Abstract

Why does religion sometimes increase support for democracy and sometimes do just
the opposite? In this dissertation, I present and test a theory of religion, group inter-
est, and democracy. Focusing on communal religion, I demonstrate that the effect of
communal prayer on support for democracy depends on the interests of the religious
group in question. For members of groups who would benefit from democracy, com-
munal prayer increases support for democratic institutions; for citizens whose groups
would lose privileges in the event of democratic reforms, the opposite effect is present.
The varying effects of religious behavior on regime preferences can be explained, in
large part, by sectarian interests. Religious identity is channeled through political
and/or economic concerns in determining attitudes towards democracy and redis-
tribution. I test these claims both observationally and experimentally, using data
from Lebanon, Iraq, India, and a cross-national sample. Through an original survey
conducted in Lebanon in 2014, I provide a fine-grained analysis of the ways in which
sectarian interests condition the effect of communal prayer on democratic attitudes. I
find that communal religion, either through frequent attendance at religious services
or through the experimental primes, increases the salience of sectarian identity, and
therefore pushes respondents’ regime attitudes into closer alignment with the interests
of their sect.
Acknowledgments

Looking back at the process of writing this dissertation, I am amazed by the generosity I have encountered from all kinds of sources. This project would not have been possible without help and support from countless people (certainly more than I can recount here) at every stage.

First, I wish to thank the members of my dissertation committee, who have suffered through more versions of these chapters than anyone else. Amaney Jamal has been the most valuable advisor I could possibly have imagined. From the beginning of my time at Princeton—actually, even before then—she has consistently treated me as a colleague and offered unwavering support and advice on all aspects of my professional development. I know of no other advisor who is as generous with her students in providing research resources, professional connections, and opportunities for co-authorship. It goes without saying that I would not be in this position today if it were not for her enthusiasm, input, and support. Chris Achen has been a vital source of feedback since my second year at Princeton, reading far more of my writing than could be considered reasonable, and not letting me get away with anything\(^1\). I am gratified to be moving to the University of Notre Dame, the one-time rivals of his beloved Michigan Wolverines. Carles Boix has encouraged me to look at this project from different perspectives, and has been abundantly generous with his time.

\(^1\)At all. Ever.
and energy in working to make the dissertation better. Bob Wuthnow has provided a wonderful environment at the Center for the Study of Religion, allowing me to bring together insights about religion from many other disciplines. My understanding of religion has improved immeasurably as a result.

My teachers and advisors at earlier stages were also instrumental in making this dissertation possible. My eighth grade teacher, Frank Merk, inspired my interest in politics. While I was a student at Notre Dame, Fr. Bob Dowd took a chance on me as a research assistant and gave me the opportunity to dive head-first into serious political research. Fran Hagopian devoted a considerable amount of energy to making sure that I got into grad school, and helped me with the process of obtaining a National Science Foundation graduate research fellowship (I’d never heard of it). Most of all, Michael Coppedge transformed me from a political science student to a political scientist. Looking back, the amount of time he spent with me working on my senior thesis, graduate school applications, and other projects is almost unthinkable. The award he received for undergraduate mentoring was well-deserved.

At Princeton, I have benefited from a large and vibrant intellectual community. I received valuable feedback on pieces of this project from the Comparative Politics Graduate Research Seminar, the Religion and Public Life Workshop at the Center for the Study of Religion, the Arab Political Development Workshop, and the Fellowship of Woodrow Wilson Scholars. There are far too many individuals to name among these groups, but special thanks go to Chantal Berman, John Chin, Sam Jaroszewski, Kevin Mazur, Matt Tokeshi, and Alienor van den Bosch, just a few of the many grad school colleagues and friends who have offered advice. Liz Nugent deserves special acknowledgement, having endured an especially large number of chapter drafts and presentations.

I have been blessed to be surrounded by such a supportive family. My par-
ents, Pauline and John, have always made their children’s education a top priority, and have worked tirelessly to make it easy for us to obtain as much education as we wanted\(^2\). My grandparents on both sides made major sacrifices to provide an education for my parents, without which I would never have reached this point. Through their pride and encouragement, my grandmother (“Mom-Mom”) and late grandfather (“Poppy”) inspired me to keep pushing through a sometimes frustrating process. My brother and sister-in-law, Bryan and Kathleen, have been vital sources of support and entertainment since well before I began this project. My other brother and sister-in-law, PJ and Sarah, have also been wonderful sources of support, and we look forward to being closer to them upon our move.

More than anyone, I wish to thank my wife, Kathy. The sheer volume of annoyance, frustration, and, frankly, nonsense, that I have put her through during this process (and before) will surely put her on the fast-track to canonization. The fact that she has endured all of this while often dealing with medical difficulties makes her sacrifice all the more impressive. She has allowed me to forgo a respectable salary in favor of six years of graduate school, spend money from our own accounts on a survey, and move her across the country just so that I could work in a job that I like. Most amazingly, she has done so with a smile on her face. Very few people would be willing to make those kinds of sacrifices, and that is not lost on me. There is no acknowledgement that I could give that would adequately capture the love and support that she has shown me.

\(^2\)My brother Bryan’s jealous hostility to post-graduate education is most certainly not an indictment on my parents.
For Kathy
Contents

List of Figures 10

List of Tables 12

1 An Interest-Based Theory of Religion and Support for Democracy 13

2 Christians and Muslims in Lebanon Before the Syrian Civil War 50

Appendices 75
   Appendix 2.A Survey Questions Used 75
   Appendix 2.B Supplementary Tables 77

3 After Syria: Communal Religion and Democracy in 2014 Lebanon 82

Appendices 123
   Appendix 3.A Description of Experiment 123
   Appendix 3.B Description of Variables 125

4 Representation or Redistribution? Evidence from Iraq 127

Appendices 154
   Appendix 4.A Supplementary Tables and Figures 154
5 Beyond the Arab World: Evidence from India and Cross-National Data

Appendices

Appendix 5.A Additional Information, India ........................................ 181
Appendix 5.B Additional Information .................................................. 183
List of Figures

1.1 Diagram of the General Model .................................................... 25

2.1 Population and Parliamentary Numbers, by Sect .......................... 56
2.2 Average Monthly Income, by Sect (in LBP) ................................. 61
2.3 Marginal Effects of Communal Prayer on Support for Democracy ..... 68
2.4 Marginal Effects of Communal Prayer on Protest Participation ...... 71

3.1 Cross-National Education Spending by Income ............................. 90
3.2 Support for Democracy, by Sect and Attendance (Observed) ........ 96
3.3 Average Treatment Effects (Support for Democracy) ................... 102
3.4 Frequency of Communal Prayer and Linked Fate ........................... 104
3.5 “Friday” Effect, by Weekly Attendance ........................................ 107
3.6 Average Treatment Effects (Linked Fate) ..................................... 109
3.7 Frequency of Communal Prayer and Perceived Benefits from Democracy 110
3.8 Frequency of Communal Prayer and Attitudes towards Ending Sectarian System ................................................................. 113
3.9 Frequency of Communal Prayer and Attitudes towards New Census ... 114

116 Inequality Economic towards Attitudes and Prayer Communal of Frequency 3.10
3.11 Frequency of Communal Prayer and Attitudes towards Redistributive Democracy ................................................................. 117
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Average Income by Sect</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Iraqi Districts, by Oil Reserves and Major Sects</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Change in Predicted Probability of Support for Democracy from Communal Prayer</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Change in Predicted Probability of Support for Democracy from Communal Prayer</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 “Candidate Sect Important”, by Sect and Communal Prayer</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Candidate Sect or Piety Important, by Sect and Communal Prayer</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.1 Conditional Probabilities of Support for Democracy</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Class and Education, by Sect</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Support for Democracy, by Sect and Attendance</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Marginal Effects of Weekly Attendance, by Sect</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Marginal Effects of Attendance, by Group Size</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Marginal Effects of Attendance, by Group Size (Non-Democracies)</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Demographics and Allocations, 1943 National Pact</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.B.1</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.B.2</td>
<td>Logistic Regression Results, Support for Democracy (Christians)</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.B.3</td>
<td>Logistic Regression Results, Support for Democracy (Muslims)</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.B.4</td>
<td>Robustness Checks, Commitment to Democracy</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.B.5</td>
<td>Propensity Score Matching Results</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Baseline Results</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Group Identification, Friday vs. Other Days</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.B.1</td>
<td>Summary Statistics</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.A.1</td>
<td>Support for Democracy by Communal Prayer, Sunni</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.A.2</td>
<td>Support for Democracy by Communal Prayer, Shi’a</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.A.3</td>
<td>Baseline Results, Support for Democracy</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.A.4</td>
<td>Interactive Models, Support for Democracy</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.A.5</td>
<td>Baseline Models, Candidate Sect Important</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.A.1</td>
<td>Regression Results, Hindus</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.A.2</td>
<td>Regression Results, Muslims</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.B.1</td>
<td>Countries Included in Cross-National Tests</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

An Interest-Based Theory of Religion and Support for Democracy

Introduction

Why does religiosity sometimes promote democratic attitudes and behaviors and sometimes have just the opposite effect? On the one hand, religious involvement is often argued to be positively associated with political engagement (Putnam 2000) and mobilization against injustice (Cone 1986; McAdam 1982); but on the other hand, religious beliefs and practices are also cited as key tools for authoritarian stability (Huntington 1996; Kalyvas 2000). Even within the same religious tradition, the Janus-faced nature of religion is evident: while the Catholic Church maintained a strongly anti-democratic outlook for centuries in Western Europe and elsewhere, it eventually became a powerful tool for pro-democracy movements in Eastern Europe (Philpott 2007). While some of these changes are explained by historical events
unique to the contexts in which they developed, a broader theoretical explanation is possible (and important). In this chapter, I present a theory that focuses on the communal aspect of religion. The theory suggests that communal prayer can have either a pro- or anti-democratic effect on support for democracy depending on the sectarian interests of the individual’s group.

Traditionally, the attitudes of “the masses” have been regarded as relatively unimportant, particularly in developing countries where institutions are often ill-equipped for (or downright hostile to) the representation of the interests of ordinary people. In the wake of tremendous social movements across much of the developing world—perhaps most dramatically in the Middle East—we now know better. Recent mass protest activities across the world highlight the continued importance of the attitudes of ordinary citizens; views toward regimes are of particular importance. In addition to the much-discussed “Arab Spring”, massive protests have threatened governments in Greece, Turkey, Brazil, and elsewhere. The uncertainty about the types of regimes that will succeed the now-deposed autocrats in several countries in the region makes understanding citizens’ attitudes about democracy all the more important: if the people were able to bring down entrenched dictators, what type of regime will they demand as a replacement? In many of these movements, religion has been at the center, either explicitly or implicitly—but little is known about how religion motivates pro- or anti-regime behavior.

Religious identity politics have become more prominent in many parts of the world. The spread of Islamist militant groups in much of the Arab World as well as parts of Africa has brought sectarian tensions to a new level in those regions. Concern about the possible fall of the ‘Alawite regime in Syria has brought fear to religious minorities in neighboring countries, including two countries examined in this study, Lebanon and Iraq. The changing power configurations in these countries has led to
the rise of a new religious politics, in which regimes are increasingly viewed through a sectarian lens, and religion’s influence on democratic attitudes is especially strong. These developments require an explanation that existing accounts of religion and politics cannot provide. Why is it the case that in many of these settings, religion has served pro-democratic purposes, but in others, has done exactly the opposite?

**Religion and Political Behavior: Remaining Ambiguities**

Despite growing awareness that “religious loyalties continue to structure political thought and action” (Grzymala-Busse 2012), comparativists have hesitated to study religion as an independent variable because of both theoretical and methodological limitations: as Bellin (2008) writes, “the subfield has still failed to reckon with the power of religion as an independent variable, the noninstrumental aspect of religious behavior, and the malleability of religious ideas, as well as their differential appeal, persuasiveness, and political salience over time.”1 Part of the problem lies in the difficulty in determining at which level we should examine religion. On the one hand, religion is an individual-level phenomenon; individuals themselves choose whether or not to pray, to attend religious services, and to follow the prescriptions of their faith. At the same time, religion possesses important institutional structures. The majority of the world’s population profess one of only a handful of faiths, and believers in the same tradition should, presumably, resemble each other in significant ways.

After decades of research, the link between religion in its various forms and individual political behavior remains unclear. Much of the existing scholarship fo-

---
1See also Gill (2001) for a discussion of the neglect of religion in comparative politics.
cuses on *denominational* differences in political behavior rather than the effects of religious practices. In a tradition extending back at least to Weber (1922), this literature generally examines the extent to which members of certain sects demonstrate meaningfully different political attitudes and behaviors compared to members of other sects, ignoring within-sect heterogeneity in religious beliefs and practices. As Layman (1997, p. 289) states, denominational affiliation “traditionally has been the only religious variable available in studies of political behavior” despite its very limited information content. In the subfield of comparative political behavior, studies of this kind have examined voting behavior (Knutsen 2004; Lijphart 1979; Lipset and Rokkan 1967) and attitudes towards social issues (Adamczyk and Pitt 2009; Kellstedt and Green 1993), among other topics. A question of particular interest in this literature is whether Islam is compatible with liberal, tolerant, and democratic attitudes (Diamond, Plattner, and Brumberg 2003; Hofmann 2004; Huntington 1996; Kedourie 1994; Kubba 1996). Unsurprisingly, these studies report a wide range of results and suggest no consensus on the link between Islamic affiliation and democratic attitudes. The literature’s failure to integrate sectarian factors with individual level religious behavior has impeded the development of a coherent theory of this relationship.

When considering behavioral rather than denominational differences, even more ambiguity is present. On the issue of civic and political engagement, studies have suggested that religiosity (variously considered) can have a pro-civic effect (Jamal 2005; Putnam and D. Campbell 2010; Smidt 1999), an anti-civic effect (Putnam 1993; Schwadel 2005), or both (D. Campbell 2004; Driskell, Embry, and Lyon 2008). Comparative studies of religion and attitudes towards the welfare state are similarly

---

2 Even *The American Voter* limits its consideration of within-denomination religious factors to “high” versus “low” identification; individual religious behaviors are not examined in their discussion of religious minorities, particularly Catholics and Jews (A. Campbell et al. 1960)
dissonant: some scholars suggest that religious engagement will have a consistently anti-redistributive effect (De La O and Rodden 2008; McClendon and Riedl 2014; Scheve and Stasavage 2006)\(^3\); others state that there is no clear link between these variables (Pepinsky and Welborne 2011); and still others argue that external factors (such as electoral concerns) determine the direction of this relationship (Amat and Wibbels 2009).

**Religion and Regime Attitudes**

Perhaps the clearest example of the uncertainty over religion’s influence in political behavior is found in attitudes towards democracy. Existing studies of the relationship between religion (particularly, personal religious behaviors) and democracy have usually focused primarily on individual-level characteristics or state-level factors without allowing for much interaction between the two. In accord with the literature discussed above, studies examining religiosity’s effect on regime attitudes are quite unclear. Scholars have suggested that religiosity depresses support for democracy in many settings, including Brazil (Geddes and Zaller 1989), Iran (Tezcur et al. 2012), Bosnia (Valenta and Strabac 2012), and Central Asia (Collins and E. Owen 2012). These studies largely focus on the theological and attitudinal components of religion, which are associated with personality types that are said to be incompatible with democracy. Among these characteristics are authoritarian orientations, conservatism, susceptibility to propaganda, and a desire for religious involvement in government.

Other studies have suggested that religiosity may actually *enhance* support for democracy. Gu and Bomhoff (2012) report that religiosity increases support for democracy.\(^3\) The most common argument for this relationship is that religious communities provide an insurance mechanism in the event of adversity; hence, religious individuals do not need to rely on the welfare state as much as other citizens (Dehejia, DeLeire, and Luttmer 2007).
democracy in both Catholic and Muslim countries, two religious groups that have commonly (at least until recently) been labeled as anti-democratic (Huntington 1996). Similar results have been noted in India (Chhibber 2014), Nigeria (Bratton 2003), and much of the Arab World (Rizzo, Abdel-Latif, and Meyer 2007), among others. These studies cover a variety of religious traditions, and typically emphasize the ties between religious piety and concern for justice and accountability. Some authors have also suggested other mechanisms: increased civic and political engagement, political tolerance, and egalitarian attitudes.

Still others claim that religiosity does not heavily influence regime attitudes in any way. Using survey data from the Arab World, Tessler (2002) suggests that Muslim piety has little effect on attitudes toward democracy (and less of an effect on political attitudes in general than is commonly assumed). Ciftci (2010) likewise argues that “religiosity and Islamic values poorly predict support for democracy in the Muslim world”; M. Kim (2008) reports similar findings in a cross-national setting. More recently, Ciftci (2012) finds that Arab citizens display high levels of support for both democracy and Islamic law, and generally do not see a conflict between the two. These studies suggest three possibilities: first, that religiosity simply has no effect on democratic attitudes. Otherwise, it may be the case that one aspect of religiosity promotes democratic attitudes, while other aspects do the opposite. Finally, it is possible that religiosity enhances support for democracy for some people, but this effect is canceled out by an anti-democratic effect among other people. The latter two possibilities highlight the need to consider variation in the effects of religious behaviors on regime preferences.

A final category of this literature argues that religiosity can either promote or depress support for democracy. Bloom and Arikan (2012) suggest that religion has

---

4Some cross-national studies report similar findings (Meyer, Tope, and Price 2008).
a “double-edged” effect on democratic attitudes depending on whether individual belief or social behavior is used as the measure of religiosity. Bloom and Arikan (2013) expand on this claim, arguing that religious belief reduces support for democracy through traditional/survival values, while social religious behavior promotes democratic attitudes both directly and through mechanisms of political interest and trust. This line of thinking usefully suggests that different aspects of religious behavior can demonstrate different and even contradictory effects on regime attitudes. However, while these studies address the different effects of religion’s sub-dimensions, they nevertheless assume that these effects are the same across sects, ignoring potentially important variation.

What is clear from the extant literature on this topic is that the relationship between religious behaviors and democracy is complicated. Philpott (2007, p. 510) observes that even within the “Third Wave” of democratization, religion has played a tremendously important role in promoting democracy in some places (e.g. Poland, Lithuania, and Indonesia) but very little role in others (e.g. Argentina and Senegal). He attributes these differences to divergent patterns in political theology and religion-state relations: the degree of fusion between religious and political institutions as well as the level of tension between them. The effect of religious practices on democratization therefore appears to be conditional not only on the contents and political orientations of religious groups themselves, but also on these groups’ orientations toward the state. My theory of religion, sectarian interest, and regime preferences considers individual and sectarian orientations towards the state in order to provide a coherent theory of the relationship between communal prayer and democratic attitudes.
A Theory of Religion, Sectarianism, and Democracy

The existing literature on this topic has failed to explain the wide variation in religion’s influence on regime preferences, and remains scattered rather than presenting a coherent theoretical and empirical whole. This project takes a first step toward reducing the ambiguity of the effect of religious behavior on attitudes towards democracy, and explaining “the political ambivalence of religion” (Philpott 2007).

A few shortcomings in the literature are responsible for much of the failure to develop an integrated account of religion and democratic attitudes. First, as mentioned earlier, the tendency to aggregate all types of religious behaviors into the broad phenomenon of “religiosity,” thereby ignoring the potentially different effects of various aspects of religiosity. A crucial—but often ignored—fact about religion as a social phenomenon is that it is multidimensional (F. Harris 1994). I have argued that much of the confusion surrounding the relationship between religiosity and democratic values is caused by the literature’s tendency to treat “religiosity” as an aggregation of many different types of behaviors rather than considering each behavior on its own Canetti-Nisim 2004; Meyer, Tope, and Price 2008; Valenta and Strabac 2012. Fortunately, recent literature on this subject has been more careful to disentangle the various components of religious behavior, and has therefore produced somewhat clearer insights into the effects of religious behaviors on political attitudes and behaviors (Layman 1997). A problem remains, however, in the literature’s tendency to assume that the effect of a given religious practice will be constant across space, time, and individual. In subsequent pages, I will argue that the effect of one aspect of religiosity—communal prayer—depends heavily on both state-level and sectarian factors. Existing studies largely ignore factors at levels higher than the individual, discussing the effects of either sectarian affiliation or various types of
religious behaviors. Some arguments acknowledge variation across countries; fewer address differences among sects, and almost none consider political contextual factors that may influence this relationship at the level of the country, sect, or individual.\footnote{Some existing studies (e.g. Smidt 1999) allow for the possibility that behavioral and denominational effects may differ across countries, but ignore the possibility that religious behaviors may affect political outcomes differently between sects within the same country. Lijphart’s (1977) classic book considers the interaction between sect and religious behavior across countries, but does so in a largely descriptive rather than theoretical way. The overwhelming tendency in this literature (both American and comparative) is either to ignore variation between religious groups, or to offer little theoretical account of why these effects differ other than sui generis characteristics of particular sects (D. Campbell 2004; Pettersson 2009; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).}

What is needed is a coherent, transportable theory of why and how religious behaviors have certain effects in particular political-sectarian environments. It is important not only to acknowledge that variation exists at each of these levels; we must also explain this variation in a principled way.

Some of the ambiguity remaining in existing work on this subject comes from confusion about what is meant by “religion\footnote{For William James (2012 [1902]), the fundamental features of religion are personal and private: his definition of religion is “the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.” In his account, the social aspects of religion (as well as theology) are secondary; they are byproducts of these solitary experiences. This definition is similar to Alfred North Whitehead’s: “Religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness.”}.” Durkheim (2001) famously distinguishes between “beliefs” and “rites,” suggesting at least two dimensions to the concept of religion, an individual dimension and a group dimension. Indeed, Durkheim (ibid., p. 42) identifies the communal aspect of religion as one of its key features: “Religious beliefs proper are always held by a defined collectivity that professes them and practices the rites that go with them. These beliefs are not only embraced by all the members of this collectivity as individuals, they belong to the group and unite it. The individuals who make up this group feel bound to one another by their common beliefs.” For Durkheim, this notion of “church” distinguishes religion from magic: “religion must be something eminently collective” (ibid., p. 46).
Following Durkheim, I emphasize the importance of communal prayer because it is in this part of the religious experience in which individuals interact with co-sectarians. Since group concerns are central to issues of representation in much of the world, it is essential to account for the factors that influence sectarian identity and the political behaviors that result from such identity. I do not doubt that other aspects of individual religiosity influence regime attitudes and political behavior; however, since private religious experiences are, by definition, personal and solitary, these experiences will be much more individual-specific and therefore more difficult to observe and analyze. Further, private practices do not embody the same sectarian content as found in communal prayer. There is therefore less reason to believe that private religious behaviors will interact meaningfully with sectarian interests in a way that influences attitudes towards democracy.

Even communal prayer, however, may have heterogeneous effects on regime preferences across individuals and sects. I consider how political context helps to determine when and where communal prayer will promote or inhibit democratic attitudes. In doing so, I analyze several levels: country, sect, individual, and issue area. I posit that the effect of communal prayer on attitudes towards political and redistributive regimes depends on sectarian interests, which in turn are determined by the state-level configuration of political power as well as which issues are under contention. In this way, I do not assume—as much of the existing literature does—that the effect of communal worship is constant across time periods, countries, and sects. Context is not only important; it is absolutely vital in predicting this effect, and the effect can reverse itself in response to changing political conditions.

This project is distinct from earlier studies of religion and political attitudes in that it seeks to explain outcomes through the conditional effect of religious practice rather than through group identity or membership or personal piety. While individual
piety might demonstrate some effect on attitudes towards democracy independent of the communal aspect of religion, the theory presented below is about collective religion. In this sense, the emphasis of this project is on what Wald (1987) call the “organizational” and “social interaction” dimensions of religion. The mechanisms outlined in this theory depend on collective religious practice, which in turn heightens the importance of group interests, thereby influencing attitudes towards democracy at the individual level.

The theory presented in this project is more structural than cultural. It applies to religiously-divided societies, and is most applicable to countries in which certain groups enjoy disproportionate economic and/or political power relative to others. In this theory, when I refer to “privileged” groups, I am describing groups who have greater-than-average political power, economic resources, or both. Depending on what citizens believe democracy to mean, democratization could influence power structures through political and/or economic channels. My theory emphasizes the interests of religious sects. Recent work on religion and democracy rightfully addresses the instrumental calculations made by religious actors with respect to the prospect of democracy (Driessen 2014; Gill 1998; Kalyvas and Van Kersbergen 2010; Toft, Philpott, and Shah 2011). While doctrinal teachings and religious leaders undoubtedly influence believers’ perceptions of democracy, the group interest dimensions of religion’s relationship to the state deserve greater attention than they have received in the existing literature on this topic.

I will suggest that the effect of communal prayer on regime preferences—and, by a similar logic, redistributive preferences—depends primarily on group and state-level factors rather than individual characteristics. The example of redistributive preferences illustrates this logic quite clearly: when an individual’s religious group would, on balance, benefit from further redistribution, communal prayer will tend
to promote support for redistribution; if the group would be a “net payer” under redistributive policies, communal prayer will have the opposite effect. Importantly, these effects operate separately from an individual’s personal incentives with respect to redistribution. Wealthy members of poor sects may oppose redistribution, and poor members of wealthy groups may likewise favor it, as predicted by the canonical models of redistributive preferences (Meltzer and Richard 1981). My argument is not that personal interests do not influence redistributive attitudes; rather, following Akerlof and Kranton (2000), I am suggesting that a second term should be entered into the individual’s utility function. This term concerns how much an individual cares about the status of his/her group, holding constant his/her own personal status. Thus, while wealthy members of poor sects might oppose redistribution, I expect that the most frequent attenders among this subset will be more likely to support redistribution than those who do not engage in communal prayer, holding constant their own income level. In other words, a wealthy member of a poor sect might be inclined to oppose redistribution on the grounds that she is wealthy. The more she cares about her sect, however, the more supportive of redistribution she will tend to be, because her group is poor.

Figure 1.1 presents the basic model graphically. The basic intuition is as

---

7 Using the terminology employed in formal models of redistributive politics, this means that the partial derivative of an individual’s utility function (that is, his/her utility from redistributive policies) with respect to income will still be negative, but an additional term will be needed. This term would capture the effect of the salience of sectarian identity on utility derived from redistribution. The sign and strength partial derivative of the individual’s utility function will depend on the relative income or status of his/her sect, irrespective of his/her personal income.

8 For this reason, my statistical models always include some measures of income. However, it is important to note that I do not include an interaction term multiplying income by communal prayer. The reason for this exclusion is that my theory does not include an interactive hypothesis. It is important to control for income to the extent that it may overlap with religious practice, but the theory does not predict that the marginal effect of communal prayer will vary by income; that is, the effect of worship is additive in the individual’s utility function.

9 It is worth noting that the “privileged”-“underprivileged” shorthand used here does not necessarily refer to absolute levels of privilege. The relevant quantity is the comparison between what a group currently possesses and what it would be likely to possess in the event of democratization
follows: in religiously-divided societies, communal religious practice tends to promote political attitudes and behaviors in which individuals begin to think more along sectarian lines; that is, they tend to support their religious group—particularly through political attitudes—more than they otherwise would. As a result, individuals who engage in communal religious practice are expected to support democracy more or less depending on the interests of their group.

Figure 1.1: Diagram of the General Model

The second piece of this model requires some elaboration. In divided societies in which certain groups are substantially better-off than others (whether politically, economically, or both), relatively disadvantaged groups have an incentive to support more meaningful democratization, since a shift towards “rule by the people” would presumably increase the amount of power wielded by larger groups. A democratic transition would provide political privileges to the largest group. Thus, it is in the interests of these groups to support democracy. If a smaller group is in power in

and/or redistribution. For instance, the group in power may not necessarily have anything to fear from democracy. If the dominant group is sufficiently large, then they need not worry about the “tyranny of the majority” brought by democracy; they will remain in power in either case. However, if the dominant group is not large enough to be electorally successful, as is the case in most of the countries considered in this project, then the dominant group will have incentives to resist democratization.
a non-democratic country, a democratic transition threatens not only their political influence but their guarantees of tolerance as well. If the majority takes power, as would be expected in a democracy, there may be no mechanisms to ensure that the rights of religious minorities will be protected; this is a particularly likely possibility if the minority group was previously politically dominant. By the same logic, an out-of-power majority group should prefer democracy, because by gaining control of the state, they can ensure their own religious rights. Cases like Syria and pre-2003 Iraq demonstrate that dictators from minority religious groups often fear the potential destabilizing effects of religion, and therefore seek to restrict the rights of other sects. The electoral and sectarian interests of a given group therefore point in the same direction: for large sects (especially those without political power), democracy is a preferable alternative; for small sects (especially those currently in power), democracy creates a fear of the tyranny of the majority.

