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Introduction

Scholars and policymakers have increasingly recognized that Islamist movements and actors vary widely – from domestically oriented, quietist movements engaging in democratic systems to revolutionary, armed movements aiming to upend the nation-state system. Yet, little has been done to understand how the nature of individual movements, and their success, often differs substantially at the subnational level. Some communities are much more likely to support different Islamist actors than others, and even the same movement may have very different strategies in some localities than others. Many questions remain regarding if and how Islamist movements and actors look or act differently in rural areas and secondary cities as they do in the capitals. To what extent do the strategies and performance of Islamists vary sub-nationally? And what explains this variation?

To address this gap in understanding, the Project on Middle East Political Science and the Program on Governance and Local Development at the University of Gothenburg convened a workshop in June 2017. In doing so, it extends research on Islamist movements, which has primarily examined the strategies of movement leaders, the relationship between Islamist movements and social services, the level support for these movements, and the performance of parliamentarian at the national level. Yet, as political science as a discipline has increasingly recognized, much of the actual experience of politics takes place outside capital cities and major urban areas and that subnational variation is particularly important. The goal of the workshop was thus to take stock of the knowledge that exists on local Islam, and to point to new avenues of research.

Mapping and Explaining Variation and Questioning Assumptions

We addressed three main sets of questions. First, we sought to map variation in Islamist ideas, behavior and performance across different localities. Do we see any variation between Islamist strategies and performance at the center and the periphery, or across different localities in the periphery? Do members of Islamist organizations in the periphery really tend to be more socially conservative or politically radical? Second, we considered what best explains such variation. For instance, to what extent do national organizations control, monitor and impose
direction on local branches, and do unequal relationships between national-level organizations of Islamist movements shape the variation we see? Similarly, what is the role of the state in shaping local Islam and is it less effective outside of urban areas? Or, does the local variation we find derive from differences in social contexts, such as levels of poverty, education, or ethnic diversity? Third, we considered whether there is anything specifically “Islamist” about such variation and the explanations put forth. Is the variation in Islamist movements and their outcomes somehow unique to the nature of such movements, or could it as easily be explained by factors that drive differences in movement success and governance outcomes of non-Islamist organizations? Throughout our discussion, we challenged ourselves to consider how we know what we think we know about the variation in Islamist movements and outcomes, the causes of such variation, and the extent to which Islamist politics is unique – paying attention to challenges in data collection and empirical inference.

**Conceptualizing “Local Politics”**

We employed a broad conception of “local politics.” While “local” refers to geographic space and associated communities, the nature and size of these spaces vary considerably. They may be large secondary cities, often located in the neglected regions of the country; rural towns or villages; or neighborhoods within major urban areas, including the capital city. The papers presented employed a range of perspectives on “local,” from rural communities in Morocco, Nigeria or Pakistan, to municipalities and cities in the peripheries of Lebanon, Syria and Turkey, to neighborhoods in Cairo, Egypt. We also opted for a broad conception of politics. Some papers examine conventional political phenomena, such as electoral performance, accountability, and clientelist relations between parliamentarians and constituents, protests and contentious political mobilization, and community organization. Other papers reflect a broader definition of politics, examining the provision of social services, the formation of civil society and development organizations, the proselytization and recruitment of new members, the engagement of movement activists and local authorities, or the establishment of local governance institutions.

The papers in this collection cover a diverse set of countries and historical periods. Bringing together specialists on local Islamist politics in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa,
South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa provided us an extraordinary breadth of contexts. This allowed us to consider the extent to which the mechanisms we uncovered operate across multiple domains, to weigh factors common to Islamist movements, generally, and to recognize when outcomes appear to be primarily driven by context.

Illuminating What We Don’t Know and Areas for Future Research

One contribution of the workshop was simply to highlight the basic empirical gaps in our knowledge. Despite the vast amounts of high quality research on Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, the academic community knew far less about the organization, membership, ideology, and practices of Brotherhood members in the rural or urban peripheral areas of Egypt. Similarly, research on Morocco’s PJD and Turkey’s AKP has revealed far less than might have been expected about their local branches and regional variation. Research on Islamist organizations in Jordan has told us much more about their protest and electoral strategies than about their relationship with tribal groups or local notables outside of Amman. As researchers, we must critically consider if these gaps are due to a lack of data, poor access to existing data, or data legibility issues. As many of the pieces in this collection demonstrate, these empirical lacunae create opportunities for innovative and creative methodology from online content analysis, to archival research, to survey research.

The workshop uncovered several key themes that we believe set the stage for future research. First, variation in state capacity seems to play a critical role in determining the political role of Islamists beyond the center. While, a certain degree of development may be necessary for movements to extend their reach, this may also better enable, the state to surveil, control and repress Islamists. Islamist movements – particularly in opposition – may more freely organize and mobilize support outside of state awareness in peripheral areas, particularly in weak states. Akinola’s piece reflects the inability of the Nigerian state to wipe out Boko Haram in the northeastern territories largely due to the group’s willingness to resort to violence. Moreover, in the absence of the state, Islamist organizations may take on the responsibilities of governance, instituting taxation practices, as Revkin shows with regard to the IS in Syria, or providing services, as Isani argues explains the rise of Islamist movements in rural Pakistan, where the traditional feudal system is being deconstructed.
The Ubiquity and Variation of Clientelism

A second key theme running through the papers is the significance of clientelism. The stark normality of Islamist engagement with constituents over issues related to services and governance stood out. In Morocco, for instance, Clark and Abouzzohour trace the success and failures of Morocco’s PJD to their constituent services. Abouzzohour, in particular, notes how the PJD in Morocco failed to win over rural voters due to the targeting of their platform towards ameliorating urban constituency concerns, failing to recognize crucial differences in the needs of rural constituencies. Similarly, Celik Wiltse highlights important and often overlooked difference between rural and urban Islamists in Turkey.

While clientelism stood out consistently across the cases, there is clearly important variation in the nature and use of clientelistic relationships across space, time, and actors. For instance, Marschall, Shalaby, and Unal identify how different Islamist parties in Turkey practiced different strategies across time. Focusing on Algeria, Benstead finds that, at the municipal level, Islamists are more likely to help marginalized populations and those with whom they have weak prior connections than are elected officials of other parties. Clientelism may be ubiquitous in Algeria, but parties differ in how they employ it.

Rethinking the Core-Periphery Relationship(s)

Another key theme is the identification of specific mechanisms that bind, or fail to bind, the center to the periphery. National level strategies and global ideological movements clearly matter, but at the local level, it is often individual leaders, key nodal points such as the local mosque, or the institutional robustness of the political party that matters. Dazey’s work on the Muslim Brotherhood-inspired UOIF in France reveals a federated system in which local branch leaders are able to create their own “fiefdoms,” sometimes leading local sections to contradict the national strategies and stoking tensions within the broader movement. Brooke and Ketchley find that the recruitment patterns in the early years Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood varied from rising middle class leaders in urban centers to established elites in the rural peripheries. Likewise, the pieces by Clark and Noh underscore the success of Islamists’ strategy to link up with non-Islamist groups in the society to gain an advantage as well as
credibility among local populations. This directs attention, once again, away from Islamist ideology towards “normal” politics.

