamic rule in Iran, ruled by a theocratic regime since 1979.

RELIGION AND GOVERNANCE IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC

The IRI is the only regime in the Muslim world that is directly ruled by the clergy. The justification for clerical rule derives from clerical status as the interpreters of the divine law and guiders of the religious community during the occultation of the 12th Imam of Shi'ism. The Iranian regime enshrines the principle of *vilayet-e faqih*, the rule of the jurist. The ultimate power lies in the hands of *faqih* who has veto power over all aspects of the political system. All legislation and bills have to be in accordance with Islam and are subject to veto by the Guardian Council (GC). Religious tests for office exist and all electoral candidates have to be approved by the GC (for an analysis of the Iranian power structure, see Buchta 2001). Neither *faqih* nor the GC is accountable to the public. To the rulers of the Islamic Republic, political obedience is a "religious duty." Political obedience entails absolute loyalty to the *vilayet-e faqih* and participation in regime-sponsored events (e.g., voting in elections).

However, the justification for clerical rule has two major problems. First, it does not have solid historical basis. Khomeini's theory of *vilayet-e faqih*, which was articulated in his Najaf seminars in 1970, represents a dramatic innovation in Shi'i political thought (Arjomand 1988; Momen 1985:195–97). In any case, it provides the blueprint for the clerical rule in Iran (Martin

2003). Second, the practice of clerical rule deviates from Khomeini's theory (Saffari 1993). The 1989 amendments gave priority to political qualifications of the *faqih* over his religious credentials and status in the clerical hierarchy. The *faqih* now claims legitimacy and power by his unwavering loyalty to the revolution and its leader and not by his religious knowledge. Yet, Khomeini explicitly stated in his Najaf lectures that the *faqih* must surpass all others in knowledge of religious law (Khomeini 1981:59). The amended Constitution of 1989 forsook that requirement probably because it became impossible to find a cleric embodying both supreme political and religious authority after Khomeini's death. Besides, Khomeini also declared that state interests (*maslahat*) have absolute priority over the application of religious law in cases of conflict between them (Tamadonfar 2001). Consequently, the consolidation of clerical power at the expense of Shi'i theology and hierarchy generated dissent among clerics excluded from the power structure (Kurzman 2001; Roy 1999). These clerics and lay intellectuals seriously and vocally question the legitimacy of clerical rule.

The ruling clergy opts for various methods to overcome their legitimacy problem deriving from the gap between the ideal of Islamic rule and the practical reality of governing the Islamic Republic. The clergy command vast patronage resources, have exclusive control over means of coercion, and veto power over popularly elected representatives (for instance, see Alamdari 2005; Chehabi 2001). The beneficiaries of these networks have vested interests in the continuation of the prevailing political system. They have no qualms in accusing their opponents of betraying the ideals of the revolution and Islam. The regime constantly refers to Islamic symbols, uses Islamic discourse, and appeals to the public's religious sentiments to justify the current distribution of power and the structure of state institutions. In this political context, it is most interesting to explore whether religious Iranians are receptive to the Islamic ideology propagated by the clerical ruling group. Do they come to accept the ideals of the Islamic rule as originally developed by Khomeini despite the pragmatic nature of the Islamic Republic?

TEHRAN SURVEY

The data for our analysis come from a public opinion survey conducted in Tehran. Tehran is the capital and the most populous city, the economic heart, and the cultural and social hub of Iran. It is home to people with wide-ranging socioeconomic backgrounds and diverse political orientations. The survey data make it possible to have a detailed analysis of whether religious beliefs are associated with a political ideology that justifies clerical involvement in politics, supremacy of Islamic law, and state enforcement of Islamic norms. All stages of the survey administration went smoothly, without any problem with state officials. The survey was carried out under the auspices of the University of Tehran in August 2003. The University of Tehran team that supervised the survey is experienced in public opinion polling research in Iran and occasionally conducts similar studies. The only caveat was that certain topics were avoided because of their politically sensitive nature. For instance, questions regarding the endorsement of the *vilayet-e faqih* were omitted from the final questionnaire. Despite that, the questionnaire consists of a wide range of questions, including evaluations of the state and its performance. The response rate was reasonably high for most of the questions and individual responses were consistent. The survey's sample is representative of the population living under the jurisdiction of the Tehran municipality.

