What’s the matter with Cairo? Religion, Class, and Elections After the Arab Spring

Tarek Masoud

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Scholars dating back to Lipset and Rokkan (1967) have argued that the structure of a country’s party system is somehow reflective of the fundamental lines of conflict over values in that society. For example, the rise of socialist parties is thought to reflect underlying class cleavages (Hechter 2004); the emergence of confessional parties is thought to reflect the salience of sectarian identities (Kalyvas 1996); and the rise of Green parties in the latter half of the twentieth century is said to reflect the newfound importance of concerns over the environment (Kitzchelt 1989). Scholars have of course problematized this account. They have asked, for example, whether social cleavages are exogenous to parties, or are created and reinforced by them (Przeworski and Sprague 1986; Bartolini 2007). And they have investigated the conditions under which parties “evolve” from their roots as ideologically committed warriors on one side of a particular social cleavage to become “catch-all” parties, appealing beyond the narrow sectional interests in which those parties were incubated (Kircheimer 1966). But what binds all of these accounts is their assumption that party systems are—if only at their moments of formation—eloquent of the structure of mass opinion in a given society.

Surveying recent electoral results from the Arab world, scholars in this mode might be forgiven for concluding that mass opinion in the Arab world is structured around the question of religion’s role in public life. After that season of revolt known as the Arab Spring, elections that had once reliably generated comfortable majorities for ruling parties such as Tunisia’s Democratic Constitutional Rally (al-Tajammu‘ al-Dustūrī al-Dimuqrāṭī) and Egypt’s National Democratic Party (al-Hizb al-Waṭanī al-Dimuqrāṭī) seemed now to do the same for parties promising to establish Islamic law or sharī‘a. In Tunisia, an Islamist party called the Renaissance Movement Party (Hizb Ḥarakat al-Nahda) captured 40 percent of the vote in that country’s October 2011 constituent assembly elections. In Egypt, two Islamist political parties, the Freedom and Justice Party (Hizb al-Hurriyah wa al-‘Adālah)—the political arm of the eighty-five year old Society of Muslim Brothers (Jama‘at al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn)—and an even more conservative, Salafist newcomer called the Party of Light (Ḥizb al-Nūr), won more than two-thirds of the seats in parliament, before the body was dissolved by the country’s highest court. And in June 2012, the Muslim Brotherhood’s Mohamed Morsi won Egypt’s presidency (al-
though that victory, too, was eventually abrogated). And in the July 2012 elections to Libya’s General National Congress (al-Mu ‘tamar al-Waṭanī al-‘Ām), Islamists from the Muslim Brotherhood- Justice and Construction (Ḥizb al-‘Adalah wa al-Binā’) as well as several smaller Salafist parties captured sixty-one of two-hundred seats, only three seats behind the National Forces Alliance, a loose collection of Libyan establishment figures and tribal notables.¹

Nor are political Islam’s recent electoral gains restricted to those polities that managed to unseat their strongmen and ruling parties. In Morocco, the Party of Justice and Development (Ḥizb al-‘Adalah wa al-Tanmiya), which claims an “Islamic frame of reference” (marja ‘īyya Islāmiyya), won more than a quarter of legislative seats in November 2011 and now leads the country’s government. In Kuwait, Islamists of various ideological stripes and organizational affiliations, ranging from the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Islamic Constitutional Movement (al-Ḥarakah al-Dustūriya al-Islāmiyya) to the ultra-Orthodox Islamic Salafi Alliance (al-Taḥāluf al-Islāmī al-Salafi), to various ideologically-congenial independents, won a majority in the February 2012 elections for the 50-seat Chamber of Deputies. Viewed through the lens of literatures on parties and cleavages, it is easy to interpret these results as indicative of religion’s centrality to the politics of these Muslim countries, and of the subordination of all other cleavages—in particular, class—to the religious one.

The scholarship on political Islam, however, offers us alternative ways of looking at these outcomes, and of interpreting the configuration of party systems. To be sure, a prominent strand of scholarship on Islamist parties and their electoral performance is consistent with the conventional wisdom that party systems reflect underlying social cleavages. Scholars in this vein attribute the ascent of Islamist parties to a popular desire for shari‘a, and attempt to discern the sources of this desire. Some locate it in the teachings of Islam (Lewis 1996), others in the emotional resonance of religious rhetoric and symbols (Singerman 2004; Wickham 2003), the hegemony of the West (Jamal 2012), and the failures of secular ideologies (Esposito 2000), among other potential sources. An alternative strand of scholarship, however, attributes the success of Islamist parties to strategic, tactical, or organizational advantages enjoyed by Islamist parties over their non-religious rivals. For example, Islamists have been variously thought to dominate elections due to their provision of social services (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob 1999; Wedeen 2003; Cammett and Issar 2010), their superior discipline and cohesion (Masoud 2008; Trager 2011), or the authoritarian state’s relative inability to suppress religious forms of collective action (Kuran 1998), among other mechanisms. This view is not necessarily at odds with the view that party systems are congruent with mass preferences, however. Grateful voters who receive social services may come to believe that Islam is the solution; Islamist discipline may better enable them to implant their beliefs in receptive minds; and the absence of state repression against forms of religious life

may create havens for the inculcation of Islamist beliefs.²

Nonetheless, this emphasis on the role of organizational factors in generating the Islamist ascent necessarily admits of the possibility that this ascent neither reflects nor generates the political salience of religion. Islamists might enjoy an organizational advantage, and this advantage may enable them to win votes, but it may do so in ways that do not bind hearts and minds to some broader religious project. Social service provision may be nothing more than a form of vote-buying (Stokes 2005; Blaydes 2010), or it might simply provide Islamists with opportunities to speak to voters of their preferences over policy domains (such as the economy, redistribution, and the welfare state) that are orthogonal to the religiously-inflected moral questions that are thought to be Islamists’ bread and butter.

This article attempts to adjudicate among these arguments. It aims not just to deepen our understanding of the phenomenon of political Islam, but to situate this inquiry within the broader study of political parties and social cleavages. It begins from the premise that the scholarship on Islamism has much to teach us about how parties relate to mass preferences. Drawing primarily on individual-level and aggregate data drawn from Egypt during the last two years of that country’s halting transition from authoritarianism, it makes two arguments: first, that economic, not religious, concerns drove much of the Islamist vote in Egypt’s post-Mubarak elections. Though class-based parties did poorly in Egypt’s elections, it was not because Egyptians did not care about class or the economy. Second, I argue that Islamists were the beneficiaries of the economic vote due to their embeddedness in the dense networks of religious institutions, such as mosques and Islamic charitable societies, that are a defining feature of collective life in the Muslim world. Specifically, I argue that these networks advantage Islamists not because they condition voters to think in a religious mode, but because they offer Islamists channels for speaking to voters about problems, and solutions to those problems, that are decidedly worldly. Mosques, charities, and religious associations may create Islamist voters, but they do not create Islamists.

In what follows, I first review the principal explanations for the electoral success of Islamist parties, situating that literature within the broader debate on political parties and mass preferences. Then, using data from a nationally-representative survey of Egyptians conducted in proximity to that country’s first post-Mubarak parliamentary elections, I show that there is strong evidence against a religious understanding of Islamist electoral dominance. Instead, I argue that the data shows that people voted for Islamists mainly because they thought those parties would be better stewards of the economy. Then, I use the survey data to explain why voters believed this, demonstrating that Islamists’ were able to use networks of religious service provision to communicate its proximity to voters on economic concerns. Finally, I test these hypotheses using aggregate data from Egypt’s 2011-2012 parliamentary and presidential elections, and Tunisia’s October 2011 constituent assem-

²These narratives are still distinguished from earlier theories of Islamism in that they view the salience of religion as a consequence of the exertions of Islamist parties, rather than the exogenously-produced outcome of broader social process.
bly elections. I argue that temporal variation in the Islamist vote share undermines an understanding of Islamist victories rooted in mass preferences for religious politics, while within-country spatial variation in voting for Islamists is consistent with an account emphasizing the relative importance of parties’ opportunities for communicating economic policy offers to voters.

I conclude this article by examining two important implications of this argument. The first is for the study of political parties and cleavages generally. I argue that our inability to attribute Egyptian voting behavior to grand social cleavages suggests that we should problematize settled accounts of the genesis of now-established party systems. Instead of reading from party systems the salience of fundamental conflict between, for example, church and state, capital and labor, or center and periphery, we should attend to the role of parties’ organizational resources in determining their ability to mobilize voters and shaping the party system. The second important implication of this argument is for our understanding of the failure of Egypt’s democratic experiment in the summer of 2013, when mass protests against the first freely-elected president of the country culminated in a military coup. I argue that the factors that made the Muslim Brotherhood electorally successful also virtually guaranteed that its opponents would seek extra-institutional means of ousting them.

1 Existing Explanations of Islamist Success

The simplest explanation for the dominance of Islamists in post-revolutionary Egypt is that Islamists win because Muslims want what they are selling. Scholars such as Bernard Lewis (1996, 61) and Ernest Gellner (1991) have contended that Islam conditions its followers to demand theocracy, rendering the appearance of religious cleavages, and the dominance of religious parties, something of a fait accompli. Such accounts have long been criticized as essentializing (Said, 1978; al Azm, 1997), and later generations of scholars, while continuing to ascribe Islamist party success to the spread of “Islamist” preferences in society, explain those preferences with reference to historical or socio-economic processes rather than immutable qualities of the faith.

For example, for some scholars, political Islam is a function of economic underdevelopment—specifically, of the cognitive habits that poverty and immiseration engender. The most prominent of these is the so-called “secularization thesis,” which holds that the political salience of religion is inversely related to prosperity (Norris and Inglehart, 2011). Weber (1946) argued that development—the term he used was “modernity”—was instrumental in changing the way individuals think, loosing them from the shackles of superstition: “The fate of our times,” he wrote, “is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the disenchantment of the world.” Similarly, Lipset and Rokkan (1967, 107), argued that citizens in industrialized societies “choose sides in terms of their economic interests, their shares in the increased wealth generated through the spread of the new technologies and the widening markets,” rather than on the basis of faith, iden-
tity, or values. By these lights, Egypt’s endemic poverty, high rate of illiteracy, and large agrarian sector mean that its citizens have not yet undergone these salutary rationalization processes, and thus remain vulnerable to religion’s siren song.