Similar reasoning can be applied to the economic realm. A transition to democracy will likely lead citizens to expect an increase in the wealth of these relatively impoverished groups because democracies tend to redistribute more than non-democracies (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; Boix 2003). Consequently, poor sects will tend to have reasons to prefer democracy. The incentives for the better-off groups are exactly the opposite: since a transition to democracy would presumably decrease their share of power by dividing power more equally according to group size, they would lose from democratization. Accordingly, it is perhaps in their interest to prevent democratization. Consequently, this model predicts that the positive effect

\[10\] This formulation is consistent with the “relative deprivation” approach of Gurr (1970) and others. However, it is worth noting that the model presented in this chapter does not address rebellion or violent conflict as is common in the relative deprivation literature. In reality, relative deprivation is less likely to explain conflict and rebellion because of the variety of constraints under which would-be rebels operate. The forms of mobilization studied in this project, however, are relatively low-cost, and are therefore more likely to be explained by theories in the style of relative deprivation.
of religious practice on support for democracy should not be present for privileged groups; indeed, religious practice should *lessen* support for democracy among these groups.\textsuperscript{11}

The comparison in this project between privileged and underprivileged groups is related to the notion of “between-group inequality” as described by Baldwin and Huber (2010). They suggest that when material conditions differ considerably between ethnic groups, public goods provision suffers. This finding highlights a crucial building block of the theory advanced in this chapter: economic (particularly, redistributive) policies are not always targeted at individuals simply based on their income; redistribution along the lines of identity groups are often an essential step in the political process\textsuperscript{12}. In this way, democracy (with its implied redistribution) should signal different prospects to different *groups*, not just to relatively rich or poor individuals.

According to this model, communal religious practice increases the salience of group identity and therefore makes individuals more likely to espouse political beliefs and behaviors that promote the interest of their group, holding constant their individual interests. This is not to say that individual interests do not matter—on the contrary, many factors influence levels of support for democracy. Rather, this theory is claiming that holding constant the other factors that influence attitudes toward democracy, communal religious practice will tend to promote attitudes in line with the interest of an individual’s religious group. Likewise, this study does not arrive at any conclusions about the cumulative effect of all forms of religiosity; instead, it focuses on the particular phenomenon of communal religious practice.

\textsuperscript{11}These predictions align with Jamal and Tessler (2008), who argue that citizens in the Arab world often view democracy instrumentally, and support it insofar as it serves their interests.
\textsuperscript{12}Salti and Chaaban (2010) demonstrate that redistribution closely follows sectarian patterns in Lebanon, a pattern witnessed in many other countries as well.
**Axis of Competition**

What determines how groups define their goals with respect to other sects? I argue that the *axis of political competition* is key. Depending on which groups view themselves to be in competition—and what they are competing over—the same group may experience vastly different trends with regard to religion and political behavior; this concept is similar to “situational salience” as described by Tajfel and Turner (1979). Verba, Nie, and J. Kim (1978) have noted that “group-based forces differ from nation to nation. These differences are reflected in the pattern of cleavage in societies and in the way in which such cleavages are institutionalized in parties and organizations” (ibid., p. 19). In the area of religion, Herberg (1983) has observed that the broadness or specificity of religious categories changes over time in response to evolving social and political circumstances. While it is beyond the scope of this project to explain the origins of religious categories, it is nevertheless important to consider how the *relationship* between communal prayer and support for democracy can change over time (or other changing variables), even for the same sect and within the same country. To this effect, I consider the axis of political competition as an intervening variable. Since democracy creates winners and losers, it is important to consider which sects consider themselves to be in competition with one another. In a setting in which more than one group would benefit (or lose) from democracy, it is conceivable that communal prayer could have the same effect for all of those groups. In a bipolar sectarian system, however, sectarian political competition will tend to take on a zero-sum quality; if one group benefits from the changes brought by democracy, they presumably should come at the cost of privileges previously held by the other group\(^\text{13}\). In subsequent chapters, I will examine the importance of the axis of

\(^{13}\)It is important to note that *violent* conflict is not necessary for this pattern to emerge. The existence of political competition between groups should be more than sufficient to produce the type
political competition in Lebanon and Iraq in a few ways. In Lebanon, I will argue that changing political circumstances shifted the relationship between communal prayer and regime attitudes because of a change in the configuration of competition among the groups. In Iraq, I will suggest that even at the same point in time, communal prayer’s effect on support for democracy depends on what the individual perceives democracy to mean. Both of these considerations are a part of the broader concept of the axis of political competition.

**Mechanisms**

A number of mechanisms for the relationships described above are possible. Many of these potential mechanisms have been discussed in existing social scientific accounts of religion. In his landmark sociological study of religion, Durkheim (2001, p. 171) argues that worship is not fundamentally about deities, but about the religious community; for Durkheim, deities are “merely the symbolic expression of society.” He further suggests that “by seeming to strengthen the ties that bind the worshiper and his god, [acts of worship] really strengthen the ties that bind the individual to his society.” Similarly, Beattie (1966) argues that religious rituals are frequently vehicles for instilling group values and clarifying the social order (similar claims are made by Djupe and Gilbert 2008, among others). I will argue that the link between communal religious practice and sect-centric political attitudes is driven by sectarian solidarity. The more frequently an individual participates in communal worship, the closer she will feel to other members of her sect, and her political preferences will adjust accordingly.

---

14 For a general critique of the de-emphasis on deities, see Stark (2010).
Religion, Group Affect, and Solidarity

Group solidarity plays an important role in translating religious practice into regime attitudes. Good and Willoughby (2007) and others have identified religion as a key builder of identity. Communal religious practice would seem to be an especially potent force for building group solidarity: through structured, regular interaction with members of the same religious community, communal practice can build trust and norms of reciprocity that might, under the right circumstances, aid in the functioning of democracy. However, it is important to distinguish between religious belief (or private practices) and communal religious behaviors; as Putnam (2000, p. 74) notes, “privatized religion may be morally compelling and psychically fulfilling, but it embodies less social capital.”

How does this social capital-producing process work? Face-to-face interaction with fellow congregants is an important factor, particularly since the congregation is the setting in which the overwhelming majority of religious interactions take place. These interactions enhance feelings of group solidarity and support. In a study on social support for the elderly, Krause (2002, p. S341) presents evidence suggesting that “greater congregational cohesiveness is associated with receiving more spiritual support and more emotional support from one’s fellow parishioners” and that congregants who attend services more frequently are more likely to view their congregations are highly cohesive. Psychological studies of mental health among Lebanese citizens have suggested that organizational religion influences mental health, while other aspects of religion do not, and that it does so through a mechanism of “social solidarity” (Chaaya et al. 2007). These findings indicate a significant social cohesion mechanism—the more citizens participate in communal worship, the more embedded they feel in their congregations.
The solidarity mechanism demonstrated by communal prayer can work through at least two different channels: messages from religious leaders and exposure to co-sectarians. This dichotomy is closely related to the question of whether the political influence of religion comes “from the pulpit or the pews” (Brewer, Kersh, and Petersen 2003; Valenzuela n.d.) In many cases, sermons delivered by political leaders explicitly address political issues; these patterns will be discussed further in subsequent chapters. Even in the absence of explicitly political content, however, sermons may have an indirect political influence. To the extent that sermons promote sectarian identity—which they frequently do in abundance in the cases studied in this project (Ayoob 2004; Davis 2005; Norton 2005; Picard 1993)—worshipers’ political attitudes may be affected by sermons even without direct political appeals.

Beyond formal sermons or exhortations from religious leaders, however, participation in communal worship increases feelings of group identity (F. Harris 1994) and therefore promotes a sect-centric approach to political issues (cf. Wald, D. Owen, and Hill 1988). The very act of communal prayer may make individuals feel more closely united with their co-sectarians (Jamal 2005). This effect is most evident in religion, where the composition of the worship community is by definition religiously homogeneous. Further, communal prayer provides an opportunity for members to interact before, during, or after worship rituals. This claim does not assume that worshipers meeting for coffee after religious ceremonies will always discuss political or sectarian matters; however, on a larger scale, such gatherings will frequently create fertile ground for political discussion and increased sectarian identity. Evolutionary biologists have suggested that “cultural evolutionary processes, driven by competition among groups, have exploited aspects of our evolved psychology, including certain cognitive by-products, to gradually assemble packages of supernatural beliefs, devotions, and rituals that were increasingly effective at instilling deep commitment,
galvanizing internal solidarity, and sustaining larger-scale cooperation.” (Atran and Henrich 2010, p. 5). Religious rituals play a particularly important role in facilitating cooperation. Experimental research has shown that “acting in synchrony with others [moving rhythmically together] can foster cooperation within groups by strengthening group cohesion” (Wiltermuth and Heath 2009, p.1). This type of behavior is abundant in religious services, complementing the more obvious solidarity-building exercises like praying, listening to sermons, bowing towards Mecca, and others. Since this type of behavior tends to promote solidarity only within the group, as discussed in more detail below, these arguments explain why a number of studies find that communal worship tends to promote out-group hostility as well (for example, Ginges, I. Hansen, and Norenzayan 2009; Iannaccone and Berman 2006).

Participation in congregational worship increases feelings of cohesion with both the congregation and the broader sect. Importantly, the effect of communal worship on group identification does not depend on worshipers receiving explicit political or sectarian cues, though I will demonstrate in later chapters that such cues are common. Direct sectarian messages affect worshipers’ attitudes in predictable ways, but even much subtler cues can have a similar influence. Importantly, these social solidarity processes are not confined to the congregation alone. Communal prayer can also influence sectarian solidarity in noticeable ways. Participation in communal rituals whose history extends beyond the congregation may remind worshipers of their co-religionists in other areas; religious rituals can be particularly strong cultivators of “imagined” religious communities (Anderson 1983). This process requires a certain degree of commonality between congregations: for single-congregation denominations (sects), there is no reason to expect communal rituals to enhance ties

15For instance, it is common for Lebanese preachers to refer to particular regions or neighborhoods as a shorthand for a given sect; a Shi’a preacher’s reference to “the south” will often carry undertones implying that he is referring specifically to Shi’a.
between members of the congregation and members of any other congregation. For the same reasons, the “imagined communities” effect will tend to be stronger within sects for whom rituals are perceived to be more similar across individual congregations. Wuthnow (2009, pp. 80-81) states that “Homogenization...such as dress and styles of worship or beliefs about the Holy Spirit, are also likely to increase the sense among widely scattered congregations that they share a common destiny and bear responsibility for one another.” The common rituals practiced by disparate congregations contribute to a mutually-reinforcing relationship between collective memory and group identity (Brown, Kouri, and Hirst 2012). The sectarian groups discussed in this project all demonstrate a considerable amount of between-congregation linkage; the rituals, ideas, and leaders of these sects extend beyond single congregations to wider sectarian groups.

It is important to note the particular form of group identification engendered by communal religious engagement. While it is possible that communal prayer might strengthen non-religious identities, there are both theoretical and empirical reasons to suspect that these behaviors will have the most powerful effect on sectarian identity. The theoretical reasons for this expectation are clear. First, the content of communal prayer is religious in nature, and is therefore associated with sect, at least to some extent. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, communal worship involves engaging in a communal ritual with only members of one’s own sect. The sectarian homogeneity of worship environments ensures that while ethnic, national, or other identities may be strengthened by communal prayer, the primary identity effects will be found in the sectarian realm.

Empirical research supports these claims. (Dana, Barreto, and Oskooii 2011) observe that among Muslims in the United States, mosque attendance decreases identification with national origins, but increases identification as Muslims. Further, these
authors observe that Muslims who are highly engaged in their mosques are four times as likely to believe that they have a great deal in common with other American Muslims compared to the least engaged. Calhoun-Brown (1996) notes a similar trend among African-American Christians, noting that church attendance is strongly negatively associated with racial identification. She suggests that “Otherworldly concerns may prompt the respondent to think less about being black and more about being Christian” (ibid., p. 948). These examples indicate that communal prayer primarily builds denominational (sectarian) identity rather than non-religious identities; in fact, this increase in sectarian identity may come at the expense of racial or ethnic identification.

Experimental research has found substantial effects of religious primes on individual behavior related to group affect and social solidarity. One line of research (Carpenter and Marshall 2009; Pichon, Boccato, and Saroglou 2007; Randolph-Seng and Nielsen 2007; Shariff and Norenzayan 2007) suggests that religion tends to promote pro-social behavior (generosity, honesty, etc.). However, another set of studies links religious primes to negative outcomes such as racism (Megan Johnson, Rowatt, and LaBouff 2010), anxiety (Toburen and Meier 2010), and submissiveness (Saroglou, Corneille, and Van Cappellen 2009). The diversity of results coming from this literature may help to explain why religion appears to have an ambiguous effect on social capital and, by extension, support for democracy. More recent experiments have suggested that the pro-social effect of religion may be conditional: Megan Johnson, Rowatt, and LaBouff (2012) find that religious priming promotes both in-group favoritism and out-group derogation, suggesting that these primes do not simply lead to greater pro-social behavior across the board. Using a field experiment in Ghana in which respondents played an economic game, Parra (2011) finds that religious priming makes the religious affiliation of the other player a major factor in determining
subjects’ behavior, leading to inter-group bias. Similarly, Blogowska and Saroglou (2011) note that religion promotes pro-social behavior only towards in-group members. These findings suggest an important consideration: religion appears to induce in-group favoritism, and should therefore lead to political attitudes more favorable towards in-groups than out-groups. These patterns are consistent with the claim that religion promotes only (or at least predominantly) within-group (or “bonding”) social capital (Putnam 2000; Uslaner 2002).

Simply put, communal prayer makes citizens feel closer to members of their sect and care more about the well-being of those members. This change in group affect brings corresponding changes in political attitudes: since attenders care more than non-attenders about their co-sectarians’ well-being, they will tend to hold political preferences closer to those that would benefit their sect as a whole. Borrowing the terminology of rational choice theory, a person’s “utility” may be derived from both selfish and group-centered interests (see Margolis 1984). Consequently, wealthy individuals may prefer more redistributive policies, and poor individuals may prefer less. In this story, communal prayer does not affect the individual’s “selfish” interests; rather, it affects the relative weights placed on selfish and group-centric concerns.

To the extent that group-level concerns matter to the individual, her preferences are not “rational” in the narrow self-interested sense. Acemoglu and Robinson’s (2006) famous models of redistributive and regime preferences ignore group-level considerations that are not purely economic in nature. Since the groups they consider (poor, middle class, wealthy, etc.) are defined by their income, it is impossible for their individual interests to clash with their group interests. In reality, however, individuals hold group identities and these identities matter in determining their political preferences. In sectarian societies, religious affiliation is likely to matter quite a bit more than a vague concept of “class.” Since sects are not economically homogeneous,
some group members will have personal financial incentives in conflict with those of the average group member. Existing models of redistributive preferences generally presume that individuals are exclusively interested in maximizing their own income, leaving aside any group-level concerns that might otherwise be important to them.

The omission of identity factors (and, in particular, religion) in the classic models of redistributive democracy is a major oversight in this literature\(^{16}\). Studies that do consider religion as a factor in redistributive preferences typically maintain the assumption that these preferences are ultimately reducible to the individual’s financial interests. Scheve and Stasavage (2006, p. 256) argue that religious individuals should be less supportive of welfare state policies because “religious involvement and social spending can both serve to insure individuals against the effects of adverse life events.” In their account, the religious community provides individuals with a substitute for welfare: in the event of an adverse life event, the individual’s coreligionists will step in to support her. In this case, the individual’s welfare preference is driven only by her financial well-being. What about her coreligionists? If indeed these coreligionists are willing to help the member of their community who was affected by an adverse life event, then their behavior must be driven by something other than self-interest. In fact, the logic of this argument \textit{assumes} that religion makes people care about their coreligionists, an assumption that implies that in a religious setting, preferences and behaviors are not motivated by self-interest alone.

This account helps to explain the curious finding that, in contrast to the predictions of many of the canonical theoretical models of redistributive preferences, identity considerations in particular influence attitudes towards redistribution even in ways that may clash with the individual’s self-interest (Keely and Tan 2008; Klor and Shayo 2010). The failure to address identity concerns in theorizing political

\(^{16}\)A recent exception is Lindqvist and Östling (2013).
preferences helps to explain\textsuperscript{17} the empirical finding that redistributive preferences often do not derive only from income-based self-interest (Alesina and Giuliano 2009; Corneo and Grüner 2002; Isaksson and Lindskog 2009). For reasons described above, religion represents a particularly important identity, and the strength of this identity is partly a function of communal worship. For any given level of wealth or influence, communal prayer will tend to push citizens’ preferences more towards those indicated by their sect’s interests. Sometimes, as in the case of a wealthy member of a wealthy group, this shift in the relative weight of sectarian concerns will have little or no effect, since both types of concerns suggest a preference against redistribution. In other cases, however, an increase in the relative importance of group concerns can lead to a shift in preferences away from personal, self-regarding interests, and in the direction of the sect’s interests. In both cases, the theory implies that attenders should be more likely than non-attenders to hold political preferences consistent with their sect’s interests.

**What Makes Religion Unique?**

In many ways, religion functions as an identity marker in a way that is similar to other forms of identity, and the relationship between religion and regime/policy preferences is also likely to resemble the relationship between other forms of group identity and such preferences. Examining the cohesion produced by union membership in Europe, Mosimann and Pontusson (n.d., p. 1) argue that “unions generate social affinity among their members and that this affinity can be a source of other-regarding support for redistribution.”\textsuperscript{18} I will suggest that a similar social affinity is produced by

\textsuperscript{17}There are certainly many other reasons for the lack of a one-to-one correspondence between income and preferences, but attention to identity concerns is of great importance.

\textsuperscript{18}For other studies suggesting that identity concerns can promote deviation from purely self-interested preferences, see Klor and Shayo (2010), Luttmer (2001), and Stegmueller (2013).
communal religion, and that this affinity has far-reaching effects on regime and policy attitudes; while labor unions and other voluntary organizations are frequently organized around an at least somewhat politically-oriented goal, participation in religion—seemingly spiritual rather than political in its origins—nevertheless has a comparable effect on political attitudes and social solidarity.

The clearest parallel between religion and other forms of social identity is found in ethnicity. The recent revisiting of the role of ethnicity in political science research has not led to the same re-awakening in the study of religion. It is important to note that—both for the purposes of this study and otherwise—religion shares many key features with ethnicity as an identity category; in fact, some authors (e.g. Corstange 2013) prefer to use the term “ethnicity” when describing sectarian affiliation in places like Lebanon, and others (Posner 2005; Varshney 2003) consider religion to be one dimension of ethnic identity. While it is beyond the scope of this project to distinguish religion from ethnicity entirely, the choice to focus on religion’s communal aspect is driven in no small part by the fact that this feature is a mostly distinctly religious practice. Few other identities contain a routinized, regular, and usually mandatory interaction with others of the same group (exclusively). It is conceivable, therefore, that communal religion may promote in-group solidarity in a way that other forms of identity are less equipped to do. I will focus on this aspect of religion, which overlaps less with ethnicity than other aspects of the broader concept of religion. However, I will draw heavily on insights from the ethnic politics literature, as this literature is more richly developed than the religion and comparative politics literature, and since many features of religion have analogs in ethnicity.

It is important to acknowledge the distinctness of religion from other forms of identity. The various ways in which religion is different from ethnicity or other identity markers cannot all be accounted for in this chapter, but several illustrations
demonstrate the importance of this distinction. First, and perhaps most obviously, ethnic groups generally do not proselytize; it is usually not possible to “join” another ethnic group. In contrast, many of the world’s largest religions actively seek new members (that these groups are the largest is surely not a coincidence). Even among those faiths that do not actively proselytize, the group’s history must have involved some conversions, or else they would never have created or sustained a base of members. Furthermore, an individual’s religious identity is exclusive: a person can be a member of multiple ethnic groups due to mixed ancestry, but cannot be a member of multiple faiths. This exclusivity may make religion a less porous boundary, and therefore a potentially more intense identity (Lockwood 1981).

Importantly, religions usually attempt to prescribe universal rules. While ethnic groups create rules about what their members should or should not do, religious groups often extend these rules to everyone, whether in the group or not. It is conceivable that ethnic groups may be more likely to coexist in a mixed society; they may apply their rules to their co-ethnics while having no desire to extend the rules to others. The same arrangement is seldom possible among religions. For many observant Catholics, allowing non-Catholics to obtain abortions is as problematic as allowing Catholics to obtain them19; in many Muslim countries, allowing non-Muslims to drink alcohol20 or eat pork has been met with fierce resistance. The effect of these problems is to create a zero-sum game in policy deliberations; since neither side will be satisfied to simply allow each group to police itself, the chances of compromise are quite slim. In regime transition negotiations involving religious actors, Kalyvas (2000,

---

19This is not to say that all Catholics or even all attending Catholics oppose abortion; rather, the claim is that for someone who is religiously opposed to abortion, the sectarian affiliation of the person seeking an abortion does not matter. Religious precepts are more than just norms: they provide universal rules for living.

20This phenomenon has been witnessed recently in Malaysia, where Muslim religious and political leaders have led a backlash against “Oktoberfest” parties being held by non-Muslims.
p. 379) argues that “contrary to typical transitions compromise is hindered by the challengers’ religious identity.” The unique authority and comprehensive worldviews embodied by religious actors create these difficulties. As Fox (2004, p. 58) observes, “Religion has to do with one’s place in the world and the manner in which the world is meaningfully put together, and it is difficult, at best, to get someone to negotiate over issues that fall into this category.” Without the universal doctrinal norms enforced by religion, it would be difficult to imagine this type of result.

It is also the case that many individuals possess a sectarian identity without actually holding religious beliefs. In these cases, “religious” identity resembles ethnic identity much more closely. However, for reasons described in greater detail in later pages, there is reason to believe that individuals who do not participate in communal rites will tend to identify less strongly with their sectarian affiliation, even though they are nominally members of the group. An important distinction here is between identification and identity (see Hardin 1997). Simply being a member of a given group (identity) is not sufficient to hold preferences in close alignment with the interests of that group. Rather, I have argued that identification (or, in my parlance, salience of group identity) is a tremendously important factor in determining individuals’ regime and redistributive preferences. The act of communal prayer—a feature unique to religion rather than other forms of identity—has a powerful effect on identification, and in turn plays a large part in directing citizens’ political preferences. While religion contains many elements that are similar to those found in ethnicity, class, gender, and other forms of identity, it also contains the uniquely powerful feature of communal prayer.

The act of communal prayer heightens sectarian interest, promotes group solidarity, and increases an individual’s sense of “linked fate” with his or her religious group. Since weekly communal prayer is religiously mandated for at least half of the
world’s citizens (Pew Forum 2012), it is safe to say that communal religious practice is the most prevalent form of associational gathering in the world. The fact that these gatherings are by definition restricted to members of the same sect suggests that they will be especially potent galvanizers of group identity. While many other associations exist—some of which undoubtedly influence political attitudes—these associations are unlikely to possess the same influence afforded to gatherings that are regular, communal, and spiritual in nature.

In many instances, religious identities have been found to be more salient than ethnic identities, though this is certainly not always the case. Jacobson (1997) argues that among British residents of Pakistani origin, 21 religion is a more significant part of individuals’ identities than ethnicity, primarily because the former is seen as “the basis of an all-encompassing frame of reference which explains or establishes their place in the world,” a conception similar to the one provided by Horowitz (1985, p. 50), who notes that for many people, religion is “an inextricable component of their sense of peoplehood.” This distinction is related to the pattern described above, in which ethnic customs are perceived to be isolated to the group, while religious teachings are believed to be “universally applicable” (Jacobson 1997, p. 240). Religion’s emphasis on value-enforcement marks one of its key distinctions from ethnicity. Religion has historically been “a particularly effective mechanism for transmitting whole suites of cultural norms” (Smaldino 2014, p. 251), and religious practices facilitate cooperation and maintain group solidarity in stronger ways than other forms of identity (Sosis and Kiper 2014) 22.

Finally, I have suggested that the nature of communal practice makes religion

---


22 See also the literature arguing that religion is particularly powerful as a group identity because it is a “hard-to-fake sign of commitment” and a “costly signal” (Atran 2002; Irons 2001; Sosis and Bressler 2003).
distinct from other associations. It is certainly the case that labor unions, soccer clubs, PTA boards, and countless other associations involve a communal aspect. However, these forms of association do not possess the same qualities as communal religious practice for a number of reasons. The spiritual dimension of religion is certainly important: as described above, one of religion’s distinctive qualities is its tendency to promote universal values. The goals of unions, soccer clubs, PTA boards, and most other associations are generally confined to the interests and purview of that group—none of these types of organizations have aspirations to change the very face of global politics and society. Further, these groups ordinarily do not limit their membership according to a pre-existing social identity. To the extent that non-religious associations are homogeneous, this homogeneity is likely due to homogeneity in the surrounding society rather than a coincidental targeting of similar people. Assuming that, for instance, a soccer club is made up of co-ethnics and this composition is not reflective of the surrounding demographics, there is an obvious self-selection problem. Members will join this type of club precisely because of its membership, suggesting that their group identity was already strong independent of the club’s influence. In such a case, to whatever extent club membership is associated with group-focused political attitudes and behaviors, these behaviors are not caused by the club in any way; rather, high-identity people are simply more likely to join the club.

Some of these selection issues are present for religion as well. It is conceivable that some citizens may choose to attend religious services more often because of a pre-existing heightened sectarian identity. If this is the case, any observed correlation between communal prayer and political attitudes will overstate the true effect of communal prayer. In subsequent chapters, I will demonstrate using original experimental data and other tests of causality that these effects are present even in an artificial setting where self-selection cannot be present. However, I will also argue
that observational relationships between communal prayer and regime attitudes are of great value. The selection issues potentially present in the link between communal worship and group identity are not nearly as substantial as they are for other types of associations. If an individual chooses to join a homogeneous soccer club, it is unlikely that he or she does so randomly, or for reasons totally separate from group identity. In contrast, religious identities are generally inherited from birth, and participation comes from a variety of sources. There are many potential reasons why individuals might attend religious services. Among the most obvious reasons are that he or she has always attended, that he or she is pious, that he or she is expected to attend by a spouse or family member, that he or she wishes to raise children in a religious environment (or have them attend religious schools), that he or she enjoys the community present in the congregation, or that he or she feels obligated to attend or would feel guilty not attending. It is reasonable to assume that these reasons (and countless others that have little or nothing to do with pre-existing group identity) account for the overwhelming majority of citizens who choose to attend religious services. While selection issues are potentially present, they are likely to be far less severe for religion than for just about any other type of communal association.

23 Of course, the possibility of conversion from one religion to another demonstrates that religious identity is not always inherited. However, conversion from one faith to another remains uncommon, particularly outside of OECD countries. Barro, Hwang, and McCleary’s study (2010) of conversion rates indicates that only a small handful of countries have experienced high levels of conversion (most prominently, The United States, Canada, The United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. No countries in their data set have reached a conversion rate greater than 18%, and the vast majority of countries have quite lower levels of conversion. Depending on the survey used, the mean rate of conversion is between 2% and 5%. Further, since the countries covered in this sample are disproportionately developed and over-represent the Western world, the global average is likely lower than that identified for the countries covered by Barro, Hwang, and McCleary’s study.
Plan of the Project

The remainder of this dissertation will bring empirical evidence from a variety of sources to assess the theory described above. It will do so in several sectarian contexts across several dimensions of political competition.

