

Religiosity and Support for Democracy in Israel and the Arab World

Measurement and Theory of Democratic Attitudes

Outline

Intro

Islamic Orientations and Democratic Attitudes

Why?

How?

What?

Religion, Authoritarianism, Democracy in Israel

Why?

How?

What?

Summary

Summary

Class questions

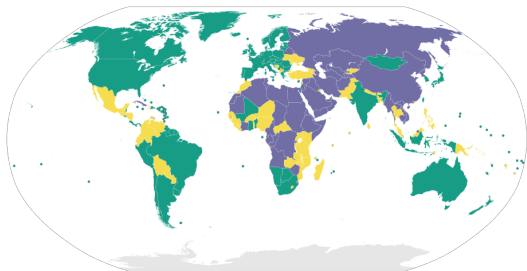
Why Religion?

- ▶ Post-war politics:
 - ▶ political conflict \approx ideological conflict
 - ▶ Cold War
 - ▶ De-Colonisation, pan-Arabism etc.
- ▶ Return of Religion
 - ▶ Iranian Revolution and Mujahideen in Afghanistan 1979
 - ▶ Growing importance of religion in Middle East conflict(s)
 - ▶ Religious Right in US + 9/11
 - ▶ Global discrimination against Muslims / global politicisation of religion

Religion and Democracy

- ▶ Religion
 - ▶ Absolute truth(s)
 - ▶ Binding, non-negotiable values and commandments
 - ▶ Religion sometimes linked to authoritarian personality
 - ▶ Compatible with pluralism, democracy, compromise?
- ▶ Tessler (Michigan)
 - ▶ Attitudes and Values in the Middle East
 - ▶ Islam and democracy (e.g. Turkey)
- ▶ Canetti-Nisim (Haifa)
 - ▶ Political Psychology
 - ▶ Attitudes and Values, broadly defined
 - ▶ Israel

Lack of Democracy in the Arab World (Freedom House)



- ▶ Democracy largely absent in Arab world
- ▶ Reforms stalled
- ▶ Because of elites and/or tribal/parochial orientations?
- ▶ Because of Islam?

Islam and Democracy

- ▶ Cons
 - ▶ all encompassing and authoritarian
 - ▶ Conformity
 - ▶ Traditional
- ▶ Pros
 - ▶ Abused to stabilise authoritarian rulers
 - ▶ Hardly uniform
 - ▶ Progressive/tolerant tendencies and traditions
- ▶ Research question:
 - ▶ 'Islamic conceptions/attachments' ↔ democratic attitudes/values
 - ▶ (Correlation vs. causation)

Data and Method

- ▶ Data
 - ▶ WVS 2000-02
 - ▶ Four Arab countries: Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Jordan
 - ▶ Internal variation + large share of the total population
 - ▶ But Gulf states excluded
- ▶ Method
 - ▶ Mass surveys
 - ▶ Indices of relatively few items
 - ▶ Regression
- ▶ Democracy (5 items)
 - ▶ Overall assessment
 - ▶ Performance (problems)
- ▶ Religiosity (5 items)
 - ▶ Public role for Islam
 - ▶ Mosque involvement

Model

- ▶ Independent
 - ▶ Attitudes towards Islam
 - ▶ Age, educ, sex, income,, residence
 - ▶ Regime evaluation
- ▶ Dependent
 - ▶ Favourable attitudes towards democracy
 - ▶ Democracy brings problems

Findings

- ▶ Impact of attitudes towards Islam very limited
- ▶ Generally relatively positive attitudes towards democracy
- ▶ *If* there are effects, mostly linked to perception of problems
- ▶ Little evidence for alleged incompatibility of Islam/Democracy
 - ▶ At individual level
 - ▶ In Arab countries

Religion and Democracy

- ▶ Religion and democracy deemed incompatible by many social scientists
- ▶ Religion
 - ▶ Absolute truths, eternal damnation
 - ▶ Many non-negotiable rules
 - ▶ Authoritarian structures
 - ▶ Often: ethnocentrism ('God's chosen people')
- ▶ Liberal democracy
 - ▶ Freedom and tolerance as central values
 - ▶ Majority rule and minority protection
 - ▶ Scepticism a core principle
- ▶ But is it really about religion or about authoritarian personalities?

Authoritarianism

- ▶ Originally copyrighted by Adorno et al. (did not work on many levels)
- ▶ Ill-defined, fantastically amorphous concept
- ▶ Roughly:
 - ▶ A desire to conform and belong
 - ▶ Support for strong authorities and universal regulation
 - ▶ Contempt for dissenters; 'others' more generally
- ▶ A personality trait or an ideology?
- ▶ Many measurement issues, but: Altemeyer
- ▶ Obviously, not exactly compatible with liberal democracy
- ▶ (But many democratic parties/citizens exhibit some authoritarian features)

Data

- ▶ Large, two-stage sample of Jewish students in 12 HE institutions in Israel
- ▶ Administered in May/June 2001
- ▶ Roughly 1100 interviews
- ▶ Skewed distributions, but reasonable variation

Measures

- ▶ Religiosity
 - ▶ 6 items tapping into Jewish core beliefs
 - ▶ Internally consistent and correlated with subjective religiosity
- ▶ Authoritarianism
 - ▶ Hebrew translation of Altemeyer scale
 - ▶ Items related to religion (5) and culture (4) excluded
- ▶ Support for democracy
 - ▶ Four items from Israel
 - ▶ One from Germany, one from the US

Method: SEM

- ▶ Structural Equation Modelling
- ▶ AKA Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)
- ▶ Combination of
 - ▶ Factor Analysis (measurement model for latent variables)
 - ▶ Path Analysis (correlations between latent variables)
- ▶ Popular in psychology because
 - ▶ Deals with things that nobody can see (attitudes, constructs)
 - ▶ Natural way to handle multi-item measurements
- ▶ Cool but complex
- ▶ Some conclusions/decisions/arguments in the text look dubious to me
- ▶ Focus on figures

Argument/Findings

- ▶ Authoritarianism has strong effect
- ▶ Religion has indirect effect
 - ▶ Religiosity has little/no direct effect
 - ▶ Religiosity plays *via* Authoritarianism
 - ▶ Religious people tend to be more authoritarian
 - ▶ Authoritarian people tend to dislike democracy
- ▶ So it's not religion, but the way people view their religion?

Summary

- ▶ In theory, relationship between religion and democracy problematic
- ▶ No strong correlations between Islamic beliefs and anti-democratic attitudes in four major Arab countries
- ▶ Religiosity has no *direct* effect on anti-democratic attitudes amongst Jewish Israeli students

Class questions

- ▶ Can you believe in these findings?
- ▶ Try to find at least three (potential) methodological problems/issues
- ▶ Do *you* think that religion and democracy are compatible?