Others point not to economic backwardness, but to the strains of modernization, as producing popular demand for religious politics. The precise causal mechanisms vary. For example, Monroe and Kreidie (1997, 41) tell us that “much of the attractiveness of Islamic fundamentalism lies in its ability to provide a basic identity for its adherents” as development processes throw those identities in flux. Berman (2003, 258) writes that Islamism thrives in societies in which “development has proceeded far enough to offer citizens a glimpse of what modernity has to offer, but not far enough to deliver it.” More than 45 years ago, Barrington Moore (1967, 384) argued that, “in many parts of the world, when an established culture was beginning to erode, threatening some of the population, people have responded by reaffirming the traditional way of life with increasing and frantic vigor.” Despite these differing emphases, all of these accounts attribute Islamism to cognitive processes undergone by voters in response to external stimulus.

For still other scholars, the popular embrace of political Islam is a function of the failures of alternative, secular nationalist ideologies. For example, in the 1970s, Egyptian scholar Ali al-Din Hilal al-Dessouki (1973) wrote that the Arab defeat at Israeli hands in 1967’s Six-Day war was experienced by citizens as “a symptom of the failure of imported Western ideological trends such as secularism, liberalism, socialism, nationalism, because all of them are in contradiction with the basic principles of Islam.”3 Similarly, the scholar Risa Brooks (2002, 612) wrote of “the failure of secular ideologies—nationalism, socialism, and capitalism—to meet the spiritual and material needs of Arab populations.” And the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé (2006, 508) attributed Islamism’s rise to “the failure of secular nationalism to deliver any of its promises for social welfare and economic prosperity.”

All of the above explanations, whether they point to Islamic doctrine, the cognitive habits of the poor, or the strains of social change, begin from the premise that Islamist electoral victories reflect the distribution of preferences in society with respect to religion. As such, they are entirely consistent with the social-cleavages account of party formation dominant in the literature on European political parties. However, they are incapable of explaining variation over time and space in support for Islamism. Underdevelopment, and modernization processes geared at exiting underdevelopment, are endemic conditions of political life in Muslim societies, and yet there is variation in the extent to which these processes correlate with Islamism. For example, in both Pakistan and Indonesia, two large Muslim-

3This turn from left ideologies to Islam is confirmed by Tibi (2009), who writes, “one-time Ba’thists, Nasserists, nationalists, and liberals [...] are now rediscovering Islam as a framework for a new political ideology.” In the case of Egypt, the most dramatic illustration of this phenomenon was provided by the ideological transformation of the Egyptian leftist ‘Adil Hussayn, of the Socialist Labour Party, into an Islamist who orchestrated the alliance of his party with the Muslim Brotherhood and its transformation into the Islamist Labour Party. It is worth noting that the famed slogan of the Muslim Brotherhood, “Islam is the solution,” was generated not by Hassan al-Banna or any of his ideological heirs, but by Hussayn.
majority societies outside of the Muslim world’s Arab core, Islamist parties have never managed the level of electoral success achieved by their counterparts in Arab countries (Kurzman and Naqvi 2010). And the continued popularity of nationalist figures such as Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar Sadat—whom 26 and 36 percent of Egyptians polled by the Brookings Institution in May 2012 identified as the leaders they’d most like Egypt’s next president to emulate—should cause us to question the assumption that voters deem non-Islamist ideologies to have been tried and failed.5

A newer generation of scholars of political Islam have attempted to move us beyond these primarily ideational, demand-side accounts of Islamism by attending to the organizational, supply-side factors that enable Islamists to out-compete their rivals at the polls. Most prominent among these are Islamists’ charitable services to poor constituencies which, presumably, enable groups like the Muslim Brotherhood to reap votes in return. According to Wiktorowicz (2004, 11) “Islamic NGOs, such as medical clinics, hospitals, charity societies, cultural centers, and schools, provide basic goods and services to demonstrate that ‘Islam is the solution’ to everyday problems in Muslim societies.” Another popular strain of scholarship has highlighted the organizational adaptations of Islamist parties to authoritarianism, and the ways in which these adaptations, including highly selective recruitment procedures and a cellular internal structure, render such parties more capable than their rivals of concerted collective action (Trager 2011). As influential as these accounts are, they leave several lacunae unfilled. The theories cannot explain, for example, why Islamists alone provide social services, or why non-religious groups with similar organizational structures, such as the Communists in mid-century Egypt (Ismael and Sa’id 1990), were nonetheless unable to match Islamist successes.

Recognizing this, scholars have argued that the advantage enjoyed by Islamists is deeper than the mere provision of social services or the adoption of rigorous recruitment methods. In this telling, Islamists possess a ready-made mobilizational resource in the form of the country’s deep religious infrastructure (Wiktorowicz 2004). In contrast, non-religious parties are bereft of equivalent resources, as secular forms organization, such as labor unions, were easily and enthusiastically quelled by the authoritarian state. The basic intuition behind this argument is ar-

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4In Pakistan’s 2002 National Assembly elections, the coalition of Islamic parties known as the United Action Front (Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal) earned 11.3 percent of the vote; but by the 2008 contests, that vote share had declined to 2.2 percent (on account of a boycott by the Brotherhood-affiliated Jamaat-e-Islami). In 2013, the parties that had made up the Islamic coalition together earned 5.3 percent of the vote. In Indonesia’s 2004 parliamentary elections, only 7.3 percent of voters cast ballots for the Muslim Brotherhood offshoot Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (Islamist Prosperous Justice Party), whereas in 2009, the PKS managed only a slight uptick in its vote share, polling at 7.88 percent.

ticated by Esposito (1999, 110), who tells us that, “The government could ban and limit political meetings and gatherings, but it could not close the mosques or ban prayer.” This is echoed by Halliday’s (1995) account of revolutionary Iran, “As in other societies where secular forms of protest are blocked off, religion in Iran became a symbol and an organizing center for protest that might otherwise have taken a more conventional secular form.” Similarly, in Egypt, Munson (2001, 502), tells us, “mosques were the only forum in which the government would permit large congregations of people.” And Kuran (1998, 122) has noted that the inability of Arab governments to “close down” mosques meant that “Islamism offer[ed] the safest forum for venting frustrations.”

Unlike ideational accounts of Islamist success, which posit a direct and causal connection between mass preferences over religion and the resulting party system, organizational accounts posit no necessary relationship between these two things. Islamist organizational capacity may endow Islamists with the ability to shape preferences over religion (in which case the success of Islamist parties would go hand-in-hand with identifiably Islamist mass preferences), or it may simply allow Islamists more and better chances to make, say, an economic case to voters (in which case we would find that the success of Islamist parties was not reflective of popular preferences over the role of religion in public life).

This article makes the latter case. Drawing on electoral and survey data from post-Mubarak Egypt, I demonstrate that the success of parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood did not indicate an overriding public obsession with matters of faith and morality, but rather stemmed from the Islamist ability to convince voters that they would be better for the economy. Second, I demonstrate that the reason Islamists were able to convince voters that they would be better stewards of their material well-being was by using pre-existing networks of religious collective action to make their economic case to voters. Thus, I argue that the long hypothesized Islamist organizational advantage worked to produce electoral victories not by turning voters into Islamists, but by allowing those parties to better mobilize voters along an economic, not religious, policy dimension.

2 Islamists between God and Mammon

The tenacity of the view that Islamist success is indicative of mass support for the imposition of Islamic law is not surprising. After all, in the periodic surveys of Egyptians that have been conducted over the last several years, one of the few empirical regularities that emerges is a popular desire for the application of shari‘ah (however construed), which is a principal plank in many an Islamist party’s platform. For example, in 2000, the World Values Survey found that almost 80% of the 3,000 Egyptians they surveyed agreed with the statement: “The government should implement only the laws of the shari‘ah.” More recently, in a November

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6World Values Survey, third wave, Egypt, 2000. Available at: http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/
2011 survey of 1,675 Egyptians, this author found that only 13% of respondents disagreed with the proposition that the “government should establish a council of religious scholars to ensure that the laws comply with the shari‘ah,” which might help explain why the fourth article of Egypt’s 2012 constitution (now suspended) accorded precisely this role to the country’s largest seat of Islamic learning, al-Azhar.

But, although public opinion polls evince broad support for the idea of implementing some version of shari‘ah, they also reveal that shari‘ah is not the only, or even the primary, thing Egyptians care about. For example, in October, 2011, the Arab Barometer project asked a sample of 1,220 Egyptians to name their country’s two most important challenges. Almost 85% cited the economy—including such issues as poverty and unemployment. Another 7.5% cited “financial and administrative corruption” (see figure 1). In a survey of 1,200 Egyptians conducted by the Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies shortly after the parliamentary elections, in May 2012, 68.5% of respondents said that the economy was the most urgent issue facing Egypt—only 2.3% mentioned “applying Islamic law.”7

Given this ostensible concern over economic issues, what explains the fact that every election held in Egypt between Mubarak’s overthrow and Morsi’s went to Islamists? An analysis of Egyptian public opinion suggests that, far from representing the subordination of economic issues to religious ones, the victory of Islamists was in large part due to voter assessments of their economic policy stances. My evidence for this claim is drawn from a survey of 1,675 Egyptians conducted in November 2011, during that country’s first post-Mubarak parliamentary election. Respondents were asked a series of questions about their economic and social policy preferences. They were also asked to record their perceptions of the preferences of some of Egypt’s principal political parties on the same issues. What we find is that Egyptians seem to express clear economic preferences, and they further seem

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Figure 2: Most Egyptians believe that the government, as opposed to the individual, is responsible for citizens’ well-being (November 2011).

To believe that Islamists share those preferences.