Chapter 2 examines Lebanon before the Syrian Civil War using data from the first wave of the Arab Barometer, conducted in 2007. This chapter considers communal prayer and support for democracy through a Christian-Muslim sectarian lens. Before the war in Syria—which pitted Sunnis and Shi’a against each other in a more severe way than any time in the country’s recent history—it was possible for both Sunnis and Shi’a to consider issues of representation through a Christian-Muslim perspective rather than through the Sunni-Shi’a divide. Since both Muslim sects were under-represented in politics and relatively poorer than Christians, their incentives with respect to democracy were aligned, despite their differences on other issues. Communal prayer therefore had a pro-democratic effect among Muslims, while the opposite was true for Christians, who sought to maintain their disproportionate influence in Lebanese politics as well as their greater wealth.

Chapter 3 reveals how changing political circumstances—a new axis of political competition—dramatically altered the political interests of Lebanon’s sects and therefore adjusted the effect of communal prayer on regime preferences. Using an original, nationally-representative survey of over 1,200 Lebanese respondents, I show that the Syrian conflict has centered political contestation around the Sunni-Shi’a cleavage, with Christians divided on their relationship with each of these sects and on the Syrian conflict itself. Sunnis, relatively better-represented and wealthier than Shi’a, now have reason to fear Shi’a ascendance in Lebanese politics. Since the new lines of political conflict have created a zero-sum situation between these two sects,
democracy is no longer a palatable option for many Sunnis. Consequently, the effect of communal prayer on regime attitudes has shifted: for Shi’a, mosque attendance continues to have a pro-democratic effect, but for Sunnis, this effect has reversed; fearing Shi’a dominance, practicing Sunnis now tend to oppose democracy more than their less observant counterparts.

Chapter 4 considers Iraq, a case in which majoritarian and redistributive understandings of democracy imply very different preferences for the main sects. When democracy is believed to be a fundamentally political arrangement (elections, freedom to criticize government, etc.), Shi’a (the majority group) have reason to favor democracy, while the formerly powerful Sunni minority have reason to oppose it. Communal prayer pushes individuals’ regime preferences further in the direction of these sectarian interests; i.e., mosque attendance increases support for democracy among Shi’a but decreases such support among Sunnis. However, when democracy is considered in economic terms, namely, narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor, the interests of each sect change. Sunnis, now poorer than Shi’a on average, have an incentive to support redistributive democracy, while Shi’a have reason to fear democratic redistribution. The effect of communal prayer follows these same patterns: in this case, mosque attendances enhances support for democracy among Sunnis but has the opposite effect among Shi’a. Evidence from the second wave of the Arab Barometer, conducted in 2011, is used to support each of these claims.

Chapter 5 extends the analysis beyond the Arab World, testing my theory in India as well as a cross-national setting. In India, where the Hindu majority has often used its numerical advantage to assert its dominance over the Muslim minority in particular, democracy has proven favorable to Hindus. As expected, communal prayer increases support for democracy among Hindus, whose demographic advantage virtually ensures success in democratic elections. For Muslims, the opposite is true:
fear of Hindu electoral dominance creates an environment in which communal prayer depresses support for democracy among Muslims. Cross-national tests indicate that the pattern described in the above cases is evident in much of the world: the general trend is that for small sects, communal prayer decreases support for democracy, while the opposite is true for large groups. Larger groups can expect to benefit from free elections due to their sheer size, so increased salience of sectarian identity—such as that created by communal worship—should promote democratic attitudes; the reverse logic holds for smaller groups, who would be unlikely to win elections. Evidence from the World Values Survey provides support for these claims in both Indian and cross-national data. Chapter 6 concludes, placing these findings in the context of religion and political behavior broadly considered.

**Conclusion**

Religion remains a deeply misunderstood force in comparative politics. For decades, secularization theorists believed—or perhaps hoped—that religion would largely disappear as a source of social and political influence. In reality, the exact opposite trend has emerged. Religion, in its various forms, remains as influential as ever, and in many cases, political circumstances have actually heightened the salience of religion as a set of identities and behaviors. The influence of religion—whatever its form—on political attitudes and behaviors is an empirical question rather than a normative one. While many scholars and casual observers have little interest in religion as social phenomenon, I will show that, when considered carefully, religious factors can account for tremendous variation in political attitudes that would be of interest to anyone who wishes to better understand the political world.

This chapter has presented a theory of religion, group interest, and democ-
racy that focuses on *communal* religion’s influence on regime preferences. While the existing literature on religion and democracy focuses on individual behaviors or sectarian factors in isolation, my theory integrates these two features of religion and places them in the context of intra-state political competition. In doing so, it suggests that the various witnessed effects of religion on democratic attitudes can be accounted for in no small part by sectarian interests and political incentives. The effect of communal prayer is neither universally pro- or anti-democratic. The direction and magnitude of this relationship depends on state- and sect-level factors that determine the interests of group members.

A number of factors condition the effect of communal prayer on regime and redistributive attitudes. First, merely being a member of a particular sect does not necessarily lead to political preferences in alignment with the interests of that group. Regular participation in communal worship has a substantial effect on the salience of group identity, and therefore makes believers much more likely to hold political positions consistent with his or her sectarian interests. Further, the arrangement of political and economic power in each country influences this relationship. For groups that enjoy special privileges under authoritarian regimes, communal prayer will tend to promote anti-democratic attitudes. This relationship is *not* due to an anti-democratic theology (indeed, it could apply to any privileged sect regardless of their theology), but rather due to group interests. Likewise, a group that would benefit from further democratization will demonstrate a pro-democratic effect of communal prayer. Finally, the *axis of political competition* matters: depending on who is competing with whom and what issues or resources they are competing over, the direction of these effects may switch. The most important implication of this theory is that communal prayer does not always have the same effect on democratic attitudes and behaviors. A fuller understanding of this relationship requires consideration of the interests of
religious sects and the political arrangements in their countries.

The theory proposed in this chapter makes three major contributions to the literature on religion and democracy and redistribution. First, it provides a straightforward explanation for why religion often appears to have an ambiguous effect on democratic attitudes. Rather than assuming a unidirectional (or null) relationship between these two variables, my theory suggests that communal prayer can either promote or inhibit democratic attitudes. Importantly, the variation in the direction of this effect is not random; rather, the theory indicates that communal prayer may have pro- or anti-democratic effects in accordance with sectarian political and economic interests.

Second, my theory suggests that studies of the relationship between religion and democracy should not focus exclusively on theology, as many existing studies have done. The theory implies that the effect of communal worship on democratic attitudes and behaviors could change dramatically even if there is no theological change whatsoever. If the interests of sectarian groups change, it is likely that the effect of religious practice on regime attitudes will change as well, but this change need not be accompanied by changes in theology or doctrine.

Finally, the theory makes a broader contribution regarding the study of religion and political behavior in comparative perspective: it highlights the need to integrate individual-, sect-, and state-level variables when analyzing the link between religious attitudes/behaviors and political outcomes. In addition to how each of these levels might influence politics, it is also important to analyze how these three levels interact. Two otherwise identical individuals of the same sect who happen to live in different countries are likely to be influenced very different by communal prayer; if the interests of their sect differs from one country to the next, then the effect of communal prayer could be drastically different from one setting to the next. A fuller
account of how communal worship influences democratic attitudes requires a clear understanding of the configuration of power and wealth among the country’s sects.
Chapter 2

Christians and Muslims in Lebanon
Before the Syrian Civil War

Introduction

This chapter assesses my theory of communal prayer and democratic support in Lebanon in 2007. I argue that before the intensification of Sunni-Shi’a tensions in 2008 and, especially, the Syrian Civil War, issues of electoral reform and economic redistribution placed Christians and Muslims at odds with each other on the issue of democratization. The evidence suggests that communal prayer had opposite effects on attitudes towards democracy: underrepresented and relatively poorer than Christians, Muslims had incentives to support democratic reforms, and communal prayer increased support for democracy. Among Christians, who had much to lose from both electoral reform and redistribution, the effect of communal prayer was just the opposite. Data from the first wave of the Arab Barometer support these claims.

Christians and Muslims in Lebanon

The Lebanese case is a useful one for the goals of this study because it is: a) a society that is clearly divided along religious lines, and b) a state possessing institutions de-
signed to mitigate inter-sectarian conflict, making the incentive structures for groups fairly clear for the purposes of this model. Despite its relatively peculiar set of institutions (not to mention its history), Lebanon presents several distinct advantages in this study. First, and most obviously, Lebanon’s sectarian divisions ensure that religion plays a crucial role in politics; W. Harris (2009, p. 9) states that religion is “the primary characteristic” of Lebanon. Religion has a powerful effect on social and political life in Lebanon independently of its institutional effects. Second, Lebanon’s semi-democratic history provides two important assurances: 1) citizens have some experience of democratic politics (or something like it); but 2) democracy is not, in the words of Linz and Stepan (1996, p. 5), “the only game in town.” Consequently, there should be some genuine variation in support for democracy in this setting. Existing surveys in Lebanon suggest that, indeed, while a majority of Lebanese citizens express support for liberal democracy, strong democratic attitudes are far from unanimous. Lebanon’s torturous political history creates a useful setting for analysis of attitudes towards democracy; its history of relatively liberal policies sets it apart from virtually all of its neighbors, but Lebanon has also experienced some of the most violent civil strife in the region. Despite these challenges, Fawaz (2009, p. 33) suggests that Lebanon “might be the only ray of light coming out of this region.” Each of these factors makes Lebanon a useful area to study the ambiguous link between religion and democracy.

Perhaps most importantly, Lebanon does not possess many other identity cleavages that could potentially undermine a causal account of the role of religion in democracy. While the bulk of other religiously-divided societies also possess ethnic, regional, linguistic, or other types of divisions that either overlap with or cross-cut religion, Lebanon is a small and largely ethnically homogenous country (apart from sect, of course). The role of religious identity is so central in Lebanon that Corstange’s
(2013) work refers to religious identities in Lebanon simply as “ethnicity.” Clearly, however, the identity groupings in Lebanon are religious in nature and not exactly like non-religious ethnic identities. These identity arrangements allow for an analysis of Lebanon that will ensure that any identified effects are due to religion specifically and not to other potentially intervening identities. In a study focusing on the relationship between religious identities and democracy, it is essential that the primary case demonstrate this rare characteristic. For these reasons, Lebanon is an ideal candidate for selection in this project.

Demographics, Representation, and Status

Following independence from a French Mandate in 1943, the leaders of Lebanon’s major sects (at the time, Maronite Christians and Sunni Muslims) agreed upon an unwritten National Pact, in which key political positions were divided among the sects, loosely based on the 1932 census (Trablousi 2007). Under this system, parliamentary seats are contested only within sects; that is, each seat can only be occupied by a member of the designated sect. Voters in a given district may vote for as many members of a sect as there are seats allocated to that sect in her district. For example, in the Jbeil district northeast of Beirut, two seats are allocated to Maronites and one is allocated to Shi’a. This arrangement means that voters from this district—regardless of their sect—may vote for up to two Maronite candidates and one Shi’a candidate. These voters may not vote for candidates of any other sect, and members of other sects will not appear on ballots.

The motivation for this system is the assumption that allocating seats on the basis of sect will prevent inter-sectarian competition and instead force candidates and parties to compete with members of their own sects, thereby reducing the intensity
of sectarian politics. Lijphart (1977, p. 149) argues that, at least prior to the civil war, this system “performed satisfactorily.” However, post-war developments have led many to question the utility of this system. Political competition remains heavily sectarian, and sectarian violence is not uncommon. Some observers have questioned the fairness of a system in which many citizens cannot vote for any candidates from their own sect; in the example discussed above, residents of Jbeil who are not Maronite or Shi’a will have no choices on the ballot coming from their own confession. More broadly, the allocation of seats to districts often does not accurately match the sectarian composition of the districts themselves. For instance, the Beirut 3 district allocates one of its 10 seats to the Druze, who represent less than 2% of the district’s voters. Shi’a, who make up around 16% of the district’s population, receive the same number of seats in the district. Proponents of the arrangement argue that it is desirable to force candidates to compete for the votes of members of other sects, while opponents consider this policy undemocratic. It is clear that the electoral system is, to say the least, controversial.

Importantly, no census has been conducted in Lebanon since 1932, largely due to fears of sectarian unrest if a census were to occur. Table 2.1 summarizes the allocations made by the National Pact as well as the results of the 1932 census.

Since 1932, Lebanon has experienced significant demographic change. While it is difficult to determine the magnitude of this change with certainty because no census has been conducted, there is little doubt that the Christian population has decreased in relative size. The US State Department’s (2008) report on religious freedom in Lebanon cites recent statistics estimating that Sunnis and Shi’a each constitute about 28% of the Lebanese population\(^1\), with Christians representing less.

\(^1\)Shi’a almost certainly account for considerably more of the population than this figure indicates, suggesting that overall Muslim under-representation is even more severe than demonstrated by these numbers.
Table 2.1: Demographics and Allocations, 1943 National Pact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confession</th>
<th>Percent of Population, 1932</th>
<th>Political Allocation(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maronite</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Orthodox</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>Deputy Speaker of Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Catholic</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Christian</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>6 parliamentary seats per 5 Muslims; control of army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni Muslim</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shi’a Muslim</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>President of National Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Druze</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Muslim</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
<td>5 parliamentary seats per 6 Christians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Michael Johnson (2001)

than 40% of the total (and Maronites specifically only reaching about 22%). Even in the absence of official figures, Lebanese leaders and citizens are aware of the general demographic trends. Druze leader Walid Jumblatt suggests that “Demography is not in [the Christians’] interest...they are now 30%²”.

Despite these demographic shifts, the Christian community remains strongly over-represented in nearly every area of the national government. Although the Ta’if Agreement of 1989 weakened the presidency and re-allocated parliamentary seats in such a way as to guarantee 50% of seats for Muslims, the other 50% remained reserved for Christians. There have been few, if any, more recent measures to remedy the relative under-representation of Muslims in Lebanon. The fact that the country has not conducted a census since 1932 provides further evidence of the Christian community’s ability to maintain its disproportionate share of formal representation despite changing demographic realities. Lebanon specialist Elias Muhanna (2013) reaches similar

²Remark to author, Beirut, March 2014
conclusions, estimating that for each Sunni seat in parliament, there are about 34,512 Sunni citizens, very close to the corresponding figure of 33,781 for Shi’a. These numbers are vastly different from the representation level of Maronites, who have 20,655 voters per seat. Figure 2.1 displays the differences between population shares and parliamentary seat shares by sect. Christian leaders are aware of this disparity, but resistant to proposals to remedy it. When asked about the possibility of decreasing the proportion of Christian seats in parliament, Alain Aoun (a prominent member of parliament and nephew of Michel Aoun, the most popular presidential candidate) remarked: “I don’t think you will have any Christians accepting this.” A similar comment was made by Nadim Gemayel, a leading figure in the rival Kataeb Party, saying “Engaging any change with Ta’if could lead to an arrangement of power in which Christians pay the price, and I am not ready to do this.”

The Lebanese Shi’a are particularly under-represented in government, a fact that will be explored in subsequent chapters. It therefore may not be entirely accurate to cast the differences in privileges among sects in Christian-Muslim terms. However, there are both theoretical and practical reasons for placing Sunni and Shi’a Lebanese in the same category for the purposes of this chapter: from a theoretical standpoint, both groups remain under-represented in government and, perhaps more importantly, are much poorer on average than Christians. Further, in the period discussed in this chapter, tensions between Sunnis and Shi’a had not reached nearly the same level of intensity that would emerge a few years later; it is therefore much more plausible to focus on the shared interests of the two sects during at this stage of the country’s political development. From a practical standpoint, the survey data available do not estimate the true proportion of Shi’a in the country; Muslims as a group are even more underrepresented than these figures indicate, and Shi’a especially so.

---

3Remark to author, Beirut, March 2014
4Remark to author, Beirut, March 2014
5The estimates displayed in Figure 2.1 almost certainly underestimate the true proportion of Shi’a in the country; Muslims as a group are even more underrepresented than these figures indicate, and Shi’a especially so.
contain enough respondents to separate Sunnis and Shi’a and still retain enough power to detect meaningful relationships in the data (there are fewer than 200 non-missing observations from these groups even for the baseline models, compared to over 500 for Christians). The focus of this chapter is on issues of representation and economic equality (and it is here where Sunnis and Shi’a are most alike to each other but markedly different from Christians). Data from the 2007 survey indicate that income and political representation differences between Sunnis and Shi’a paled in comparison to the differences between Muslims in general and Christians in general during this period. With unlimited data availability, it would be ideal to consider these groups separately (and subsequent analyses will do so), but for the reasons outlined above, practical limitations render such an analysis unfeasible. Thus, this chapter considers them together as “Muslims” even though there are, without question, significant
differences in the outlooks and interests of these groups\textsuperscript{6}. It is important to note that I am \textit{not} assuming (nor suggesting) that Sunnis and Shi’a are in any way “allies” in Lebanese politics; recent developments in the country have proven that this is most certainly not the case. However, their economic and political positions relative to Lebanese Christians placed their interest in democracy in the same camp; it is more than reasonable to suspect that a full transition to democracy in Lebanon would transfer both political and economic resources away from Christians and towards both Sunnis and Shi’a. Therefore, while the two sects are in many senses adversaries in Lebanese politics, their incentive structures with regard to democracy are highly similar\textsuperscript{7}.

Sunnis had an another significant reason to support democracy in 2007: the most recent general elections in 2005 had brought a Sunni-led anti-Syrian coalition to power (the March 14th coalition). These elections—the first to be held after the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon—were viewed by many as part of a democratic revolution; the results indicated to the Sunni leadership that they could hold their own against other groups in open elections. Despite their demographic disadvantage relative to Shi’a, the Sunnis at this point had reason to believe that democracy might not inevitably lead to Shi’a ascendance. In a subsequent chapter, I will discuss the political changes that caused the Sunni leadership to change its course with respect

\textsuperscript{6}The first wave of the Arab Barometer, the only survey of its kind in Lebanon during this period, contains relatively small numbers of Sunni and Shi’a respondents. This small sample limits researchers’ abilities to consider the sects separately, but the survey itself is nevertheless an invaluable resource for studying historical political attitudes in a country where data on such attitudes are scarce, to say the least.

\textsuperscript{7}It is also important to recognize that these data were collected in 2007, before Hezbollah had gained much of the political ground that it has in recent years. Thus, even if Sunnis might now fear democracy because it could imply Shi’a dominance, this fear is certain to have been far less significant at the time when these data were collected. My analysis of data from 2014 (in a subsequent chapter) will separate Sunnis and Shi’a because of the massive widening of the rift between these groups during the period between the two surveys. For media discussion of the growing divisions between the sects, see “Lebanon’s Dangerous Sunni-Shiite Divide Widens,” \textit{al-Monitor}, May 29, 2012.
to electoral reform; for now, it is sufficient to note that the political incentives faced by Syrian leaders in the wake of the 2005 elections were meaningfully different from those in the post-Syrian Civil War setting.

A question remains as to the extent to which we can consider “Christians” to be a unified group in Lebanese politics. On many issues, this is most certainly not the case: issues such as Syria’s role in Lebanon have driven wedges between different Christian political actors, and Christians (even Maronites specifically) often disagree in high-profile political debates. However, on the fundamentals of Christian interest in the country—particularly in the political realm—relations between the otherwise conflicting Christian parties are remarkably harmonious. Negotiations regarding the electoral laws are illustrative. In 2011 (before Lebanon became heavily affected by the Syrian Civil War), the leaders of the Maronite Church organized a meeting in which all of the major Maronite and Orthodox parties agreed to endorse an electoral law that would have turned the country into a single electoral district in which citizens voted exclusively for seats allocated to their own sects.8 Unsurprisingly, this arrangement was seen to benefit Christians at the expense of Muslims, and would have embedded sectarianism even more concretely into the electoral system. On fundamental issues of regime and representation, Christians were—at this stage—able to come together despite major disagreements on other significant subjects. Likewise, while Sunnis and Shi’a were often at odds with each other with respect to other political problems, it was clear that Christian attempts to reinforce their over-representation in government would disadvantage Muslims of both sects9.

The behavior of religious leaders during this period reflects the political interests of their sects as well. Reporting on the 2010 funeral of Lebanon’s predom-

---

9It is surely not a coincidence that even local media coverage of this issue tends to refer to “Muslims” rather than “Sunnis” and “Shi’a.”
inant Shi’a religious figure, Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, a writer for Hezbollah’s *al-Manar* news outlet suggested that the only absent Lebanese religious leader was “the small minded Maronite Cardinal Patriarch [Nasrallah Boutrous] Sfeir who took umbrage at Fadlallah’s positive views about one person-one vote democracy. Sayeed Fadlallah did not favor Lebanon being ruled by the current archaic French colonial legacy of parceling out political power based on the undemocratic confessional formulae of the 1943 Paris installed National Pact.”

Fadlallah’s own words refer to “the Muslims who form the majority” (emphasis added) and emphasize “the legitimacy of the rotation of power,” indicating both support for democracy and a sense of broader Muslim political interest.

Indeed, prior to 2008, the discourse of Fadlallah and other Muslim religious leaders was in general much more likely to emphasize Islamic cohesion rather than sectarianism; Fadlallah offered several public statements in 2006 and 2007 with the term “Islamic Unity” in the title; over the next few years, these titles shifted to refer to Sunni-Shi’a issues with increasing frequency. The alignment of political interests within Muslim and Christian groups is evident among both political and religious leaders.

Beyond the political realm, it is clear that considerable inequities exist between Christians and Muslims (and between smaller sects within these groups) in Lebanon. While the World Bank’s data on inequality are consistently absent for Lebanon (surely not a coincidence), Credit Suisse’s *Global Wealth Databook* (2012) covers countries omitted by other sources. Of the 166 countries in their sample, Lebanon ranks as the fifth most unequal country — and two of the four countries reported as more unequal than Lebanon (St. Kitts & Nevis and Belize) have

---

11. These and many other statements emphasizing both Islamic unity and democracy are found at the official web site of his mosque: [http://bayynat.org.lb/](http://bayynat.org.lb/)
12. According to these data, the mean wealth per adult in Lebanon is over 33,000 USD, but the median is just over 7,000.
populations of far less than 1 million people.

Much of this inequality takes the form of inter-sectarian disparities. Figure 2.2 illustrates the considerable differences in average income across sects. These average income figures come from survey responses from the Arab Barometer, and indicate that the average Christian in the sample earns over $6,000 more per year than the average Muslim, a 40% difference.\textsuperscript{13} Inequalities exist beyond wealth alone; Christians are more than twice as likely as Muslims (both Sunni and Shi’\textasciiacute{}) to have attended private schools.\textsuperscript{14} Of the 178 countries for which World Bank data on education spending are available, Lebanon ranks fourth-lowest; only the Central African Republic, Monaco, and Zambia spend less per capita on education. In the area of labor rights, Salloukh et al. (2015, ch.5) argue that the country’s political elites have systematically “sectarianized” workers’ movements. Sectarian inequality of both wealth and opportunity is therefore reinforced by the state behaviors. The state has failed to invest in public goods and has suppressed labor mobilization; changes to these behaviors would tend to benefit Muslims, indicating that a regime change could improve the standing of these sects relative to the better-off Christians. Religious leaders have made note of these inequalities; Fadlallah stated in 2006 that “The wealth of the nation is being plundered wasted, and not distributed. A few people put their hands on it as if were private property. This constitutes a big injustice\textsuperscript{15}.”

This inequality is magnified further by perceptions of inequality: Christians have historically been perceived (by both themselves and by others) as the privileged group in Lebanon, while Muslims have historically had less access to both wealth and social resources (Mackey 1989, pp. 13-14).\textsuperscript{16} Historical perceptions, of course,

\textsuperscript{13}Following Horowitz (1985, p. 22), we can think of the confessions in Lebanon as “ranked groups” since there is considerable overlap between class and group identity.
\textsuperscript{14}Christians: 62%; Sunnis: 28%; Shi’\textasciiacute{}: 29%. Source: Author’s survey.
\textsuperscript{15}\texttt{http://english.bayynat.org.lb/Stands/stand16052006.htm}
\textsuperscript{16}This inequality has often put Christians on the defensive; in 2011, Maronite Labor Minister
Figure 2.2: Average Monthly Income, by Sect (in LBP)
remain sticky—even if Muslim wealth were to increase relative to that of Christians, it would likely take some time before perceptions of inequality were updated completely. The prevalence of kin-based organizations as providers of social insurance likewise suggests that the economic fates of members of particular religious groups in Lebanon are linked together in significant ways (Baylouny 2010). Since these kin ties overlap considerably (in fact, almost completely) with sect, members of the same sect (usually in smaller communities) frequently rely on each other for social services through such associations. These structures provide a further incentive for Lebanese citizens to consider *group* rather than only individual interests. The group-centric view of economic issues manifests itself in political priorities as well. When Lebanese Arab Barometer respondents were asked about the most important problem facing the country today, Muslims were over 11 percentage points more likely than Christians to point to the “economic situation” (61.2% to 49.5%).

Much of the literature in the field of comparative democratization suggests that democracies tend to redistribute more than non-democracies, and that wealthy elites therefore have incentives to prevent democratic transition while the poor have incentives to favor it (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; Boix 2003). While recent studies have cast doubt upon this relationship (Mulligan, Sala-i-Martin, and Gil 2003; Ross 2006; Timmons 2010), the key requirement for the logic presented here to hold is that citizens *perceive* democracies to be more redistributive than non-democracies. In the survey I conducted in Lebanon, most respondents believed that democracies tend to be more redistributive than non-democracies. When prompted with the statement: “Democracies redistribute income from the rich to the poor more than

Boutros Harb even submitted a draft law proposing to prohibit the sale of land across religions in response to a growing number of Iranian purchases of Christian property (see *al-Arabiya*, “Iran Possession of Lebanon Christian Property on Rise”, January 5, 2011.)
other types of governments," 17 61% of respondents agreed, while only 24% disagreed. The association between democracy and redistribution—in the minds of citizens, if not in cross-national data—suggests that citizens should believe that democracy benefits poor groups at the expense of rich groups.

A further question that is important for the purposes of this study is: how democratic is Lebanon? The country holds (mostly) regular elections and honors the results, but it would be a mistake to characterize Lebanon as anything close to a full democracy. Freedom House (2011) plainly notes that “Lebanon is not an electoral democracy.” This characterization comes from a variety of factors in addition to the confessional system. In many cases, parties cut deals prior to election day in which they agree not to field candidates in certain districts in order to avoid “divisive campaigning.” Significant interference from foreign powers also calls into question Lebanon’s democratic credentials. Finally, vote-buying is rampant across Lebanon: using survey data and new methods to elicit truthful answers to sensitive questions, Corstange (2012b) estimates that 55 percent of Lebanese sold their votes in the 2009 parliamentary elections. Taken together, it is reasonable to conclude that Lebanon falls far short of conventional standards of democracy.

It should be noted that this understanding of the distribution of power in Lebanon is not undisputed. It is certainly the case that Lebanon has, since the end of the civil war, experienced some forms of liberalization, and these reforms have usually come at the expense of the previously-dominant Christian groups. I have suggested (with some evidence from both the political and economic spheres) that Lebanon’s Christians remain more powerful than they are often claimed to be. However, to the extent that Lebanon has moved closer to meaningful democracy,

17 Arabic wording: "الديمقراطيات تعيد توزيع الدخل من الفئات الغنية للفئات الفقيرة أكثر من أنواع الحكم الأخرى."
Christians have usually been forced to cede some power to Sunnis and Shi’a. Thus, while I argue that such redistribution of power has not been substantial enough to genuinely undermine the Christian community’s privileged position in politics and society, one does not need to accept this account of Lebanese politics in order to accept the theory presented in this chapter. Two very different potential versions of the Lebanese case can both be reconciled with this theory. The first is the account I have presented, in which democratization has been limited and Christians have largely managed to preserve their power. The second is that Lebanon has democratized, and this transition has shifted power away from Christians and towards Muslims. A full discussion of the merits of each of these accounts is beyond the scope of this chapter, but either story is reconcilable with the theory in this paper: in either case, democracy—whether potential or actual—would benefit Muslims disproportionately at the expense of Christians.