*Islamism and Modernization*

A final key theme of the workshop focused on the modernization of Islamism. Today, the Internet has revolutionized the meaning of social space and distance, arguably transforming the nature of centrality in fundamental ways. It may help Islamist movements learn strategies from one another and imitate one another. As Akinola highlights, Boko Haram declared its caliphate in Nigeria just two months after the Islamic State did so in Iraq and Syria. Marschall, Shalaby, and Unal demonstrate how Islamist mayors use municipality websites to promote their Islamicized view of Turkish identity and morality in Turkey. Recently, some movements have opted to lean away from their Islamist roots, euphemizing overtly religious rhetoric and adopting more internationally acceptable neoliberal narratives of administrative competence and efficiency. Others, meanwhile, continue to emphasize their religious connection that, perhaps especially at the local level, confers unique legitimacy. And while the concept of Islamist movements modernizing may seem novel or even counterintuitive, Islamist organizations have long been adapting to and incorporating “modern” tools and strategies to leverage their political power.

**Implications for Policymaking and Development**

The research presented here, and which we hope to spark by this collection, is important not only for scholars concerned with theoretical understanding of local politics and Islamist movements, but also for policymakers and development practitioners. First, the research begins to uncover the breadth of subnational variation among Islamist movements, from their strength, to their strategies, to implications for governance and development. Better specifying this variation, understanding the reasons that Islamists, and other actors, gain greater hold in some localities than others, and determining the extent to which different actors are associated with more transparent, accountable and responsive governance and improved the human development outcomes can help policymakers to identify whether, and when, Islamist movements represent challenges or partners for development. Identifying key stakeholders and understanding how local contexts may affect their strategies and capabilities is key to designing and implementing effective programs.
Second, policymaking and development can be informed by a clear, comparative research that examines the extent to which Islamist actors follow the same patterns of governance and development at the local level as non-Islamist actors. That is, whether there is something uniquely “Islamist” about Islamist politics. The questions over whether Islamists are constrained by theological or ideological constraints or are ultimately responding to the same material and strategic incentives as other movements have been a subject of much debate. However, debates have relied largely on analyses conducted at the national-level, or even on transnational groups, rather than fine-grained, well-structured analyses of Islamist strategies and outcomes at the local level. Mapping Islamists’ strategies and outcomes across time and space will allow us to move beyond the tendency to see the potential partners in terms of ideological positions – separating “moderates” from “radicals.” By examining subnational variation in the same groups, we can better understand the extent to which they are influenced by Islamism or by everyday political considerations. This can help policymakers and development specialists to identify the groups and contexts in which mutually beneficial programs can be developed and succeed.

Covering diverse regions and themes and employing a wide range of methodologies, the pieces in this collection begin to fill the empirical gap on local Islamist politics. As scholars continue this work of highlighting subnational variation, explaining its causes, and problematizing our assumptions, we may begin to answer some of our opening questions about local Islamist politics, while opening new doors of inquiry. We hope this collection will inspire future research, debate, and scholarship.

Lauren Baker, Kristen Kao, Ellen Lust, and Marc Lynch.

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Islamist Strategies Beyond the Center
The Party of Justice and Development and Municipal Elections in Morocco*
Janine A. Clark, University of Guelph

Analyses of Islamist political parties focus overwhelmingly on their performance in national elections, largely neglecting municipal elections. Yet, at the municipal level, Islamists often face a different set of opportunities and impediments, arising from national political agendas, directives of the party’s central leadership, and local contexts. Examining the electoral strategies of municipal branches of Islamist parties allows us to better understand not only the diversity of Islamist electoral strategies as they implement national discourses and party directives while competing for power at the local level and how but also why they succeed electorally.

In this memo, I examine the electoral strategies of Morocco’s Party of Justice and Development (PJD) in three municipalities during the 2009 municipal elections. Illustrating the diverse responses of PJD branches to national discourses and party directives, I specifically focus on how they seek to overcome influential local patrons. Those PJD branches that successfully overthrew long-established patrons adopted electoral strategies not only took advantage of the regime’s good governance agenda but essentially mimicked or reproduced the key elements of a patron-client relationship, namely the appearance of closeness to the regime, candidates with prestige and clout, and close individual ties to voters based on competent civil society organization (CSO) work.

The three municipalities examined are: Chefchaouen (capital of the northwest province of Chefchaouen), Erfoud (located in the Saharan province of Errachidia in the east), and Tiflet (located 70 kilometers east of Morocco’s capital, Rabat). In all three, the PJD competed with long-standing patrons for political power. In Chefchaouen, the PJD confronted a mayor who had ruled the municipality since 1982 (with the brief exception of 1994-1997) and was

* The study is based on a larger research project, see Clark, Local Politics in Jordan and Morocco (Columbia UP, forthcoming). I would like to gratefully acknowledge Emanuela Dalmasso for her help in the research for this study.
simultaneously a member of parliament (MP). In Tiflet, two competing families have dominated the council since the 1970s. Similarly in Erfoud, the parties of the elite families have dominated the councils for decades. In two municipalities, Chefchaouen and Erfoud, the local branches of the PJD won the position of mayor for the first time in 2009, while the Tiflet branch won neither the mayoralty nor seats in the executive bureaus of the 2009 municipal council. Chefchaouen and Tiflet, are urban municipalities (with populations over 35,000) and use a proportional list system for municipal elections; in 2009, Erfoud was a rural municipality and consequently employed the more candidate-centric majoritarian electoral system, which favors local patrons. I chose to focus on the 2009 elections because it was the last municipal election during which the PJD was broadly considered the country’s only opposition party. Since 2011, the PJD has held the position of prime minister and headed the government; most analysts now consider it a co-opted party.

The 2009 Municipal Elections

In Morocco’s municipal elections, Islamists’ greatest political competition most commonly comes from powerful local notables/patrons representing pro-regime parties and elected by dense networks of loyal clients. In this context, voting primarily revolves around personal ties and access to state resources. An ideologically-based opposition party, the PJD is at a disadvantage as voter-clients either perceive it as lacking the necessary connections to the regime to address their needs or are too fearful to defect from their patrons. Furthermore, PJD members commonly lack the historical personal ties to families or individuals in their municipalities that patron-families often have had for generations.

In 2009, Islamists competed in an electoral context shaped by three dominant factors: 1) the regime’s good governance agenda as reflected in Morocco’s municipal charters granting CSO-activists a greater role in municipal decision-making; 2) the proliferation of CSOs and activists seeking to take advantage of the charter’s provisions; and 3) the 2003 Casablanca bombings, which damaged the PJD, prompting the party to adopt the monarchy’s good governance discourse.

Beginning with King Mohammed VI ascension to power in 1999, the monarchy has pursued a neoliberal agenda of good governance including decentralization, participatory government,
and local development. The 2002 municipal charter reflected this by enlarging the decision-making purview of municipal councils and charging them with creating and aiding CSOs to encourage local development. Building on the 2002 charter, the 2009 municipal charter requires all municipalities to establish consultative councils comprising CSO-members and, based on their feedback, create a local development plan. Partnering with CSOs thus has become part of the official discourse in Morocco. Despite regime attempts to control and penetrate civil society, its discourse and initiatives have resulted in the rise of politically-independent, largely technocratic CSO-activists throughout the country who expect to play a role in municipal decision-making.

Following the 2003 Casablanca bombings that killed dozens of civilians, the monarchy and several political parties accused the PJD of moral culpability for the attacks and called for its dissolution. The PJD responded by falling in line with the regime’s good governance agenda. Seemingly viewing its social conservatism and focus on religiously-defined moral issues as liabilities in the wake of the attacks, the PJD replaced its religious rhetoric with that of human rights, democracy, pluralism and rule of law. The party began emphasizing its technocratic expertise and focusing more diligently on drafting and proposing bills in parliament.