Each survey question presented respondents with two contrasting policy options, each at either end of a ten point scale, and respondents were asked where they stood between these two poles. For example, respondents were asked whether they were closer to the view that “government should be responsible for the welfare of every citizen” (which was assigned a score of 1), or to the view that “citizens should be responsible for their own welfare” (which was assigned a score of 10). Respondents could also place themselves anywhere in the middle of these two extremes. Another question, also focused on economic policy, asked respondents to place themselves on a spectrum of views regarding redistribution, ranging from the view that “the government should raise taxes on the rich in order to give to the poor” (assigned a score of 1) to the view that “the government should focus on economic growth and not social equality” (assigned a score of 10). After placing themselves on these questions, respondents were then asked to place parties, such as the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party and the leftist National Progressive Unionist Rally (Ḥizb al-Tajammu‘ al-Waṭanī al-Taqadumī al-Waḥdawī), along the same scales.

Two relevant patterns emerge from the data. First, although Egyptians may evince demands for the sharī‘a, they also appear to demand identifiably “leftist” or “progressive” economic policies. Figure 2 is a histogram that shows the proportion of respondents that placed themselves at each point on a ten-point scale, ranging from those who believe that the government is responsible for citizens welfare to those believe that citizens are responsible for themselves. The vast majority endorsed the statist view. Similarly, when citizens were asked whether the government should focus on redistribution and equality, or ignore equality and focus solely on economic growth, the vast majority displayed a strong preference for redistribution (see figure 3).

The second pattern that emerges from the data is that voters appear to believe
that Islamist parties are more likely than their non-Islamist competitors to favor strong welfare states and redistribution. Figures 4a and 4b provide the mean self-placement of survey respondents, and the mean perception of where some of the principal parties stand, on each of the two economic policy issues discussed above (i.e. welfare provision and redistribution). I have included the two Islamist parties—the Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) and the Salafi Nūr Party—the secular Free Egyptians Party (Hizb al-Miṣriyyin al-Aḥrār, here abbreviated as FEP), the leftist NPUR, and the Wafd Party. I have also magnified the scale to more easily discern the differences between average party scores. As is evident in both figures, among political parties, Egyptians identified the FJP and the Nūr party as being the most left-leaning. In other words, Egyptians appear to think that the Islamists favor redistribution over growth, and they think that Islamists believe that the government is responsible for the welfare of individuals. More importantly, respondents appeared to think that Islamists are more redistributive and more welfare-statist than parties like the NPUR, a party that describes itself as “the party of workers and farmers,”8 and whose current program declares that it “puts its thought and its struggle in the service of the millions who suffer under current conditions, especially the working classes.”9

It is beyond the scope of this article to determine whether voters are correct in their assessments of the economic policy positions of Islamists and their leftist rivals. But regardless of whether they are correct or not, the data here suggests that popular support for Islamist parties may be attributable, at least in part, to perceptions of their economic policy stances. During the 2011 election, the Mus-

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Figure 4: Mean placement of parties and mean self-placement on economic issues.

(a) Redistribution vs. growth

(b) Government vs. individual responsibility
lim Brotherhood’s candidates paid significant attention to issues of the economy and social welfare, often to the exclusion of religious matters. For example, one campaign flier summarizing the Brotherhood’s program identified four four goals: “security, job opportunities, education, and health.”\textsuperscript{10} Another flier laid out a six-point program—focusing on security, public services employment, education and culture, health, and communication between representatives and voters. Note here the absence of any mention of God’s law. And though one might have expected the party’s discussion of education to include a strong religious component, it is worth reproducing it here in full:

1. Establishing a program to raise the standard of education in the district through competition among the schools of the district.

2. Establishing new schools in order to reduce overcrowding in the classrooms, especially in the new settlements.

3. Activating public libraries and establishing new ones in places deprived of them and providing them with electronic books.

4. Activating the role of cultural, literary, and political salons to raise the intellectual level and political awareness of the youth and giving them the incentive to participate in public life.

5. Holding debates and artistic and cultural and literary competitions to discover, nurture, and support talents and raise public tastes.

6. To work to improve wages for teachers in the ministry of education

7. To establish training sessions for teachers in modern methods of teaching and establish quality programs, in addition to honoring model teachers in each of the district’s schools.\textsuperscript{11}

When one reads the full party platforms put forward by both the Muslim Brotherhood and the more religiously conservative Salafists, one is struck by the extent of their emphasis on issues of economic development. The platform of the Nūr Party, for example, begins not by declaring the importance of returning to the path of Allah or the method of the prophet, but by noting three forms of corruption that characterized the Mubarak regime and that the party comes to combat: electoral fraud, the theft of national resources, and the use of the security services to defend the regime instead of the people.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10}Min Birnāmījūnā al-Intikhābī li’ām 2011 (From our electoral program for the year 2011), Ḥizb al-Hurrīya wa al-‘Adālah (Freedom and Justice Party, Dā‘irat Sharq al-Qāhirah (District of East Cairo), November 2011.

\textsuperscript{11}Al-Bīrnamīj al-Intikhābī limurāshāt dā‘ ira Miṣr al-Jadīda, al-Nuzha, al-Shurūq, Badr, Fardī (Electoral Program of the candidates in the district of Miṣr al-Jadīda, al-Nuzha, al-Shurūq, Badr, Fardī, individual seat), Ḥizb al-Hurriya wa al-‘Adāla (Freedom and Justice Party), 2011

\textsuperscript{12}Birnāmīj Ḥizb al-Nūr al-Salafī (Program of the Salafi Nūr Party), n.d. Cairo 2011.
In fact, a statistical analysis of the Nūr Party’s platform reveals that the most frequently-mentioned word in the 8,876-word document is not sharīʿa (which appears five times), or Islam (which, in its various forms, appears 25 times), but “economy” (iqtiṣād) which appears 58 times in its various forms. Similarly, the Muslim Brotherhood’s 12,639-word program only mentions sharīʿa 14 times, whereas the words for “economy” appear 35 times. In Mohammed Morsi’s 15,000-word presidential platform, sharīʿa earned only 8 mentions, whereas “development” (tānmiya) in its various forms was mentioned 178 times, the economy 158 times, and Islam only 36 times.\(^{13}\) All of this is consistent with the patterns we observe in the data: Egyptians have strong views about the kind of economic order they want, and they think Islamists share those views.

Of course, we can not yet dismiss the null hypothesis that voting for Islamists is driven by preferences over Islamists’ societal agenda. For example, it may be that voters primarily support Islamists due to their concerns over sharīʿa and morality, but that aversion to cognitive dissonance also causes them to rate Islamists positively on the economic dimension. Or it may be that voters prefer Islamists because they are both more likely to implement the requirements of the faith and redistribute wealth. In the following section, I use individual-level evidence to test, and dismiss, both of these alternative hypotheses.

3 The determinants of Islamist voting

If voters cast ballots for Islamists out of a concern for religion, we should observe that the voter’s perceived “distance” from Islamists on religious issues (such as the status of women or the need to preserve public morality) should be much more important determinants of vote choice than the voter’s perceived distance from Islamists on the economic issues described in the previous section—that is, state provision of welfare and redistribution. In order to test this, I employ the method developed by Gelman and Cai (2008). My data are voters’ placements of themselves and key political parties on economic and social issues.\(^{14}\)

As described earlier, voters were asked two questions about the economy, and two questions about social/moral policy. In each question, they were presented two contrasting policy options—each at the end of a ten-point scale—and asked to indicate where they stood along the scale, and where they placed key parties and groups, including the Brotherhood’s FJP, the Wafā, the leftist NUPUR, the Free Egyptians Party, the Revolutionary Youth Coalition, and the Reform and Development Party. We have already described the economic policy questions and illustrated the range of voters’ responses to them in figures 2 and 3. The two social/moral questions covered two key pillars of the Islamist program—the role of women in public life and the regulation of personal freedom in the service of maintaining moral ob-

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\(^{13}\)The analysis was conducted using TextSTAT, which allows the user to generate word frequencies and concordances for any text document; available at: http://neon.niederlandistik.fuberlin.de/en/textstat/

\(^{14}\)Survey questionnaire is available at http://www.tarekmasoud.com/data/
servance. To be more specific: for the first question, respondents were presented with two polar opposites “Women are unsuited to assume public positions,” which was scored 1) and “Women must be allowed to assume public positions,” (which was scored 10). For the second social/moral question, the two poles were “Government should limit personal freedoms in order to protect public morality” (scored 1) and “Government should not interfere with personal freedoms as long as they are not hurting anybody” (scored 10).

For this analysis, we are interested in determining the relative importance of economic versus social/moral policy positions in respondents’ decisions whether or not to vote Islamist. As a first step, I collapse the two economic policy questions into a single economic dimension by summing each respondent’s self-placements to the two questions, yielding the respondent’s self-placement on a 2 to 20 scale. I do the same for the two social policy questions. I then repeat this for each respondent’s placement of the two Islamist parties. We thus emerge with six data points for each respondent: their self-placement on the 2-20 economic scale, self-placement on the 2-20 social/moral scale, placement of the FJP on the 2-20 economic scale, placement of the FJP on the 2-20 social/moral scale, placement of the Nür party on the 2-20 economic scale, and placement of the Nür party on the 2-20 social scale. The data are displayed in figure 5. Low scores on the social/moral dimension connote greater conservatism, and low scores on the economic dimension mean can be taken to connote a more “leftist” economic orientation.