The survey has a sample of 412 respondents. It is based on multistage area probability sampling. The municipality of Tehran—having a population of approximately 9 million according to official census figures—was divided into five zones reflecting different levels of socioeconomic development based on the available official statistics. Following the selection of primary sampling units (PSU), the number of interviews in each unit was determined according to their relative population. Then, housing units were randomly chosen. Respondents within households were also randomly selected. Interviewers, who were hired and specifically trained by academic personnel of the University of Tehran, conducted face-to-face interviews with a single individual at each

household. Interviewers and respondents were matched in terms of gender. The response rate for the survey was 93 percent. All survey data were electronically recorded and subjected to controls for accuracy. English translations of the questions that are used in this article are provided in the Appendix.

It can be argued that survey findings would be unreliable in Iran given the undemocratic nature of the ruling regime. Citizens may falsify their preferences or be afraid to speak their mind to strangers. Yet, while Iran is not a democracy, it is not a police state either. Unlike Iraq under Saddam Hussein or Syria under the Assads, citizens openly express their criticism of the ruling regime in daily conversations. The regime has more ability to curtail freedom of the press than to instill constant fear in citizens. Furthermore, local organizations, including the faculty of the University of Tehran, regularly conduct public opinion polls on a range of social and cultural subjects. Since 2000, several foreign organizations have sponsored nationwide surveys in Iran including the WVS, the Gallup organization, and the WorldPublicOpinion.org in collaboration with the Search for Common Ground.¹ In addition, results from this Tehran survey on religious values and practices are consistent with the WVS conducted in Tehran on related topics. Consequently, there are no reasons to expect that Tehran respondents were fearful or reluctant to reveal their true preferences when answering the survey questions. In fact, many respondents turned out to be highly critical of the current political system.

The sample differs from the official demographic statistics in two respects. (1) Males are overrepresented in the sample, as almost two-thirds of the all respondents are men. This reflects the fact that especially in households with a traditional family structure surveys were conducted with the head of the family, who tended to be male. (2) While age distribution looks reasonably representative of the population—55 percent of the respondents being younger than 36 years²—people with higher education are slightly overrepresented. People with elementary education or less comprise one-third of the sample. The following analyses were checked to see if overrepresentations of men and the well educated bias the results.

BEING PIOUS UNDER A THEOCRACY

The statistical analysis of the survey data primarily addresses the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: *Higher levels of religiosity are significantly and positively associated with the support for Islamic rule among the citizens of Tehran.*

Hypothesis 2: *Controlling for levels of religiosity, Tehran residents who are politically satisfied are more likely to espouse Islamic rule than the politically dissatisfied residents.*

Dependent Variable: Islamic Rule

The conceptualization of religion as political ideology poses unique challenges. While the conceptual distinction between religion as culture and ideology is valuable, the linkages between the two should be specified for a better grasp of sociopolitical roles of religion (Williams 1996). The vast literature on ideology provides dozens of different definitions and little consensus (Gerring 1997). In a very basic sense, an ideology entails a high degree of consistency (Converse 1964) among a set of ideas about how a good society *ought to be*. Moreover, these ideas are to a certain extent crystallized and not subject to rapid changes (Sartori 1969). Here, the focus is on whether religious beliefs are intermingled with some well-established ideas about how politics *ought to be*. This question becomes particularly relevant in Iran where the ruling regime articulates an Islamic ideology.