The PJD’s new discourse was quickly adopted at the municipal level where PJD branches began focusing on three interrelated themes (Catusse and Zaki 2010). First, a managerial approach to governing, promoting itself as having the managerial skills and technical savvy to successfully get results. Second, the euphemization of its relationship to Islam. Rather than social morality, the PJD spoke of the need to “moralize the management of public affairs” (Wegner 2011: 111). Third, a focus on addressing citizens’ daily problems, stressing its “personalized ‘social and institutional mediation’ with voters” (Catusse and Zaki 2010).

*Chefchaouen and Erfoud*

Operating within this context, PJD branches adopted different electoral strategies to overcome their disappointing performances in the 2003 municipal elections that followed the Casablanca bombings. In Chefchaouen and Erfoud, the two branches pursued two complementary strategies. The first was to put the party’s good governance discourse into practice by transforming the branch-parties into parties in service of civil society. They
instructed their members to work in CSOs, prioritized CSO activists as candidates and coalition partners, and, once in power, elevated CSO activists and their concerns as hallmarks of municipal politics. By doing so, PJD members effectively enlisted CSO-activists in their bid for political power, particularly those frustrated with pro-regime patrons/incumbents who claimed to represent civil society simply by sitting on committees supposedly designed to bring CSO-voices into municipal decision-making (Bergh 2017; Clark forthcoming). Furthermore, by working with and in CSOs, PJD-members members concurrently demonstrated their managerial competence and developed individual ties with CSO “clients.” Second, both branches chose mayoral candidates who could counterbalance local patrons in terms of social and/or economic prestige. These dual strategies enabled the PJD to demonstrate clear affinity with the regime and its proclaimed values of good governance, boost the party’s electoral chances, and develop close individual ties with a broad base of non-members/non-sympathizers.

In both Chefchaouen and Erfoud, the PJD branches interpreted the party’s broad national policy of working with civil society expressly in terms of working with non-Islamist CSOs. As a 2009 PJD councilor in Chefchaouen stated in a 2012 personal interview with the author:

“The PJD is in all sorts of associations, not just PJD-affiliated ones... we chose this strategy. It is more useful to be spread out. The Party only said that it is important to be active in civil society, the members have the liberty to join whatever they want.

In both cases, their local strategies of “mixing” with CSOs enabled their members to not only come into contact with a far broader audience or clientele but also forge ties with the country’s new technocratic CSO-activists as electoral coalition partners. The Chefchaouen electoral list, for example, was a fusion between PJD members and CSO-activists who had originally created an independent list under a well-known CSO activist, Mohammad Sefiani. The PJD furthermore put Sefiani – neither a PJD member nor sympathizer – at the head of its list to send a clear message that the PJD was, as Sefiani told me in an interview, “open to civil society.” Central to the coalition between the PJD and Sefiani was the shared understanding – as demonstrated by their joint CSO-work – that the PJD would respect the charter and
ensure that CSO activists were granted a greater role in municipal decision-making (which it did, in fact, do).

Erfoud’s PJD members similarly entered a spectrum of CSOs. While the Erfoud PJD had already established several associations “close” to the party, following 2003, party members made a concerted effort to work in a variety of politically independent CSOs, allowing the population to get to know the PJD members and, as the former mayor said to me, their “good behavior from their work in associations.” A former PJD councilor explained in an interview:

More people now know that the PJD is not dangerous. There has been a huge change in mentality. The population now knows that the PJD members are good and honest and do good work. This is because PJD started serious work in the social field, in associations

As in Chefchaouen, the Erfoud branch not only prioritized those members with associational experiences for its electoral candidates but also created pre-electoral coalitions with non-PJD CSO-activists. The PJD ran in all but one of Erfoud’s electoral districts and made a pre-election agreement with one United Socialist Party (USP) candidate (out of seven). The USP candidate agreed to work with the PJD should it win; in return, the PJD agreed not run in his district. When asked why he was approached to be in a PJD-coalition, the USP member responded that the primary reason was his CSO- and union activism, through which he was well-known and experienced. Second, were his “good ideas” – which the PJD members knew from their CSO work with him. Third, his presence demonstrated that the party was “not ideological”.

The second prong of the Chefchaouen and Erfoud branches’ electoral strategies was to seek mayoral candidates who could counter the political weight and patronage of previous mayors. As one 2009 Chefchaouen PJD councilor expressed to me:

The PJD had to have a strong list so that people would believe it could win against a minister, someone very powerful with lots of lands and who has support of other landowners. So [we] needed a strong list to convince people
they could do it. People feared revenge… because, of course, if you fight against a minister, you better win.

In Sefiani, the Chefchaouen PJD had found a social counter-weight to the previous mayor/MP by capitalizing on the respect garnered by his profession as an engineer in a large well-respected international company. As the previously quoted PJD councilor continued, “If you want to substitute a minister you cannot do it with someone who is just a teacher.” Similarly, in Erfoud, the mayor became a MP prior to running again for mayor – a highly unusual reversal of the pattern in which candidates generally seek the mayoralty in order to become an MP. Having lost the 2002 parliamentary elections and the 2003 municipal elections, the soon-to-be mayor won the 2007 parliamentary elections and was then able to bring his institutional authority and proximity to power as an MP to bear in the 2009 municipal elections.

**Tiflet**

In Tiflet, the local PJD adopted a different strategy while still remaining within the national party’s focus on good governance and civil society. While Tiflet PJD members were members in a variety of associations with no affiliation to the PJD, the branch’s primary electoral strategy focused on organizing neighborhood associations representing each area’s respective needs. When this strategy failed, they established a neighborhood committee to gather citizens’ concerns and bring them to the municipal council. This was supplemented by members going door-to-door introducing themselves and the party. Party members thus sought to create new CSOs independent of both existing patrons and existing CSOs and to act as conduits between citizens, CSOs and the municipal council – demonstrating their competency and closeness to the population differently than in Chefchaouen and Erfoud.

Though the Tiflet branch’s strategy brought it more seats, it failed to make significant inroads in a population divided between two patron-families. While its lack of electoral success cannot be fully attributed to its electoral strategies, it is instructive to note that it did not mimic a patron-client relationship. While its strategies brought PJD-members in closer contact with the population, the branch neither reinforced its affinity with the regime’s discourse (and consequently its access to resources) nor included other CSO-activists with whom they could further demonstrate their good governance agenda and forge pre-electoral coalitions. With the
head of the list also not well known, the PJD list also had no “counterweight” to the established patrons; it could not demonstrate its ability to win or effectively replace existing patrons.

Significance

An examination of the PJD-electoral strategies in the 2009 elections demonstrates how different PJD branches put the party’s good governance agenda into practice. Indeed, this examination demonstrates the flexibility of the party and points to one of the possible explanations for Islamists’ electoral successes even when their religious-based ideologies are liabilities vis-à-vis the public’s perception. In keeping with the party’s good governance discourse, all three branches turned their attentions to CSO-activism, yet the details of this activism were left to the branches.

This examination furthermore demonstrates how the PJD was able to defeat pro-regime incumbents while remaining within and simultaneously exploiting the regime’s neoliberal good governance agenda. Successful branches effectively used CSO-actors – themselves largely products of the regime’s good governance agenda – to jointly oust pro-regime patrons from power. They did so by demonstrating their commitment to the values of good governance through their joint CSO-activism and by upholding the opportunities for CSO-actors in the municipal charter and enlisting CSO-activists as coalition partners.