Having generated social and economic positions as judged for the country’s two religious parties as well as voters’ self-assessments, we then define, for each survey respondent $i$, the distance between herself and each party $p$ on the two dimensions:

$$EconDistance^p_i = |EconPlacement^p_i - EconPlacement^p_{self}|$$

$$SocialDistance^p_i = |SocialPlacement^p_i - SocialPlacement^p_{self}|$$

I then estimate two logistic regressions predicting a voter’s party preference given his or her ideological distance from the parties on each dimension.

$$Logit(PartySupport^p_i = 1) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 EconDistance^p_i + \beta_2 SocialDistance^p_i + \beta' X + \varepsilon_i$$

Where $PartySupport^p_i$ is the likelihood that voter $i$ will support party $p$ in the upcoming election.\footnote{Respondents were asked which party or group they trusted most to move Egypt forward. Those who named the Muslim Brotherhood or the Freedom and Justice Party are coded as Brotherhood supporters, those who named the Salafi Call Society or its political arm, the Nûr Party, were coded as Salafi supporters.} $EconDistance^p_i$ is the voter’s self-judged proximity to party $p$ on economic issues, and $SocialDistance^p_i$ is the voter’s self-judged proximity to party $p$ on social issues. $X$ is a vector of covariates including the respondent’s education level, age, gender, religion, and whether s/he lives in an urban or rural area. The dichotomous dependent variables are, respectively, support for the Muslim
Figure 5: Economic and social positions of Freedom and Justice and Nur Parties, as judged by respondents in November 2011. (Points jittered to avoid over-plotting.)
Table 1: Logit regressions of Islamist support against voter’s estimation of social and economic policy congruence between voter and party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MB/FJP</th>
<th>Salafi/Nur</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EconDistance</strong></td>
<td>-0.0794***</td>
<td>-0.0720***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.0188)</td>
<td>(0.0198)</td>
<td>(0.0232)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SocialDistance</strong></td>
<td>-0.0369**</td>
<td>-0.0237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.0154)</td>
<td>(0.0177)</td>
<td>(0.0240)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.0506</td>
<td>0.0693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.0451)</td>
<td>(0.0428)</td>
<td>(0.0563)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>-0.0398</td>
<td>-0.174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.139)</td>
<td>(0.146)</td>
<td>(0.177)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.0889</td>
<td>0.0162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.134)</td>
<td>(0.140)</td>
<td>(0.181)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.00483</td>
<td>-0.0153**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.00474)</td>
<td>(0.00447)</td>
<td>(0.00637)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Muslim</td>
<td>-0.968***</td>
<td>-1.128***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.311)</td>
<td>(0.309)</td>
<td>(0.342)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.551**</td>
<td>0.561*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.278)</td>
<td>(0.291)</td>
<td>(0.343)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>978</td>
<td>1,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>pseudo – R²</strong></td>
<td>0.0235</td>
<td>0.0164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Brotherhood (or its Freedom and Justice Party) and support for the Salafists (or the Nur Party). For each party, I run three regressions—the first is a regression of party support against perceived distance from the party on economic issues, the second is a regression of party support against perceived distance from the party on social/moral issues, and the third is a regression of party support on both distance variables. Each specification includes the entire vector of demographic covariates. The results are presented in table 1.

Negative coefficients on the measures of social or economic distance mean that greater perceived proximity between voter and party on those dimensions increase the likelihood of voting for the party. As we can see in the first two columns of table 1, when EconDistance and SocialDistance are each included separately as determinants of support for the MB, the coefficient on each is negative and significant, although EconDistance is significant at the 99% level and is larger than the coefficient on SocialDistance, which is significant at the 95% level. Including both of these terms in the regression (column 3), EconDistance remains significant at the 99% level, while the coefficient on SocialDistance loses significance. What this suggests is that moral/social concerns are less important to explaining support for the Brotherhood than economic ones.

This relationship is revealed graphically in figure 6, which plots the simulated probabilities that a respondent will support the Muslim Brotherhood, conditional
on the respondent’s perceived distance from the Brotherhood on economic policies (figure 6a) and social policies (figure 6b). For example, a respondent who perceives herself as simpatico with the Muslim Brotherhood on economic policy had almost a fifty-five percent chance of supporting the group, whereas on who believed herself at the opposite end of the spectrum on this view had only slightly more than a twenty-percent chance of supporting the Brotherhood. In contrast, proximity to the Muslim Brotherhood on the two social policies under consideration had no appreciable affect on a respondents propensity to evince support of the movement, which hovered around fifty percent.

The case of the Salafi Nūr party is more complex. The variables EconDistance and SocialDistance are negative and significant at the 99% level in all three specifications, and the size of the coefficient on SocialDistance is larger than the size of the coefficient on EconDistance. What this suggests is that religious concerns matter more than economic ones in determining support for the Salafis. Though the negative and significant relationship between EconDistance and support for the Salafis suggests that assessments of the Salafists economic positions were not inconsequential (otherwise, we would have seen an insignificant coefficient on this variable), we can not rule out the possibility that a desire to avoid cognitive dissonance may have simply caused religion-minded voters to assign high congruence to the Salafis on the economic dimension.16

What these data reveal is that, at least for the largest Islamist party in Egypt, economic concerns appear to have trumped social ones in determining whether voters would cast their ballots for it. Thus, the longstanding idea that Islamists win by causing voters to sublimate their economic interests on the altar of fealty to God appears, at the very least, difficult to sustain.

3.1 Service provision, policy perceptions, and party choice

The above analysis, which finds that economic issues mattered more than social ones in explaining support for the Brotherhood, suggests that we should reconsider the work that Islamist service provision allegedly does to generate fealty to political Islam. Instead of converting grateful recipients to the Islamist’s religious agenda, such provision may serve as a communicative channel through which Islamists convince voters of their proximity to their own ideal points on issues of direct,

16Readers will notice that the number of observations in each of the six specifications above fluctuates—this is due to missingness on responses to the economic and social questions. Given the inferential problems involved in analyses of missing data, I re-ran the above analyses with a different measure of respondent-party proximity on the two dimensions that would allow me to use all 1,675 cases. Instead of using the respondent’s distance from the party, I instead construct a dichotomous measure of proximity to each party on each of the two dimensions, EconProximatep and SocialProximatep for each party p and respondent i. For example, if a respondent’s distance from the FJP on the economy is equal to or less than her distance from every other party, she is assigned an EconProximate value of 1 for the FJP and zero for all other parties. A replication of the analysis in table 1 using these measures, not reported here, produced the same results: economic proximity was a significant determinant of voting for the MB while social proximity was not, and both were significant predictors of support for the Salafists.
Figure 6: Predicted probability of support for the Muslim Brotherhood condition on perceived proximity on two policy dimensions

(a) Welfare and redistribution

(b) Gender and Morality
material concern. The potential pathway through which Islamist services might have this effect is illustrated in figure 7. In this section, I demonstrate that the effect of Islamic service provision on support for Islamist parties is mediated through its effect on voters’ estimations of the party’s preferred economic policies, and not by causing voters to assign greater value to shari’a and issues of Islamic identity.

In order to conduct this analysis, I first measure respondents’ reliance on Islamic service provision. Respondents were asked about the various health care services they have relied on in the past, without specifying a time frame. The options were: “Health services through a mosque” (khadamāt šihiyya tābi’ā li-masjīd); “health services through a church or Christian house of worship” (khadamāt šihiyya tābi’ā likānīsā aw dār ‘ībāda masīhiyya); “Islamic charitable society” (jamʿiyya khayriyya islāmiyya); “Christian charitable society” (jamʿiyya khayriyya masīhiyya); “non-religious charitable society” (jamʿiyya khayriyya ghayr dīniyya); “government health center or hospital” (wḥda šihiyya aw mustashfā ḥukīmi); “private clinic or hospital” (ʿayāda aw mustashfā khāṣ); and “medical caravan under the auspices of one of the candidates in elections in your district,” (qaṭila ṭibbiyya taḥt raʿayat aḥad al-mutarashḥīn fi al-intikhābāt qurb dāʾiratak). The full results are presented in table 2. Out of the sample of 1,675, 323 (19.28%) reported having used a mosque clinic, and 206 (12.30%) admitted to relying on an Islamic charitable society. The total number of respondents who used either of these two forms of Islamic healthcare provision was 347 (20.72%). We construct a indicator variable, IslamicServices, equal to 1 if a respondent relied on either a mosque clinic or Islamic charitable society, and 0 otherwise.

Having established the distribution of reliance on Islamic health care, we wish to explore whether this reliance influences assessments of Islamist parties’ economic policies. In other words, is the effect of Islamist service provision on support for Islamists mediated through assessments of policies regarding social welfare
and redistribution? If mediation exists, three relationships will obtain (Baron and Kenny 1986). First, we should find that Islamist healthcare provision (X) predicts support for Islamist parties (Y). This relationship is represented in figure 7a, where c is the total effect of Islamic healthcare provision on Islamic party support, estimated in a regression of the form:

\[ Y = \beta_1 + \text{IslamicServices} + \varepsilon_1 \]  

Second, we should find that Islamic healthcare provision (X) predicts beliefs about Islamist economic policies (Z). This is represented in figure 7b, where a is the effect of Islamic healthcare provision on beliefs about Islamist economic policies, estimated in a regression of the form:

\[ \text{EconDistance} = \beta_2 + \text{IslamicServices} + \varepsilon_2 \]  

Third, we should find that Islamic healthcare provision (X) continues to predict support for Islamists even when beliefs about Islamist economic policies (Z) are included in the model, estimated in a regression of the form:

\[ Y = \beta_3 + \text{IslamicServices} + \text{EconDistance} + \varepsilon_3 \]  

If IslamicServices remains predictive, then the effect of Islamist healthcare services on party support is not mediated through beliefs about party economic policies. If, however, the coefficient on IslamicServices is insignificant when EconDistance is included, and the coefficient on EconDistance is significant, then we have strong evidence of a mediating relationship. In what follows, I describe the results of each step in the mediation analysis.

### 3.1.1 Does receipt of Islamic healthcare influence support for Islamist parties?

In order to test the relationship between Islamist healthcare provision and support for Islamist parties (equation 1), I use the survey data described above to estimate the following logistic regression:

\[ \text{Logit}(\text{PartySupport}_i = 1) = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{IslamicServices}_i + \beta'X + \varepsilon_i \]
Table 3: Logit analyses of effect of Islamic health services on Islamist party support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MB/FJP</th>
<th>Salafists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IslamicServices</td>
<td>0.301**</td>
<td>-0.232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.125)</td>
<td>(0.188)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious lessons</td>
<td>0.00768</td>
<td>0.654***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.175)</td>
<td>(0.208)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.00569</td>
<td>0.0923*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0351)</td>
<td>(0.0476)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>0.0485</td>
<td>-0.113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.107)</td>
<td>(0.152)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.178*</td>
<td>-0.364**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.103)</td>
<td>(0.145)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.00699*</td>
<td>-0.0200***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.00360)</td>
<td>(0.00513)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-muslim</td>
<td>-1.019***</td>
<td>-1.908***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.250)</td>
<td>(0.596)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.0979</td>
<td>-1.030***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.214)</td>
<td>(0.280)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations: 1,675 1,675

pseudo $- R^2$: 0.0146 0.0436

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Where IslamicServices is a dichotomous variable equal to 1 if the respondent reports having received medical services from an Islamic charity or a mosque clinic. X is a vector of covariates, including age, gender, urbanization, education. I also include a measure of participation in religious activities. Specifically, respondents were asked whether they attend religious lessons or sessions (durūṣ aw jālasāt diniyya) or attend an institute for memorizing the Qur’an (maqṣra ‘a). A dichotomous variable was created, coded 1 if respondents answered yes to one or both of these questions, and 0 otherwise. The results of two regressions, where the dependent variable is support for the MB and Salafi parties, respectively, are presented in table 3. The results of the logistic regressions appear to show that receipt of Islamic healthcare services is an important determinant of support for the Muslim Brotherhood, but not for the Salafists.