The dependent variable of the analysis, Islamic ideology, is based on three interrelated dimensions: (a) regulation of politics according to *Shari'a*, (b) clerical involvement in politics, and (c) social enforcement of Islamic laws by the state. This conceptualization closely resembles

the ideological foundation of the theocratic regime in Iran as originally formulated by Khomeini. Hence, this variable measures public support for Islamic rule in Iran. The first dimension of variable is related to the supremacy of *Shari'a*. Respondents are asked if they think politics, foreign affairs, commerce, and art should be regulated according to Islamic law. Factor analysis reveals that these four items tend to measure a unique dimension. The Cronbach's alpha score that is used as an index of reliability has a score of 0.81. A composite index of *Shari'a* rule is constructed by using these items. The second dimension focuses on attitudes on the political role of clerics. Despite the opposition of some clerics against clerical political involvement, clerical rule has remained the most distinctive aspect of the Islamic Republic. To test citizens' perceptions of clerics' political role, the survey asked respondents if the current influence enjoyed by the religious leaders is good for the society.³ The third dimension is composed of the question of whether the state should enforce Islamic principles over social interactions. Factor analysis shows that these three indicators cluster together and measure the same underlying concept—Islamic rule. A composite variable created using these components has an alpha score of 0.60.

Religiosity

Following a long-established tradition in survey studies of religious values (Glock and Stark 1965), we conceptualize religiosity as having multiple dimensions. The first indicator of religiosity focuses on its subjective aspects. Respondents were asked about the importance of religion in their lives, and how pious they are. Both questions were answered on a scale from 1 to 10. They measure a single dimension of religiosity and have an alpha score of 0.81. A composite variable from these two questions is our measure of subjective levels of religiosity.

Two questions identified participatory aspects of religiosity. Previous research has shown that mosque attendance is lower under the Islamic Republic than under the Pahlavi monarchy, while religiosity levels remain the same (Kazemipur and Rezaei 2003). In fact, WVSs in Muslim-majority countries reveal that Iran has the lowest rate of religious attendance among Muslim countries without a communist past. Citizens of Iran, where the state is heavily involved in the regulation of religion, participate in religious services much less frequently than do citizens of Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Pakistan, where there is less state regulation of religion. Furthermore, high levels of religiosity do not lead to high levels of participation in Friday congregational prayers. Citizens who frequently participate in Friday prayers in Tehran exhibit lower levels of self-declared religiosity than citizens who do not participate at all. Participation in prayers is strongly and positively correlated with political satisfaction. In fact, one can argue that such participation is transformed into a political act. Consistent with the supply-side theory of religion, state control of religious gatherings translates into low levels of popular participation (Tezcur, Azadarmaki, and Bahar 2006). Along similar lines, another study shows that relatively low levels of religiosity and religious attendance in Saudi Arabia, in comparison to Jordan and Egypt, are caused by higher levels of state regulation of religious affairs in the former (Moaddel 2006).

These findings show that attendance at Friday prayers has potentially gained a new meaning among Iranian citizens because of the politicization of religion under theocratic rule. Attendance at these prayers expresses loyalty to Islamic rule. In contrast, the frequency of visiting Mashhad (the site of the shrine of Imam Reza, the eighth Imam of Shi'i lineage, located about 850 km east of Tehran) for religious purposes has no comparable political meanings. Thus, we include the frequency of visiting Mashhad in the analysis as an indicator of religious participation that is not contaminated with political motivations. Consequently, we anticipate that people attending Friday prayers and visiting Mashhad for religious purposes are more likely to support Islamic rule.

Demographic Variables

Demographic characteristics might have some influence in shaping respondents' support for Islamic rule. There are no *a priori* reasons to expect men to be more supportive of the Islamic rule than women. Unlike gender, age might be an important factor that differentiates between people in their degree of support for Islamic rule. Younger generations are generally thought to be restless and most discontented with the prevailing economic and social conditions in Iran. Yet, this discontent might not be associated with a reaction against Islamic rule. Younger generations might be resentful toward the ruling groups without being critical of the Islamic character of politics. The victory of the radical Mahmood Ahmedinejad in the June 2005 presidential elections supports this possibility. Ahmedinejad presented himself to the public as an outsider to the corrupt and inefficient political elites and ran an electoral campaign on a highly populist platform. At the same time, he pledged his unwavering loyalty to the Islamic system and promised to revitalize the egalitarian ideals of the revolution. In contrast, his main opponent, Hashemi Rafsanjani, who ran as the candidate of moderates in the second round, was the most visible public figure of the regime after the death of Khomeini. He was the president from 1989 to 1997. Many Iranians identified him with nepotism and liberal economic policies that led to increasing income disparity. Ahmedinejad's victory over Rafsanjani can be read as an indicator of public discontent with previous national governments but not with the fundamental principles of Islamic rule.