Finally, this examination of the PJD indicates how the party branches won against local patrons by reproducing key elements of the patron-client relationship and the success of these relationships in bringing patrons to power. In Chefchaouen and Erfoud, the branches not only shared power with CSO-activists but also leveraged this relationship to essentially mimic the patron-client relationship: demonstrating an affinity with the regime, selecting a mayor with local prestige, and creating personal ties through CSO-work.
The Persistent Rural Failure of Morocco’s Justice and Development Party*  
Yasmina Abouzzohour, University of Oxford

The Moroccan regime has emerged from the Arab uprisings stronger than ever, and its inclusion of the legal Islamist party, the Justice and Development Party (PJD), into the political sphere has made the kingdom a sort of exception to its anti-Islamist counterparts. Indeed, at first glance, it is the Islamists who came out of Morocco’s Arab Spring victorious. During the kingdom’s first elections after the Tunisia-triggered protests, the PJD – the socially conservative and politically moderate, Islamist leading party in Morocco – won 22.8 percent of the vote (Morocco Ministry of Interior, 2011). This is a significant percentage in a country with 38 political parties and where the largest vote share for any political party never earned more than 15.38 percent before then, see Figure 1.

Figure 1. Author’s graph based on data from the Ministry of Interior.

* This research was supported by the American Political Science Association and the Norman Chester Funds. The author thanks Michael Willis and Ilyas Saliba for their comments on this piece, and Anne Wolf for her help with Tunisia’s Ennahda party.
The PJD’s electoral win in 2011 meant that the party obtained 107 seats in parliament (out of 395), saw its secretary-general, Abdelilah Benkirane, appointed as prime minister, and took control of major ministerial positions. The party’s impressive results in 2011 and its even more successful performance in the 2016 legislative elections (125 seats and 28 percent of the vote) were due to its unfaltering urban support. However, its hold over rural areas has historically been weak (Mouline 2016). Importantly, rural vote bias against Islamist parties is not unique to the Moroccan case; Algeria’s Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) won the majority of its votes in the urbanized north during the 1990 local elections and the 1991 legislatives, but had little support in the rural south (Willis 1999: 134-5).

The PJD’s electoral success among urban voters and its presence as the only Islamist party still heading a government in the Arab world, has led a growing body of literature to look at the party’s rise, its relationship with the regime and other parties, and its views on Islam and Islamism (Brown and Hamzawy 2010; Ullah 2014; Wegner 2011; Willis 2015). Few sources, however, dwell on its low electoral performance in rural areas; the only scholar to my knowledge working on the PJD’s rural disadvantages is David Goeury (2014), as part of a larger research project focusing on urbanism and elections in Morocco. Indeed, despite the party’s success, advanced organization, around the clock grassroots work, and charismatic leaders, the PJD has failed to win over the kingdom’s rural populations, which still vote for the old elite parties (the conservative, nationalist Istiqlal and the social-democratic Socialist Union of Popular Forces) and the administration-backed parties (Authenticity and Modernity, Constitutional Union, National Rally of Independents, and Popular Movement). This paper examines the PJD’s rural failure using data gathered during the author’s fieldwork in Morocco.

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1 As of the writing of this article, the Ministry of Interior has not yet released the official vote share. The author has calculated this number nationwide using the following steps: 15,702,592 people registered to vote. According to official results, voter turnout was 42.29%; i.e., 6,640,626 people voted. Invalid votes, unofficially are estimated to be close to the number of the 2011 elections (around 1,361,511). There were 5,779,004 valid votes in 2016, and the PJD obtained 1,618,963 votes i.e., 28 percent of valid votes. And 11.03 percent of all registered voters voted for the PJD.

For the numbers used, see:
http://psephos.adam-carr.net/countries/m/morocco/morocco2016.txt
For the Ministry of Interior’s official numbers, see:
between 2013 and 2017, and drawing from personal interviews with party leaders, election candidates, civil society members, and activists, as well as observations of campaigning and of vote polling during the 2016 legislative elections.

Figure 2. Author’s graph based on data from the Ministry of Interior.

An Urban Attraction

Despite regime restrictions (Maghraoui and Zerhouni 2014: 115-118; Abdel Ghafar and Jacobs, 2017; Kristianasen 2012), criticism from various civil society organizations as well as intellectuals (Dilami 2017), and opposition by other parties (Puchot 2015), the PJD maintained significant support among the urban electorate. Former Prime Minister Benkirane’s (2011-2016) opinion poll ratings remained high throughout his first mandate – with 69 percent approval in 2013 and 62 percent in 2015 (Solutions 2015) – until King Mohammed VI replaced him by the PJD’s deputy leader, Saâdeddine El Othmani, following the 2016 elections deadlock. Indeed, on the eve of the 2016 legislative elections, 44.9 percent of Moroccans wanted Benkirane to have a second mandate as prime minister (Chambost 2016). In the legislative elections, the PJD obtained 22.8 percent of the votes in 2011, and 28 percent in 2016. In the 2015 communal elections, it obtained 25.6 percent (Ministry of the Interior).
Scholars point to several factors to explain the PJD’s electoral success and popular support. First, the party is attractive to a wide group of voters because of a combination of its Islamic credentials and its behavior as a normal political party (Mahgraoui and Zehrouni 2014: 113). Second, the PJD portrayed itself as more effective and honest than the administration-backed parties and more pragmatic than parties from the Left (Mahgraoui and Zehrouni 2014: 117-122). Furthermore, having only formally formed in 1998, and having been forced by the authorities to reduce its electoral candidates until 2007 (Kraetzschmar 2012: 29), the PJD’s credibility in the eyes of voters was intact when the Arab Spring struck (compared to parties like the Istiqlal and USFP, which were formally in government since the 1960s). It thus gained support from voters who identified with its brand of Islamism as well as from protestors who did not necessarily prefer Islamists in power but desired change.

A Rural Disadvantage

This reasoning explains the PJD’s recent success, but it does not shed light on the center-periphery discrepancy in its support base. Throughout its electoral history, the party’s successes (in the 2016, 2011, and 2002 elections) can be traced back to its support in major metropoles like Casablanca, whereas its failures (most strikingly in the 2007 and 2009 elections) were linked to its lack of support in rural areas. In the 2002 parliamentary elections, after claiming that it supported the introduction of Islamic law to the Moroccan political system but would also work within the existing system, the PJD presented itself in 56 districts and
arrived third behind the USFP and Istiqlal parties (Mouline 2016). These were significant results as the party obtained 12.92 percent of the vote (only 2.46 percent less than the USFP, and 1.15 percent less than the Istiqlal) and 42 seats in parliament. In these elections, the PJD garnered strong support in cities but failed to elicit similar levels of support outside of them.

In 2007, despite gerrymandering from the regime (Zaki 2009), the PJD came in second with 46 seats in parliament (behind the Istiqlal which obtained 52 seats). It is noteworthy that the PJD earned 10.9 percent of the vote, compared to the Istiqlal’s 10.7 percent, but still came in second because of its significant shortcomings in the rural areas.

It was after these elections that the PJD started to address its rural problem, by increasing its presence in rural areas via recruited members during the local elections of 2009. Despite these efforts, the party’s weak support in rural areas prevented it from winning any seat in the renewal elections of October 2009. The situation improved slightly during the 2011 (Arab Spring) elections when the PJD won a small number of seats in rural areas while maintaining its domination of urban districts. Compared to the precedent legislatives, the 2011 round saw a dramatic increase in PJD votes; the party earned 22.8 percent of the vote (far ahead of the second-place Istiqlal’s 11.9 percent) and 107 seats in parliament. This was consistent with the improved results from the following elections in 2016 in which the PJD received 18 additional seats and 27.88 percent of the vote.