3.1.2 Does receipt of Islamic healthcare influence citizens’ beliefs about Islamist economic policies?

Now we turn to equation 2, which describes the hypothesized effect of Islamic social services on citizens’ beliefs about Islamist economic policies. We regress respondent’s self-reported distances from the Brotherhood and Salafist parties (which, to recall from section 3, are scores from 2 to 20), against Islamic healthcare provision and a vector of covariates (X), including:
The results of this analysis are presented in Table 4. We find, as expected, a voter’s receipt of Islamic healthcare services is negatively correlated with his or her estimation of his distance from both the MB and the Salafists on economic policy issues. In other words, those who received Islamic healthcare are likely to identify themselves as being closer to Islamist parties on economic issues than those who have not received such services.

### 3.1.3 Is the effect of Islamist healthcare on support for Islamists mediated through its effect on beliefs about Islamist economic policies?

Finally, in order to determine whether Islamic healthcare’s effect on support for Islamists is mediated through *EconDistance*, I run a final logistic regression in which both *IslamicServices* and *EconDistance* are included in the model, with a vector of covariates (X):

\[
\text{Logit}(\text{PartySupport}_i = 1) = \beta_3 + c \cdot \text{IslamicServices}_i + b \cdot \text{EconDistance}_i + \beta'X + \epsilon_i
\]

The results of the analysis are presented in Table 5. We find that, in both specifications (i.e. where the dependent variable is support for the Brotherhood’s party...
Table 5: Full models of Islamist party support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MB/FJP</th>
<th>Salafi/Nūr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EconDistance</td>
<td>-0.0716***</td>
<td>-0.0681***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0199)</td>
<td>(0.0261)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SocialDistance</td>
<td>-0.0240</td>
<td>-0.0939***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0178)</td>
<td>(0.0272)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IslamicServices</td>
<td>0.0838</td>
<td>-0.286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.159)</td>
<td>(0.227)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious lessons</td>
<td>-0.131</td>
<td>0.401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.218)</td>
<td>(0.256)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.0399</td>
<td>0.0686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0476)</td>
<td>(0.0589)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>-0.0200</td>
<td>-0.0237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.147)</td>
<td>(0.195)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.0646</td>
<td>-0.280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.140)</td>
<td>(0.192)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.00402</td>
<td>-0.0174***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.00494)</td>
<td>(0.00676)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-muslim</td>
<td>-1.030***</td>
<td>-1.527**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.341)</td>
<td>(0.694)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.542*</td>
<td>-0.0849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.295)</td>
<td>(0.368)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pseudo – R²</td>
<td>0.0245</td>
<td>0.0692</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

and where the dependent variable is support for the Salafi party), the coefficient on EconDistance remains negative and significant, while the coefficient on IslamicServices is insignificant. Recall that in table 3, we found that IslamicServices was a positive and significant predictor of support for the MB, and we can conclude that, at least in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic healthcare services generated support for the party by shaping people’s beliefs about the economic policies the party would pursue once in office.

4 Aggregate electoral evidence

In the previous sections, we have demonstrated that a large proportion of the Islamist vote came not from those whose primary demand was the application of God’s law, but from voters who saw Islamists as champions of the redistributive policies that the large majority of Egyptians craved. The reason that citizens attributed such policy commitments to Islamists rather than to leftist parties lay in the ability of Islamists to make their case to voters through extensive, longstanding
networks of Islamic social service provision. In this section, I offer additional evidence for the central thesis of this article—that the Islamist-dominated party system in transitional Egypt did not reflect the domination of the religious question over the collective mind, but instead was a function of the different opportunities faced by parties for making their economic case to voters.

Specifically, I argue that two facts of recent Egyptian political life are consistent with the story offered here. The first is the constriction of the Islamist vote base after their initial victory in the 2011 parliamentary elections. The second is the strong performance of non-Islamist candidates in pockets of the country where they were able to draw on local solidarities that could provide them channels to voters that matched those available to Islamists. I discuss each of these in turn. I then show that the general patterns I identify in Egypt can also be seen in Tunisia, another country in which Islamist dominance has been attributed to popular demand for religious politics.

4.1 Constriction of the Islamist vote base

When Mohamed Morsi was elected to Egypt’s presidency with 52 percent of the vote in June 2012, it was easy to forget how hard fought and narrowly won the victory was, and to fit it instead into the established narrative of inevitable Islamist dominion based on broad preferences for, and prioritization of, shari’ah. However, if we compare the number of votes cast for the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) in the legislative contest of 2011-12 to the number of votes cast for its candidate, Mohamed Morsi, in the first round of the 2012 presidential race, we see that in every one of the country’s governorates, the Muslim Brotherhood actually lost supporters from the previous election. This is represented in Figure 8, where the Y axis represents the number of votes in each governorate cast for the FJP in parliament, and the X axis is the number of corresponding votes for Mohamed Morsi in the first round of the presidential contest. The dotted, 45-degree line is where all data points would lie if the same number of people voted for Morsi as had voted for the FJP. If Morsi had managed to get more votes than the FJP, the data points would all lie below the dotted line. Instead, however, we see that all governorates lie above the dotted line, indicating a sizable voter exodus from the FJP between the two elections.

Of course, the FJP was not the only Islamist party in the parliamentary elections, and Morsi was not the only Islamist candidate in the presidential one. Of the thirteen candidates that contested the 2012 presidential election’s first round, there were two other Islamists in addition to Morsi: a scholar named Muhammad Salfîn al-‘Awâ and ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Abû al-Futûh, a former member of the Brotherhood’s guidance bureau who had been expelled from the movement in 2011. It is worth asking whether Abû al-Futûh could be called an Islamist candidate at all, since his campaign emphasized his differences with the Brotherhood, whom he criticized for mixing religion and politics. However, his roots in the Brotherhood, and the fact that he was endorsed by the Salafi Nûr Party, suggest that the Islamist label is apt.
Vote shares of the top 5 candidates in the first round of the 2012 presidential election are presented in table 6. In an illustration of how far the Brothers had fallen, Morsi only secured 25 percent of the more than 23 million votes cast—not enough to win outright, but enough to enter a runoff. A May 2012 survey of 1,200 Egyptians conducted by al-Ahrām and the Danish Egyptian Dialogue Institute, and designed in collaboration with the author found that fewer than 20 percent of voters identified Morsi as their likely choice, and the majority of those were religious conservatives, indicating that the broad coalition that had supported the FJP in November 2011 had dissipated.17

The rest of the Islamist field performed no better. Abu al-Futūḥ earned only 17.5 percent, and Salīm al-ʿAwā recorded just 1 percent of the vote. In fact, a majority of votes went to non-Islamist candidates, including to Mubarak protégé and former prime minister Ahmad Shafiq (almost 24 percent of the vote), the Karāma Party’s Ḥamdīn Ṣābāḥī (with 21 percent of the vote), and former foreign minister Amr Moussa (11 percent). Though the runoff in the presidential election eventually brought Morsi to power, it was only on relatively narrow margin (52 percent to 48 percent), and against a figure widely reviled as a pillar of the regime Egyptians had overthrown a mere seventeen months earlier. Moreover, it is worth noting that voter turnout in that election was approximately 46 percent, which means that the Brotherhood candidate’s eventual 52 percent of voters represents only around a quarter of eligible voters.

To illustrate the extent of the Islamists’ regression in the first five months of 2012,

Table 6: Candidate vote shares in first round of 2012 presidential election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>votes</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mohamed Morsi</td>
<td>Freedom and Justice</td>
<td>5,764,952</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmad Shafiq</td>
<td>None (former NDP)</td>
<td>5,505,327</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḥamdīn Ṣabāḥī</td>
<td>al-Karāma</td>
<td>4,820,273</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Abd al-Mun‘im Abū al-Futūḥ</td>
<td>Independent (Nūr party)</td>
<td>4,065,239</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amre Moussa</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2,588,850</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9 is a scatterplot of the share of votes captured by all Islamist candidates in the May 2012 first round presidential election against the vote share captured by all the country’s Islamist parties, the FJP, Nur, and the more liberal Wasat Party, in the parliamentary election concluded in January 2012. The scatterplot shows a precipitous decline in the Islamist vote share between the two elections across practically every governorate (the only exception being Matrūh, where the Nūr party could call on tribal loyalties cultivated through its parent movement, the Salafi Call Society.)

A further, final measure of how much ground the Muslim Brotherhood had lost is offered by a comparison of the results of two surveys, conducted almost two years apart. The first survey, analyzed in sections 2 and 3 above, was commissioned in November 2011. The second was conducted in June 2013 (see figure 10). In both surveys, respondents were asked to state how much confidence they had in the Muslim Brotherhood. In the 2011 survey, conducted in proximity to the country’s first parliamentary elections, more than 40 percent of respondents claimed to be “very confident” in the movement, with only around a quarter of voters claiming to have “no confidence.” In the second survey, conducted in proximity to mass protests in June 2013 demanding the president’s resignation, the share of respondents claiming to have “no confidence” in the Brotherhood had swelled to more than 60 percent. This should not surprise us. When asked whether their lives had improved or worsened since Morsi’s election to the presidency, more than 63 percent of respondents in the June 2013 survey said their lives had worsened.