**Communal Prayer and Sectarianism**

The salience of sectarian identity in Lebanon is scarcely disputed. Although the civil war from 1975-1990 was a multifaceted conflict that should not be reduced to simply sectarian strife, Lebanon’s history has largely been written along sectarian lines. The civil war only exacerbated these differences: as Salamé (1986) notes, “it is very difficult to distinguish a Druze from a Maronite or a Sunni from a Greek Orthodox in the street . . . the system has rigidified and has become exceedingly compartmentalized into nearly non-communicating confessions.” Lebanon’s consociational institutions have been both a blessing and a curse. Lijphart’s (1977) classic work on consociational democracy cites Lebanon as something of a *success* because its institutions had, at the time of his writing, held the country together (for the most part) for thirty years. After
the experience of the civil war, however, it became clear that Lebanon’s confessional system had proven too rigid to solve all of the country’s problems, and the post-civil war era has seen many calls for some form of secularization of the system.

The crystallization of sectarian identity in Lebanon—while driven considerably by political and institutional factors—is reinforced by communal religious behavior. Deeb’s (2006) ethnography of Shi’a in the suburbs of Beirut observes that in Lebanon, “public prayer carries social capital.” She quotes a young volunteer: “Why is prayer in a group? Because you find everyone, poor, rich, educated, uneducated, all are standing in a single line praying together.” Communal prayer, it seems, creates a certain degree of within-group solidarity. By praying with others from the same confessional group, believers build relationships with members of the group and begin to view the world (including the political world) more through the eyes of the group.18

A byproduct of these linkages with members of the in-group is an increase in the salience of sectarian identity. The more citizens engage in communal prayer (almost by definition with members of their own sect and not others), the more they will tend to care more about the political fates of their co-sectarians. Given the political and economic incentives outlined above, the linkages forged by communal worship should have effects on political preferences in alignment with sectarian interests.

In total, the theory presented above and the details of the Lebanese case suggest a few hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1** Christians who engage in communal religious practice will tend to support democracy less than those who do not.

---

18 The mechanisms by which communal prayer translates into group solidarity and its corresponding political attitudes will be explored further in subsequent chapters, in which more detailed data are available.
Hypothesis 2. Muslims who engage in communal religious practice will tend to support democracy more than those who do not.

Data, Methods, and Findings

The hypotheses above are tested using data from Lebanon coming from the first wave of the Arab Barometer survey, overseen by the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan. This survey was conducted by Statistics Lebanon in November 2007 in each of Lebanon’s six governorates (muhafazat). The survey includes 1,200 respondents representing each of Lebanon’s main sectarian groups.

The key explanatory variable (Practice) is a dummy variable indicating whether respondents pray at a mosque/church or not\textsuperscript{19}. A set of controls standard to survey-based regression analysis are added, as well as a handful of controls that might be important in the Lebanese case. Each model is fitted separately for Christians and Muslims in order to allow the effect of all of the explanatory variables to vary by sect; this is a more conservative test of the hypothesis than a pooled model with an interaction term between sect and communal practice (though such a model, of course, indicates similar results). The tests include a variety of specifications to account for several possible omitted variables.

Table 2.B.2 presents the results of the tests of Hypothesis 1. In this model, the dependent variable is a binary measure of (strong) support for democracy, in which respondents can agree or disagree that “Democracy may have its problems but is better than any other form of government.”\textsuperscript{20} Model 1 is the baseline model; Model 19A more detailed measure of frequency of attendance was not available in the first wave of the Arab Barometer.

20Outcomes were similar when the models used an ordinal measure rather than the dichotomous variable presented here. The dichotomous variable is used in this chapter for clarity of presentation; results from the models using the ordinal measure are available upon request.
2 controls for religious piety (measured by “importance of prayer as a quality in a spouse”); Model 3 controls for income (which is not included in the baseline model because of missing data); Model 4 controls for association membership to account for the possibility that religious attenders are simply more involved in group activities than are non-attenders; and Model 5 includes all of the covariates included in Models 1-4\textsuperscript{21}. In each of the models, the coefficient on communal religious practice is negative and significant. The magnitude of this effect is similar across models, but is amplified in the models including income because of the missing data resulting from inclusion of this variable. All in all, the models support Hypothesis 1.

Table 2.B.3 presents the results for the same models as Table 2.B.2, but for Muslims\textsuperscript{22} instead of Christians. In each of these models, the coefficient on communal religious practice is positive and statistically significant. In total, the effect of communal practice on support for democracy seems to have the opposite effect on Muslims as it does on Christians. These results are consistent with Hypothesis 2.

Since logistic regression coefficients are difficult to interpret substantively, Figure 2.3 provides a clearer depiction of the predictions of these models. This graph shows the difference in predicted probabilities (marginal effects) comparing the levels of support for democracy for those who participate in communal religious practice to those who do not. Each of the five models is run separately for Christians and Muslims. For these simulations, other covariates are held at their observed values (Hanmer and Kalkan 2013). The graph shows that the estimates of these models are  

\textsuperscript{21}Additional robustness checks controlling for other measures of religiosity yielded similar results; the findings are available from the author upon request.

\textsuperscript{22}These results pool Sunnis and Shi’a together as “Muslims” for the reasons discussed above. Due to the small number of observations when separating these groups, virtually no estimated effects for any variable reach statistical significance. Reassuringly, however, the magnitude of the effect of religious practice is similar for Sunnis and Shi’a, though when these groups are separated, the effect does not quite reach statistical significance at conventional levels due to the imprecision caused by the small sample sizes. These estimates are omitted for the purposes of space, but are available from the author upon request.
highly consistent across specifications and show strong effects of communal practice on support for democracy, but in opposite directions. For Muslims, communal religious practice is predicted to increase the probability of support for democracy by between 16 and 19 percentage points. For Christians, communal practice is expected to decrease the probability of support for democracy by between 13 and 18 percentage points. In each of these models, the coefficient on religious practice is statistically distinguishable from 0 at the 0.05 level or better. This figure suggests that the effect of communal religious practice on support for democracy is quite strong in Lebanon, but the direction of the effect is different for different religious groups.

It is possible, of course, that these results are dependent on the type of model chosen. To address this concern, I use propensity score matching to improve covariate balance. As predictors of communal practice, I include age, education, gender, associ-
ation membership, and religious belief, since presumably these factors might influence both tendency to engage in communal practice and attitudes toward democracy. The propensity score matching method then calculates a “propensity” to participate in communal practice based on these characteristics, matches observations based on this propensity score, and calculates an average treatment effect across matched groups. These models use one-to-one matching with replacement. These tests are performed using the Matching R package developed by Sekhon (2011), implementing the estimator proposed by Abadie and Imbens (2006). Table 2.B.5 presents the results of this procedure. The estimated treatment effects are actually slightly larger than they were found to be in the logit analysis, suggesting that the trends observed above are actually stronger among respondents for whom a close match can be found. For Christians, communal practice is predicted to reduce support for democracy by 19.5 percentage points, while for Muslims it increases support for democracy by 25.7 percentage points. Both of these differences are significant at the 0.05 level. These results provide further support for the claims presented in this section.

I also test the theory using a broader measure of commitment to democracy. This measure incorporates three measures of democratic attitudes: it is an additive index of the ”strong support” measure described along with a question asking “To what degree would you agree that the violation of human rights in [country name] is justifiable in the name of promoting security and stability?” and a question asking “If “1” means that democracy is completely unsuitable for Lebanon and “10” means that it is completely suitable, where would you place your opinion about the degree to which democracy is suitable for Lebanon?” Since these questions are skewed towards more pro-democratic responses, I code each of these questions as 1 if the respondent gave the most pro-democratic response and 0 otherwise. The resulting index has
4 categories, with each level accounting for between 12% and 38% of responses. Scores of 0 indicate that the respondent did not give a strongly pro-democracy response to any of the items, while a 3 indicates that the respondent gave the most pro-democracy response for each of the questions; hence, this measure captures commitment to democracy.

Since this measure is ordinal, consisting of only four categories, I run a series of ordinal logistic regressions of the same form as used in the previous tests. Table 2.B.4 displays the results of these tests. In each case, the coefficient on the communal prayer variable is in the expected direction and significant at the 0.1 level or better. Substantively, these effects are also considerable. Among Christians, praying at church is associated with a 5.7 percentage point decrease in the probability of reporting the most democratic attitudes. For Muslims, communal prayer increases the likelihood of the most pro-democracy response by 8.6 percentage points. It is evident that religious attendance in Lebanon is also an important determinant of a broader sense of commitment to democracy.

A question remains as to whether or not these religious practices actually lead to different political behaviors among ordinary citizens. I address this question by examining whether church/mosque attenders differ from non-attenders in their propensity to participate in protest. Lebanon has a long history of political protest—sometimes, but not always, sectarian in nature—related to a variety of political issues. A recent example is the well-known “You Stink” movement, targeting the government due to its failure to address a garbage removal crisis in Beirut. Protest is a relatively common practice. Nearly 47% of Lebanese respondents in the Arab Barometer 2007 survey reported having participated in a demonstration or protest march at least

---

23More precisely, 12.6% of respondents scored a 0 (least democratic), 37.6% scored 1, 32.0% scored 2, and 17.9% scored 3 (most democratic).
once, with nearly a third of respondents reporting having done so more than once. To determine whether or not attenders were more likely to protest compared to non-attenders, I fit an ordinal logistic regression (because the question allows respondents to respond "never," "once," or "more than once") of the same form as the baseline model above.

Figure 2.4: Marginal Effects of Communal Prayer on Protest Participation

Figure 2.4 displays the marginal effects of communal prayer on the likelihood of protest participation by sect. The effects are quite similar between the two sectarian groups: for both Christians and Muslims, attenders are about 10 percentage points more likely to have participated in protests at least once compared to non-attenders. These effects are considerable in size and are significant at around the 0.05 level (slightly lower for Muslims, likely due to the smaller sample size). Raw means, not controlling for other variables, show a similar pattern: for Christians, attenders are 7 percentage points more likely to protest; for Muslims, the difference is over 9 percentage points. The evidence therefore suggests that the effects of com-
munal prayer are not simply limited to *attitudes*: participants in communal prayer also demonstrate higher levels of political *activity*, at least in the form of protest. This finding presents an interesting contrast to the arguments (coming either from a Marxist or political culture perspective) that religion creates docile citizens. Among both Christians and Muslims in Lebanon, communal prayer actually makes citizens *more* politically engaged. Rather than focusing believers on the afterlife, religious practice seems to increase citizens’ interest in addressing worldly political issues.

**Conclusion**

Recent events in Egypt, Syria, and elsewhere have shown that religion can exercise many different types of influences on citizens’ preferences and behaviors, particularly in the area of regime attitudes. While scholars have recently begun to pay closer attention to the unclear relationship between religion and support for democracy (Bloom and Arikan 2012, 2013; Philpott 2007), it remains unclear why religion sometimes promotes steadfastly democratic outlooks and sometimes induces believers to support autocrats. This chapter presents a theory (along with evidence) that helps to clarify this phenomenon.

This chapter makes several contributions to the study of religion and politics, identity politics, democratization, and political behavior more broadly. First, it helps to explain why religion sometimes appears to promote democratic mobilization but other times seems to do just the opposite. Second, it indicates that individuals’ attitudes towards democracy may be filtered through a group-consciousness lens, suggesting that studies of support for democracy may need to re-think their almost exclusive emphasis on individual cost/benefit analyses. Third, it suggests that the effect of religion on democratic behaviors—and probably other types of political
behavior—depends on religion’s interaction with socioeconomic considerations.

The results presented above suggest that the impact of religiosity—communal religious practice, in particular—is highly conditional on group-level factors. Perhaps surprisingly, this effect appears to be conditional on socioeconomic factors; namely, relative group impoverishment. These findings indicate that members of relatively impoverished religious groups: a) view democracy as a means of remedying the inter-group inequalities present in their countries, and b) experience a heightened sense of “groupness” due to the act of worshipping with others from their same faith tradition.

An especially important implication of these findings is that the impact of Islamic practice is not as straightforward as it is often assumed to be. Huntington (1996, p.70) famously argued that “in Islam, God is Caesar,” and that Islam is therefore incompatible with modern conceptions of liberal democracy. The findings of this chapter cast considerable doubt upon this claim: as shown above, Muslims in Lebanon who practice their faith are substantially more likely to support democracy than are those who do not engage in communal practice. This result does not necessarily mean that Muslim religious practice is always and everywhere associated with greater support for democracy; this chapter has argued that the effect of religious practice—regardless of the particular faith tradition in question—is conditional upon group status. This finding highlights the dangers of making sweeping statements about particular religious groups. The results of this chapter suggest that the effects of religious practice within the same religious group could vary substantially across countries.

Importantly, this chapter described Lebanon during a particular phase of its political history. For many, the Syrian withdrawal meant a return to Lebanese sovereignty and brought hopes for democratic reform. The Sunni-Shi’a tensions, while beginning to fester, had not reached anything close to what they would become in
the next several years. Most crucially, the Syrian Civil War was several years away, and would have seemed unthinkable at the time. The Syrian conflict fundamentally reconfigured political alliances in Lebanon (as I will discuss in the next chapter), and hardened the boundaries between Sunnis and Shi’a in an unprecedentedly severe way. Importantly, the conflict has altered the way that Lebanese leaders and citizens view their own state. Ali Hamdan, a leader for the largely Shi’a Amal Movement, states that “This entity, this ‘Lebanon,’ is seriously at risk. In 2008, we didn’t used to think that the entity was at risk.” The massive changes experienced by Lebanon as well as its neighboring countries in the years since 2007 mean that the Lebanon described in this chapter no longer exists. In only a few years, national and regional developments have led to a fundamentally different structure of political and sectarian alliances, shifting groups’ interests with respect to democracy as well as other political issues. The next chapter will discuss the implications of these shifts, and will highlight the need to consider variation in group interests over time in order to better understand the link between religious practices and democratic attitudes.

24Remark to author, Beirut, March 2014.
Appendix

Appendix 2.A  Survey Questions Used

The following questions were used from the Arab Barometer:

202) Are you a member of any organization or formal groups? “Political parties, living cooperatives or local societies, religious organizations, sport and entertainment clubs, cultural organizations, associations or workers’ unions, farmer unions, professional unions or associations economic organizations or associations, entrepreneurial organizations, parent-teacher associations, or other voluntary organizations.”

1. Yes 2. No


222) How often do you use the Internet?

1. Daily or almost daily 2. At least once a week 3. At least once a month 4. Several times a year 5. I do not use the Internet

232) To what extent do you agree/ disagree with the following statements?

4. Democracy may have its problems but is better than any other form of government 1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree

502) When you consider what a suitable spouse is for your son or daughter,
would you say that each of the following is very important, somewhat important, or not important?

1. S/he doesn’t pray
   1. Very important 2. Somewhat important 3. A little important 4. Not important

701) Age...

702) Gender:
   1. Male 2. Female

703) Level of education:
   1. Illiterate 2. Elementary 3. Primary 5. Secondary 6. College Diploma-two years 7. BA 8. MA or higher

714) Do you pray at:

715) (Income includes all salaries, wages, and rent) Monthly income for individual in (local currency)
## Appendix 2.B Supplementary Tables

Table 2.B.1: Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Strong) Support for Democracy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communal Prayer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>38.47</td>
<td>13.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Use</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse Prayer Important</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income (Deciles)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association Membership</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.B.2: Logistic Regression Results, Support for Democracy (Christians)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>0.337</td>
<td>0.748</td>
<td>-1.308</td>
<td>0.488</td>
<td>-0.665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.628)</td>
<td>(0.652)</td>
<td>(0.823)</td>
<td>(0.643)</td>
<td>(0.859)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communal Prayer</td>
<td>-0.604</td>
<td>-0.555</td>
<td>-0.730</td>
<td>-0.589</td>
<td>-0.757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.234)</td>
<td>(0.237)</td>
<td>(0.305)</td>
<td>(0.238)</td>
<td>(0.317)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>-0.066</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>-0.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.069)</td>
<td>(0.070)</td>
<td>(0.092)</td>
<td>(0.070)</td>
<td>(0.095)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.121</td>
<td>-0.127</td>
<td>0.502</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0.473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.182)</td>
<td>(0.185)</td>
<td>(0.258)</td>
<td>(0.184)</td>
<td>(0.265)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Use</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.059)</td>
<td>(0.060)</td>
<td>(0.074)</td>
<td>(0.060)</td>
<td>(0.077)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse Prayer Important</td>
<td>-0.182</td>
<td>-0.257</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.081)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income (deciles)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.172</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>0.175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.046)</td>
<td>(0.047)</td>
<td>(0.047)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association Membership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.021</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.236)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.313)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIC</td>
<td>728.928</td>
<td>715.479</td>
<td>447.364</td>
<td>714.679</td>
<td>431.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIC</td>
<td>831.387</td>
<td>834.586</td>
<td>553.824</td>
<td>833.625</td>
<td>566.837</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses

* significant at $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-0.806</td>
<td>0.249</td>
<td>-0.783</td>
<td>-0.658</td>
<td>0.134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.876)</td>
<td>(0.945)</td>
<td>(1.092)</td>
<td>(0.889)</td>
<td>(1.182)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communal Prayer</td>
<td>0.760 **</td>
<td>0.785 ***</td>
<td>0.725 **</td>
<td>0.772 ***</td>
<td>0.820 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.280)</td>
<td>(0.286)</td>
<td>(0.339)</td>
<td>(0.285)</td>
<td>(0.352)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>0.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.082)</td>
<td>(0.085)</td>
<td>(0.106)</td>
<td>(0.084)</td>
<td>(0.112)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>-0.063</td>
<td>-0.157</td>
<td>-0.037</td>
<td>-0.170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.287)</td>
<td>(0.293)</td>
<td>(0.402)</td>
<td>(0.291)</td>
<td>(0.412)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Use</td>
<td>-0.053</td>
<td>-0.071</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>-0.046</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.081)</td>
<td>(0.083)</td>
<td>(0.099)</td>
<td>(0.082)</td>
<td>(0.103)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse Prayer Important</td>
<td>-0.322 ***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.095)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income (deciles)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.059)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.061)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association Membership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.788 ***</td>
<td>-0.477</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.297)</td>
<td>(0.356)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIC</td>
<td>506.004</td>
<td>483.824</td>
<td>318.890</td>
<td>499.733</td>
<td>304.318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIC</td>
<td>600.631</td>
<td>593.402</td>
<td>416.231</td>
<td>610.058</td>
<td>428.400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses

* significant at p < .10; ** p < .05; *** p < .01
### Table 2.B.4: Robustness Checks, Commitment to Democracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communal Prayer</td>
<td>-0.34*</td>
<td>-0.58**</td>
<td>0.94***</td>
<td>1.11***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
<td>(0.28)</td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.79***</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
<td>(0.24)</td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Use</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association Membership</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.28)</td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Spouse Prayer</td>
<td>-0.20**</td>
<td>-0.18*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income (deciles)</td>
<td>0.18***</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ordinal logistic regressions. Standard errors in parentheses**

* significant at $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$
Table 2.B.5: Propensity Score Matching Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estimated effect [ATT]</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abadie-Imbens Standard error</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matched/Total Observations</td>
<td>452/508</td>
<td>151/369</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 3

After Syria: Communal Religion and Democracy in 2014 Lebanon

In politics, you don’t have eternal enemies.
– Mohammed Obeid, Amal Movement

Introduction

This chapter applies my theory of communal religion, group interest, and democracy to the case of Lebanon following the outbreak and spread of the Syrian Civil War. Using data from an original nationally-representative survey conducted in Lebanon between 2013 and 2014, it shows that the relationship between communal prayer and attitudes towards democracy can change drastically, even within a given sect, when the political and/or economic interests of that sect change. By shifting the axis of competition (both in terms of who is competing and what they are competing over), these changes can dramatically alter the effect of communal prayer on support for

\footnote{Remark to author, Beirut, March 2014.}
democracy or non-democracy. The findings in this chapter—both observational and experimental—suggest that the Syrian Civil War and its spillover effects in Lebanon have created an environment in which communal religion depresses support for democracy among Sunnis but enhances support for democracy among Shi'a. For Christians, who are highly politically divided and largely “on the sidelines” with respect to the Syrian conflict (Hoffman and Nugent 2015), communal practice no longer has a clear unidirectional effect on regime attitudes².

**Religion in 2014 Lebanon**

Despite the emergence of a visible secular segment in Lebanon, the overwhelming majority of the Lebanese population remains “religious” in the traditional sense³. The data suggest that 79% of Christians, 88% of Sunnis, and 87% of Shi’a reported that they considered themselves “religious.” Over 97% of each sect indicated that religion was at least “somewhat important” in their lives, with a majority of respondents in each sect saying that religion was “very important.”⁴ Personal piety and self-identification as “religious” are very high across sects.

Religious behaviors are also very common in Lebanon. As expected from the different tenets professed by each sect, the types of religious behavior performed by citizens vary across denomination. Muslims of either major sect are more likely to pray at home or at work; 70% of Sunnis and 77% of Shi’a report praying daily (or more frequently), compared to 27% of Christians⁵. Frequency of fasting in Ramadan

---

²This description of sectarian interests is consistent with Salamey and Tabar (2012, p. 507), who find that Shi’a generally prefer a proportional electoral system, Sunnis prefer a district-majority system, and Maronites are split between the two.

³The findings presented in this section are broadly consistent with other surveys of religious behavior in Lebanon, such as Moaddel (2009) and Gärde (2012).

⁴Similar distributions of responses are present for the question of whether respondents take comfort and strength from religion.

⁵These differences are due in no small part to the fact that daily prayer is a religiously-mandated
or Lent is similar; 81% of Sunnis and 76% of Shi’a report that they “always” observe this practice, compared to 43% of Christians (of course, fasting during Lent is not required in every Christian denomination). Communal prayer follows the opposite trend; 61% of Christians report weekly attendance, compared to 49% among Sunnis and 32% among Shi’a.

Patterns of communal practice also differ within sects. Importantly, gender differences might be present in relative rates of communal prayer. Christian women attend church weekly at a slightly higher rate than men (64% compared to 58%). A common—though mistaken, as shown below—claim is that Muslim women do not attend mosque services; this claim sometimes states that women are not permitted to pray at mosques, but otherwise simply states that women are not encouraged as strongly as men to attend communal prayer. Empirically, it is true that Muslim women engage in communal prayer less than Muslim men, but it is far from true that women never attend mosque services. While Sunni men are far more likely (62%) than Sunni women to attend mosque services on a weekly basis, over one third of Sunni women report attending mosque at least weekly. Similarly, Shi’a men report weekly attendance at a rate of 38%, compared to 23% of Shi’a women. Thus, while it is most certainly the case that women attend mosques at lower rates than men in Lebanon, a considerable number of women from every sect participate in communal prayer regularly.

**Lebanon’s Political Environment**

Following independence from France in 1943, the leaders of Lebanon’s major sects (at the time, Maronite Christians and Sunni Muslims) agreed upon an unwritten National behavior for Muslims, but not as clearly required for Christians.
Pact, in which key political resources were divided among the sects, loosely based on the 1932 census (Trablousi 2007). Importantly, no census has been conducted in Lebanon since 1932, largely due to fears of sectarian unrest if a census were to occur. The Lebanese Civil war (1975-1990), heavily influenced by concerns about sectarian representation in government, resulted in the Ta’if Accord, an agreement in which Christians and Muslims were each given 50% of parliamentary seats and Sunnis and Shi’a were given equal shares of seats. While this reconfiguration of sectarian allotments came closer to representing demographic realities, it fell far short of matching the population shares of each sect. Sunnis remained under-represented relative to the population share, but Shi’a—who now make up around 40% of the population and are considerably more numerous than Sunnis—are particularly under-represented. Since virtually every political resource is allocated (at least partially) along sectarian lines, this deprivation has remained a major narrative of Lebanese politics.

There is little doubt that sectarian concerns continue to influence political preferences in Lebanon. An overwhelming majority of respondents from each of the major sects agreed that “Religious conflict is the biggest problem facing Lebanon today” (90% of Christians, 83% of Sunnis, and 85% of Shi’a; similar proportions agreed that “Religion is the most important social division in Lebanon.”). Recent changes in political circumstances have substantially affected both the axis of political competition in Lebanon and the tone of political discourse. Deeb and Harb (2013, loc. 1076) state that “in 2005, after the assassination of former prime minister Rafiq Hariri, these [Sunni-Shi’a] tensions came to the foreground and, for the first time in Lebanese history, began to take the form of Sunni-Shi’i sectarian conflict” (emphasis added). These tensions, which were unprecedented prior to 2005, increased further with the May 2008 fighting between Hezbollah and the Sunni Future Movement,
the first time that Hezbollah had used weapons against other Lebanese since the civil war. More than any of these events, however, the Syrian Civil War beginning in 2011 has hardened and intensified the divisions between Sunnis and Shi’a. The Syrian conflict has come to be seen in Lebanon through a highly sectarian lens, broadly pitting Sunnis vs. Shi’a with Christians divided on the issue (but largely preferring to be uninvolved). Sunnis have largely supported the rebels, while Shi’a have primarily sided with the Asad regime. Both sides have provided support in many forms, including sending fighters and financial support to the other side of the border. Lebanese Sunni involvement in Syria was initially claimed to be limited to a few radical groups, but subsequent developments suggested that Sunni involvement has likely been far deeper than previously believed (Asfura-Heim, Steinitz, and Schbley 2013). Christians, divided between the two main blocs (the primarily Sunni March 14 and the primarily Shi’a March 8; see Salamey and Tabar 2012), have yet to take any type of united stance either for or against the regime. Nevertheless, the Syrian conflict has heavily influenced political discussions for each and every sect. al-Akhbar (2014) reports that even the Lebanese presidential election, seemingly a domestic issue, is dictated heavily by competing visions of Lebanon’s role in the regional system; Sunnis (allied with Saudi Arabia) versus Shi’a (allied with Iran). Meanwhile, “Christians, the Maronite clergy, and Maronite presidential candidates will have no choice but to stand on the sidelines again.” The sects’ opposite positions in Syria have translated into political discord in Lebanon; prominent Maronite MP Alain Aoun has remarked that “Since the Syrian crisis began, in 2011, Lebanon’s Sunnis and Shi’ites have been

---

6March 14 and March 8 are the main two political coalitions in Lebanon formed in 2005 after the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. March 14, to whom most Sunnis are loyal, is anti-Syrian (specifically, anti-Syrian regime), and March 8, with whom most Shi’a are affiliated, supports the Syrian regime.

7These developments are perhaps ironic, given that the Lebanese National Pact of 1943 requires that the president be a Maronite Christian.
unable to speak to each other” (The New Yorker 2014).

These changing circumstances suggest an important distinction from the previous political environment: now that the main political issue is the Syrian conflict, Sunnis and Shi’a find their interests to be in direct conflict, in contrast to the previous alignment of interests in significant ways. When presented with the statement “Political differences between Muslims and Christians are stronger than differences between Sunnis and Shi’a,” only a small minority agreed (less than 14% of Sunnis and just over 17% of Shi’a; even Christians only agreed with this statement less than 27% of the time). Christians, instead of being fairly united in their opposition to electoral reform and redistribution, are divided on the key issue of the day. While Christians still have reasons to oppose electoral reform and redistribution, the prospect of democratization per se is now less threatening, since Christian groups could be potentially very powerful coalition members. al-Monitor (2014) quotes a Christian political leader in a border area as stating that since the Syrian conflict has erupted, “Everybody wants the Christians to be on their side.” By being a seemingly neutral group with respect to the conflict, Christians can potentially ally with either side if political conditions change (see Hazran 2010, for a discussion of how Shi’a leaders have altered their behavior based on the knowledge that an inter-sectarian coalition could overpower them). These factors create a situation in which Sunnis and Shi’a view the prospects of democratization through a Sunni-Shi’a lens rather than a Christian-Muslim one. Consequently, the incentives of each group with respect to democracy are determined in large part by these alignments.