The relationship between education levels and support for Islamic rule is likely not to be linear. For many well-educated people in the Muslim world, Islamic rule does not appear less sophisticated and attractive than liberal democracy. In Iran, students are subject to years of indoctrination that praises the Islamic nature of the political system. Predominant political institutions in the country inculcate a culture of unquestioning loyalty to the office of *faqih*—the most powerful political institution in the country. Consequently, less-educated citizens of Tehran may not be more supportive of the Islamic rule than more educated ones. In addition to the institutions of regular education, religious seminaries occupy a central role in Iranian social life. As mentioned previously, parts of the clergy are highly critical of the regime. They argue that the direct clerical involvement in politics undermines the social respectability of the clergy, as all political problems are blamed on the ruling clerical class. Moreover, they reason that extensive politicization of Islam corrupts religious sentiments. Hence, people with diplomas from religious institutions are not expected to be more supportive of Islamic rule. Finally, we expect that citizens who self-identify with the lower classes are more supportive of the Islamic ideology than ones who have higher evaluations of their social standing. This is because piety and class identification may be strongly correlated. Besides, the Iranian Revolution, the only successful mass revolt mobilized by a religiously radical ideology in recent times, was made in the name of *mostazafin*, the wretched of society (Abrahamian 1993). Historically, Islamism has mobilized the working poor and the lower-middle classes who are jealous of the social status enjoyed by the more established middle- and upper-income classes (Kepel 2002).

Social and Political Attitudes

In addition to these religious and demographic variables, a set of political and social attitudes are included in the analysis to see if they have any impact on the likelihood of espousing Islamic rule. These variables are gender equality and comparisons of Iran with the West in respect to their political systems. Inevitably, the questions used to measure these culturally bounded variables vary from one context to another. As a litmus test of gender equality in Iranian social life, we use the question of political participation of women. The opposition to women's participation in politics should be positively correlated with the support for Islamic rule. Higher levels of piety may translate into negative views of women's political participation. Moreover, recent studies argue

that women are more likely to be subordinated in Muslim societies (Fish 2002). Respondents were also asked to compare contemporary Iran with the West with respect to their political systems. Following Bernard Lewis's characterization of Muslim responses to the rise of the West (Lewis 1993), we expect that people who evaluate the Iranian political system to be superior to the West are the ones who support Islamic rule. They are likely to be more pious and believe that Islamic rule is capable of providing solutions to the problems of modern age.

Another relationship that is theoretically relevant is whether the state's responsiveness to popular demands influences people's support for Islamic rule. Specifically, do low levels of political satisfaction translate into resentment toward Islamic rule? People might either oppose the Islamic rule because they hold it responsible for bad governance, or perceive government as incompetent because they are against Islamic rule. These possibilities are elaborated below. Three questions are selected to measure attitudes that reflect political satisfaction. Respondents are asked if the political system is responsive to their needs, if they consider the state successful in accomplishing the goals that are deemed important by citizens, and how often they are unfairly treated by state authorities. The first two questions have an acceptable alpha score of 0.62, and are used as a composite variable. The question on unfair state treatment is included in the analysis as a separate variable.

An Overview of Religiosity and Political Attitudes Among Tehranis

Table 1 provides the distribution of responses to a set of questions on religiosity and political attitudes. First, a vast majority of the respondents have very strong religious beliefs. Around 60 percent perceive religion to be very important in their lives and more than 80 percent consider

TABLE 1
SELECTED INDICATORS OF RELIGIOSITY AMONG THE TEHRANIS (ALL
VALUES IN PERCENTAGES)

Importance of religion*	Very important 60	Important 25	Not very important 13	No answer 2
How pious*	Very pious 41	Pious 41	Not very pious 16	No answer 2
Self-identification	Shi'a 51	Iranian 26	Muslim 19	Other 4
Belief in afterlife	Yes 86	No 8	Not Sure 6	
Attendance at Friday prayers	More than once a month 16	Once a month 6	Very rarely 35	Never 38
Visiting Mashhad	At least once a year 41	Once in few years 42	Only once 12	Never 5
Islamic regulation of society	Very important 54	Somehow important 25	Not important 8	Don't know 13

Note: *Very important and very pious category included respondents who choose 10 from a scale of 1 to 10. Important and pious categories include values from 5 to 9, and not very important and not very pious categories include answers from 1 to 4. Percentages may not add up to 100 because of missing answers.