This dramatic reduction in support for Islamists is inconsistent with a view of Egyptian politics that ascribes the dominance of Islamists in founding elections to a popular passion for religion. If religious purity were the thing voters thought

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18Though Nūr Party’s capture of nearly 80 percent of votes in the district of Matrūh, a western border region dominated by tribal solidarities, would seem to militate against the logic of the argument here, it actually illustrates it. The electoral success of the movement is based not on supplanting tribal loyalties, but on incorporating them. During the 2011 parliamentary election, the party was keen to ensure that key tribal leaders found slots on its electoral lists. The exquisite sensitivity of the party to Matrūh’s tribal dynamics was demonstrated in April 2012, when the party’s parent movement, the Salafi Call Society, instructed the party to halt planned internal elections for fear of igniting “sedition and volatility.” In an official statement, the SCS declared that it had decided to appoint the leaders of the party’s general secretariat in Matrūh directly, “in order to reflect the tribal and demographic map.” See: “Al-Da‘wa al-Salafiyya ft Matrūh tarfu‘ intikhābat al-Nūr al-Dākhiliyya (The Salafi Call Society in Matrūh rejects the Nūr Party’s internal elections),” al-Rāi (Kuwait), April 9, 2012; available at: http://www.alraimedia.com/ArticlePrint.aspx?id=376024
they were purchasing with their suffrages, we would expect those voters to insist on keeping Islamists in office, regardless of the slowing of the economy, the decay of public services, or the steady erosion of public order. If religion were truly possessed of the totemic power that observers of the Muslim world have long assigned to it, then it would take a great deal more than a few months of fuel shortages, blackouts, or inflation to cause the faithful to turn their backs on it. But turn their backs on it they did.

4.2 Neutralizing Islamic networks

As we have seen, temporal variation in the Islamist vote undermines the narrative of Egyptian voters as driven primarily by religious concerns. In this section, I use spatial variation in Islamist voting during the 2012 presidential election to show that Islamist victories and defeats were functions of the relative density of Islamic versus non-Islamic social networks (which determined the opportunities candidates and parties had for communicating with voters), and not of variation in religiosity or demand for shari‘a.

The first illustration of the importance of networks is found in the vote returns of the third place finisher in the May 2012 presidential race: Ḥamdīn Ṣabāḥī, a journalist and head of the small, pro-poor, Arab nationalist Karāma Party. Figure 11 is a scatterplot of votes for Ṣabāḥī at the level of the qism or markaz (second-order administrative units), plotted against the percentage of the adult workforce in agriculture (our proxy for urbanization or, rather, the lack thereof) drawn from the 2006 census conducted by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statis-
Figure 10: Voter confidence in the Muslim Brotherhood

(a) November 2011 (N=1,675 with 256 nonresponses)

(b) June 2013 (N=1,086 with 24 nonresponses)
tics. Though the relationship appears to be weakly negative, we observe a set of outliers where Şabâhi’s vote share exceeded 50 percent, even in highly rural areas. These places all turn out to be located in Şabâhi’s home governorate of Kafr al-Shaykh. Presumably, the inhabitants of the villages of Kafr al-Shaykh were no less religious than other rural dwellers. What distinguished them from their counterparts in other areas who voted for the Muslim Brotherhood’s Morsi was probably less their ideology than their information—Şabâhi’s embeddedness in his home governorate likely meant that voters knew enough about him, and had enough trust in his policy promises, to choose him over the Brotherhood.

We observe a similar pattern with the vote share of the second-place finisher in that election, Ahmâd Shaftîq. Figure 12 is a scatterplot of Shaftîq votes at the qism level, also plotted against the share of the workforce in agriculture. The locales at the very top of the vote distribution are all located in the governorate of al-Minûfiyya, birthplace of Shaftîq’s mentor, ousted president Ḥusnî Mubârak. Again, al-Minûfiyya is not significantly different demographically or socially from other rural governorates. Its inhabitants are not somehow less religious than their compatriots elsewhere. In fact, the governorate has the highest proportion of Islamic private voluntary organizations in Egypt. And yet it went overwhelmingly for the opponent of the Muslim Brotherhood on the strength of Shaftîq’s ties to the governorate’s favorite son.

Another governorate in which Shaftîq won an outright majority of votes was Morsi’s home governorate of al-Sharqiyya. Though to some this suggested that the Interior Ministry had engaged in fraud on the former air force general’s behalf, the more likely explanation is that, as a son of al-Sharqiyya himself, Shaftîq was able to call on networks of family loyalty in that governorate that could rival Morsi’s. Moreover, Shaftîq could also count on former NDP loyalists from among
the governorate’s notability to get out the vote on his behalf. Indeed, the Egyptian newspaper, al-Miṣrī al-Yawm, reported in August 2011—almost a full year before the presidential election—on a Ramadan dinner held for Shafiq by “the big families of al-Sharqiyya,” who “asked Shafiq to announce his candidacy for the presidency of the republic.”19 Though these big families lacked the clout they once had under Mubarak, they would nonetheless help Shafiq give Morsi and the Brotherhood a run for their money in a governorate that many thought of as an Islamist stronghold.20

Probing the electoral results from al-Sharqiyya more closely confirms the intuition that ideology had little to do with the way that voters in the governorate chose between those two candidates. Villages that were identical across a range of socioeconomic factors ended up voting in very different ways, depending on the embeddedness of the candidates within them. Figure 13 displays the percentage of voters in each of al-Sharqiyya governorate’s second-level administrative units who selected Shafiq over Morsi in the two rounds of the 2012 presidential election. One of the locales that went most heavily for Shafiq in both rounds was called Markaz al-Ibrāhimiyya. Shafiq beat Morsi there by 10.5% in the first round, and by 20% in the second. One of the districts that went most heavily for Morsi, in contrast, was Markaz Hiyyā, where the Islamist surpassed his opponent by 14.6% and 12.4% in the first and second rounds, respectively. Little distinguishes

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19“Shafiq fī ḏiyāfāt ahāf al-Sharqiyyya (Shafiq is the guest of the families of al-Sharqiyya),” al-Miṣrī al-Yawm (Cairo), August 27, 2011; available at: http://www.almasryalyoum.com/node/490517
Markaz al-Ibrāhīmiyya from Markaz Hihyā. Both feature high illiteracy—35% in al-Ibrāhīmiyya and 30% in Hihyā. The share of the workforce employed in the agricultural sector is 11% in Hihyā and 18% in al-Ibrāhīmiya. Almost 85% of the inhabitants of the pro-Morsi Markaz Hihyā, and 87% of inhabitants of the pro-Shafiq Markaz al-Ibrāhīmiyya voted for the March 2011 constitutional amendments. What distinguishes these places, however, is that Markaz Hihyā contains Morsi’s home village of al-’Udwa, whereas Markaz al-Ibrāhīmiyya contains Shafiq’s home village of Qatīfa Mubāshir.21

Similarly, the district where Morsi performed best over the two rounds, Qism al-Qurayn, is indistinguishable from Markaz al-Zaqāziq, where he performed far worse. In Qurayn, 94 percent of citizens had voted for the March 2011 constitutional amendments, whereas 91 percent had in Markaz al-Zaqāziq. Of the six Muslim Brotherhood activists in al-Sharqiyya that I asked, none could offer me a convincing explanation for why al-Qurayn had favored them so heavily and Markaz al-Zaqāziq went so definitively against them. One suggested that al-Qurayn’s proximity to Morsi’s home district may have played a role, but others rejected this assertion, pointing out that other locales bordering Markaz Hihyá had gone against its most famous son. All however, in groping for answers, suggested that the Brothers in al-Qurayn had simply done a better job of reaching out to citizens (and families) there than the old NDP allies who mobilized support for Shafiq, whereas the reverse was true in Markaz al-Zaqāziq. It is thus difficult not conclude that, within al-Sharqiyya as across the country, Egypt’s presidential election seems to have been less about who stood for or against Islam, and more about who stood closest to the voter.

5 Evidence from Tunisia

The patterns described here—in which electoral outcomes are functions not of ideological conflict, but rather of the relative embeddedness of parties and candidates in local communities—are not restricted to Egypt. We observe the same phenomenon in the October 2011 elections to Tunisia’s constituent assembly. As noted earlier, an Islamist party, al-Nahda took 41 percent of the seats and emerged as the single largest bloc in the body tasked both with governing Tunisia and crafting its future constitution. The dominant description of that result in the West was as one more sweeping victory for Islamists, and one more demonstration of an insatiable Arab thirst for sharī‘a. However, close examination of those results reveals that, as in Egypt, this outcome was not primarily attributable to the political salience of the role of faith in public life, but rather to differences in the ability of different parties to reach primarily economics-minded voters where they lived.

An initial indication that Tunisian voters were not gripped by anxiety over the role of religion in public life is offered by the results of an Arab Barometer survey

Figure 13: Vote difference between Shafiq and Morsi, al-Sharqiyya Governorate, 2012 presidential election

(a) First round (May 2012)

(b) Runoff (June 2012)
of 1,200 Tunisians conducted in advance of that country’s constituent assembly elections. As in Egypt, respondents were asked what issue they thought constituted the most important challenge facing their country. More than 70 percent named the economy, whereas fewer than 1 percent mentioned the new constitution or concern over maintaining (or reversing) the country’s longstanding ban on polygamy (see figure 14). When Tunisians were asked what their second highest priority was, fewer than 3 percent named the constitution and fewer than 2 percent the polygamy ban, with most voters naming internal security (23 percent), corruption (21 percent), and returning funds looted by the Bin ‘Ali regime (15 percent). As two gifted scholars of the Arab world put it, “Tunisians voted for jobs, not Islam.”