Although Sunnis are still under-represented in parliament, they are signif-

---

8Arabic wording:

<<الخلافات السياسية بين المسلمين والمسيحيين أشد من الخلافات بين السنة والشيعة.>>
icantly less under-represented than Shi’a, their current political adversaries. Although electoral reform in the direction of a more proportional system would benefit Sunnis in absolute terms (and relative to Christians), it would lessen their influence relative to Shi’a. As a result, Sunni discourse has shifted away from electoral reform considerably. Ahmed Fatfat, a leading Sunni member of the Future Movement’s parliamentary bloc, now says that “Ta’if is a very good equilibrium,” referring to the 1989 Ta’if Agreement that reassigned parliamentary seats to increase the number of Muslim seats in parliament but still preserves the under-representation of Muslims. Further, he remarks that “we need to keep it [Ta’if] even though it can be non-democratic.” These comments reflect remarkable candor about the new incentives faced by Sunnis. Realizing that electoral reform would benefit Shi’a at the expense of Sunnis, Sunni leaders have come to accept the current arrangement as being superior to their more democratic alternatives.

Shi’a are well aware of the implications of electoral reform under the new structure of political alliances and hostilities. While no census has been conducted in Lebanon since 1932 (a fact that is closely related to political incentives), current estimates suggest that the Shi’a are now more than likely the largest group in the country; common estimates place their proportion at 40% of the total population (Hazran 2009, pp. 2-3; Shanahan 2005, p. 118); some estimates place this proportion as high as 55% (Alagha 2005, p. 237). A proportional electoral system, therefore, would tend to benefit Shi’a substantially, particularly relative to their current allot-

---

9 As Tajfel and Turner (1979, p. 39) note, in settings of inter-group conflict, there is “a good deal of evidence that, within the pattern of responding in terms of in-group favoritism, maximum difference (M.D.) is more important than maximum in-group profit (M.I.P). Thus, they seem to be competing with the out-group, rather than following a strategy of simple economic gain for members of the in-group.” In the Lebanese setting, this behavior translates into Sunni hostility for democratic reforms; although Sunnis would benefit from democratization relative to Christians, Shi’a would benefit even more than Sunnis. Since Shi’a are now the relevant out-group with respect to Sunnis, Sunni preferences follow a “maximum difference” pattern comparing themselves to Shi’a.

10 Remarks to author, Beirut, March 27, 2014.
ment of just 27% of seats in parliament. Lebanon’s voting age (21) also contributes to Shi’a under-representation, since Shi’a birth rates are higher and the proportion of their population under the age of 21 is higher than those of other sects (see Hazran 2009); the largely Shi’a Amal movement estimates that 70% of citizens between the ages of 18 and 21 are Shi’a (Shanahan 2005, p. 121). In this sense, the Shi’a are the under-represented and under-privileged group and the group who would benefit the most from democratic reforms. Mohammed Obeid, a key figure in the Amal Movement and long-time advisor to Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri, declares: “Let’s hope a miracle happens and they adopt a proportional law”\textsuperscript{11}. To the extent that communal religious practice pushes citizens’ beliefs into closer alignment with the interests of their groups, then, mosque attendance should promote support for democracy among Shi’a but inhibit such support among Sunnis.

Economic incentives are also likely to lead to a pro-democracy effect of communal prayer among Shi’a but the opposite among Sunnis. Lebanon continues to be a tremendously unequal country. While the World Bank’s data on inequality are consistently absent for Lebanon (surely not a coincidence), Credit Suisse’s \textit{Global Wealth Databook} (2012) covers countries omitted by other sources. Of the 166 countries in their sample, Lebanon ranks as the fifth most unequal country\textsuperscript{12} — and two of the four countries reported as more unequal than Lebanon (St. Kitts & Nevis and Belize) have populations of far less than 1 million people. It is also evident that most government policies have not been designed with the intention of reducing inequality in a meaningful way. Figure 3.1 displays one indicator of government policy that can reduce inequality: education spending. This figure compares the levels of education spending per GDP across countries as of 2011. As this figure demonstrates, Lebanon

\textsuperscript{11}Remarks to author, Beirut, March 2014.

\textsuperscript{12}According to these data, the mean wealth per adult in Lebanon is over 33,000 USD, but the median is just over 7,000.
is the fourth-lowest of the 182 countries in the data in terms of education spending per GDP. These levels indicate a remarkable lack of emphasis on education by the Lebanese government. Greater access to public education for poorer citizens (and, by extension, poorer sects\textsuperscript{13}) would more than likely promote the development of skills that would enable such citizens to improve their economic standing. Since education is a key factor in upward mobility, the government’s inattention to the education sector reflects a lack of interest in reducing inequality, at least compared to other interests.

Figure 3.1: Cross-National Education Spending by Income

\textsuperscript{13}Using a national survey, Salamey and Tabar (2012, p. 503) find that Shi’a are much less likely to hold post-secondary degrees (43\%) compared to Sunnis (52\%) and Maronites (70\%). They are also much more likely to live in areas where residential property values are worth less than 75,000 USD on average: 47\% of Shi’a live in such areas, compared to 26\% of Sunnis and 20\% of Maronites.
Much of Lebanon’s economic inequality follows sectarian lines. Since income is a less-than-ideal measure of group privilege in this setting, I use a variety of other measures to capture this concept more accurately. To distinguish the concept of wealth from income, I asked respondents whether or not they owned their homes. Shi’a relative deprivation is clear from this measure; compared to Sunnis, Shi’a were about 12 percentage points less likely to own their homes. Of course, it is possible that this difference is simply due to demographic differences (specifically, average age) or settlement patterns. To address this possibility, I estimate the difference between groups while controlling for the respondent’s age and his/her qadaa (district). After including these controls, the difference between Sunnis and Shi’a is actually larger (over 17 percentage points) and remains highly statistically significant (p-value <0.001).

Other measures of economic privilege produce similar results. A frequently-used measure of poverty in Lebanon is the number of hours per day in which an individual’s electricity is cut off (Corstange 2012a, 2013). This measure is particularly useful because it captures an individual’s access to a resource that is supposed to be provided by the state. Shi’a respondents experienced an average of about 37 more minutes without power per day than Sunnis. This difference remains statistically

---

14 The simple income measure is problematic as a measure of group privilege for several reasons. First, and perhaps most obviously, income alone does not indicate wealth, the latter of which is presumably more likely to be targeted by state-led redistribution. Second, respondents in this survey frequently had difficulty remembering or estimating their monthly income, so the measure is not entirely reliable. Finally, asking respondents about their monthly income does not capture the source of this income. While average income for both Sunnis and Shi’a has increased in the past few decades, the degree to which the state has provided such income is highly uneven. Both groups benefit from external patronage and clientelistic political parties, but Shi’a have been much less likely to receive state benefits. Thus, even if certain groups report higher income, it is important to consider the source of that income: Shi’a have increased their average income considerably, but very little of this increase is due to state intervention; they could benefit substantially from state redistributive policies despite their increasing income levels.

15 The qadaa (district) is Lebanon’s second-level administrative unit; the country is divided into 26 qadaa.
significant and of comparable size after including \textit{qadaa} fixed effects, a test that is likely over-conservative since the state can (and likely does) choose to provide certain areas of the country with more or less reliable electricity based on the area’s sectarian composition. Further evidence of unequal state privileges are found in the area of employment. While the unemployment rate for Shi’a was only slightly higher than that for Sunnis (a difference of 1.5 percentage points), the level of \textit{public-sector} employment differed vastly between the groups. While over 13\% of Sunni respondents reported working in the public sector, less than 6\% of Shi’a respondents reported doing so. These figures suggest a clear trend: to the extent that the Shi’a community in Lebanon has enhanced its economic standing in recent years, it has done so with considerably less access to state largesse than its Sunni neighbors. Democratization—including, importantly, more proportional and equitable access to state resources—would therefore tend to benefit Shi’a at the expense of Sunnis, both politically and economically.

\textbf{Data and Hypotheses}

My theory of communal religion, group interest, and democracy as applied to the changing political environment in Lebanon suggests a new set of hypotheses. Observationally, we should expect that citizens who attend religious services frequently should be more likely to hold political attitudes in alignment with the interests of their sect than those who do not attend regularly. Although this trend is likely to hold for a broader set of issues, the focus of this project is on regime attitudes; therefore, I emphasize the relationship between communal prayer and attitudes towards democracy.

\textbf{Hypothesis 3} \textit{Communal religious practice will tend to increase support for democ-}
racy among Shi’a, decrease support for democracy among Sunnis, and have no effect on support for democracy among Maronites.\textsuperscript{16}

Of course, it is possible that any observed correlation between these variables may be spurious; it is conceivable, for instance, that individuals with high levels of \textit{pre-existing} group identity are simply more inclined to participate in communal worship. While it is impossible to “exogenize” communal prayer fully, I included a religious priming experiment in a nationally-representative survey of Lebanon that aims to (unobtrusively) mimic the types of cues that individuals might hear in a communal worship environment. These primes cannot fully mirror the type of content that individuals experience at a church or mosque (particularly since this content will vary across both place of worship and time), but they nevertheless should invoke a certain type of “religious” mindset in respondents. Wenger (2004) states that these types of primes can trigger an “automatic” activation of religious concepts, and similar priming experiments have proven successful in studying the effect of religion (in various forms) on a number of different outcomes (Ahmed and Salas 2011; Pichon, Boccato, and Saroglou 2007; Randolph-Seng and Nielsen 2007; Saroglou, Corneille, and Van Cappellen 2009; Shariff and Norenzayan 2007; Van Cappellen et al. 2011). A full description of the experiment is available in Appendix 3.A, but it is important to note that the treatment group considered here was only primed with \textit{communal} religious words, rather than words that might activate notions of personal piety.

The expectations for this experiment are analogous to those in the observational portion of the results; communal religious primes should shift respondents’ attitudes towards the interests of their group, much like communal prayer.

\textsuperscript{16}Since the Christian community is politically divided regarding the major political issue of the day (Syria), and has largely remained on the sidelines with respect to the Syrian conflict, it is unclear what to expect from communal religious practice among Christians. As a result, the remainder of this chapter will focus primarily on Sunnis and Shi’a, for whom political interests are more easily identifiable.
Hypothesis 4 Communal religious primes will increase support for democracy among Shi’a but decrease support for democracy among Sunnis.

To test these hypotheses, data are drawn from an original nationally-representative survey in Lebanon conducted between late 2013 and early 2014.\textsuperscript{17} The survey used a multi-stage area probability sample covering all 25 of Lebanon’s districts in order to ensure proper representation. Surveys were conducted face-to-face using traditional pen-and-paper methods. The response rate for this survey was over 85%. The sample was stratified by sect such that 402 respondents were selected from each of the main sectarian groups: Christian,\textsuperscript{18} Sunni, and Shi’a.

The key dependent variable (support for democracy) is an index combining several different questions about attitudes toward regime types. For the observational section, this variable combines nine different items, all related to support for democracy; the full list of questions is available in Appendix 3.B. Out of necessity, the experimental results use a smaller (4 item) index because the effects of primes of this sort are fairly short-lasting\textsuperscript{19}. The dependent variables are re-scaled to range from 0-1 for ease of interpretation.

The observational analysis uses a question asking respondents how frequently they attended church or mosque; this question asked “Other than weddings or funer-

\textsuperscript{17}The survey was designed by the author and implemented by Informational International, a Lebanese survey and consulting firm headquartered in Beirut.

\textsuperscript{18}Christian sub-groups were sampled in proportion to Interior Ministry figures regarding their population shares, so the sample proportions of each Christian denomination are representative of their population proportions.

\textsuperscript{19}The four questions used for the experimental index are a subset of the nine used in the observational section; originally, more items were included in the experimental portion of the questionnaire, but pilot testing revealed that the repetitiveness of these questions created considerable respondent fatigue. As a result, the regime questions were spread out in the final questionnaire, allowing them to be used in the observational section but not the experimental section. In any case, the results presented here are generally not sensitive to changes in the specification of the indices.
als, how often do you attend religious services at a church or mosque?"^{20}

Response categories included “never,” “rarely,” “around once per month,” “around once per week,” and “more than once per week.” Variables included in the “baseline” set of controls are gender, age, education level, employment status and income. Gender is perhaps a particularly important control variable since, as shown above, men and women differ considerably in their propensity to attend mosque.^{21} Subsequent models include measures of religiosity (“Are you a religious person?”) and qadaa (district) fixed effects. Importantly, later models also control for personal prayer; in this question, respondents were asked: “How often do you pray at home or at work?” The qualification in this wording is important in order to distinguish personal/private from communal prayer. Inclusion of this variable should account for the possibility that communal prayer is not meaningfully different from other types of prayer.

Results

For a first glance at the patterns present in the data, Table 3.2 displays the mean levels of support for democracy (on a 0-1 scale) by sect and frequency of religious attendance. These averages are observed from the data rather than being estimated from a model. The observed values generally support the hypotheses presented above: for Sunnis,

^{20} Arabic wording:

>>باستثناء الأعراس وال الأربعين، كم مرة تحضلون في الكنيسة أو المسجد؟<<

^{21} Communal prayer and gender are both included as additive rather than interactive terms in these models because there is no theoretical reason to expect the effect of communal prayer to vary by gender; the omitted-variable problem could potentially come from leaving out the gender variable, since gender has been shown to be correlated with mosque attendance and could independently affect regime attitudes. As a robustness check, I have run models interacting these two terms, and the substantive results remain the same, albeit with less precision for women due to the smaller number of women attending mosque.
support for democracy decreases with more frequent attendance; for Shi’a, support for
democracy increases with attendance; and for Maronite Christians, no clear pattern
is present. The Sunni and Shi’a trends are both close to being monotonic, and the
general trend is clear: without controlling for other variables, frequency of communal
prayer is associated with democratic attitudes in closer alignment with sectarian
interests for Muslims, while no trend is present for Maronites.

Figure 3.2: Support for Democracy, by Sect and Attendance (Observed)

Table 3.1 presents the results of a series of ordinary least-squares regressions
of support for democracy on communal religious practice for Sunnis (Table 3.1a), Shi’a
(Table 3.1b), and Maronite Christians (Table 3.1c). In each of these tables, the first
five models use the continuous measure of frequency of communal prayer as described
above, while models 6-10 use indicator variables for each level of attendance in order
to determine if there are meaningful nonlinearities in this relationship. Models 1 and 6 are bivariate regressions that include no controls; the other models all include “baseline” controls as described above. Models 3 and 8 control for self-reported religiosity; models 4 and 9 control for personal prayer, and models 5 and 10 include qadaa fixed effects.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{22}Results (omitted here for the purposes of space) are virtually identical when the models include a measure of association membership or including all of the previously-mentioned control variables in a single model.
Table 3.1: Baseline Results
(a) Communal Prayer and Support for Democracy (Sunnis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
<th>(6)</th>
<th>(7)</th>
<th>(8)</th>
<th>(9)</th>
<th>(10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>-0.18*</td>
<td>-0.17*</td>
<td>-0.20*</td>
<td>-0.22*</td>
<td>-0.15*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~Once per month</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~Once per week</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Once per week</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.08*</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline Controls</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadaa FEs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>402</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>0.141</td>
<td>0.147</td>
<td>0.157</td>
<td>0.234</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$AIC$</td>
<td>-249.98</td>
<td>-252.15</td>
<td>-253.24</td>
<td>-257.84</td>
<td>-258.35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
(b) Communal Prayer and Support for Democracy (Shi'a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
<th>(6)</th>
<th>(7)</th>
<th>(8)</th>
<th>(9)</th>
<th>(10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.10***</td>
<td>0.10***</td>
<td>0.09***</td>
<td>0.09***</td>
<td>0.11***</td>
<td>0.08***</td>
<td>0.09***</td>
<td>0.10***</td>
<td>0.14***</td>
<td>0.08***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>0.07*</td>
<td>0.07*</td>
<td>0.08*</td>
<td>0.11**</td>
<td>0.08**</td>
<td>0.07*</td>
<td>0.07*</td>
<td>0.08*</td>
<td>0.11**</td>
<td>0.08**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~Once per month</td>
<td>0.12***</td>
<td>0.13***</td>
<td>0.14***</td>
<td>0.18***</td>
<td>0.12***</td>
<td>0.12***</td>
<td>0.13***</td>
<td>0.14***</td>
<td>0.18***</td>
<td>0.13***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~Once per week</td>
<td>0.12***</td>
<td>0.13***</td>
<td>0.14***</td>
<td>0.18***</td>
<td>0.13***</td>
<td>0.12***</td>
<td>0.13***</td>
<td>0.14***</td>
<td>0.18***</td>
<td>0.13***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Once per week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline Controls</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadaa FEs</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.177</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>0.076</td>
<td>0.191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>-357.69</td>
<td>-350.48</td>
<td>-349.13</td>
<td>-349.36</td>
<td>-369.67</td>
<td>-359.43</td>
<td>-354.00</td>
<td>-352.52</td>
<td>-355.43</td>
<td>-370.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
(c) Communal Prayer and Support for Democracy (Maronites)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
<th>(6)</th>
<th>(7)</th>
<th>(8)</th>
<th>(9)</th>
<th>(10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.08*</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~Once per month</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~Once per week</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;Once per week</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline Controls</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadaa FEs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>0.384</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>0.106</td>
<td>0.106</td>
<td>0.107</td>
<td>0.412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIC</td>
<td>-211.88</td>
<td>-214.03</td>
<td>-212.51</td>
<td>-213.30</td>
<td>-258.33</td>
<td>-221.10</td>
<td>-219.41</td>
<td>-217.45</td>
<td>-217.81</td>
<td>-262.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
Since these results are from OLS models and both the dependent variable and the main independent variable are scaled to range from 0 to 1, the coefficients in the table can be interpreted as marginal effects or percentage-point changes. For Sunnis, a one-unit increase in frequency of communal prayer (corresponding to an increase from “never”-attenders to more than weekly-attenders) is predicted to decrease support for democracy by between 15 and 22 percentage points; for Shi’a, the corresponding effect is an increase of 9 to 11 percentage points. These effects are sizeable, highly statistically significant (at the 0.01 level or better in every specification), and very stable across different model specifications. For both sects, frequency of attendance has a mostly monotonic association with democratic attitudes, as illustrated in models 6-10 in each table: frequent communal religious practice is robustly negatively correlated with support for democracy among Sunnis, but positively linked to support for democracy among Shi’a. As expected, results for Maronite Christians are unclear and inconsistent; the political divisions within the political community over the issue of Syria make it difficult to identify what their “group interest” might be. In total, these results provide strong support for Hypothesis 3.

**Experimental Results**

Mosque attendance cannot be considered to be “randomly-assigned,” and the results presented above may be endogenous even after the inclusion of the control variables listed. While it is not possible to “exogenize” communal prayer directly, the survey experiment described in the preceding section attempts to prime respondents with the types of communal religious content they might find at a mosque.

Figure 3.3 displays the average treatment effects (by sect) of the communal

\[^{23}\text{Because of the lack of clear testable predictions for Maronites and other Christians, the further analyses presented below mostly focus only on Muslims.}\]
religious primes on support for democracy. Among Sunnis, these primes decreased support for democracy by over 6 percentage points compared to the control group, while for Shi’a, the prime increased support for democracy by about 5 percentage points. Both of these effects are statistically significant at the 5% level. It appears, therefore, that these primes had a similar effect to that demonstrated by mosque attendance; for Sunnis, communal religion in either form reduces support for democracy, while the opposite is true for Shi’a. Importantly, these results are isolated to the communal primes; personal piety primes (as described in Appendix 3.A) had no such effects on any of the outcome variables\textsuperscript{24}.

\textsuperscript{24}Full results for the personal piety primes are available from the author upon request.
Mechanism Tests

I have suggested that the mechanism through which communal prayer translates into support for (or opposition to) democracy is as follows: mosque attendance heightens the salience of group identity, which in turn induces individuals to view political issues (e.g. electoral reform or redistribution) through a more sectarian lens, which influences their regime preferences accordingly. While testing such mechanisms is difficult, particularly with observational data, it is nevertheless possible to examine the degree to which mosque attendance correlates with the expected mechanism outcomes as a “plausibility probe” (George and Bennett 2005). To that end, I fit a series of regressions\(^{25}\) similar to the ones described above (using the “baseline” control set), but with the outcome being more specific issue attitudes or measures of group affect rather than broader measures of regime attitudes.

I have argued that communal prayer should increase an individual’s sense of “linked fate” (Dawson 1995), making citizens more likely to believe that their fortunes are closely tied to those of their sect. To measure this concept, I asked respondents the degree to which they agreed that “Policies that are good for my sect are good for me personally.”\(^{26}\) If the linked fate mechanism is at work, then members of either sect should be more likely to agree with this statement if they attend religious services regularly. This relationship is presented in Figure 3.4. Patterns are very similar between the two groups: 32-33% of “never”-attenders agree with the statement, compared to 54-55% of the most frequent attenders. These relationships, significant at the 0.001 level, suggest that mosque attenders are indeed more likely to perceive a

\(^{25}\)Since the dependent variables in this section are each 5-point Likert scales, I use ordinal logistic regressions for these models.

\(^{26}\)Arabic wording:

"السياسات الجيدة لطائفتي جيدة لي شخصياً."
link between their own fates and the political fates of their sects.

Figure 3.4: Frequency of Communal Prayer and Linked Fate

![Graph showing frequency of prayer and linked fate for Sunnis and Shi'a](image)

It is possible, of course, that these results do not indicate causal mechanisms, but rather selection effects. If high-identifiers are simply more likely to attend religious services, then my claim that mosque attendance enhances sectarian identification may not be true. To address this possibility, I use a “tough test” of the effect of mosque attendance on sectarian identity. If mosque attendance truly increases the salience of sectarian identity, then respondents interviewed on Friday (the Muslim holy day) should report higher levels of sectarian identification than those interviewed on other days\textsuperscript{27}. Furthermore, this effect should be isolated to attenders. Non-

---

\textsuperscript{27}Unfortunately, time of interview was not recorded, so it is not possible to know whether respondents were interviewed before or after the \textit{jumu'ah} congregational prayers. However, the inability to account for the time of day should bias the results of the tests downwards, since the data likely includes respondents in the “treatment” group who had not yet received the actual treatment.
attenders provide a type of placebo test for this hypothesis: if respondents who do not participate in communal prayer report higher levels of sectarian identification on Fridays than on other days, then the “Friday” effect is most likely due to factors other than mosque attendance, such as the mere awareness that it is Friday. These expectations are summarized in Hypothesis 5:

**Hypothesis 5** Among mosque-attenders, respondents interviewed on Fridays will report higher levels of sectarian identification than attenders interviewed on other days. Among non-attenders, there should be no difference between respondents interviewed on Fridays versus other days.

Table 3.2 displays the proportions of high-identifiers comparing Friday respondents to others, conditional on whether or not the respondent attends mosque services weekly. These proportions provide strong support for Hypothesis 5: among weekly attenders, respondents who were interviewed on Fridays were substantially more likely (a 12 percentage point difference) to report strong sectarian identification. Among non-attenders, no meaningful difference was found between respondents interviewed on Friday and those interviewed on other days; the miniscule difference that is present is actually in the opposite direction. These results indicate that Friday prayer has a substantial influence on sectarian identification among attenders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Attenders</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Friday</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weekly Attenders</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Friday</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To ensure that these differences are not due to the fact that certain areas and types of respondents were more likely to be surveyed at particular times, I fit a logistic regression using the same dependent variable as in Figure 3.4 as well as the baseline set of covariates. To these covariates, I add a few additional controls to account for the possibility that the day of interview might not be independent of attendance or identification: governorate (mohafaza) indicators, week of interview indicators, and a sect indicator. Figure 3.5 displays the marginal effects of being interviewed on a Friday. The y-axis can be interpreted as the difference in the predicted probability of high sectarian identification between respondents interviewed on a Friday and respondents interviewed on any other day of the week. This figure indicates a substantial effect: among weekly attenders, Friday-interviewees were 14 percentage points more likely to report strong perceptions of linked fate compared to non-Friday-interviewees, and this difference has a p-value of 0.02. Among non-attenders, there is no meaningful difference between Friday-interviewees and others. These differences suggest that the act of attending mosque increases sectarian identification.

A few caveats are necessary for interpreting these results. First, like the priming effects described above, the “Friday” effect is inevitably short-lived. If the entire effect of mosque attendance survived long-term, then there would be no detectable “Friday” effect because attenders would have built up a large stock of sectarian identification already. However, the observational results pertaining to frequency of attendance indicate that long-term effects are present as well. The evidence suggests that there are both immediate and long-lasting effects of mosque attendance on sectarian identification. Much like certain medicines that require long-term administration to

---

28 For this model, Sunnis and Shi’a are pooled because of sample size considerations. Since the “treatment” group (attendees interviewed on a Friday) is so small within each sect (29 Sunnis and 39 Shi’a), it is necessary to combine them to achieve a reasonable level of statistical power. When analyzed separately, the sects demonstrate similar patterns, albeit with noticeably larger standard errors.
have their full effect but also provide an immediate “jolt” to the patient when they are administered, religious attendance enhances sectarian identification through both an immediate bump-up effect and a long-run accumulation effect.

Second, the results presented in Figure 3.5 must be interpreted as average treatment effects on the treated (ATT) rather than overall average treatment effects. For non-attenders, we do not (and cannot) know the effect of the mosque attendance treatment precisely because they do not attend mosque. Their presence is useful in the model because it ensures that the “Friday” effect is not due to some other factor besides mosque attendance; however, it is not possible to determine how they would be affected by mosque attendance without highly questionable assumptions29. Nev-

29The most obvious issue in assuming that the ATE would be the same as the ATT is that non-attenders might simply lack the pre-existing piety or identification required for mosque attendance to have any effect. If this were the case, then the treatment effect for non-attenders (if it could be
ertheless, the ATT is a highly useful quantity for this study. The fact that attenders are 14 percentage points more likely to report high sectarian identification on Fridays compared to other days is remarkable, and indicates that the act of mosque attendance has a tremendous influence on the salience of sectarian identity among regular attenders.

As a final test to address the possibility of self-selection, I consider the effect of the communal religious primes described above on perceptions of linked fate. Using the same linked fate question as above, Figure 3.6 demonstrates that the “communal” primes increased respondents’ sense of linked fate, even though these questions were asked after the section on democracy, potentially allowing the effect of the primes to wear off. Among Sunnis, the communal treatment increased perceptions of linked fate by 8 percentage points; the effect size was 5.4 percentage points among Shi’a. The Sunni effect is significant at the 0.05 level, and the Shi’a effect at the 0.1 level. These effect sizes and significance levels are fairly substantial considering how soft the primes were as well as the time in between the primes and the linked fate question. It appears, therefore, that these communal primes increased a sense of linked fate in a similar way as would communal practice, albeit on a smaller scale.

While the limits of experimental methods are well-known, these findings nevertheless provide a useful complement to the observational findings. Although the scope of the experiment is rather narrow (and, by necessity, artificial)\footnote{At the same time, the present study avoids many of the pitfalls of experimental research by using a representative sample of the Lebanese population. While the primes are inevitably artificial, the sample is generalizable to the national population, maximizing external validity (Mutz 2011).}, it is helpful to observe that these types of communal religious primes cause the same types of attitudinal changes that I have previously attributed to mosque attendance, and do so through the same types of mechanisms that operate in the relationship between observed) would be quite different from the observed effect among attenders.
mosque attendance and political attitudes.