Figure 4. Author’s graph based on data from the Ministry of Interior.
Explaining the PJD’s Rural Failure

Explanation I: The PJD’s Problematic Campaign Strategy

In an interview, members of the PJD’s Central Elections Committee explained that PJD results in rural areas in 2011 were disappointing and posited that the party’s mistake in dealing with rural voters was that it did not have a different campaign strategy for rural and urban areas, and that its strategy targeted a specific class of voters. Indeed, since its entry to the country’s political scene, the PJD mainly targeted the middle class in large metropoles. These voters usually possess higher than average salaries and at least a high school education. This category of voters then mobilized a major part of the popular urban voters through charity-related and cultural efforts (Aït Akdim 2011; Smaoui 2009).

In preparation for the 2016 legislative elections, the PJD adopted a strategy targeting rural voters, by which it ensured a greater presence of PJD representatives in rural areas, and approached rural voters differently than voters in cities (Fanack Chronicle 2015). The latter move was inspired by the widely-accepted belief that urban and rural voters are different, and that they want different things from elected candidates (Chandra and Potter 2016; Baaklini, Denoeux and Springborg 1999; David Goeury 2014; Willis 2002). While urban voters generally want the national government to make complex structural changes that would decrease unemployment rates and ameliorate the education system, healthcare system, etc., rural voters tend to want their regional government to implement rural development reforms that would benefit their specific region (Aït Akdim 2011). Such reforms are more immediate and include developing the region’s infrastructure, building and manning hospitals and schools, ensuring clean water is available, etc. (Ibid; Tamin and Tozy 2010).

While it is true that rural voters want different things than urban ones, attributing the urban-rural divide in votes for the PJD to a faulty campaign strategy does not offer a satisfactory explanation. Having participated in parliamentary elections as early as 1997, the PJD would

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2 Author’s personal interview with members of the PJD’s Central Elections Committee, on 11/10/2016; Badrane, Mohamed. "Elections : Le PJD Veut Séduire Les Ruraux." Aujourd'hui le Maroc. 16/06/2015.
have quickly caught on to its rural disadvantage. After winning 8 seats in the 1997 parliamentary elections, and 42 in the 2002 parliamentary elections, the PJD surprisingly came behind the Istiqlal in 2007. While the PJD had won the popular vote, it obtained fewer seats than the Istiqilal because the latter won more seats for less votes in rural areas (whereas the PJD won more votes for less seats in urban areas). As a direct result, and in preparation for the parliamentary by-elections of 2008 and the communal elections of 2009, the PJD increased its presence in rural areas through charity work and organized representatives. Yet, despite its efforts, it came in sixth with 5.5 percent of the vote and only 1,513 out of 27,795 seats in 2009. While the party came in first in the 2011 parliamentary elections, this was mainly due to its urban success. Its rural failure persisted through the 2015 communal elections and the 2016 parliamentary elections.

At the same time, from 2007 to 2016, the party has continuously reformed its campaign strategy to address this issue; it increased the presence of its representatives in rural areas, sent out famous PJD figures to hold events in various villages, encouraged members to talk to rural inhabitants directly about their problems, and asked urban PJD supporters who have rural origins to go out to their villages of origin and mobilize support for the party (Siraj 2009). During the 2016 campaign, for example, Prime Minister Benkirane held a forum on the topic of young people in the rural world in Ourika (a village located 30 km outside of the city of Marrakech) and invited close to 200 young PJD supporters from this area to participate in a debate on the issues facing the country’s rural populations. Also present were PJD ministers Aziz Rebbah et Driss Azam (Jaabouk 2016). In the 2016 campaign, Communications Minister Mustapha Al-Khalifa toured various villages in an effort to garner more rural support for the party. In Had Al-Aounate, a village 160 km outside of Casablanca, he went to the market and spoke to people about the party’s agenda (Ait-Akdim 2016).

Despite these efforts in 2016, the PJD’s electoral performance in rural areas remained the same. Although PJD members claim they transformed their campaign strategies in the rural areas, their 2016 efforts were actually remarkably similar to those of precedent years, albeit more intense. Overall, the PJD has not been changing its rural strategies beyond talking to rural inhabitants about a different set of issues than they do to urban inhabitants. The party’s dependence on now-urban workers with rural origins to campaign for them is also
problematic, especially given that the PJD does not have a consistent local presence in many of these rural regions during the year, only making itself known to many inhabitants before the elections. The party’s mostly-static strategies in the rural world are confounding. It is hard to imagine that, during the decade between the 2007 and 2016 elections, the PJD was not able to pinpoint the supposed flaw in its campaign behaviour or that it did not observe what other parties have been doing right. The fact that the PJD has barely changed its campaign strategy in these areas suggests that the latter are not to blame for its failure. In interviews, when I have pressed on this question, PJD officials do not offer an explanation beyond foul play against the PJD and potential bribery of rural voters. Thus, while its campaign strategy might be a factor, it is not the main reason why the PJD cannot obtain more rural votes.

Explanation II: An Extension of the Palace-PJD Divide

The logic behind the PJD’s continuous attempts to reform its strategy is significant; rural and urban voters are different, especially because of the types of reforms that they want and how they perceive the process of implementing reform. Rural voters want rural development reforms in their region and vote for parties in the coalition and that side with the regime, because they believe that parties in the opposition would not be able to implement these reforms (Aït Akdim 2011). Furthermore, historical analysis shows that rural populations in Morocco tend to side with the regime. Because of the relationships among rural elites and the regime, rural populations have historically supported the latter (Levau1985). Specifically, following the country’s independence in 1956, rural elites – because they wanted to atone for having accepted or partnered with the Protectorate – sided with Mohammed V to protect themselves from the rival and vengeful urban bourgeoisie. The administration, in turn, depended on these rural elites to police and stabilize the rural populations and garner support. These elites thus mobilize large-scale support for the regime in political matters, most notably, voting. In exchange, they receive resources, political favors, and protection against agrarian reforms proposed by the urban bourgeoisie (Ibid; Willis 2002).

Rural elites, then, mobilize votes in favor of the administration as they have no motivation to change the status quo, and many rural voters see parties backed by the administration as potentially more effective. As a result, administration-backed parties such as the PAM and the RNI are more popular in rural areas, whereas the PJD is viewed as a party that opposes the
administration (even though the party has never, since rising to power, directly opposed it). In the same way urban voters vote for the PJD because they perceive it as the only party that can stand up to the regime, rural populations vote against the PJD for this very reason. Be they elites or masses, these particular rural voters believe that they would benefit more from the administration (with its preferred parties) in power, than from the PJD.

The Bigger Picture: What the PJD’s Rural Failure Means for Morocco’s Nascent Democratic Path

The predisposition of rural populations to vote for administration-backed parties and for parties that are not part of the opposition has impacts that reach beyond the PJD or any single party. This phenomenon’s implication is that any party not backed by the regime will most likely not gain votes in rural areas and will thus lose an important number of seats to administration-backed parties. If the rural populations’ electoral behavior persists, it would follow that parties not supported by the administration will not gain enough seats to take control of the government.

Keeping this last point in mind, if we look beyond the PJD’s successes and failures, and focus on the bigger picture, i.e. Morocco’s nascent democratic process, the problem is no longer faulty campaigning, or even the rural voters and their electoral predispositions; the problem is Morocco’s electoral system. This system allows administration-backed parties like the RNI, the UC, and the PAM to compete with and restrain other parties (Santucci 2006). Thus, while elections in Morocco have been substantially more free and fair over the last three elections, they maintain the administration’s control over other actors and its domination of the political scene (Zaki 2009; Catusse 2005).