However, if Tunisians did indeed vote for jobs, why did they believe that Islamists were the best guarantors of those jobs? The theory offered here would suggest that Islamists earn the benefit of the doubt because they are able to reach voters through religious institutions, while their secular and leftist opponents were restricted to relatively more limited networks of labor organizing and non-religious civil society more generally. Though union membership in Tunisia (taken as a percentage of the population and not, as is standard practice, as a percentage of the non-agricultural and formal workforce) is 50 percent higher than in Egypt (4.7 percent to 3.0 percent), it remains low in absolute terms. The Tunisian Gen-

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22 The author thanks Amaney Jamal for generously sharing this data.
24 Figures drawn from the website of the Tunisian General Labor Union:
eral Labor Union (al-Ittiḥād al-‘ām al-Tūnisī lil-shughlī, abbreviated UGTT after its French name, Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail) claims 500,000 members. And though the UGTT appears to have played a more important role in the revolution that brought down Bin ‘Alī than its Egyptian counterpart played in the revolution that unseated Mubarak, this was less because of differences in the extent of union membership than because of structural differences between the two organizations. The UGTT, like its Egyptian counterpart was dominated by the regime (see Posusney, 1997), but as Kamāl ‘Abbās, an Egyptian labor activist, argued, “the most important difference between the UGTT and the ETUF is that the representatives of the former are chosen via direct elections.”25 Similarly, a 2006 U.S. State Department cable written in advance of the UGTT’s twenty-first general congress, noted that “despite the leadership’s pro-government stance, the UGTT is almost universally recognized as the most democratic Tunisian organization.”26 However, while this may have ensured the union’s militance during the revolution, the relatively narrow vote base the UGTT represented suggested that the left’s ability to cultivate suffrages through it would be limited. It’s worth noting that in the Arab Barometer’s 2011 survey of Tunisians, only 3 percent indicated membership in a labor union or syndicate.

If networks of labor activism were limited in Tunisia, those based on religion were not. Although the Tunisian regime tightly regulated the religious realm in order to prevent the emergence of Islamic challengers, the departure of Bin ‘Alī on January 14, 2011 meant that the country’s religious infrastructure suddenly became available for Islamists to use to engage voters. Thus, as in Egypt, the density of religious networks should serve as a strong predictor of al-Nahda’s eventual vote share. In order to test this proposition, I constructed a dataset of the socioeconomic characteristics of each of Tunisia’s 262 second-level administrative units (mu’tamadiyāt, or delegations), as well as the votes captured by each party in the October 2011 constituent assembly elections. I conduct six regression analyses, one for each of six major Tunisian political parties. These are:

- **Hizb Haraka al-Nahda** (Renaissance Movement Party): Founded in the early 1970s by independent Islamic thinker Rached al-Ghannouchi as the “Islamic Group,” and in 1981 renamed the “Movement of the Islamic Trend,” before becoming Haraka al-Nahda (Renaissance Movement) in 1988, the movement was originally viewed by Habib Bourguiba’s ruling Constitutional Socialist Party as a useful counterweight to the left (for the movement’s history and development, see Hamdi (1998)). After winning close to 15 percent of the vote in Tunisia’s 1989 parliamentary elections, the group was subject to a brutal crackdown, particularly after it was alleged that some of its members launched an armed attack against an office of the ruling party in 1991. Ghannouchi went into exile, and by some estimates, close to 25,000 members of al-

http://www.ugtt.org.tn/


26http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=06TUNIS2887
Nahda were thrown into Bin ‘Ali’s prisons. And though al-Nahda members are thought to have continued to operate underground during that period (allegedly infiltrating, for example, the country’s main labor union (Alexander 2000), by all accounts the party’s street presence was limited prior to the January 2011 revolution. As of July 2013, the party held eighty-nine seats in the 217-member constituent assembly.

• al-‘Arīda al-Sha’biyya lil-Ḥurriyya wa al-‘Adāla wa al-Tannīya (Popular Petition for Freedom, Justice, and Development): Founded by former al-Nahda member Mohamed Hachmi Hamdi in 2011. This party—or, more accurately, electoral list—is often described as “populist” (Zeghal 2013), and appears to combine al-Nahda’s demand for “respect for the Arab and Islamic identity of Tunis,” (al-‘Arīda’s campaign materials begin and end with the traditional Islamic greeting) with two worker-friendly demands: unemployment benefits and free healthcare for all. The list won twenty-six seats in the constituent assembly.

• al-Mu’tamar min ājl al-Jumhūriya (Congress for the Republic): Founded by Moncef Marzouki, a “left wing physician who went into exile after his party was banned in 2001” (El Amrani and Lindsey 2011), the party won twenty-nine seats in the constituent assembly. In December 2011, Marzouki was selected by the assembly to serve as the country’s first post-revolutionary president.

• al-Takattul al-Dimuqrāṭī min ājl al-‘amal wa al-ḥurrīyāt (Democratic Forum for Labor and Liberties): Described as a “socialist” party (El Amrani and Lindsey 2011; El-Khawas (2012)), the party won twenty seats in the constituent assembly elections.

• al-Hīzb al-Dimuqrāṭī al-Taqadumī (Progressive Democratic Party): Led until 2012 by the feminist and human rights activist Maya Jribi, the party is described as “center-left” (Brody-Barre 2013) and holds sixteen seats in the assembly.

• Ḥīzb al-‘Ummāl al-Shiyya ‘īlal-Tānisī (Tunisian Workers Communist Party): The party, whose ideological inclinations are perhaps self-evident, captured three seats in the October 2011 elections.

The independent variables are the share of the workforce in agriculture, the unemployment rate, the crowding rate (defined as the number of inhabitants per household room), the logged population, and, in order to capture the density of religious networks, the number of mosques per 10,000 inhabitants.27 The results of the re-

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27Thanks to Duncan Pickard and Safia Trabelsi for data assistance. Demographic data is drawn from the 2004 census conducted by the Tunisian National Institute for Statistics (al-Ma’had al-Watānī ‘lil-‘iḥṣā‘). Mosque data was provided by the Tunisian Ministry of Religious Affairs (Wizārat al-Sha‘īn al-Dimiyā). Both available from the author. Mosques are divided into two types: masājid (sing. masjid), which connotes smaller mosques (similar to zawāya in Egypt), and jawāmi‘ (sing, jāmi‘), which are large mosques in which Friday prayers are offered.
gression analyses are presented in table 7. Though Zeghal (2013) argues that “the secularist parties’ and al-Nahḍa’s constituencies are not necessarily that different in terms of their socioeconomic characteristics,” the results of our regression analysis reveal that al-Nahḍa was more definitively urban than its competitors. The party seems to have cut across class lines, however, as revealed by the insignificant coefficient on our proxy for poverty, the crowding rate. For the purposes of our analysis here, however, the key variable of interest is mosque density. We find a positive and significant relationship between that variable and al-Nahḍa’s vote share, whereas the relationship is insignificant for most parties, and is negative and significant at the 99 percent level for the leftist al-Takattul party.

Readers might object that mosque density is actually a proxy for religiosity, and that what this analysis shows is not that Islamists won by canvassing voters through pre-existing religious networks, but that places that were more religious tended to vote for al-Nahḍa. The only way to rule this out would be to demonstrate that the process by which mosques were generated and distributed in Tunisia was unrelated to the distribution of religiosity. After all, as we know, the Tunisian state heavily restricted all forms of religious activity, and was particularly likely to police so-called Islamist strongholds more heavily than others. A 2008 report indicates that the state required anyone wishing to build a mosque to demonstrate that the area in which they proposed to build was underserved relative to some arbitrary, state-determined ratio of mosques to people.28 This regulation might mean that the most religious locales were ones in which—at least since 2008—are ones with the fewest, not most, mosques. All of this suggests that we cannot take mosque density as a straightforward indicator of popular religiosity, and that the correlation between mosque density and al-Nahḍa’s vote share is attributable to more than just the likelihood that more mosques signify more religious people.

Another, more powerful demonstration of the importance of local networks in determining vote shares can be found when we examine the spatial distribution of votes for some of al-Nahḍa’s key competitors. Several commentators, for example, have noted that al-Nahḍa performed poorly in Sidi Bouzid, the central Tunisian province in which the December 17, 2010 self-immolation of a fruitseller, Muḥammad Abū Ḥadiẓ, is thought to have sparked the uprising that led to the ouster of Bin Ḥīlāl scarcely one month later (Schraeder and Redissi 2011). According to the brilliant scholar of Islamism and North Africa, Mallika Zeghal, al-Nahḍa’s loss in the poor, rural Sidi Bouzid “speaks to a crucial line of [class] cleavage that is often ignored.”29 However, examining the distribution of votes for the list that performed best in Sidi Bouzid—al-ʿArīḍa al-Shaʿbīyya—suggests a different, and more mundane story. Figure 15 is a scatterplot of al-ʿArīḍa’s vote share across Tunisia’s 262 second-level administrative units, against the share of the workforce employed in agriculture. As we can see, al-ʿArīḍa’s performance is Sidi Bouzid is a clear out-

28 “Tunis tafriḍ shurūṭ jadīda li-bīnāʾ al-masajid minhā dhikr madāʾ al-ḥāja (Tunisia imposes new conditions on building mosques, including demonstrating need),” al-Fajr News (Tunis), April 6, 2008; available at: http://www.turess.com/alfajrnews/3680