It is also important to consider how these linked fate perceptions influence beliefs about regime types. For this purpose, I asked respondents how much they agree that “Democracy is good for people like me.” As expected, the effect of communal practice on this outcome diverges between the two groups; this relationship is depicted in Figure 3.7. Among Sunnis, 82% of non-attenders strongly believe that democracy is good for people like them, compared to only 43% of the most frequent attenders. Among Shi’a, the opposite is true: less than 50% of non-attenders strongly agreed with the statement, compared to over 82% of very frequent attenders. In each of these models, the coefficient on the communal practice variable is significant at the
0.001 level. There is evidence, therefore, that the “linked fate” perceptions created by mosque attendance translate into political attitudes — by attending religious services, citizens become increasingly aware of how the prospect of democratic reforms would affect their sect, and are increasingly sensitive to such effects.

Figure 3.7: Frequency of Communal Prayer and Perceived Benefits from Democracy

Which Features of Democracy?

The above evidence suggests that communal prayer influences attitudes towards democracy in fairly consistent ways that can be predicted by the interests of a citizen’s sect. However, it is unclear exactly which aspects of democracy are responsible for these attitudes. Respondents may be expressing support for concepts that are not necessarily features of democracy but are otherwise desirable features of a political
system (Bratton 2010; Canache 2012; Jamal and Tessler 2008). Citizens’ understandings of democracy—particularly in the Arab World—can largely be grouped into two categories: “political” and “economic” (Tessler, Jamal, and Robbins 2012).

In the first case, democracy implies free elections, rotation of political power, freedom to criticize the government, and other “political” characteristics. In the latter case, democracy can imply greater economic equality, redistribution, greater provision of public goods, and similar “economic” considerations. In Lebanon, there is reason to expect that both of these categories will feature prominently in citizens’ understandings of democracy. While recent studies have cast doubt upon the claim that democracies redistribute more than dictatorships (Mulligan, Sala-i-Martin, and Gil 2003; Ross 2006; Timmons 2010), the key requirement for the logic presented here to hold is that citizens perceive democracies to be more redistributive than non-democracies. In my survey, most respondents believed this to be the case. When prompted with the statement: “Democracies redistribute income from the rich to the poor more than other types of governments,” 61% of respondents agreed, while only 24% disagreed. Further, the political and economic interests of each sect generally point in the same direction in the current political climate. Since Shi’a are poorer and more under-represented than Sunnis (their main political rivals), they have both political and economic incentives to support democracy. Of course, the opposite is true for Sunnis. To the extent that both political and economic concerns enter into citizens’ preferences regarding democracy, their responses to questions about these specific aspects of democracy should follow the same patterns as their responses to questions about democracy in general.

31 It is worth noting, however, that Braizat (2010) finds that Arab citizens widely understand democracy in the way it is understood elsewhere: civil liberties, political rights, and power rotation. 32 Arabic wording: "الديمقراطيات تعيد توزيع الدخل من الفئات الغنية للفئات الفقيرة أكثر من أنواع الحكم الأخرى."
To test this claim, I asked respondents separate questions about individual dimensions and interpretations of democracy in order to determine: 1) which features of democracy are driving these results; and 2) whether respondents are simply expressing support for “democracy” without actually supporting any of democracy’s implications. First, I asked respondents about a concrete political dimension of democracy: electoral reform. Respondents were asked about their level agreement with the following statement: “Lebanon should abandon its sectarian electoral system.” In the Lebanese political environment, the term “democracy” carries strong anti-sectarian undertones. Sectarian quotas in government are perhaps the clearest manifestation of undemocratic rule in the political system, and citizens are highly sensitive to this issue. Abandoning the sectarian electoral system would imply moving towards a more proportional system rather than allotting a fixed number of seats to each sect; as I have argued previously, this type of change would benefit Shi’a substantially. Therefore, communal prayer—to the extent that it has the effects that I have suggested—should lead Sunnis to be less likely to support this statement, but increase Shi’a support for abandoning the electoral system. Figure 3.8 provides evidence in support of this claim. Among Sunnis, 82% of never-attenders support the statement, compared to just 60% of the most frequent attenders. Conversely, 86% of never-attending Shi’a support this statement, and 93% of the most frequent attenders do so. These differences are sizeable and significant at the 0.001 (Sunni) or 0.05 (Shi’a) levels.

A related question asks respondents whether they agreed that “Lebanon should conduct a new census.” As Figure 3.9 demonstrates, the effects of mosque
Figure 3.8: Frequency of Communal Prayer and Attitudes towards Ending Sectarian System

![Graph showing frequency of communal prayer and attitudes towards ending sectarian system for Sunnis and Shi'a.](image)

attendance for this item were similar to the effects on attitudes towards the sectarian system. In both cases, respondents expressed high levels of support for this statement. A new census would indeed reveal that Sunnis are under-represented in the current arrangement; however, it would reveal that Shi'a are substantially more under-represented than Sunnis. To the extent that political competition is seen as a zero-sum game between Sunnis and Shi'a (as is mostly the case since the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War), a net gain for Shi'a could be seen to offset an absolute gain for Sunnis. For non-attending Sunnis, this competition appears not to be a concern: over 90% of respondents in this category agreed with the statement. However, frequent attenders—who possess higher levels of group solidarity and information
about group interests—are 16 percentage points less likely to agree with this statement. For Shi’a, the opposite pattern is once again present. Frequent attenders are 30 percentage points more likely to support this statement than are non-attenders. Never-attenders report support for this statement at a rate of 62%; the fact that this level is not higher is likely due to some combination of a lack of information about group size, lower levels of sectarian identification, and a lower likelihood of viewing politics as a Shi’a-Sunni contest. In any case, the differences between attenders and non-attenders are clear for both sects: communal worship makes respondents far more likely to express attitudes towards the census in accordance with the interests of their sect.

Figure 3.9: Frequency of Communal Prayer and Attitudes towards New Census

I have also suggested that economic interests will condition the relationship between communal prayer and regime attitudes, so it is useful to consider whether or
not attendance is correlated with economic attitudes consistent with group interests. First, respondents were asked how much they agree with the following statement: “Economic inequality is a major problem in Lebanon.” If the mechanism I have proposed is indeed present, then frequency of communal prayer should make Sunnis less likely to agree with this statement, but have the opposite effect for Shi’a. Figure 3.10 illustrates that this is the case: the most frequently-attending Sunnis are over 8 percentage points less likely than the least-frequent attenders to agree with this statement; the corresponding difference among Shi’a is a (positive) 19 percentage points. These differences are substantial in size and are statistically significant at the 0.05 level for Sunnis and the 0.001 level for Shi’a.

It may be the case, however, that these attitudes do not translate directly into regime preferences. To address this possibility, I asked respondents about their attitudes towards democracy including a prime that stated that democracies tend to be redistributive. The question wording was as follows: “Democracy often involves redistribution of wealth from rich groups to poor groups. Do you support this type of policy?” Once again, if my theory is correct, communal prayer should increase agreement among Shi’a but decrease agreement among Sunnis. Figure 3.11 shows that this is the case: 81% of non-attending Sunnis agreed compared to 66% of the most frequent attenders; among Shi’a, 76% of non-attenders agreed, compared to over 91% of the most frequent attenders. These effects are statistically significant at the 0.01 level or better.

35 Arabic wording:
>>عدمالمساواةالاقتصادیةمشكلةأساسیةفيلبنان<<

36 Arabic wording:
>>الدیمقراطیةكثیراًماتضمنإعادةتوزيعالثروةمنالفئاتالفنیةلفئاتالفقیرة.هلتؤیدھذاالنوعمنالسیاسات؟<<

37 Using a similar question that does not specifically mention democracy but specifically refers to “sects” (“It is necessary for the government to work to improve income equality between different sects in Lebanon”) yielded similar results, significant at the 0.01 level or better. Arabic wording:
Sermons

The results presented above suggest that communal religion has opposite effects on democratic attitudes among Sunnis and Shi’a, the two groups engaged in the most antagonistic political competition in Lebanon. At the individual level, citizens’ beliefs about political issues and regime types are influenced heavily by religious participation, but the direction of this influence depends crucially on the interests of their sects. How, exactly, does this process work? I have suggested that one channel through which communal prayer influences sectarian identity and political preferences is through explicit cues from religious leaders. While it is difficult to generalize...
Figure 3.11: Frequency of Communal Prayer and Attitudes towards Redistributive Democracy

![Graph showing frequency of communal prayer and attitudes towards redistributive democracy]

about the behaviors or individual believers or religious leaders in mosques, it is nevertheless useful to consider citizens’ reports about the political content they experience in the mosque. To this end, I asked respondents whether they hear political sermons at church/mosque, and whether these sermons (if they answered “yes”) supported or opposed democracy. Given the social desirability issues present in the latter question, there would be every reason to expect that respondents would not report hearing anti-democratic sermons. However, this proved not to be the case among Sunnis, the group who would lose the most from democracy in the current environment. Among respondents who reported hearing political sermons discussing democracy (about 40% of attenders), over 38% of Sunnis reported hearing anti-democratic sermons, compared to less than 11% of Shi‘a. Thus, there is some evidence that the some of the pro- or
anti-democratic sentiment cultivated in mosques may be coming “from the pulpit.”

Public examples of political rhetoric from mosque leaders are abundant in Lebanon. Among Sunnis, the tone of high-profile sermons tends to emphasize stability rather than reform, stressing that Sunnis would most likely be the losers from major political changes. The former grand mufti of Lebanon (the highest-ranking religious official in the country), Mohammed Rashid Qabbani, delivered a sermon at Lebanon’s largest mosque on Eid al-Adha in 2012, stating “We will not allow the government to be toppled through street action.” He further remarked that “Abandoning the constitution means the destruction of the republic and country.” These words call for the preservation of the current political arrangement—and, by implication, Sunni political privilege—regardless of public opinion. He had previously stated that “Adherence to, rather than departure from, the Taif [Accord] should be renewed, because it is [our] foundation.” More recently, current Grand Mufti Abdel Latif Derian has said that “The Taif Accord ended the Civil War, after which the Lebanese were wholly engaged in rebuilding the state,” but that progress was being threatened by, among other things, “the marginalization of [Sunni] Muslims in public affairs.”

These statements reflect a common theme in Sunni political thought: that reform threatens to marginalize the Sunni community, who benefit from the non-democratic elements of the Ta’if Accord.

Discourse on democracy among Shi’a preachers generally follows the opposite pattern, emphasizing that moving away from the sectarian system and towards true democracy would benefit the Shi’a community. These sermons stress the continuing political and economic disadvantages experienced by Lebanon’s Shi’a, and suggest

---

38 Sermon delivered at Mohammed al-Amin Mosque, Beirut, on October 26, 2012. Quoted in an-Nahar, 10/26/2012.
that electoral reform will help to remedy the existing inequality between the sects. Sheikh Ahmad Kabalan, a Shi’a religious leader, has stated that “The Shiite sect has not made any political, economic or social gains and the Shiite community continues to compromise to preserve Lebanon as a model of coexistence, forgiveness and love.”41 Sayyid Ali Fadlallah, the son of (and successor to) Mohammed Fadlallah, perhaps Lebanon’s most influential Shi’a cleric, has commented extensively on the current political deadlock, calling for the election of a new president (as constitutionally required) and objecting to the parliament’s extension of its term42. Mohammed Fadlallah himself frequently called for democratic reforms in Lebanon, even though he considered himself an Islamist. He viewed Islamic government in Lebanon as unrealistic, and his words suggest an acceptance of democracy as a reasonable compromise; he suggested that pluralistic democracy “helps to further the cause of Islam or secure total control by the will of the majority”(Sankari 2005, p.244). The reasons for Fadlallah’s reluctant acceptance of democracy reveal an important dimension of sectarian attitudes toward democracy: *instrumental* concerns are tremendously important in determining the relationship between religion and democratic preferences. Fadlallah himself was, at best, ambivalent towards democratic values *per se*, but favored democratic reforms because of the practical benefits they would bring to his community.

Sermons on both sides of the sectarian divide emphasize the importance of communal prayer for group solidarity. Ali Fadlallah recently devoted a sermon to the importance of communal prayer. In this sermon, Fadlallah stated that communal prayer has a “psychological impact” on worshippers that “generates compassion, co-

---

41 Quoted in The Daily Star, 05/14/2011.
hesion, and solidarity.” This “solidarity” discourse frequently takes on a distinctly sectarian character. In a recent sermon, Sheikh Salem al-Rafei, leader of the Sunni al-Taqwa Mosque in Tripoli, called for the creation of “a military council for the Sunni sect in Lebanon,” suggesting not only sectarian chauvinism, but also a severe concern that the Sunni sect is particularly threatened.

Lebanon’s new Sunni Grand Mufti, Sheikh Abdul Latif Derian, has begun distributing “suggested” sermons to all Sunni scholars and preachers, seeking to promote a unified message. This type of practice is common in Lebanon, and indicates that the content present in sermons is likely to be fairly consistent across congregations, preaching a message of sectarian solidarity.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has explained and tested a theory of religion, group interest, and democracy that focuses on communal religion’s influence on regime preferences. The observational and experimental results above point to the same trend in 2014 Lebanon: communal religion, either in the form of regular attendance at religious services or experimental primes intended to mimic the effect of communal prayer, heightens the salience of sectarian identity and alters regime preferences accordingly. For Sunnis, communal religion has a consistently anti-democratic effect. For Shi’a, the exact opposite trends are present. I have argued that the reason for these divergent effects is to be found in group interests. Electoral reform and economic redistribution would both tend to benefit Shi’a at the expense of Sunnis, and the ongoing conflict in Syria has drawn the lines of political competition rather clearly between these two groups.

---


with Christians largely remaining on the sidelines.

The implications of these findings are important for scholars of identity politics, democratization, and political behavior generally. In some ways, religion in this story looks very much like ethnic identity; however, the important distinction here is between identification and identity (see Hardin 1997). Simply being a member of a given group (identity) is not sufficient to hold preferences in close alignment with the interests of that group. Rather, I have shown that identification (or, in my parlance, salience of group identity) is a tremendously important factor in determining individuals’ regime and redistributive preferences. The act of communal prayer—a feature unique to religion rather than other forms of identity—has a powerful effect on identification, and in turn plays a large part in directing citizens’ political preferences. In this sense, while religion contains many elements that are similar to those found in ethnicity, class, gender, and other forms of identity, it also contains the uniquely powerful feature of communal prayer.

In light of these findings, future work should acknowledge several important facts. First, the amorphous concept of “religion” is made up of a number of distinct parts, and each of these parts may influence political behavior separately and possibly differently. I have argued that the communal aspect of religion is particularly powerful. Relatedly, we should not expect communal prayer to have a pro- or anti-democratic effect always and everywhere. Group interest determines the direction of this effect in no small part. Group interest, in turn, is related to the axis of political competition: who is fighting with whom, and over what. In total, my findings suggest that attempts to provide a unidirectional account of the link between religion (or even communal prayer specifically) and support for democracy are likely to be unfruitful. While communal prayer’s effects on regime preferences are powerful and abundant, their direction and magnitude depend not on theology or doctrine, but on
group interests.
Appendix

Appendix 3.A  Description of Experiment

In the religious priming experiment, respondents were randomly assigned to complete a “word association” task consisting of five items. In each case, the respondents were presented with five words, and asked to select their closest match from three choices. The word groups were as follows:
**Control Group:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delicious:</th>
<th>a) Hungry</th>
<th>b) Tasty</th>
<th>c) Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sleep:</td>
<td>a) Tired</td>
<td>b) Rest</td>
<td>c) Bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work:</td>
<td>a) Money</td>
<td>b) Job</td>
<td>c) Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper:</td>
<td>a) Read</td>
<td>b) Politics</td>
<td>c) Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirt:</td>
<td>a) Clothes</td>
<td>b) Pants</td>
<td>c) Shoes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Communal Treatment Group:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sect:</th>
<th>a) Group</th>
<th>b) People</th>
<th>c) Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man of religion:</td>
<td>a) Leader</td>
<td>b) Preacher</td>
<td>c) Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrine:</td>
<td>a) Altar</td>
<td>b) Holy Place</td>
<td>c) Saint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sermon:</td>
<td>a) Message</td>
<td>b) Teaching</td>
<td>c) Devotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of worship:</td>
<td>a) Church/Mosque</td>
<td>b) Community</td>
<td>c) Clergy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Personal Piety Treatment Group:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faith:</th>
<th>a) Belief</th>
<th>b) Religion</th>
<th>c) Dogma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prayer:</td>
<td>a) God</td>
<td>b) Petition</td>
<td>c) Duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fasting:</td>
<td>a) Duty</td>
<td>b) Obligation</td>
<td>c) Sacrifice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heaven:</td>
<td>a) Paradise</td>
<td>b) Earth</td>
<td>c) Eternity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soul:</td>
<td>a) Spirit</td>
<td>b) Religion</td>
<td>c) Heart</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3.B  Description of Variables

Support for Democracy, Observational Section

For the observational models, the support for democracy measure consisted of an additive index of the following items (all questions are on a 5-point Likert Scale):

1. Democracy is the best form of government.

2. I would support a political system governed by a strong authority which makes decisions without considering electoral results or the opinions of the opposition.*

3. I would support a political system governed by religious leaders.*

4. I would support a political system governed by the army.*

5. Democracy would be better for Lebanon than the current political system.

6. Democracy is better than any other form of government.

7. Lebanon needs to become more democratic than it is right now.

8. A non-democratic government is sometimes necessary for establishing stability.*

9. Democracy is always the best form of government.

The experimental section used an additive index of items 1-4. In both cases, the support for democracy variable was rescaled to range from 0-1 for ease of interpretation.

*Indicates that the question was inverted such that higher values indicate greater support for democracy.
Table 3.B.1: Summary Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support for Democracy (Observational)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for Democracy (Experimental)</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Communal Prayer</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Attendance</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>37.81</td>
<td>11.92</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Income (USD)</td>
<td>1627.46</td>
<td>1045.66</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>10000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Person</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to Members of Congregation</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Prayer</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End Sectarian System</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Inequality Major Problem</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Must Reduce Sectarian Inequality</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked Fate</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for Democracy (Redistribution)</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy Benefits People Like Me</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4

Representation or Redistribution?
Evidence from Iraq

Introduction

This chapter will evaluate my theory of religion, group interest, and democracy in the Iraqi context. I have suggested that group interests account for a great deal of the variation in the role played by religion in influencing democratic attitudes and behaviors. Broadly, communal religious practice (or communal prayer) tends to promote democratic attitudes when the individual’s sect would benefit from democracy. Conversely, when a citizen’s sect would tend to lose (power, rights, money, etc.) from democracy, communal prayer will tend to have the opposite effect. The structure of sectarian relations—and thus, the religious-sectarian patterns of support for democracy—are influenced by political, economic, and social factors that can and do change across time; it is a central theme of this project that the axis of political competition is a key determinant of how communal religion will tend to affect attitudes towards regimes. As Haddad (2011, p. 31) writes, “political climate and
geographical and class differences influence sectarian relations and the salience of sectarian identity.” I have proposed that communal prayer heightens the salience of sectarian identity, which in turn pushes believers’ political attitudes into closer alignment with the interests of their religious groups. This pattern helps to explain why religion sometimes serves as a major force for democracy, but sometimes undermines democracy altogether.

Background

The Iraqi case is an ideal setting in which to test the theory I have described earlier. First, and perhaps most importantly, Iraq is a society that is highly-divided along religious lines; a casual glance at virtually any newspaper confirms the ongoing importance of sectarian identity in this country. Second, both staunch authoritarianism and attempts at democracy are in the recent memories of most Iraqi citizens. This feature of the Iraqi case is helpful insofar as it provides experiential contrast for citizens; when they are asked questions about democracy or authoritarianism, they are likely to have a richer understanding of the meanings and implications of these words than citizens of a country that has been steadfastly democratic or autocratic for many years. In other words, citizens are much more likely to have a clear picture of what it means to compare democracy to other types of regimes. Third, the centrality of the state in Iraq’s economy (particularly in the area of natural resources) means that the redistributive implications of regime type are massive. In cases where the state plays a minimal role in the economy, citizens might not have economic reasons to prefer one regime type over another; in a case like Iraq, where an overwhelming portion of the country’s revenues are controlled by the state, the economic ramifications of regime type could hardly be stronger.
Sect plays an extremely important role in channeling demands (and policies) related to politics and redistribution in Iraq. Writing about the new state formation process undertaken following the U.S. invasion, Jabar (2011, p. 21) notes that “Within these grand blocs [sects] communal labels and unity at this stage were conceived of as an assured vehicle to reach out for power and fair distribution of national wealth” (emphasis added). Sectarian identities are thus an important part of virtually all political deliberations in Iraq. While Iraq has not conducted a census since 1997 and has delayed recent plans for a new census several times (Hiltermann 2010), it is possible to characterize ethnic and sectarian demographic patterns broadly. The U.S. State Department (2012) estimates that Shi’a, most of whom are Arab, account for 60 to 65% of the population; 18 to 20% are Sunni Kurds and 12 to 16% are Sunni Arabs. Regardless of the precise figures, it is clear that Arab Shi’a constitute a numerical majority. Even counting all Sunnis (more than half of whom are non-Arab and could therefore scarcely be counted on as allies of Arab Sunnis), Sunnis are outnumbered by Arab Shi’a. These demographic realities have made many Sunnis hostile to the new pseudo-democratic political arrangement, as they have lost the privileged status afforded to them under the prior autocratic regime; Jabar (2011, p. 21) writes that for Shi’a, “demography is democracy,” but the main catch word for Sunnis has been “restoration.”

Figure 4.1 displays the average income of each sect as derived from the nationally-representative sample from the Arab Barometer. Each of these figures suggests that contrary to the assumptions of some observers, Shi’a appear to be wealthier than Sunnis on average. Including all ethnic groups, the average Shi’a income is about 31% higher than than of the average Sunni; this difference is depicted in Figure 4.1a. This difference, however, may simply be due to the fact that Kurds, who are overwhelmingly Sunni, are much poorer than Arabs on average. To address
this possibility, Figure 4.1b restricts the calculation to Arab respondents. When limiting the sample only to Arab respondents, the difference between Sunnis and Shi’as is smaller, but still substantial: the average Shi’a Arab earns over 16% more than the average Sunni. The evidence suggests, therefore, that the previous perception of Sunnis as the wealthier sect in Iraq is no longer accurate, if indeed it ever was.

The increase in relative Shi’a wealth is likely a direct result of government redistributive policy. Whether or not the post-Saddam government has managed to make Shi’a the wealthier sect, Shi’a control over most of Iraq’s oil (and the government agencies responsible for it) makes such changes virtually inevitable, and this inevitability is not lost on Iraqi Sunnis. Blanchard (2011, p. 13) notes that “Sunni negotiators opposed Iraq’s new constitution in part because it empowers regions in oil production and revenue allocation policy.” This arrangement threatens Sunni interests in a clear way: most of Iraq’s proven oil reserves lie in heavily-Shi’a areas. The US Energy Information Administration (EIA) reports that “Iraq’s resources are not evenly divided across sectarian-demographic lines. Most known hydrocarbon resources are concentrated in the Shiite areas of the south and the ethnically Kurdish region in the north, with few resources in control of the Sunni minority in central Iraq” (2013). In a country with the fifth-largest proven crude oil reserves in the world, the redistributive implications of this inequality are likely to be massive. Furthermore, the Ministry of Oil controls oil and gas production throughout Iraq with the exception of Kurdish territory, where production is controlled by the Kurdistan Regional Government (ibid., p.2). The state-controlled oil industry accounts for the bulk of the Iraqi economy; the World Bank estimates that nearly 78% of Iraq’s GDP in 2011 came from oil rents (2011).

Figure 4.2 displays Iraq’s districts according to accessible oil reserves and sectarian (or ethnic) composition. Data for this map are taken from Berman, Shapiro,
Figure 4.1: Average Income by Sect

(a) All Ethnicities

(b) Only Arabs
and Felter (2011). This figure confirms that the bulk of Iraq’s oil is concentrated in solidly Shi’a or Kurdish districts. Only two solidly Sunni districts fall above the lowest category (less than 1 billion accessible barrels), and even these districts remain in relatively lower categories of reserves compared to other districts, especially in the southern tip of the country where several super-fields exist. Two factors combine to limit Sunni access to oil revenues: 1) Iraq’s federal structure allows some of the oil revenues to be distributed at the province, district, or local levels, so oil-rich areas tend to be able to keep a great deal of the money generated by these resources; and 2) The central government is heavily Shi’a-led. Consequently, substantial sectarian inequality has emerged in the distribution of revenues produced by oil and other resources.

Unsurprisingly, the oil sector has become an important focus for sectarian conflict in post-Saddam Iraq. The logic of this aspect of the conflict is straightforward: the fact that government rents account for such a large portion of the Iraqi economy means that who is in power is of the utmost importance, probably even more than in countries with more diverse or less state-centric economies. Since the state controls an especially large segment of the economy, its redistributive power is quite sizeable. These realities will tend to heighten the stakes of political conflict regardless of the form that conflict takes.

Iraq’s sectarian conflict, of course, has only made matters worse. Saddam Hussein’s regime, though certainly not exclusively Sunni in composition, favored Sunnis heavily in a number of important ways. Continuing an earlier pattern, Saddam (himself a Sunni) staffed the army’s officer corp predominantly with Sunnis despite their much smaller share of the population (al-Marashi and Salama 2008). Saddam’s highest priority was loyalty; specifically, he believed that complete loyalty to the Ba’ath party was essential in order to prevent a coup (Sassoon 2012). The revolution
in Shi’a Iran made Saddam fearful of a similar uprising in Iraq. While the regime continued to recruit Shi’a for the rank-and-file out of necessity, their loyalty was always subject to scrutiny.

Saddam’s favoritism toward Sunnis extended to the economic realm as well. He used his control of state resources to allocate more public funding to Sunnis and provided Sunni villages with access to more reliable electricity (Asquith 2009, p.5). Sunni tribes also received special access to land, money, and weapons (Karam 2007). Many have argued that much of the regime’s anti-sectarian and anti-tribal rhetoric was meant to distract Shi’a and Kurds from the realities of Sunni Arab rule. The Hussein regime tried to squash public sectarian identity, so it is difficult to find precise statistics on income or wealth levels by sect, but it is clear that Sunnis benefitted disproportionately from the state’s largesse during this period. Ordinary
Shi’a held strong perceptions about the relative treatment of the sects during the Hussein regime; Haddad (2011, pp. 47-48) quotes a former Ba’ath official as saying that the regime’s behavior “created an unmistakable belief amongst the Shi’a that the state was against them.”

The nominally secular (or at least cross-sectarian) nationalist ideology of Saddam’s Ba’ath party does not match the realities of social and religious policies in the country during this period. As Dodge (2012b, loc. 528) writes, although the Ba’ath party claimed to integrate Sunni and Shi’a imagery into its ideology, “it was clearly more inclusive of Sunni symbolism than Shi’a;” furthermore, Iraqi state schools taught Sunni, not Shi’a Islam, and a number of important Shi’a religious practices were banned by the regime. Indeed, Cole (2003, p. 545) states that “the Ba’ath massively persecuted the religious Shi’a of the south” (emphasis added). These regime behaviors suggest that religion rather than mere sectarianism, in which religious identity functions in almost exclusively ethnic terms, held important political implications. On the other side of the equations, Shi’a also clearly felt that religious considerations were of paramount importance. In April of 2003, shortly after the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime, millions of Shi’a took part in Arba’een, a massive Shi’a religious ritual that had been banned by Saddam (Jabar 2003). Clearly, the link between political identity and religious behavior remains strong.

A great deal of the violence of the post-Saddam era can be attributed to the changes that came with the new regime. The U.S. invasion removed state patronage, “the very life line” of many predominantly Sunni tribes (Jabar 2011, p. 21). Since Sunni Arabs represent less than 20% of the country’s population, it is reasonable to expect that a would-be democratic regime would not present them with disproportionate influence or patronage. Dodge (2012b, loc. 726) suggests that the new regime went even further, creating “an exclusive elite bargain that consciously excluded, and
indeed demonised, not only the old ruling elite, but also the whole Sunni section of Iraqi society from which that elite had largely come” (see also Dodge 2012a). A number of Sunni groups have responded violently to their perceived unfair treatment. Karam (2007, p. 88) notes that about 90% of Iraq’s insurgents are believed to be Sunni, and 85% of insurgent attacks following Saddam’s fall took place in the four provinces of the Sunni heartland (where only about 40% of the population lives). These patterns suggest that the loss of Sunni privileges in Iraq’s pseudo-democracy may account for the heightened propensity for violence in these communities; in concrete ways, democratic reforms have benefitted Shi’a at the expense of Sunnis.