TABLE 2
POLITICAL ATTITUDES AMONG TEHRANIS (ALL VALUES IN PERCENTAGES)

	Very responsive	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
How responsive is the political system	9	33	32	21
How successful is state	Mostly successful	Has mixed record	Completely fails	Don't know
	15	32	45	8
Unfair treatment by state	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Always
	15	15	38	30
Is democracy followed in Iran	Yes	No	Don't know	
	33	50	17	
Most important political issue	Cost of life	Internal subversive elements	Foreign threats	Lack of democracy/freedom
	37	17	16	15

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 because of missing answers.

themselves to be pious or very pious. Similarly, less than 10 percent do not believe in afterlife. A majority identify themselves as Shi'a before anything else. Meanwhile, respondents report low level of attendance at Friday prayers. Only 16 percent attend Friday prayers at least once a month and nearly 40 percent have never been to Friday prayers. Men are not more likely than women to attend Friday prayers. In contrast, Tehranis are fond of visiting the shrine of Imam Reza—the eighth Imam of Shi'i lineage—in Mashhad. Around 43 percent of the respondents claim that they travel to Mashhad for purposes of visiting the shrine of Imam Reza at least once a year. Finally, a majority of respondents agree that it is very important for the state to regulate social life according to Islamic laws. Only 8 percent think that state enforcement of Islamic laws is unimportant.

Table 2 reports selected measures of political attitudes. More than a majority of respondents describe the political system as either rarely or never responsive to their needs. Similarly, around 45 percent think that the state completely fails to address citizens' demands.⁴ Furthermore, almost 70 percent believe that they are occasionally mistreated by the state. Finally, only one-third of respondents argue that democratic principles are followed in contemporary Iran. Meanwhile, the WVS data show that a majority of Iranians have positive evaluations of democratic procedures and ideals. In that survey, around 69 percent of the respondents either strongly agree or agree with the statement, "democracy may have its own problems but it is better than its alternatives."

Statistical Analysis

The results of the multivariate regression analysis are presented in Table 3. Model 1 shows the unstandardized coefficients of each variable and their *t* scores. None of the demographic variables turns out to be significant. Even if the age variable coefficient is positive, it is far from being significant. Older generations are not more likely to espouse Islamic rule than younger generations. Surprisingly, neither class identification nor type and level of education have any influence on whether respondents support Islamic rule.

The coefficient for the religiosity variable is positive and statistically significantly different than zero, with *p*-values less than 0.001. That means higher levels of religiosity are associated with higher levels of support for Islamic rule. Likewise, the more frequently a respondent attends Friday prayers, the higher the probability that s/he favors Islamic rule. The coefficient for the

TABLE 3
MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE
SUPPORT FOR THE ISLAMIC RULE

	Model 1	Interactive Model	Multiple Imputation Model
Gender	-0.11 (-1.31)	-0.08 (-0.91)	-0.09 (-1.10)
Age	0.003 (0.12)	-0.006 (-0.22)	0.05 (2.06)*
Religious education	-0.14 (-1.33)	-0.20 (-1.78)	-0.14 (-1.51)
Secular education	-0.024 (-0.71)	-0.03 (-1.04)	-0.01 (-0.36)
Class identification	-0.04 (-.094)	-0.5 (-1.15)	-0.03 (-0.70)
Religiosity	0.07 (4.35)***	0.17 (3.72)***	0.20 (4.6)***
Attendance at Friday prayers	0.21 (4.70)***	0.18 (4.08)***	0.13 (3.1)**
Pilgrimage to Mashhad	0.09 (2.23)*	0.07 (1.75)	0.6 (1.59)
Politics and women	-0.09 (-1.11)	-0.11 (-1.36)	-0.21 (-2.05)
Politics and West	-0.12 (-2.07)*	-0.11 (-1.89)	-0.11 (-1.6)
Political satisfaction	0.08 (1.23)	0.42 (2.68)**	0.46 (3.3)**
State unfairness	0.062 (1.57)	0.08 (1.98)*	0.04 (1.3)
Religiosity * Pol. satis.		-0.04 (-2.38)*	-0.05 (-2.87)**
Adjusted R^2	0.29	0.30	Five dif. models [0.26 to 0.28]
Sample size	270	270	412