Overrepresentation of the Rural Vote, and the Rural Bias for the Administration

This is because Morocco’s electoral system underrepresents urban areas and over-represents rural ones. The minimum number of seats in government per electoral district is two, often making the least-populated electoral districts over-represented compared to densely-populated ones. For instance, Fahs-Anjra, a province that spans 799 square kilometers and has a population of 76,447 inhabitants, elects two representatives, each of which thus represents 38,224 people. By comparison, the national representation mean is 110,196 per representative; and the densely populated Casablanca Anfa elects 4 representatives for about 497,000 people,
meaning each one represents some 124,000 people. The rural representation range is 38,000 to 80,000 inhabitants per seat, while the urban range is 120,000 to 150,000 inhabitants per seat (López García and Hernando de Larramendi 2017). This explains why, in 2007, the PJD won the popular vote, as more people voted for it in urban areas, and only came in sixth in terms of seats. The electoral system solidifies the administration’s control over elections and politics because it over-represents rural areas that favor administration-backed parties.

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The Rise of the Islamic Constitutional Movement in Kuwait
Yuree Noh, University of California, Los Angeles

In a country characterized by the ban on political parties and the weakness of civil society, the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM) – the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Kuwait – has successfully established itself as one of the most influential political players. Officially formed in 1991, the ICM has operated since the 1950s as social organizations under various names. For consistency, I refer to the group as the ICM or the Muslim Brotherhood throughout this memo. The group has invested extensively in activities at the grassroots level to increase its influence in society through its social arm, the Social Reform Society (SRS). It was this social weight that helped the ICM enter parliament, form a sizable coalition with its allies, and influence the lawmaking process.

Its far-reaching social influences parallel that of Hezbollah in Lebanon or Hamas in Palestine. However, the presence of such an extensive social services network in Kuwait is puzzling because the success of Hamas and Hezbollah is often attributed to the ineffective governance in poor regions, as explored by Zeidan in this collection. Unlike its counterparts in southern Lebanon or the Gaza Strip, the government of Kuwait distributes generous welfare packages for all of its citizens. Additionally, the Kuwaiti society is characterized by strong family ties and tribal links that, in theory, should minimize the need for a social organization. This memo attempts to address this puzzle by first examining the social activities of the Brotherhood and second highlighting how its social influences helped the group expand its base of support to Kuwait’s tribal population. While Brotherhood affiliates elsewhere in the region have struggled to broaden beyond urban appeal, the ICM has uniquely been able to engage populations outside the capital city. How can this case nuance our understanding of the limitations and opportunities of Islamist actors?
Social Activities

In the 1970s, the Middle East witnessed the retreat of liberal, leftist forces in favor of Islamist movements. In addition to the regional trend, the decline of the liberal opposition in Kuwait was also attributed to its failure to penetrate the social life as comprehensively as Islamist groups like the Brotherhood did. From the beginning, the MB leadership had invested much of its resources to recruit Kuwaitis through social activities related to the press, sports, and charity. The organization also publishes various brochures, pamphlets, videos, and magazines such as Majallat al-Haraka (Movement Journal) and Majallat al-Mujtama’ (Society Journal).

In particular, the ICM has invested heavily in targeting the youth and students. A liberal activist once told me that she, along with many of her friends, used to be part of a youth choir group sponsored by the Brotherhood. She added that they were not aware of the group’s ideologies until they were older. The organization’s targeting of young Kuwaitis was often facilitated through educational centers and groups it had founded, such as Marakiz al-Shabab and Markaz al-Muruj for young men and young women, respectively. The Brotherhood also sponsored numerous educational institutions ranging from Quranic centers to Madrasat al-Irshad al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Guidance School). These centers quickly flourished; the first Quranic center opened in 1968 with just 88 students and by 1990, there were some 400 such centers with more than 80,000 students (Al-‘Atiqi 2006).

Moreover, the ICM gained control of the National Union of Kuwait Students (NUKS) in Kuwait as well as the union’s international branches in Egypt, the US, and the UK. Winning the NUKS elections was crucial, because the union wielded extensive influence in student life. For instance, in 1981, the Brotherhood was able to amend the union’s constitution to reflect Islamist ideologies by adding phrases such as: “the role of the Union in securing a better future [for Kuwait] on the bases of Islamic principles.” Such efforts to expand its authorities in the educational sphere reflected the Brotherhood belief that education played a key role in reforming the society as a whole.

The Brotherhood also took over many social clubs and dominated professional groups like the Teachers’ Association. Moreover, MB members allegedly gained control over important
charity groups like the Zakat (almsgiving) Committee and the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Society. The charitable activities were geared towards sponsoring religious activities since Kuwait was already a wealthy nation. For instance, the charity works included supporting religious classes at mosques and funding hajj trips. More importantly, the charitable societies opened their accounts and deposited millions of dollars worth of funding at the Kuwaiti Finance House (KFH), an Islamic bank at which Brotherhood members occupied important advisory board positions (Alkandari 2014).

To facilitate its social efforts, the group has systematically divided Kuwait City into different administrative areas and created separate sections for different types of activities within each area (al-Mdaires 2010). The ICM also incorporates a lengthy process of ideological and organizational trainings for its members to establish order and solidify collective goals; as a result, the group produces a “cohesive generation” of future members (Alkandari 2014).

The Brotherhood’s extensive social contributions and organizational capacities have gradually translated into its political activities. Although the organization officially advocated for no interference in the political spheres (Al-Shirbasi 1953), like many other Islamist organizations, it had spread its political rhetoric long before it officially established its political wing in 1991. The ICM’s exceptional political presence – as opposed to the diminishing role of its secular rivals – was partially a result of its efforts directed towards grassroots activities that begin with the youth. “We are all friends. We have known each other forever,” said a member of the ICM when I asked him how the group had reached such a high level of organization with systematic goals. He suggested that the personal associations cultivated at young ages had led to effective working relationships between ICM members. Unlike other political groups that currently suffer from internal conflicts and the lack of unified objectives, years of social interaction have not only strengthened the cohesiveness of ICM affiliates but also have solidified the group’s direction.

Appealing to Tribal Grievances

The Kuwaiti urban, merchant class historically dwelled within the boundaries of the capital, Kuwait City, whereas the Bedouins or the tribes had largely existed in areas outside the city in
accordance with a nomadic lifestyle. The discovery of oil in 1938 brought significant changes to both communities.

The Brotherhood recruited heavily from universities and initially drew much of its support from the educated middle class, similarly to Islamist groups in France (see Dazey in this collection) and Egypt (see Brooke and Ketchley in this collection). However, the group has gradually appealed to more voters outside the central, urban Kuwait, through its social activities. While this was in part due to the Kuwaiti ruling family’s decision to support the Islamists in order to counterbalance the liberal opposition, the Brotherhood was also able to exploit the economic grievances of the traditionally marginalized Bedouin population. The tribal members felt that the urban merchant class took advantage of most of the economic privileges arising from the oil wealth. The discovery of oil had created new economic elites who had gained tremendous wealth by winning government contracts and forging economic ties with the ruling family.

Furthermore, the socially conservative stance of the ICM proved to be popular in the areas dominated by tribal identities. In response to the rapidly Westernizing urban lifestyle, many tribal members felt threatened by the perceived disappearance of conservative values. The Brotherhood appealed to such anxiety, forging stronger ties with the tribal population to win their support. Along with the “desertization” of politics – enfranchisement of the tribal population (Ghabra 1997), Kuwait witnessed the decline of liberal values in both the social and the political fronts.