At the same time, it is possible that these grievances are only held by a small number of extremists; the “Sunni street” may not be as frustrated with the changes brought by the post-Saddam era. Attitudinal evidence from the Arab Barometer, however, suggests that this is not the case. In this survey, 47% of Shi’a responded that the country’s economic situation was “good,” compared to only 26% of Sunnis. Sunnis were similarly disaffected in their political evaluations, scoring the government an average of 3.4 on a scale from 1 to 10, compared to 4.5 among Shi’a. Sunnis also reported consistently lower levels of trust in Iraq’s major institutions when compared to Shi’a; the sectarian difference is especially large for trust in the government and the army. These attitudes extend to tolerance of authoritarian regimes: Sunnis were over 4 times as likely to express support for an authoritarian system than were Shi’a. In total, it appears that Sunnis are on average much less satisfied with the changes brought by the current regime.

1See Hoffman (2012) for these results as well as others characterizing sectarian differences in Iraq.
Religion and Sectarianism in Iraq

I have suggested that the political changes of the post-Saddam era\(^2\) have created differing incentives for Sunnis and Shi’a to support or oppose democracy; however, a key argument of this project is that we must look for intra-sectarian differences between citizens in order to understand the role played by religion more fully. Specifically, I have argued that individuals who engage in communal religious practice (in these cases, regular mosque attendance) will tend to hold attitudes towards democracy that are more closely-aligned with the interests of their group. Before outlining the hypotheses of this chapter, however, it is important to consider how everyday religious behavior interacts with sectarianism in Iraq.

Accounts of sectarian political behavior in Iraq observe that mosques frequently serve as loci for mobilization. The most active and visible mobilization has come, of course, from Sunnis who feel that the Shi’a-led government has discriminated against them. In April of 2013, the BBC reported, “For months, thousands of Sunnis have been protesting after weekly Friday prayers” (Jaboori 2013). While all Sunnis have some reasons to feel threatened by democracy (or the current political arrangement), I have argued that these reasons are stronger among those who engage in communal religious practice than those who do not. Communal prayer increases sectarian identity through several possible mechanisms. First, communal religious practice by definition involves meeting with others of the same sect, suggesting a potential to build “bonding” social capital (i.e., within the same sect; see Putnam 2000).

\(^2\)The origin of sectarianism in Iraq is a matter of considerable dispute, with scholars arguing that the sectarian divide stretches back to the early days of Islam and others arguing that this schism only emerged in the wake of the U.S. invasion, and everywhere in between these two. See Visser (2008) for a review of this issue (and an argument for recent origins of Iraq’s sectarian divide); see also Haddad (2013) for a discussion of how sectarian discourse has waxed and waned in Iraq. The age of this cleavage is not of great importance to this study, so I have chosen to sidestep this issue for the most part; it is sufficient to note that whatever its origins, sectarianism is tremendously important in contemporary Iraq, which is the focus of this chapter.
Second, communal prayer may serve an *informational* role: individuals who attend mosque may learn about the condition of their co-religionists (as well as their political interests) through interaction before, during, or after communal prayer. Third, messages received from religious leaders may increase the salience of sectarian interests. Through some combination of these mechanisms, individuals who participate in communal prayer will tend to develop attitudes towards democracy that are more closely-tied to the interests of their group than those held by individuals who do not attend mosque, *even within the same sect*.

Skeptics of the role of religion have argued—in many cases, fairly—that sectarianism is not really about religion at all. In these accounts, religion simply plays a role analogous to that of ethnic identity, class identity, or any other type of social grouping. Along these lines, Haddad (2011, p.3) writes that “the dynamics of sectarian identity are no different from those governing ethnicity or race.” While there is no doubt that religious sects closely resemble many of these other identities in many cases (including Iraq), there is considerable evidence to suggest that the uniquely *religious* aspect of political behavior in Iraq is important over and above the more ethnic-style aspects of sectarian identity. The fact that Sunnis organize in large numbers after Friday prayers (a phenomenon witnessed elsewhere in the Muslim world as well) suggests that religion serves an important motivating purpose. It is, of course, possible that mosques serve as organizational centers only because they are places where members of the same sect regularly meet, and nothing more. However, in highly segmented sectarian societies such as Iraq, this explanation does not account for much of the importance of mosques. In Iraq (as well as many other countries experiencing high-level sectarian conflict), virtually all civil society organizations are mostly homogenous if not outright sectarian. If religion is simply a channel for intra-group engagement, then mosques should be no more likely to organize or facilitate political behavior.
than any other organization, and this is not the case. It appears, then, that religion is a particularly powerful motivator of political attitudes and behavior in Iraq in a way that relates to—but does not completely overlap with—sectarianism.

Moreover, if religion were simply a placeholder for social or economic grievances, the discourse of members of different faiths would reflect this reality. The rhetoric used by members of each sect following the U.S. invasion, however, carries a distinctly religious inflection. While Shi’a certainly referred to Sunnis as “Saddamists” in many cases, a large number of clearly religious labels were used; “Wahhabis” to indicate a strict conservative form of Islam and “nawasib,” meaning those who do reject Shi’a imams and “hate” the ahl al-bayt, the family of the prophet Muhammad. To Sunnis, Shi’a became “al-rafidha,” rejectors or deserters, a term used to denigrate Shi’a for failing to acknowledge the early Islamic leaders believed by the Sunnis to be legitimate (Rosen 2006). This choice of words suggests the perceived importance of the sects’ actual religious rather than merely political differences.

The targets of political violence also reveal the particular importance of religion. Dodge (2012b, ch. 2) demonstrates that mosques and other religious institutions have been especially common targets. If mosques were just like any other sectarian civil society institutions, then they should not be any more likely to be targeted by attacks than any other civil society center. For instance, if a Sunni insurgent simply wanted to attack as many Shi’a as possible, then any number of predominantly Shi’a organizations could be targeted alongside mosques. Data on terrorist incidents in Iraq, however, suggest that mosques are frequently targeted. The Global Terrorism Database (2013) records data on terrorist incidents across the globe and contains thorough records of Iraqi incidents. Between 2003 and 2012, this database contains reports of 374 attacks against Iraqi religious figures/institutions, which only includes attacks on religious leaders (imams, priests, etc.), and religious institutions, places, or
objects (mosques, churches, shrines, relics). Thus, these several hundred attacks do not count the many other attacks on religious pilgrims, religious schools, etc. Of the 22 categories of attack targets used by the database, the relatively narrow category of religious figures/institutions ranks sixth in number of attacks in this period, behind only the very broad categories of business, government (general), police, military, and “private citizens and property,” a very broad category that includes attacks on religious pilgrims among other religiously-motivated targets; this vague category accounts for over 35% of the total number of attacks. Even as it stands, considering only the narrow definition of religious figures/institutions, religious entities were targeted more than other seemingly common target categories like NGOs, food/water supply, utilities, journalists/media, tourists, and non-state militia. Furthermore, attacks on religious institutions/figures were on average far deadlier than other sorts of attacks, perhaps owing in part to the relative scarcity of targets and larger degree of planning required. Almost 14 people were injured in the average attack on a religious target, compared to 7.5 among non-religious targets (the corresponding figures for deaths are 5.6 and 3.2). In terms of total number of wounded, religious targets actually outrank military targets (4,868 wounded compared to 4,261). Furthermore, these figures do not include attacks from 2013 and 2014, which casual observation suggests were even more likely to be targeted against mosques\(^3\). In sum, it appears that religious institutions and figures—even narrowly-defined—represent a significant portion of insurgent attacks and an even larger portion of injuries and deaths caused by such attacks.

Accounts of religion in Iraq likewise suggest that mosques played particularly important political roles, even in comparison to other civil society institutions.

\(^3\)Attacks on funeral processions and Eid celebrations were especially common (Ahlul Bayt News Agency 2013). It is also important to note that mosque attacks were not limited to Sunni attackers; Sunni mosques have been targeted as well in deadly attacks (Raheem 2013). These attacks even led Sunni leaders to announce that they would close down Baghdad’s Sunni mosques “indefinitely” in November 2013 (Times 2013).
Jabar (2011, p. 22) states that Shi’a mosques “acted more like a political agent, information, and ideological center,” while Sunni mosques became “a recruitment, mobilization and insurgent agency.” In other words, mosques in post-Saddam Iraq came to function similarly to places of worship across the world, providing information, ideology, and organization in the name of the religious group. Even such extreme examples as sectarian violence (on both sides) have frequently used mosques for organizational/motivational purposes; Dodge (2012b, loc. 1107) observes that radical Shi’a cleric Muqtada al-Sadr posted orders and sermons for the military wing of his movement on mosque walls across Iraq. In cases like this, mosques are neither politically neutral nor simply filling in for other types of civil society institutions; rather, they serve as uniquely strong incubators for all sorts of political activity. Presumably, the politicizing function of religious behavior is why, as Jabar (2003, p. 18) observes, the Shi’a religious resurgence has ”startled Iraqi Sunnis, clerics and laymen.” Even in the American context, Jamal (2005) finds that mosque attendance promotes group consciousness and civic engagement among Arab Muslims. In a country where sect is as strong an identity as it is in Iraq, these effects are likely to be even stronger. While explicit expression of group consciousness might not vary according to mosque attendance in this case (since sectarian identity is highly crystallized even for citizens who are not particularly religious), the second-order effects of religious practice (such as attitudes towards democracy) are likely to be strong.

The logic of this theory suggests a few hypotheses in the Iraqi case:

**Hypothesis 6**  *Mosque attendance will tend to increase support for democracy among Shi’a, but decrease support for democracy among Sunnis.*

Since democracy is multidimensional and different citizens are likely to perceive the implications of democracy differently, the effect of mosque attendance on
attitudes towards democracy might be conditional on additional variables. Redistribution is a particularly likely candidate, since majoritarian democracy should tend to favor Shi'a at the expense of Sunnis but the redistributive aspects of democracy would tend to do the opposite.

**Hypothesis 7a** Among Sunnis, mosque attendance will tend to increase support for democracy among respondents who believe that democracies are primarily characterized by redistribution, but decrease support for democracy among those who believe that democracies are primarily characterized by something else.

**Hypothesis 7b** Among Shi'a, mosque attendance will tend to decrease support for democracy among respondents who believe that democracies are primarily characterized by redistribution, but increase support for democracy among those who believe that democracies are primarily characterized by something else.

**Data and Methods**

To test the hypotheses outlined above, I have conducted a series of logistic regressions using the Iraq sample from the Arab Barometer. These regressions aim to estimate the effect of communal prayer (mosque attendance) on support for democracy. The dependent variable is derived from a question asking respondents the extent to which they agree to the following statement: “A democratic system may have problems, yet it is better than other systems.” This question was chosen because it captures commitment to democracy more clearly than the other questions, which either ask about specific features of democracy or ask about conditional support for democracy. Accordingly, I have coded as “1” only those respondents who strongly agreed with this statement, since weak or conditional support for democracy is neither as conceptually
meaningful nor as practically valuable as an outright commitment to democracy.

The main independent variable is communal prayer, which is coded from a question asking respondents if they “Attend Friday prayer.” Respondents are coded as 1 if they responded that they attend Friday prayer always or most of the time, and 0 otherwise. These models also include a handful of typical control variables (age, education level, income level), a control for individual religious behavior (Qur’an reading\(^4\)), and a few control variables necessary to capture the different experiences of the various sects in post-Saddam Iraq (self-perceived safety, self-perceived equal treatment). These control variables help to assure that the relationships observed between communal prayer and attitudes towards democracy are not spurious.

### Results

A cursory look at the conditional distributions of the support for democracy variable according to sect and communal prayer suggests that, on balance, communal prayer has opposite (though somewhat modest) effects on support for democracy between the two sects. Shi’a who engage in communal prayer are about 5 percentage points more likely to support democracy than their co-religionists who do not pray at mosque; for Sunnis, the opposite effect is present: mosque-attenders are about 10 percentage points \textit{less} likely to support democracy than those who do not attend. These distributions are displayed in Tables 4.A.1 and 4.A.2. Of course, these distributions do not control for any potentially confounding factors. It is important to consider whether or not these differences hold up in a multivariate setting, adjusting for the variables listed above.

Figure 4.3 displays the marginal effect of communal prayer on support for

\(^4\)See Hoffman and Jamal (2014) for a discussion of the political importance of Qur’an reading in the Arab World.
Figure 4.3: Change in Predicted Probability of Support for Democracy from Communal Prayer

Note: Figure displays changes in predicted probability of support for democracy comparing a respondent who engages in communal practice with a respondent who does not, i.e. \(Pr(\text{Support}|\text{Practice}) - Pr(\text{Support}|\sim\text{Practice})\). The predictions come from separate logistic regressions for each sect, controlling for the variables listed above. Bars represent 90% confidence intervals. These calculations use the observed value approach for the control variables; see (Hanmer and Kalkan 2013).
democracy for Sunnis and Shi‘a separately. Full results of the model are available in Table 4A.3. As this graph suggests, communal prayer has entirely opposite effects on support for democracy between the sects, consistent with Hypothesis 6. For Sunnis, communal prayer is associated with an 11.5 percentage point decrease in support for democracy, while for Shi‘a, communal prayer increases support for democracy by over 8 percentage points. These effects are sizable when we consider that only about 30% of respondents are coded as being strongly supportive of democracy according to the criteria used.

I have suggested that the reason for this trend is that Sunnis, on balance, have a considerable amount to lose from true democratization, and their losses would be met with corresponding gains for Shi‘a. Consequently, communal religious practice has contradictory effects for these two groups. Sunnis who attend mosque become more attached to their sect, and therefore more closely attuned to the implications of democratization for their co-religionists in their country. The same process occurs for Shi‘a, but has the opposite effect: since Sunnis would presumably lose from democracy, communal prayer pushes Sunnis towards less democratic attitudes, while the opposite effect is present among Shi‘a, who might have much to gain from democratic reforms.

**Representation or Redistribution?**

Importantly, democracy implies a number of different changes, and not all citizens will interpret the prospect of democratic transition in the same way. Perhaps the most obvious implication of democracy is free elections, which will tend to privilege larger groups at the expense of smaller ones. This understanding of democracy is the most commonly-reported feature in Iraq, and the results presented above are consistent
with this characterization of regimes. Larger groups (in this case, Shi‘a) will generally benefit from free and fair elections, while smaller groups (here, Sunnis) may have reason to fear the development of a “tyranny of the majority” (De Tocqueville 2003 [1835]). This fear is especially likely in settings such as Iraq in which the minority group had enjoyed special privileges under the previous non-democratic regime.

Majoritarian political concerns, however, are not the only aspect of democracy that citizens consider to be important. I have suggested that one of the main features of democracy tends to be redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor, a claim whose history extends back at least to Aristotle, who argued that democracy “has in view the interest...of the needy” (Everson 1996, p. 72). More recently, this claim has been modified by Boix (2003) and Acemoglu and Robinson (2006), among others, building upon the work of earlier models of redistributive preferences (Meltzer and Richard 1981; Romer 1975). Since the poor are more numerous than the rich, an electoral system that privileges larger groups will, in principle, lead to policies that benefit the poor at the expense of the rich. If this is the case, then democracy might not be entirely bad for Iraqi Sunnis; as demonstrated earlier, the average Sunni now appears to be poorer than the average Shi‘a, and the existing pseudo-democratic arrangement has tended to favor Shi‘a in the redistributive arena. Importantly, since my argument addresses political attitudes, perceptions are key: if respondents believe that democracies redistribute income from the rich to the poor, then it matters fairly little whether or not this belief is actually true.\(^5\) If further democratization would imply more meaningful redistribution from rich to poor, then Sunnis would, on balance, benefit from these transfers. However, if respondents do not believe that democracies tend to redistribute wealth in this way, then democracy would generally appear to be an almost universally pro-Shi‘a proposition.

\(^5\)See Ross (2006) for a discussion of why this relationship might not hold in reality.
Fortunately, the Arab Barometer asks respondents about their perceptions of what democracy means. Respondents were presented with the following prompt: “There is a difference in opinion among people regarding the most important features of democracy. If you had to choose one, which of the following features would you say is the most important?” The choices included “narrowing the gap between rich and poor” among several other options (elections, freedom to criticize the government, equality of political rights, etc.) The inclusion of this question allows for a direct test of the potentially conditional relationship between communal prayer and democratic support among Iraq’s sects. To allow for the possibility that this effect may vary depending on whether or not the respondent believes that democracies narrow the gap between the rich and the poor, I have coded respondents according to whether or not they named this criterion as the most important feature of democracy. I have then run logistic regressions identical to the ones presented above except that in this case, the “most important feature of democracy” variable is added and interacted with communal prayer.

The results of these models are presented in Figure 4.4. This figure displays the marginal effect of communal prayer conditional on both sect and belief that democracy is primarily defined by narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor. These results are highly consistent with the expectations of the theory presented above. For Sunnis, communal prayer has an anti-democratic effect (of about 14 percentage points) among respondents who do not believe that democracies narrow the gap between the rich and the poor, but has a large positive effect (over 29 percentage points) among those who do believe that this is the key feature defining democracy. These results are supportive of Hypothesis 7a. Once again, the opposite is true among Shi‘a, consistent with Hypothesis 7b: among those who do not believe that democracies are primarily redistributive, communal prayer increases support for
Figure 4.4: Change in Predicted Probability of Support for Democracy from Communal Prayer

Note: Figure displays changes in predicted probability of support for democracy comparing a respondent who engages in communal practice with a respondent who does not, i.e. $Pr(\text{Support} | \text{Practice}) - Pr(\text{Support} \sim \text{Practice})$, according to both sect and belief that democracies narrow the gap between the rich and the poor. The predictions come from separate logistic regressions for each sect, controlling for the variables listed above. Bars represent 90% confidence intervals. These calculations use the observed value approach for the control variables; see (Hanmer and Kalkan 2013).
democracy by over 12 percentage points, while among those who believe that democracies redistribute, communal prayer decreases support for democracy by close to 22 percentage points. Each of these marginal effects is significant at the 10% level at a minimum, and most are significant at much higher levels. This evidence is thus consistent with the claim that communal religious practice tends to promote sect-centered attitudes towards democracy; since Sunnis would presumably benefit from *redistributive* democracy but would lose from *majoritarian* democracy, the effect of communal religious practice on support for democracy depends heavily on the respondent’s perception of what actual changes democracy would bring. The same can be said for Shi’a, but with the direction of the effects exactly flipped. These results suggest an interesting pattern: communal religious practice can have a strong pro- or anti-democratic effect for *either sect*, depending on what the respondent believes to be the primary characteristic of democratic government.

Figure 4.5: “Candidate Sect Important”, by Sect and Communal Prayer
The nature of observational public opinion data makes mechanism testing difficult, but it is possible to conduct some basic tests to identify whether or not mosque attendance is, in fact, associated with higher levels of group consciousness; this is the main mechanism that I have suggested. Fortunately, the Arab Barometer contains an additional question in Iraq that can capture (at least to some extent) the political salience of the respondent’s sectarian identity. In this question, respondents were asked: “In general, to what extent is it important to you that the candidate belongs to your sect in deciding who to vote for in elections, whether the parliamentary, municipal or local elections?” For ease of interpretation, I have coded respondents as 1 if they responded “to a great extent” or “to a medium extent” and 0 otherwise. I then fit logistic regression models for each sect, exactly as in the tests above, but instead using the new dependent variable. The results are strong and remarkably consistent between the sects: for Sunnis, mosque attenders are 12 percentage points more likely to emphasize the importance of a candidate’s sect than non-attenders (p-value 0.02); for Shi’a, the corresponding difference is 12.3 percentage points (p-value 0.01).

Full results of these models are presented in Table 4.A.5. This evidence supports the claim that mosque attendance increases the salience of sectarian identity, providing some insight into the channels through which religious participation is translated into views of democracy consistent with one’s group’s interests.

To demonstrate the magnitude of the purely sectarian aspects of this mechanism, I fit the same model as above, but using as the dependent variable a question asking respondents whether a candidate’s piety is important in their voting decision. Presumably, communal prayer should have a large positive effect on this outcome: citizens who participate in communal worship should be considerably more likely to emphasize the importance of a candidate’s piety than citizens who do not partici-
pate in communal prayer. Figure 4.6 displays the “relative risks”\(^6\) of emphasizing each characteristic, comparing attenders and non-attenders within each sect. This figure demonstrates that communal prayer had a far stronger effect on emphasizing a candidate’s sect rather than the candidate’s piety. Among Sunnis, attenders were about 1.3 times as likely to emphasize a candidate’s sect compared to non-attenders; the corresponding ratio among Shi’a is 1.36. The effect on emphasizing a candidate’s piety is far more muted. Among Shi’a, attenders were 1.1 times as likely (or 10\% more likely) to emphasize a candidate’s piety compared to non-attenders. Surprisingly, among Sunnis, no meaningful difference is detected between attenders and non-attenders on the issue of a candidate’s piety, despite the large difference in emphasis on the candidate’s sect. This evidence suggests that the influence of communal prayer on candidate preferences is more sectarian than religious: worship attendance might make citizens somewhat more concerned with a candidate’s piety\(^7\), but it makes them much more interested in a candidate’s sect.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided evidence in support of my theory of religion, group interest, and democracy. I do not claim to explain all (or even most) of the individual-level variation in support for democracy, nor do I argue that religion, sectarianism, or their combination can fully explain these patterns. However, the evidence presented in this

---

\(^6\)I use relative risks here to account for the fact that certain candidate characteristics were more commonly emphasized than others. This quantity represents \(\frac{Pr(Important|Attender)}{Pr(Important|Non-Attender)}\). For example, the relative risk comparing attending Sunnis to non-attending Sunnis on the “candidate sect important” variable is 1.29, indicating an increase of 29\% comparing attenders to non-attenders. This percent increase corresponds to the 12 percentage point increase presented in Figure 4.5.

\(^7\)Using a different question that asked the extent to which piety is an important quality for political leadership, I found no significant differences between attenders and non-attenders for either sect. This non-result bolsters the finding that communal prayer has, at best, a limited effect on demands for piety from political leaders.
chapter suggests that the *communal* aspect of religion, in combination with sectarian concerns, demonstrates a powerful influence on democratic attitudes in Iraq, and does so according to identifiable and fairly consistent patterns. I have shown that in contemporary Iraq, communal religious practice can either promote or undermine democratic support depending on the interests of the sect involved. For poorer and outnumbered Sunnis, communal prayer in general tends to promote undemocratic attitudes; however, the exact opposite effect is present among Sunnis who believe that the primary function of democracy is economic redistribution. Among Shi’a, these patterns are reversed. Since Shi’a are wealthier, numerically larger, and powerful in the new political system, communal prayer tends to make Shi’a more supportive of democracy; once again, however, the direction of this effect is reversed entirely among respondents who believe that democracies are primarily redistributive. As a general rule, majoritarian democracy would tend to benefit Shi’a, but redistributive
democracy would tend to benefit Sunnis. These trends, therefore, are consistent with the claim that communal prayer promotes or impedes support for democracy in accordance with the individual’s group interests, and varies depending on how the individual perceives democracy to function.

It is also important to note that the data presented in this chapter were collected prior to the spread of the so-called Islamic State (or ISIS). The emergence of a heavily transnational conflict in which a Sunni extremist organization has taken over vast areas of the country has more than likely transformed the political attitudes and behaviors of members of both sects in considerable ways. In some ways, the behavior of ISIS reflects the logic presented in this chapter taken to an extreme degree: the call for a single state across the region attempts to capitalize on the Sunni numerical advantage in most of the Arab World, in resistance to the Shi’a dominance of post-Saddam Iraq. For ordinary Sunnis, incentives may be unclear: neither the radical violence of ISIS nor the neglect of the Shi’a regime is desirable. Likewise, Shi’a interests with respect for democracy may have changed. Although they represent a solid majority in Iraq, Shi’a are a fairly small minority when the Arab World is considered as a whole; consequently, majoritarian democracy looks quite different when the boundaries of states break down.

It is far beyond the scope of this chapter to account for the havoc wrought by the emergence and spread of ISIS. This chapter has demonstrated the importance of examining individual contexts at a particular point in time. When the data used in this chapter were collected, representation and redistribution were two key questions facing Iraq’s emerging state. The chapter has shown how differing perceptions of these issues led to seemingly contradictory effects of religious attendance on attitudes towards democracy. In doing so, it has highlighted the importance of acknowledging democracy’s different aspects; the winners from free elections might nevertheless be
the losers of redistribution.
Appendix

Appendix 4.A   Supplementary Tables and Figures
Figure 4.A.1: Conditional Probabilities of Support for Democracy

Note: These figures are conditional probabilities not controlling for any other variables (the graphical equivalent of a crosstab); subsequent models control for several other variables.
Table 4.A.1: Support for Democracy by Communal Prayer, Sunni

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communal Prayer</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>117 (63%)</td>
<td>68 (37%)</td>
<td>185 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communal Prayer</td>
<td>193 (73%)</td>
<td>70 (27%)</td>
<td>263 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>310 (69%)</td>
<td>138 (31%)</td>
<td>448 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.A.2: Support for Democracy by Communal Prayer, Shi’a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communal Prayer</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>198 (73%)</td>
<td>75 (27%)</td>
<td>273 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communal Prayer</td>
<td>130 (68%)</td>
<td>61 (32%)</td>
<td>191 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>328 (71%)</td>
<td>136 (29%)</td>
<td>464 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.A.3: Baseline Results, Support for Democracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1) Sunni</th>
<th>(2) Shi’a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communal Prayer</td>
<td>-0.60**</td>
<td>0.42*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qur’an Reading</td>
<td>0.55**</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>0.39*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.25)</td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Level</td>
<td>0.36***</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels Safety Ensured</td>
<td>0.75***</td>
<td>0.46*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
<td>(0.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurd</td>
<td>0.89***</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
<td>(1.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Group</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels Treated Equally</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
<td>-0.62***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.28)</td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.71**</td>
<td>-1.60***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.69)</td>
<td>(0.61)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations | 424 | 454  
Pseudo $R^2$ | 0.094 | 0.028  
$AIC$ | 494.26 | 543.70  

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
Table 4.A.4: Interactive Models, Support for Democracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1) Sunni</th>
<th>(2) Shi’a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communal Prayer</td>
<td>-0.72***</td>
<td>0.63**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats Narrow Gap</td>
<td>-2.84***</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.01)</td>
<td>(0.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communal Prayer*Democracies Narrow Gap</td>
<td>2.91**</td>
<td>-2.15**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.18)</td>
<td>(0.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qur’an Reading</td>
<td>0.54**</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.25)</td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Level</td>
<td>0.32***</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels Safety Ensured</td>
<td>0.80***</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurd</td>
<td>0.94***</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.30)</td>
<td>(1.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Group</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels Treated Equally</td>
<td>-0.62**</td>
<td>-0.66***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
<td>(0.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.49**</td>
<td>-1.63***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.69)</td>
<td>(0.62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo $R^2$</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>0.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$AIC$</td>
<td>488.52</td>
<td>538.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
Table 4.A.5: Baseline Models, Candidate Sect Important

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1) Sunni</th>
<th>(2) Shi’a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communal Prayer</td>
<td>0.52** (0.23)</td>
<td>0.57** (0.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qur’an Reading</td>
<td>-0.06 (0.23)</td>
<td>-0.99*** (0.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.36 (0.23)</td>
<td>0.07 (0.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>-0.08 (0.07)</td>
<td>0.16* (0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Level</td>
<td>-0.06 (0.09)</td>
<td>-0.37*** (0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels Safety Ensured</td>
<td>-1.14*** (0.28)</td>
<td>-0.59** (0.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurd</td>
<td>0.44 (0.29)</td>
<td>-0.41 (0.95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Group</td>
<td>-0.13 (0.09)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels Treated Equally</td>
<td>0.60** (0.26)</td>
<td>0.50* (0.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.98 (0.64)</td>
<td>0.50 (0.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo $R^2$</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>0.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$AIC$</td>
<td>556.10</td>
<td>538.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
Chapter 5

Beyond the Arab World: Evidence from India and Cross-National Data

Introduction

To this point, I have shown that my theory of communal religious practice, sectarian interests, and democratic attitudes helps to explain the varying effect of religious practice on support for democracy in Lebanon and Iraq. It is possible, of course, that these cases are idiosyncratic, and that the theory only fits them well because of the peculiarities of the Arab region or the highly sectarian political systems found in these countries. I will suggest that the theory is not so limited. In this chapter, I demonstrate that the theory also finds support in countries outside of the Arab World that are not necessarily subjected to the same degree of sectarian tension found in that region. Using evidence from India and from cross-national data, I show that the theory applies to a wide variety of settings. To test the theory discussed in
previous chapters in India, the world’s largest democracy, as well as a broader sample of countries, I rely on data from five waves of the World Values Survey.