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Note: Table shows unstandardized coefficients and gives t -statistics in parentheses.

frequency of visiting Mashhad variable is also positive and statistically significantly different than zero, with p -values less than 0.05. These findings do not falsify the Hypothesis 1—*Shi'i Islamic beliefs are closely associated with endorsements of Islamic rule in Tehran*.

The disapproval of women's involvement in politics does not increase the likelihood of supporting Islamic rule. Respondents who are not favorable to women's participation in politics are not necessarily the ones who perceive Islamic rule positively. This is not surprising as Iranian women have achieved significant progress since 1979 (Keddie 2003). Moreover, Iranians are much more supportive of women's public participation than the citizens of Egypt and Jordan (Moaddel and Azadarmaki 2003). Consistent with the expectation, respondents who think that the Iranian political system is superior to the West are more likely to espouse Islamic rule.

Variables that measure citizens' political satisfaction have statistically insignificant coefficients. Levels of political satisfaction appear irrelevant to the likelihood of supporting Islamic rule. However, the effects of religiosity on the support for Islamic rule might be mediated or conditioned by political satisfaction. The latter might change the magnitude of the positive relationship between religious beliefs and Islamic rule. Religious people might be more likely to endorse Islamic rule only when they are politically satisfied. Increasing levels of political dissatisfaction might undermine the linkages between Shi'i Islamic beliefs and endorsement of clerical rule, preference for Islamic law, and state enforcement of Islamic norms.

The second model includes an interactive term based on religiosity and political satisfaction to address this theoretical concern. The multicollinearity, high correlation among the interactive term and two variables that are used to obtain it, in this model is relatively high. While the variance inflation factor (VIF) is 3.8 on average, it is 13.3 for the interactive term, and 12.2 for the religiosity variable. This induces large standard error estimates, reflecting greater uncertainty. However, a theoretically misspecified model will result in inefficient and biased estimates. Thus, an interactive model that addresses the main theoretical concerns of this article is preferable to a noninteractive model that leaves a theoretically relevant question unanswered.⁵ The interactive term stands for the joint effects of religiosity and political satisfaction on Islamic rule. The results are presented in

the third column of Table 3. The fitted model slightly improves, and adjusted R^2 values rise to 0.30. The coefficients of all demographic variables remain insignificant. While the coefficients of both the religiosity and the attendance at Friday prayer variables continue to be significant and positive, the coefficient of the Mashhad variable ceases to be significant at $p < 0.05$. The most outstanding difference between the two models emerges in the coefficients of the political attitudes and the state unfairness variables. Both coefficients are now positive and significant. The counterintuitive result is the coefficient of the interactive variable, which turns out to be significant with p -values less than 0.05, but negative. This finding falsifies Hypothesis 2, which states that *highly religious people are supportive of the Islamic rule only if they are satisfied with governmental performance*. On the contrary, increasing levels of political satisfaction decrease the magnitude of the positive relationship between religiosity and support for Islamic rule. Low levels of political satisfaction do not make pious Shi'ite citizens of Tehran less supportive of Islamic rule.