By 1980s, the Islamist and secular movements in Kuwait were deeply divided on social issues. The electoral success of the Islamist-tribal alliance further created visible legislative battles. The Brotherhood, in alliance with Salafi groups, attempted to amend Article II of the Constitution so that the Shari’a law would be the primary of legislation. It also demanded restriction of Kuwaiti citizenship to Muslims though it was also unsuccessful. Although the Islamist-secular division does not describe the Kuwaiti society today as a whole, this division remains stark to this day.
Conclusion: Future Prospects

While the ICM is endowed with extensive social networks and visible political representation in the National Assembly, the group is restrained by the political institutions controlled by the regime. In particular, due to the current electoral system (single non-transferable vote or SNTV) and the restriction on political parties, it is unlikely that the group alone will win the majority of the seats as its counterparts in Egypt and Tunisia had once achieved.

It is noteworthy that the working relationship between the ruling family and the Kuwaiti MB has transformed significantly in recent years, as the ICM became part of the broader opposition bloc. However, the group has been unwilling to promote regime change and to directly challenge the ruling family’s right to rule. Rather, the ICM has largely operated within the existing political institutions that bolster the legitimacy of the ruling regime. In November 2016, the ICM lifted its boycott and returned to participate in the legislative elections. Not only had they contributed to the Kuwaiti society as mentioned in this memo, but it also understood that the “democratic” system set up by the authorities was a vital mechanism through which it will achieve its Islamist goals (Brown 2007). In response, the Kuwaiti authorities have largely let the organization operate freely. This shows that the ruling family does not view the MB as an existential threat as did many other Arab regimes. Rather, the monarchy has benefited from incorporating groups like the ICM as part of the “divide-and-conquer” strategy. The working relationship between the Islamists and the ruling family in Kuwait contrasts sharply with that in Morocco, as analyzed by Abouzzohour. Unlike the Moroccan ruling family that has chosen to back the same “pro-regime” parties, the Kuwaiti authorities have not consistently favored one side.

In the face of the fall of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood and the emergence of the Islamic State, the ICM has put aside their Islamist agendas and worked more closely with non-Islamist groups. Instead of its traditional objectives – such as amending Article II of the Constitution – the group has shifted its advocacy toward more broad reforms targeted at the masses. In 2015, ICM member Mubarak al-Duwailah published on the ICM website that the ICM is setting aside “traditional differences” with other groups for further reforms. This was surprising because cooperation between Brotherhood affiliates and non-Brotherhood groups
is increasingly uncommon in other Arab countries. If the ICM truly strives to bring about broader political changes, its presence in the social domain will become even more relevant.

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Explaining the Dog That Does Not Bark: Why Do Some Localities in Turkey Remain Resistant to Islamist Political Mobilization?
Evren Celik Wiltse, South Dakota State University

Introduction

Most studies on political Islam in Turkey have embraced a comprehensive, national level of analysis. From the classic “center-periphery” paradigm (Mardin, 1973) to recent works that explain the rise of political Islam (Gulalp, 2001; Arat, 2005; Turam, 2007; Gumuscu, 2010) or its downfall (Tugal, 2015), scholars focus mostly on macro transformations. These include socio-economic changes since the 1980s, new state-society dynamics, the rise of a “strong devout bourgeoisie” and successful bottom up mobilization efforts of political Islam in large urban centers. Few researchers (Turam, 2007; Tugal 2015) expand their analysis to include the transnational outreach of the Turkish Islamist experience.

In terms of their methods, many of the studies that explain political Islam in Turkey include key explanatory variables on a national scale. The Turkish state’s rigidly secularist disposition since the early Republic, effective mobilization of Islamist movements/parties as a reaction to top-down secularism, rise of conservative business networks since the neoliberal tide of the 1980s, expansion of civil society, urban marginalization, and women’s organizations all offer excellent explanations for the strengthening of Islamist movements and parties in Turkey.

While most of these studies successfully explain the rise of Islamist movements, many of them are not particularly sensitive to local variation and agency. Even ethnographic studies that try to reach out to the marginalized sectors (White, 2013; Tugal, 2015) focus on the periphery of the largest metropolis, Istanbul – Umrankiye and Sultanbeyli respectively.

1 For an example of research that is particularly sensitive to local characteristics, see “Islamic Calvinists: Change and Conservatism in Central Anatolia” by the European Stability Initiative http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_document_id_69.pdf Ironically, the local networks and bonds of trust in Kayseri province that are much praised in this report later became a serious liability. When the ruling AK Party and its once closest ally, the Gulenist religious network, parted their ways, businesses in Kayseri became targets and were overtaken by publicly appointed trustees.
Despite these compelling studies, an intriguing puzzle remains: why do certain pockets of Turkey seem relatively immune to the rising religious political wave? This paper tries to explain the relative failure of Islamist politics in certain localities of Turkey, with reference to their distinct regional socio-cultural and economic characteristics. As Marschall Shalaby and Konak Unal demonstrate, local politics is not merely a venue for redistributive policy. Issues of identity and morality also play an important part, for they constrain “mayors’ ability to govern, manage conflict, and win elections.” (Marschall, Shalaby and Konak Unal, 2017:2) Briefly, this paper argues that having a distinct local socio-cultural identity and certain economic means to sustain it can make communities relatively immune to the inroads of Islamist politics. Due to methodological and practical complexities of accurately gauging the power of relatively non-transparent Islamic movements, electoral support for religious parties is used as a proxy in this paper. In addition to election data, the paper utilizes qualitative data from fieldwork conducted in Edirne and Kirklareli in the northwest, and Hatay in south-central Turkey.

Can a Secular Versus Muslim Lens Capture the Whole Picture?

“At one level, Turkish society appears to be divided into secular and Muslim positions whose proponents are circling the wagons and demanding ideological and behavioral purity from their members. But neither term—secular or Muslim—does justice to the variety of the possible positions and their sometimes surprising combinations.” (White, 2013: 10)

After each election in Turkey, particularly since 2011, the predominant interpretation seems to be the “polarization” between modern, secular coastal cities against the conservative, Muslim core. Consolidation of multiple center-right and religious-right parties (ANAP, DYP, Genc, and Refah) under the Justice & Development Party (AKP), and left parties (DSP and CHP) under the Republican People’s Party (CHP) helps breed this perception. Since ultranationalists and Kurds are under constant existential crisis due to the 10 percent electoral threshold, scholars argue that Turkey has gradually replaced its chronic electoral volatility with a dominant party system, wherein the Islamist party takes the center stage and seculars take the main opposition seat. (Carkoglu, 2011) While Izmir symbolizes the stereotypical voter profile of the secularists with its modern, educated and elite outlook, places like Konya, Kayseri or Ümraniye symbolize the core constituencies of the religious political bloc. This paper tries to peel away some of these dichotomous assumptions about the secular and
religious voters, elites and counter-elites of Turkey, by zooming in on three specific localities. (Figure 1)

**Figure 1. Administrative units in Turkey**

![Map of Turkey showing administrative units](https://www.d-maps.com)

*Source: www.d-maps.com*

Both Edirne and Kirklareli in the northwest are known to be historical strongholds of CHP. However, unlike other CHP strongholds, such as cosmopolitan Izmir, Eskisehir, or Ankara-Cankaya, boasting multiple universities, educated and affluent upper-middle classes, Edirne and Kirklareli are relatively small, economically less developed, and socially more parochial cities. In their region 45 percent of women active in the labor force (ages 15 to 49) work in the agricultural sector, which is 5 percent higher than the national average. (TNSA 2008: 51) Given their large rural populations that make a living from subsistence agriculture, it is difficult to paint these localities as the hubs of Turkey’s secular elites.