Table 7: Correlates of party vote shares in Tunisian constituent assembly election, October 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>al-Nahda</th>
<th>al-‘Arîda</th>
<th>CPR</th>
<th>al-Takatul</th>
<th>PDP</th>
<th>CP</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>percent agriculture</td>
<td>-0.283***</td>
<td>0.158***</td>
<td>-0.0104</td>
<td>-0.00600</td>
<td>0.0202*</td>
<td>0.0421***</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0364)</td>
<td>(0.0301)</td>
<td>(0.0157)</td>
<td>(0.0135)</td>
<td>(0.0110)</td>
<td>(0.0118)</td>
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<tr>
<td>percent unemployment</td>
<td>-0.101</td>
<td>0.0356</td>
<td>-0.0866**</td>
<td>-0.0442</td>
<td>0.0223</td>
<td>0.0454**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.107)</td>
<td>(0.0722)</td>
<td>(0.0368)</td>
<td>(0.0345)</td>
<td>(0.0219)</td>
<td>(0.0200)</td>
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<tr>
<td>log population</td>
<td>1.878*</td>
<td>2.000***</td>
<td>0.881**</td>
<td>0.302</td>
<td>-0.278</td>
<td>-0.296</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.080)</td>
<td>(0.648)</td>
<td>(0.396)</td>
<td>(0.376)</td>
<td>(0.218)</td>
<td>(0.385)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crowding rate</td>
<td>4.073</td>
<td>8.811***</td>
<td>-6.613***</td>
<td>-9.621***</td>
<td>-2.886***</td>
<td>-1.792***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.604)</td>
<td>(2.054)</td>
<td>(1.170)</td>
<td>(1.140)</td>
<td>(0.730)</td>
<td>(0.668)</td>
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<td>Mosques per 10K</td>
<td>0.796***</td>
<td>0.157</td>
<td>0.0474</td>
<td>-0.289***</td>
<td>-0.0601*</td>
<td>-0.0952</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.152)</td>
<td>(0.112)</td>
<td>(0.0920)</td>
<td>(0.0983)</td>
<td>(0.0336)</td>
<td>(0.0592)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>11.27</td>
<td>-32.27***</td>
<td>9.435**</td>
<td>19.82***</td>
<td>10.61***</td>
<td>6.436</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(12.87)</td>
<td>(7.853)</td>
<td>(4.562)</td>
<td>(4.899)</td>
<td>(2.781)</td>
<td>(4.965)</td>
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<td>262</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>239</td>
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<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.275</td>
<td>0.373</td>
<td>0.253</td>
<td>0.462</td>
<td>0.110</td>
<td>0.139</td>
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Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.01
Figure 15: Vote share for al-‘Arīḍa al-Sha‘biyya across Tunisian *muʿtamadiyyāt*, October 2011

lier—nowhere else was the party able to capture anywhere near a majority of the vote. The reason for this voting pattern is not mysterious—the party’s founder, Hicham Hamdi, is a native son of Sidi Bouzid (Lindsay and El-Amrani 2011) and was able to call on local loyalties at election time.

The same, incidentally, is true of voting for the second largest party in the constituent assembly, Marzouki’s Congress for the Republic (CPR). Figure 16 is a scatterplot of CPR’s vote shares across the country, against the share of the workforce in agriculture. As with al-‘Arīḍa’s vote share, there is a clear set of outliers—this time in the southwestern province of Kebili. The reason for CPR’s uniquely strong performance in that locale is not that voters there were somehow more ideologically receptive to leftist appeals, but that Marzouki hails from the Marāẓīq tribe based in Douz, a town in Kebili. An illustration of the importance of Marzouki’s belonging to Douz is offered by a December 2012 speech that the Tunisian president gave on a visit to that district, in which he promised to address the region’s chronic water shortages, and concluded with the rousing declaration, “Have faith in God, have faith in yourselves, have faith in Douz, and have faith in the Marāẓīq!”30 What this all suggests is that, in the calculus of Tunisia’s voters, ideology matters less than a candidate’s or party’s ability to credibly commit to serving voters, and the credibility of that commitment is greater the more embedded in the locality the candidate or the party is. Interpreting the results of such elections through the lens of grand cleavages, rather than through the connections parties have to voters, obsures as

30Mosaïque FM, “Al-Munṣīf al-Marzūqī: Thiqū billāh, thiqū bi-dūz, thiqū fi al-marāẓīq (Moncef Marzouki: Have faith in God, have faith in Douz, have faith in the Marāẓīq),” December 24, 2012; available at:: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slHHjbdqkdbg
much as it illuminates.

6 Conclusion

Why did a revolution whose principal demand was not for the rule of the Qur’an, but rather for “bread, freedom, and social justice (‘aysh, ḥurriyah, ‘adālah īṭimmā ‘iyya),” give way so quickly to the dominance of religious political parties? After all, it is frequently reported that 40% of citizens subsist on less than two dollars per day (in 1993 international prices). The country’s per capita income of $5,349 places it in the lower half of nations. Ranked by its score on the United Nations Development Programme’s human development index (which aggregates health, education, and national income indicators), Egypt places 112th, behind Cape Verde and Guatemala and just ahead of Nicaragua. Egypt’s poor masses would seem to constitute a ready constituency for a politics of radical redistribution. Why, then, do Egyptians cast ballots not for the tribunes of workers and peasants, but for religious parties led by technocrats (such as President Morsi, a U.S.-trained engineering professor) and tycoons (such as Khayrat al-Shāṭir, a multi-millionaire businessman, and the Muslim Brotherhood’s second-in-command)? To expropriate the title of a well-known

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book, should we be asking “What’s the Matter with Cairo?”

This article has argued that the answer to that question is, “nothing.” The dominance of religious parties can neither be taken as evidence of the dominance of religious concerns nor of the subordination of economic ones. On the contrary, we find that Islamists are able to win expressly by mobilizing along the economic dimension, prioritizing welfare and redistributive policies in their formal party platforms, and using their access to voters through Islamic civic networks (such as clinics and hospitals) to position themselves not as champions of God, but as deliverers of Mammon. Thus, when Lila Abu Lughod (1995, 54), writing during an earlier period of Islamist energy, asked, why is “a political discourse in which morality displaces class as the central social problem [...] so appealing?” she was reifying a religious cleavage that, as this article has attempted to demonstrate, was far less important than widely assumed.

There are several implications of this work. First, it suggests that we cannot infer underlying social cleavages from the structure of a country’s party system. Party fortunes, particularly in new democracies, may be less a function of the structure of mass opinion than they are of organizational factors. Not only does this raise questions about the external validity of theories of party formation generated to explain outcomes in late 19th and early 20th century Europe, it also raises questions about the internal validity of those accounts. To what extent is our post-hoc reading of social cleavages from party systems in modern Europe an accurate reflection of reality experienced by parties and voters?

Second, this article has offered an explanation for Islamists initial victories, rooted in their superior ability to use existing religious institutions to mobilize along economic lines, that can also explain why those victories withered so rapidly. By demonstrating the contingency of Islamist support on factors orthogonal to religion, we understand why the Islamist support base proved far more fragile than we would have expected it to be, had it been based on a popular desire for the application of religious laws and moral codes. Instead, the Brotherhood’s claim to rule was always based not on claims of superior fidelity to the faith, but on claims of superior ability to do well by Egypt, to deliver to Egyptians the economic development and egalitarianism that had eluded them for the past 30 years. When the movement failed to do this, it mattered little that it was the self-styled vanguard of shari’a.

Thus, we can finally put to rest the fear that Islamists would exploit democratic elections to come to power, after which they would replace democracy with Islamic theocracy. This fear was best expressed by former American diplomat Edward Djerejian, who said that instead of “one man, one vote,” Islamists would usher in “one man, one vote, one time.” This fear, however, was based on a particular sociological understanding of Islamists’ electoral prowess, one rooted in the belief that


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the social conservatism observable on the so-called Arab street was indicative of a set of widespread and durable political preferences. As this article has shown, those preferences were neither as widespread nor as durable as previously believed. The ink that was spilled in an attempt to divine the depths of the Islamists’ democratic commitments would have been better spent exploring the possibility that Islamists would ever enjoy the kind of unquestioned support that would enable them to put such anti-democratic designs into practice in the first place.

Third, and finally, this article helps us to understand why the Muslim Brotherhood’s tenure in power ended in a military coup rather than in an election. After all, given the dwindling support for Islamists over the course of their year in power, it is puzzling that opponents of the Egyptian president sought military intervention rather than simply preparing to trounce him and his party at the polls. However, a close examination of the demands of the opposition and of the government in the months leading up to the coup suggests that the opposition did want an election—just not the kind of election that the government wanted.

In fact, I argue that the battle between Islamists and their opponents is properly understood not as a struggle over the place of religion in public life or the proper meaning of democracy. It was, at root, a battle over a relatively narrow institutional matter—whether to have presidential or parliamentary elections. Morsi and the Brotherhood preferred the latter, and had tentatively scheduled the parliamentary contest for April 2013 (before these plans were derailed by the Constitutional Court, which rejected the proposed electoral law).35 Shortly after the army’s announcement of the coup, Morsi once again called for the “rapid conduct of the upcoming parliamentary elections so that we can create a parliament in accordance with the already extant Egyptian constitution.”36 The president’s opponents, on the other hand, wanted a presidential contest. United in a temporary National Salvation Front (Jabhat al-Inqādī al-Waṭāṭī)—led by Mohamed ElBaradei and former presidential candidates Ḥāmid Ṣabāḥī and Amre Moussa—they refused anything short of a reset of the presidential election that had brought Morsi to power a year earlier.37

What explains each side’s preferences, and intransigence? I argue that the reason that the opposition rejected parliamentary elections and Morsi rejected a presidential one is that neither side thought it could win the elections favored by the other. The opposition resisted parliamentary elections because they feared that the Muslim Brotherhood’s unpopularity might not be enough to overcome the Islamists’ still-considerable resource advantage. After all, the revolution of 2011 had

not changed the fundamental alchemy of Egypt’s politics or its associational life. The non-Islamist opposition remained bereft of the infrastructure that would allow it to reach the vast majority of voters. They faced the formidable challenge of identifying non-Islamist candidates in each and every electoral district who could call on local allegiances to match those of the Islamists, incorporating them all into a national opposition front, and waging local campaigns against Muslim Brotherhood and Islamist candidates who, for all of the flaws of their parties or their president, were embedded in local communities in ways their rivals were not.

A presidential election, from the opposition’s standpoint, was a different matter. It was much easier to envision coordinating around a single presidential candidate, a charismatic figure such as Ḥamdīn Ṣabāhī or a “wise man” such as Amr Moussa, who could reap votes simply by serving as the focus of popular anger with Mohamed Morsi. For his part, the president was probably aware of his dwindling popularity. The anger in the streets, not to mention the narrowness of his electoral victory a year prior, likely convinced him that he could not prevail in a new contest. Rather than risk an election, then, Morsi chose instead to put Egypt’s fledgling democracy at risk. Brandishing his claim to democratic legitimacy like a weapon, he was soon to find that it could not help but prove impotent in the face of the real weapons carried by the men in uniform.

What all of this suggests, then, is that Djerejian was right, after a fashion, when he predicted that Islamist electoral victories would result in the abrogation of democracy, even as he was wrong about the cause. Islamist victories in democratic contests endangered democracy not because Islamists were imperfectly committed to the democratic game, but because they were too successful at it.

References