Although the survey was conducted with 412 respondents, both models are based on only 270 observations. Some questions have relatively high nonresponse rates. For instance, 46 people did not report any class identification, and 64 people did not respond to the question on women's participation in politics. Nonresponses do not appear to follow a pattern (i.e., people who fail to answer are not necessarily the ones who have high levels of political dissatisfaction). Yet, many observations are lost because of listwise deletion of missing data. The diminishing size of the sample may result in the biased and skewed results. Furthermore, some of the variables that appear insignificant may be significant and *vice versa*. We used the technique of multiple imputation to recover the lost observations (King et al. 2001). "Multiple imputation" is a technique for predicting missing data by using theoretically relevant nonmissing data in the sample. Different from the simple imputation technique, multiple imputation produces multiple observations for each missing observation that reflects uncertainty. Here, five values are generated for each missing observation based on the available data.

Table 3 also compares the full model with the model produced through using multiple imputation. The multiple imputation results are obtained through the Amelia software (Honaker et al. 2001). The analysis using imputed sample produces smaller standard errors and recovers all the missing observations. The coefficients of the religiosity, Friday prayers, political satisfaction, and interactive variables continue to be highly significant in the third model. Two noticeable differences between the third and the second models exist. First, the coefficient of the age variable is positive and statistically significantly different from zero, with p -values lower than 0.05. Older generations are more likely to be supportive of Islamic rule than younger generations. Second, the coefficient of the state unfairness variable is no longer significant.

DISCUSSION

The findings from the Tehran survey lead to two conclusions. First, subjective religiosity is positively correlated with a religious-political worldview that favors clerical rule, supremacy of *Shari'a*, and state enforcement of Islamic norms. Religious people in Tehran tend to have a distinctively Islamic understanding of politics compared to less and nonreligious people. Shi'ism as practiced in Tehran is associated with a coherent and consistent Islamic political worldview. More interestingly, this linkage between religiosity and Islamic rule does not only persist among politically satisfied citizens. Religious citizens in Tehran make a distinction between the general principles of Islamic rule and the specific national government. They do not necessarily attend Friday congregations, used by the government for propaganda purposes. At the same time, their support for Islamic rule seems to be anchored in their religious beliefs rather than being contingent on governmental performance. They can be called "politically dissatisfied Islamists."

In Iran, where the regime equates political obedience with religious duty, public religiosity is inevitably infused with political meanings. The historical evolution of Shi'ism and the pervasive

legacy of the revolution might be responsible for this infusion. This reinterpretation of Shi'ism during the revolution was not only instrumental in mobilizing the Iranian people against the Pahlavi monarchy, but it also has provided an ideological foundation to the Islamic regime that emerged from the revolution (for the IRI's treatment of non-Muslim minorities, see Sanasarian 2006). The success of the revolution led to the formation of a close symbiosis between popular religious beliefs and Islamic rule. While Shi'i beliefs served as a critical resource for the opposition against the perceived tyrannical monarchical regime, they have become a potent force that demands unquestioned political obedience under the Islamic Republic. The revolution, and the regime it created, has transformed what Shi'ism means to ordinary religious Iranians. Most remarkably, this ideological worldview appears to be highly resilient and survives among pious Iranians despite widespread political dissatisfaction. In this sense, Shi'ism in Iran has evolved from a "world shaking" force into a "world legitimating" force (Billings and Scott 1994).

Meanwhile, these findings should not be taken as evidence for religious citizens being politically acquiescent and passive. As indicated above, they seem to make a critical distinction between the ideals of Islamic rule articulated by Khomeini and actual practices of the current governance. In this regard, pious Tehranis are not necessarily the ones who attend state-sponsored Friday prayers. Consequently, there are no *a priori* reasons to expect that religious Iranians are less likely to support reformers than less or nonreligious citizens. In fact, the central strategy of the reform movement (*jebhe-ye eslahat*) led by the ex-president Mohammed Khatami, who is a cleric, was to generate a democratic and relatively liberal interpretation of the Islamic revolution and its ideals. For him and his followers, the principles of freedom of expression and political pluralism can be perfectly compatible with Islamic rule. Khatami was fully aware that the majority of Iranian citizens is deeply pious and tailored his political discourse accordingly. He identified the greatest achievement of the revolution as its democratic spirit. His call for greater political freedom and openness was cast in a religious language and had strong appeal among religious Iranians.⁶ In this sense, religious Tehranis' espousal of Islamic rule does not necessarily preclude their acceptance of democratic and even liberal values.