India’s Divided Democracy

By virtually any measure, India is the world’s most diverse democracy. Its various social divisions (including but not limited to ethnicity, region, language, caste, and religion) create a vast array of challenges for the country’s political institutions. Each of these divisions is, without question, an important factor in the success or failure of India’s democracy. This chapter focuses on the religious divide in India, and specifically the Hindu-Muslim divide. Although the many other sources of social fragmentation in India also contribute to the well-being of its democracy, religion is a uniquely powerful division in the country. As Varshney (1998, p. 44) observes, “the only cleavage that has the potential to rip India apart is the divide between Hindus and Muslims.”

Tensions between Hindus and Muslims have waxed and waned throughout India’s history, but endure as a source of meaningful division in the Indian population. While Muslims account for around 14% of the Indian population, only one of India’s states (Jammu and Kashmir) is majority-Muslim. Hindu-Muslim violence has resulted in a disproportionate number of Muslim casualties: in the period between 1985 and 1987, Wilkinson 2006, p. 30 estimates that 60% of those killed by Hindu-Muslim riots were Muslims. Injuries (45%) and property damage (73%) were also experiences disproportionately by Muslims. Government behavior has undoubtedly contributed to the disproportionate suffering of Muslims during such tensions. At lease some of this behavior can be attributed to simple demographics: Muslims accounted for only four percent of the Indian Police Service as of 2006 (Shani 2011,
Further, the Indian National Crime Records Bureau reported that over 21% of
the inmates under trial in 2014 were Muslim, a figure 50% higher than would
be expected if inmates were a random sample of the population. Jones (2009)
discusses how Indian Muslims are increasingly treated with suspicion in the
wake of the global “War on Terror.”

How do these trends influence the experience of democracy for the members
of India’s different sects? Since India is overwhelmingly characterized as a
democracy by both internal and outside observers, it is reasonable to suspect that Muslims and
Hindus may differ in their evaluations of democracy. Unsurprisingly, Muslims are
considerably more pessimistic about their government than are Hindus: Muslims are
12 percentage points less likely to report satisfaction with national officeholders than
are Hindus (40% versus 52%). Unequal experiences with democratic rule are likely
to translate into disparate views of democracy. I will suggest that, much like the
cases of Iraq and Lebanon, India demonstrates a sectarian divergence in support for
democracy that maps closely on to communal religious practice.

**Religious Practice and Democracy in India: Existing Accounts**

Despite perceptions that Hindu religious rituals are predominantly private, communal
religious practices are abundant among Indian Hindus (Chhibber 2014; Kumar 2009).
Like the rituals of other religious groups, these practices are inherently social in
nature. It is therefore reasonable to expect that participation in these rituals will
generate social cohesion in a way that is not likely to be witnessed in personal or
private prayer. The implications for democratic attitudes should follow a similar
logic to the one I have illustrated previously in the cases of Lebanon and Iraq.

The link between religious practices and democratic attitudes in the Indian case remains relatively understudied. Studies that address the role played by religion in India’s democracy tend to focus on religious nationalism (Corbridge and Harriss 2013; T. B. Hansen 1999; Van der Veer 1994), religious parties (Chandra 2007; Chhibber 2001), or religious violence (Nussbaum 2009; Varshney 2003; Wilkinson 2006). Each of these subjects is important to understanding the relationship between religion and democracy in India, and each factor will play a role in determining the interests faced by religious groups. With a few exceptions, however, behavioral accounts of this relationship are scarce.

Chhibber’s (2014) recent work addresses a very similar question to the one considered in this project. Chhibber concludes that religious practice unambiguously promotes support for democracy. Using a variety of data sources, he argues that religious practice builds group identity, allowing citizens to overcome internal divisions and experience higher levels of political efficacy and satisfaction. Indeed, he argues that “all forms of religious practice, minority and otherwise, are supportive of democracy in India” (ibid., p. 181).

These findings contrast with the logic presented in this project. If the theory I have outlined in earlier chapters is true, then the relationship between religious practice and democratic attitudes should not be so straightforward. Since democracy creates winners and losers, there should be some groups for whom religious practices enhance support for democracy, but others for whom the opposite effect is present.

What accounts for this contradictory finding? The key reason for the divergence between my argument and Chhibber’s findings is that he does not consider religious groups separately. While his statistical tests do include a dummy variable indicating whether or not the respondent is a Muslim, they do not consider whether the
effect of communal practice differs between Hindus and Muslims. The fact that Hindus are a majority of the sample in his data may mask a distinct effect of communal practice among Muslims. My theory implies that, consistent with Chhibber’s argument, communal prayer should heighten support for democracy among Hindus, who constitute a large majority of the Indian population and who have benefited from India’s democratic institutions. For Muslims, however, the opposite expectation should be present. Since majority rule has, in various instances, threatened Muslim interests (and, in many cases, their safety), there are reasons for Muslim Indians to be wary of majoritarian democracy. The group identities built by communal religious practice are, by definition, sectarian in nature. As a result, the political preferences that these practices underwrite will be influenced heavily by sectarian interests. Since these interests differ considerably between Hindus and Muslims, we should expect different relationships between communal prayer and democratic attitudes between the two sects.

**Hindu and Muslim Political Interests**

Democracy—like any other political issue—implies different things for different groups. In India, where sect is a highly salient social division, political interests often fall along religious lines. In post-independence India, where Hindus represent a large majority (roughly 80%) of the population, demographic logic suggests that Hindus will, for the most part, benefit from electoral politics. Muslims, representing around 14% of the population, will likely be far less competitive in elections, and would therefore have few resources in a democratic setting to prevent a “tyranny of the majority” that would undermine their interests.

Instances in which majoritarian politics have threatened the Muslim commu-
nity in India are abundant. Perhaps the most notorious recent example of this trend is the 2002 sectarian riots in Gujarat, a state in Western India. The Indian government reported that these riots resulted in 790 Muslim deaths (along with 254 Hindu deaths) and thousands more injured or missing. The Gujarati chief minister (now Prime Minister of India) Narendra Modi is widely considered to have been complicit in the anti-Muslim violence. An American inquiry into the violence found Modi to have been guilty of allowing the riots, and Martha Nussbaum has stated that “there is by now a broad consensus that the Gujarat violence was a form of ethnic cleansing, that it was in many respects premeditated, and that it was carried out with the complicity of the state government and officers of the law” (Nussbaum 2009, p.51).

For many Muslims, the fact that a democratically-elected government would not only allow but even facilitate such violence was a signal that democratic institutions were not necessarily capable of providing for their safety and protecting their interests. Indeed, scholars have argued that electoral incentives may actually induce elected officials to promote sectarian violence (Wilkinson 2006).

Indian democracy also neglects Muslims in more mundane ways. Political representation is highly unequal in India along a variety of identity lines, but the level of Muslim disenfranchisement is staggering. Despite representing 14% of the country’s population, in 2014 Muslims held only 22 out of 543 seats (just over 4%) in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of parliament. The first-past-the-post electoral system for Lok Sabha constituencies naturally contributes to this under-representation: if citizens were to vote along sectarian lines, Muslims would only win seats in districts in which they are the largest single group. Since few districts meet this criterion, Muslim candidates are unable to win in most districts, despite the fact that the

---

1Interestingly, despite this low number, Bhalotra et al. (2014) find that districts that elect Muslim legislators experience better development outcomes.
Muslim population is substantial. The rise of Hindu nationalist political figures has only exacerbated the tensions created by this system; the rise of these figures (and the parties that accompany them) has made voting more likely to take place along sectarian lines, decreasing the chances of Muslim electoral victories even further. There is considerable reason for Indian Muslims to believe that the democratic system has failed to represent them; it is therefore unsurprising that Muslims in the World Values Survey expressed levels of satisfaction in national political officials that were about 25% lower than those of Hindus.

Recent developments have highlighted the enduring importance of Hindu-Muslim political tensions in India. Electoral victories for the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—and particularly, prime minister Modi—have caused many Indian Muslims to feel increasingly threatened. These victories have coincided with a rise in the activities of the Ghar Wapsi movement, which emphasizes Hindu conversion and so-called “purification.” Hassan (2015) argues that Ghar Wapsi “is also an overt strategy of communal polarization using religion as tool for boosting majoritarianism, the political philosophy that suggests a majority group has a primary role in society’s decisions.” It seems that the pitfalls of democracy from the Muslim perspective have become more apparent in the new political climate.

The relative disadvantage of Muslims in India’s democracy has extended to the economic realm as well. Since the income measurements included in the World Values Survey are of questionable reliability (Donnelly and Pop-Eleches 2012), I use alternate measures of well-being instead\(^2\). Findings from these measures are displayed in Figure 5.1. The first measure asks respondents to identify themselves according to their social class. The choices for this question were: upper class, upper middle class, lower middle class, working class, and lower class. As Figure 5.1 shows, 55% of

\(^2\)Direct income measurements also broadly support the claim of Muslim relative deprivation.
Muslims identified as lower or working class, compared to only 38% of Hindus. Levels of educational attainment follow the same patterns. Muslims were ten percentage points more likely than Hindus to have received no elementary education (38% versus 28%) and were barely half as likely to have received a university education (13% for Muslims and 22% for Hindus). While it is certainly the case that these differences are not due entirely to government favoritism or neglect, it is reasonable to conclude that political disadvantage has translated—at least partially—to economic deprivation among India’s Muslims.\(^3\)

Figure 5.1: Class and Education, by Sect

---

\(^3\)Alarmingly, Mitra and Ray (2014) have found that Muslim economic growth has often been met with anti-Muslim violence, suggesting an additional (and more overt) political role in holding back Muslim advancement.
Testing the Group Interest Theory in India

The experience of Indian Muslims serves as a useful illustration of how democracy, once enacted, does not always benefit all groups equally. Incidences of violence paint a colorful picture of how democracy can harm minority groups, but more everyday effects of democracy threaten Muslim interests as well. While democratic rule has afforded Hindus with the bulk of the political power available in the country, Muslims have been left out of many of India’s most important political processes. This inequality has taken a similar form in the economy, where Muslims are disproportionately poor and under-educated. The fact that democracy has benefited Hindus so much more than Muslims indicates that the groups should have divergent interests with respect to regime type\textsuperscript{4}.

If the theory I have proposed in previous chapters is correct, then the competing interests of Hindus and Muslims on the issue of regime type in India should lead to opposite effects of communal worship on democratic attitudes. By pushing citizens’ preferences into closer alignment with the interests of their sects, religious attendance should lead Hindus to support democracy at higher levels, while having the opposite effect among Muslims.

**Hypothesis 8**  
Hindus who engage in communal religious practice will be more supportive of democracy than Hindus who do not, while Muslims who engage in communal religious practice will be less supportive of democracy than Muslims who do not.

\textsuperscript{4}Importantly, this theory does not require Muslims to assume that non-democratic rule would result in increased Muslim political power. Many Muslims may recognize that non-democratic rule in India would likely still result in Hindu dominance; however, without the veneer of democracy, such a regime might not have the type of credibility afforded to democratic rulers who cater to the majoritarian—and potentially violent—interests of the largest group. Furthermore, an autocratic leader might be more willing or able to prevent the types of riots that occurred in Gujarat and elsewhere in 2002. In either case, Indian Muslims may well believe that while non-democratic rule would not necessarily favor them, it might nevertheless be preferable to the democratic status quo.
I test this hypothesis using data from the World Values Survey. The primary dependent variable asks respondents the degree to which they believe that a democratic system is a good way to govern their country. Possible responses were very good, fairly good, fairly bad, and very bad. The main explanatory variable is religious attendance. Respondents were asked: “How often do you attend religious services?” For simplicity, I code this variable as 1 if respondents reported attending services at least weekly, and 0 otherwise; substantive results do not depend on this choice of coding scheme.

As a first glance of the test of the theory, Figure 5.2 displays the proportion of respondents in each sect-attendance combination that stated that democracy was a “very good” way to govern their country. These figures indicate that the expected differences are present: attending Muslims are 8 percentage points less likely to support democracy compared to non-attenders, while attending Hindus are 11 percentage points more supportive of democracy compared to their non-attending co-sectarians.

It is possible, of course, that these differences are simply due to omitted variables: if other factors are correlated with both worship attendance and democratic attitudes—and that these correlations lead to different directions of the effects between the two sects—then the relationship between attendance and regime preferences might be coincidental. To address this concern, I fit a series of regressions using a variety of control variables in an attempt to “partial out” the true effect of worship attendance. The models used in this section are ordered logistic regressions because the outcome variable is ordinal, but the results are comparable using OLS regression or binary logistic regression after dichotomizing the support for democracy.

---

5 Full question wording: “I’m going to describe various types of political systems and ask what you think about each as a way of governing this country. For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way of governing this country? …Having a democratic system?”
variable. The full results of these models are displayed in Tables 5.A.1 and 5.A.2. The results are consistent with the predictions of the theory; regardless of the specification of the model, weekly attendance is associated with a considerable increase in support for democracy among Hindus, and a decrease in democratic attitudes among Muslims. Figure 5.3 displays the substantive effects of weekly attendance on support for democracy for each sect. These marginal effects are derived from model 2 in each table, which includes standard demographic covariates. For Hindus, weekly attendance increases the likelihood of expressing support for democracy by 8 percentage points. Conversely, attendance decreases support for democracy among Muslims by 16 percentage points\textsuperscript{6}.

The evidence from India supports the expectations of my theory. For Hindus, the religious group that has dominated India’s democracy, participation in commu-

\textsuperscript{6}Again, this figure uses responses of “very good” as the quantity of interest.
nal worship enhances support for democracy. Muslims, however, have had a much different experience with democracy; as a result, communal prayer depresses support for democracy for members of that sect.

It is also important to note that weekly attendance also has an influence on political behavior. As shown previously in the Lebanese case, weekly attendance in India is associated with an increase in the likelihood of participating in protest. Using a logistic regression of similar form to the ones used above, weekly attenders are found to participate in protest at a rate that is 2.4 percentage points higher than that of non-attenders, and this difference is significant at the 0.1 level. While the difference is not terribly large in absolute terms, it is worth noting that less than 14% of Indian respondents reported having participated in protests, to the 2.4 percentage point increase is actually quite substantial in relative terms. This difference is only present for Hindus, presumably because protest is a highly risky behavior for Muslims and
only 82 Muslims in the sample reported ever protesting. The finding for Hindus once again calls into question the claim that religion creates inactive, acquiescent citizens; on the contrary, Indians who engage in frequent communal religious practice are, in fact, meaningfully more likely to participate in protest than are their non-attending co-sectarians.

Cross-National Tests

My theory of communal prayer, sectarian interests, and democratic attitudes has found considerable support in Lebanon, Iraq, and India, countries that cover a wide variety of religious and political experiences. At this point, it is worth examining how well this theory “travels.” In this section, I provide—cautiously—broad tests of the theory in an attempt to give a “view from 30,000 feet.” It is impractical to test the theory in every country in the way that I have done for the cases discussed above; instead, I provide suggestive evidence that the effect of communal prayer varies according to country and sect in a way that is consistent with the sectarian interests process that I have presented.

I use a series of simple tests to assess the theory in a cross-national setting. I use data from the first five waves of the World Values Survey (1981-2007). For each country in each wave, I use the data to estimate the shares of each sectarian group within the country, providing an approximation of their shares in the population. The dataset includes 87 countries across five waves, and a total of 1,158 country-wave-sect combinations. The main dependent variable is an index of support for democracy rescaled to range between 0 and 1. The quantity of interest is the effect of communal prayer on support for democracy; communal prayer is measured by asking respondents “How often do you attend religious services?” and is likewise rescaled to
range from 0 to 1.

The main model is an ordinary least-squares regression of support for democracy on the interaction between group size and frequency of communal prayer along with a set of control variables\(^7\). The parameters of interest are the coefficient on communal worship and the interaction between communal worship and group size. The theory suggests that for larger groups (i.e., those who would be more competitive in democratic elections), communal prayer should, other things being equal, have a pro-democratic effect. For smaller groups, who would be less likely to win elections and whose interests might be threatened by majority rule, the opposite should be true.

Figure 5.4: Marginal Effects of Attendance, by Group Size

\(^7\)The control variables used in the main model are: age, education level, income (country-specific), female, marital status, religiosity (self-described), employment status, importance of God/religion, religion as a source of comfort and strength, and country and wave fixed effects. Minimal models or models including other relevant covariates yield comparable results.
democracy across the range of group population shares. The y-axis represents the difference in support for democracy comparing the most frequent attenders to the least frequent attenders. For sects that represent only a small portion of their country’s population, communal prayer has a negative and statistically significant effect on support for democracy. Conversely, for the largest groups, communal prayer increases support for democracy, and this difference is statistically significant. The effect sizes are quite modest (just over 1 percentage point at the highest and lowest group sizes), but it is worth noting that this type of test is rather difficult for this theory. Since many of the countries in the sample are religiously homogenous, secular and/or solidly democratic, many of the cases included in these models are environments where the theory has little applicability. The fact that significant differences emerge according to the pattern expected by my theory is encouraging, and suggests that it has at least some general explanatory power.

It is beyond the scope of this project to determine exactly which countries ought to be considered “sectarian enough” to be included in these models, so I opt for a more conservative strategy of not excluding any countries on the basis of sectarian characteristics. However, my theory applies most clearly in non-democratic settings (or, at least, in cases that are not clearly consolidated democracies). To account for this boundary condition, I re-fit the same model as the one used above, but restrict the analysis to authoritarian regimes.\footnote{In this case, I use countries with a Polity IV score of less than zero, but other cutoffs or democracy scores yield similar findings.}

Figure 5.5 presents the marginal effects of communal prayer at each group size, restricting the analysis to non-democracies. The shape of this curve is similar to the one using the full sample (Figure 5.4), but the slope is considerably steeper. For the smallest groups, communal prayer depresses support for democracy by five
percentage points, while for the largest groups, communal prayer increases support for democracy by about the same amount. Simply restricting the analysis to regime settings that are appropriate for this theory increases the effect sizes by a factor of five, suggesting that the theory has broad explanatory power for cases in which its mechanisms are plausible.

These findings should be interpreted with a great deal of caution. My tests highlight the common tradeoff between internal and external validity; this section gains broad coverage at the expense of thoroughness. The pooled data used to estimate these models masks a considerable amount of heterogeneity, and while I have tried to account for as much of that heterogeneity as possible using control variables, there is no question that many factors remain unaddressed. Indeed, it has been a central argument of this project that the details of each case (both place and time) will play a huge part in determining how religious attendance will affect attitudes towards
democracy. Knowing which groups are involved in the political battles—and what they are battling over—is a vital part of a richer test of theories like this one. The case studies above provide a richer analysis of how these mechanisms operate in particular settings, and that richness simply cannot be provided in broad cross-national tests.

It is nevertheless valuable to note that the theory has performed well in these cross-national tests despite the low resolution of the pictures they provide. The wide variety of peculiarities across these many cases are likely to wash out a considerable amount of the effect of communal prayer. The fact that any effects remain after so much dilution provides substantial support for the theory. These findings indicate that the findings presented in earlier chapters are not simply artifacts of the few cases I have addressed in detail; the conditional relationship between communal prayer and support for democracy seems to be present in many parts of the world.

**Implications**

The evidence presented in this project suggests that the relationship between religious practice and democratic attitudes is complicated, but not random. Simplistic narratives regarding religion’s consistently pro- or anti-democratic effects have found little support. Theology per se—not examined in much detail here—might matter, but it does not seem to account for the bulk of the effect of religious factors on individual attitudes towards democracy.

Readers interested in the ongoing debate regarding Islam and democracy should take note of these findings. While in some cases discussed in this project, Muslim religious practice is associated with lower levels of support for democracy, there are just as many cases in which communal prayer enhances democratic val-
ues among Muslims. In some cases, Sunnis in a given context witness the opposite effects as those experienced by Shi’a in the same country. These divergent trends indicate that the reason for the differential effects is not theological; after all, Sunni-Shi’a theological differences are quite mild compared to differences between Islam and Christianity or Hinduism. I have argued that the gap in our collective understanding of these differences can be filled—at least partially—by a greater acknowledgement of the importance of sectarian interests. In most cases, religious practices can serve either pro- or anti-democratic purposes irrespective of their theological content. A focus on the missing political considerations demonstrates why religion is often found to be politically ambiguous (Philpott 2007).

The cases discussed in this project are merely a sampling of the potential applications of this theory. The theory is likely to hold some explanatory power in countries where political and economic resources are distributed along sectarian lines, and where democracy is still a matter of dispute; that is, it is not “the only game in town” (Linz and Stepan 1996). The applicability of the theory is certainly determined in part by the salience of sectarian identity. We should not expect the theory to fit very well in cases where sectarianism does not exist, or where it is not a strong political identity. However, as the results presented previously have shown, the conditioning of communal prayer’s effect on democratic attitudes by sectarian interests seems to be a fairly widespread phenomenon.

There are many implications of these findings for both future scholarly work and policymaking. The first, most obvious, and perhaps most important is that we must avoid the temptation of dismissing religion. Other scholars have lamented the lack of attention paid to religion in comparative politics (Bellin 2008; Gill 2001; Grzymala-Busse 2012), and this study has shown that in the area of regime preferences, religious factors can have massive effects. In a variety of settings, it is clear
that religious variables (frequency of attendance, strength of identification, or even simple religious primes) account for enormous differences between individuals’ levels of support for democracy. Regardless of whether one thinks that religion should matter in this arena, the evidence suggests overwhelmingly that religion does matter.

Second, as mentioned above, theological explanations offer (at best) an incomplete picture of the link between religion and democratic attitudes. In different political and economic environments, the same religious tradition can have either a strong pro-democratic or an equally strong anti-democratic effect. The experience of politics in an individual’s country plays a large part in conditioning the direction and magnitude of the effect of religious practice on her attitudes towards democracy. On some level, this finding should be encouraging for policymakers. While it is not realistic to change the theological content of religious groups, it is much more feasible to adjust their incentives with respect to democracy. The evidence presented here suggests that if policymakers can manage to make democracy more appealing to religious groups, then religious practice can be effectively harnessed to build support for democracy. Of course, such adjustments come at a cost. Since democracy inevitably creates winners and losers, it will be necessary to ensure that the changes made to redistributive or political structures do not threaten the interests of other groups so much that it cancels out the pro-democratic effects witnessed by the beneficiary groups. Many of the challenges experienced during this process are similar to those found in other areas of democracy promotion—namely, creating more “winners” from democracy without also adding “losers”—but my findings provide a new avenue for democracy-promoters to explore in mobilizing support for democracy.

Third, the influence of formal religious institutions—often held to be rigid and slow-moving—can change fairly rapidly. The experience of Lebanon demonstrates how for certain groups (most prominently, Sunnis), the effect of communal religious
practice can shift dramatically over a period of only a few years. The political effects of communal prayer are highly responsive to changing political conditions, and these effects should not be assumed to be stable in the long term. Rather, attention must be paid to the ways in which changing political policies or the emergence of new issues might disrupt the existing link between religious practices and regime attitudes.

There are some ways in which the theory presented here can be extended to other types of identities. When certain activities heighten the salience of politically-relevant identities in divided countries, a similar logic might account for differences in attitudes towards democracy, redistribution, or other political issues. Such a pattern is especially likely when political resources and/or interests map closely onto seemingly non-political group identities. However, religion is a natural starting point for a theory of this kind. The particular strength of religious identity, which is often stronger and less fungible than other identities (Grzymala-Busse 2012), makes it an especially likely candidate for considerable political influence. Furthermore, religious identity and practice are abundant throughout the world, and the sheer number of individuals who engage in communal worship suggests that religion should have a powerful effect on social identities and political preferences. Nevertheless, future work should examine when and how other forms of identities operate in similar ways, and what the implications of these identities are for democratic attitudes.

**Conclusion**

Religion remains a complicated but deeply powerful force in politics in most parts of the world. Importantly, it remains poorly understood. The findings presented in this dissertation suggest the need to move away from traditional understandings of religion as irrational (and often unpredictable) influences on political attitudes and
behaviors. This study has refocused discussions of religion and politics towards both affective and instrumental mechanisms. Religion’s influence in politics is about much more than theology; in fact, political factors themselves play a large role in how religious behaviors translate into political attitudes. The implications for democracy, as shown above, can run the gamut from threats to democracy to active mobilization in its favor.

Recent estimates suggest that nearly 84% of the world’s population identifies with a religious group (Pew Forum 2012). Three-fourths of people report that they receive comfort and strength from religion, and over two-thirds of people state that religion is quite important in their lives\(^9\). In some ways, the fact that the results of this study have indicated a major role of religion in political behavior should come as no surprise. What is perhaps more surprising is that this role is variegated, yet predictable.

If, as scholars and policymakers, we choose to downplay the importance of religion, we do so at our own peril. The patterns presented in this dissertation should give hope to those puzzled by religion. Rather than demonstrating a random, scatter-shot series of effects on political attitudes and behaviors, religious practices often have systematic (and even \textit{rational}) effects on individuals’ political beliefs. When studying a world, as we do, where religion remains one of the most potent drivers of political outcomes, it is far better to understand religion than to downplay it. This project represents a modest step forward in that understanding.

\(^9\)Data from World Values Survey.
## Appendix

### Appendix 5.A Additional Information, India

Table 5.A.1: Regression Results, Hindus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Attendance</td>
<td>0.37***</td>
<td>0.31***</td>
<td>0.57***</td>
<td>0.38***</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave FEs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Controls</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Controls</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Capital Controls</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group FEs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>3404</td>
<td>2423</td>
<td>1595</td>
<td>2308</td>
<td>1574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIC</td>
<td>6478.30</td>
<td>4454.61</td>
<td>2905.54</td>
<td>4210.98</td>
<td>2876.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses
Demographic controls include age, education level, income, and gender.
Religious controls include importance of religion and frequency of private prayer.
Social capital controls include generalized trust and number of association memberships.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
Table 5.A.2: Regression Results, Muslims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ordinal Logit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Attendance</td>
<td>-0.36*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave FEs</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Controls</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Controls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Capital Controls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Group FEs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIC</td>
<td>807.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses

Demographic controls include age, education level, income, and gender.
Religious controls include importance of religion and frequency of private prayer.
Social capital controls include generalized trust and number of association memberships.

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01
## Appendix 5.B Additional Information

Table 5.B.1: Countries Included in Cross-National Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andorra</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Trinidad and Tobago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Great Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>Uruguay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>Venezuela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Serbia and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Montenegro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>Zambia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography


al-Akhbar, 2014. “Regional Developments to Determine Presidential Election Date.”


Hiltermann, Joost. 2010. “Thank Goodness for Iraq’s Census Disaster.” Foreign Policy. url: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/10/08/thank%5C_goodness%5C_for%5C_iraq%5C_s%5C_census%5C_disaster.


National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), 2013. “Global Terrorism Database.” URL: [http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd](http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd).