Besides, the findings of the Tehran survey indicate that popular religion is conditioned by the prevailing political conditions and historical circumstances. Like all major religions, Shi'i Islam's teachings and norms have been subject to competing interpretations under different historical conditions (Silberman, Higgins, and Dweck 2005). The ideal of Islamic rule has emerged as the predominant religious-political discourse in Iran in the wake of victory of the revolutionary struggle. Yet, Shi'ism has led to different political ideals in other contexts. In the post-Saddam era in Iraq, the Shi'i clerics have emerged as major political players. However, the notion of clerical rule is currently not the predominant Iraq political discourse. The most venerable religious figure in contemporary Iraq, Ayatollah Sistani, refrains from promoting clerical rule in the post-Saddam era. Similarly, Shi'i beliefs do not necessarily lead to support for clerical rule in Lebanon despite the popularity of Hezbollah. Studies that integrate cross-national surveys with comparative historical analyses will lead to a more refined understanding of the conditions under which Islamic beliefs are associated with support for Islamic rule.

Finally, this article raises several questions that can be addressed by ethnographic studies that involve open-ended interviews and focus groups. Particularly interesting is the nature of the association between Islamic beliefs and ideology. What are the causal dynamics characterizing the linkages between religious beliefs and ideology? Which aspects of Shi'i beliefs and rituals in Iran are crucial to the support for Islamic rule?

NOTES

1. World Values Surveys are available at www.worldvaluessurveys.org.
2. The minimum voting age was 15 in Iran in 2003, so the survey was conducted with individuals who were 15 and older.

3. Ideally, respondents should be asked if they approve the institution of *faqih*. However, this question cannot be asked in a public survey given its sensitivity.
4. In the survey, this question follows a set of question asking respondent about their opinion of the primary purposes of the state. In this sense, when the respondents claim that the state fails they are referring to their previous answers. The success of the state is not evaluated by any external criteria but by the goals declared important by the respondents.
5. The model including an interactive variable highly benefits from Franzese and Kam (2007).
6. For examples of Khatami's political discourse, see the public speech he delivered on the 15th anniversary of the passing of Khomeini on May 27, 2004. Also informative is Milani (2001).

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APPENDIX

Tehran Survey Questions Used in the Analyses

Religious Values and Behaviors

1. How do you identify yourself?
Shi'a, Muslim, Iranian, Azeri, Kurd, Arab, Other.
2. Do you believe in afterlife?
3. How important is religion in your life? Please use this scale of 1 to 10 to indicate—10 means very.
4. On a scale of 1 to 10 piety, where do you place yourself?
5. How often do you attend the Friday Prayers?
6. How often do you make a trip to Mashhad to visit the Holy Shrine of Imam Reza?

Political Attitudes

1. Have you ever been subjected to an unfair treatment by state officials or institutions?
2. On the whole would you say the political system in this country is responsive or is not responsive to your needs?
3. Do you think principles of democracy are followed in this country?
4. Do you think the state is successful in achieving the goals you have mentioned? (This question follows a question asking respondents to indicate how important each of these issues is for the state: increasing the income level of its citizens, keeping order, making sure that all citizens are moral and religious, and regulating the society according to Islamic laws.)

5. What is the most important political issue in Iran nowadays?

Foreign threats to national security, subversion action by internal forces, lack of democracy, cost of life, restrictions on freedom, other.

Islamic Rule

1. Do you think the following affairs should be regulated by the *Shari' a*?
Political governance, Commercial affairs, Family relations, Punishment of criminals, Entertainment, Art
2. Do you think the current influence of religious leaders in politics is good for society?
3. Which of the statements do you agree with?
 - a) People should be free to choose whether they want to live according to Islam.
 - b) State should make sure that people live according to Islam.
 - c) State should encourage Islamic life but not through coercion.

Social Orientations

1. People sometimes describe themselves as belonging to the working class, the middle class, or the upper or lower class. How would you describe yourself?
2. Do you think politics of Iran is superior to, inferior to, or at equal standing with the Western civilization?
3. Do you think women can be involved in politics?