A third province included in this study is Hatay located in south-central Turkey with Syria on one side and the Mediterranean on the other. Hatay contains a medley of cultures, religions, and ethnicities. Housing the historic cities of Antakya (Antioch) and Iskenderun, Hatay prides itself for being the “cradle of the three Abrahamic religions.” It stands out for having Turkey’s only Armenian village, Vakifli, located on the legendary Musa Dagh.(Eski, 2015) Numerous
holy sites of Islam and Christianity are scattered across the province. In the old city center of Antakya, one can see insignias on the facades of old stone houses that display the profession and faith of the residents. This is probably the only city in Turkey where one can hear church bells ringing regularly during the daytime. Yet it is not a typical secular/elite province such as Ankara, Izmir, or Eskisehir either. Compared to these cities, Hatay is much more religious and much less affluent. (see Table 1 below)

Table 1. Ranking of Turkey’s provinces according to GDP per capita (2014)

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<td>Denizli</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>HATAY*</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Şırnak</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Karaman</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Yozgat</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Muş</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Manisa</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Osmaniye</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Batman</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Sakarya</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Kahramanmaraş</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Hakkari</td>
<td></td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Düzcė</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Erzurum</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>Van</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Burdur</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Bayburt</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Şanlıurfa</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Source: TUIK. Calculated by the author based on Turkish Statistical Institute data on GDP of each province and the population of each province for 2014.</td>
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When we look at the voting patterns of these three provinces since 1991, we can observe certain variation that sets them apart from national trends. Figure 2 displays the support for religious parties, including the ruling AKP and its predecessors. Despite the progressively increasing vote share of the Islamist parties across Turkey, it shows that these three provinces
consistently rank below the national average. Average support for the Islamist parties is about 4 percent lower in Hatay, and nearly 20 percent lower in both Edirne and Kirklareli.

**Figure 2. Percentage of AKP votes in general elections in Edirne, Kirklareli and Hatay, 1991-2015**

![Graph showing percentage of AKP votes in Edirne, Kirklareli, and Hatay from 1991 to 2015.](source)

*Source: Compiled by the author from the Election Archives of the Turkish Supreme Election Council (YSK). [www.ysk.gov.tr](http://www.ysk.gov.tr)*

When we look at the support for the CHP, variation of these three provinces becomes even more striking. All three provinces score much higher than the national average since 1991. On average, CHP receives 10 percent more votes in Hatay, and around 14-15 percent more votes in Edirne and Kirklareli.
Why Swim Against the Tide?

The elite/secular center versus Islamist periphery template does not explain the strong support for the opposition CHP in small towns and villages of Edirne, Kirklareli, and Hatay, which are full of small-scale merchants and subsistence farmers. The majority of the population in these provinces is far from being highly educated, secular elites. In fact, both Trakya and Hatay are famous for their fertile agricultural lands, and outside of a few urban centers, there is also a significant portion of rural population. Nearly half of economically active women work in agriculture. The puzzle is: why would majority of these less privileged, rural residents turn their backs to the tangible benefits that come with a vote for the ruling Islamist party? Why do they insist on voting for the secular opposition?

Teune (1995: 14) argues that, “local structures and cultures are less amenable to change than are higher levels of political organization.” Constitutional amendments, bureaucratic or economic reforms are much easier to execute form the center, in comparison to breaking away the “familiar dominance of political influence” in the periphery. Consequently, we should not
be too surprised to see these provinces in the periphery resisting the Islamist political wave that is impacting the metropolitan centers of Turkey. The type of morality and identity politics in which Islamist parties engage elsewhere, particularly in large urban centers, might undermine their success in these localities in the periphery of Turkey.

Religion is the crucial mortar that holds together the social fabric in all three of these provinces. However, the ways in which these communities incorporate religion are not necessarily the same way as many political Islamists. Compared to other parts of Turkey, religiosity in Trakya stands out in several aspects. First and foremost, the gender gap in Trakya is not as wide as the rest of the nation. Women and men work in the fields together and celebrate together in weddings and holidays. On average, more than 35 percent of women in the region between the ages of 15 and 49 are active members of the labor force as of 2008, this is 5 percent higher than the Turkish national average. (TNSA 2008) Marriage among relatives, including distant cousins and even close neighbors, is strictly forbidden. (Yedi kuşak akrabayla evlilik olmaz) (Celik Wiltse 2014-16) This social norm eases the tension among sexes, making socialization much easier since they do not consider each other as potential spouses, or haram in all contexts.

Unlike other parts of rural Turkey, strict public segregation of sexes is neither practical, nor enforced in Trakya. Given the low population density and record low birth rates, men and women need to work side-by-side in the region. Women can work alone as day laborers, without being shunned by their communities. This relative gender parity also extends into property rights. Turkish civil code grants equal share of inheritance to all siblings, yet in most parts of Anatolia brothers are favored over sisters. However in Trakya, my respondents

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2 Almost all surveys highlight low fertility rates in Trakya. TUIK data on population density in 2016 shows that Edirne and Kirkareli have nearly half the population density, compared to the Turkish average. (TR average, 104; Edirne, 66; Kirkareli, 56). Edirne also scores negative population growth in four of the last nine years that are recorded. Hatay on the other hand shows robust expansion with double-digit growth rates, and is one of the more densely populated provinces with a density rating of 267 in 2016. (Turkey average: 104). TNSA -13 survey results also show Trakya region having the highest rate (30%) of nuclear families in Turkey without children. (Average for Turkey is 17.9%) p.20. http://www.hips.hacettepe.edu.tr/tnsa2013/rapor/TNSA2013ilerianaliz.pdf
emphatically stated that all siblings get equal share, regardless of gender. (Celik Wiltse 2014-16)

Secondly, there is the unique way in which this devout Sunni Muslim population practices its religion and tradition. Complying with duties and transmitting them to the next generations are important goals that shape day-to-day conduct. However, they also insist on practicing these traditions the way their ancestors did, and react negatively to external influences. (Atalarımızdan, dedelerimizden gördüğümüz gibi ibadet ederiz) (Celik Wiltse 2014-16)

In her impressive ethnographic work, Kimberly Hart captures the clash between different ways in which Islam can be experienced in any given community. The unorthodox Islam takes the glorified Ottoman past as its source of legitimacy, whereas the more modern and politicized form of Islam looks at the future to establish its ideal Islamic society. Hart compares and contrasts two villages in western Turkey. The first adheres to more traditional, heterodox practices, while the other one, influenced by the Islamic movements and brotherhoods (particularly by Süleymançılardı), tries to “purify” religion from these backwards influences and seeks legitimacy in a future, Islamist form of polity. (Hart, 2013: 153-4)

An overwhelming majority of rural Trakya probably resembles the first village in Hart’s classification. They are proud of their Ottoman heritage, and religious ceremonies harken back to that golden era. (Hurriyet, 2016) Similar to Hart’s villagers, “they share a patriotic dedication to the nation-state, and an uncritical merging of Turkish ethno-national and Sunni Islamic identities.” (Hart, 2013: 23) Patriotism and discretion towards national institutions are noticeable in people’s daily habits as well. Across Trakya, there seems to be greater reverence for the public TV channels (TRT). The Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) serves as the sole arbitrator on religious matters, particularly among the middle aged and older generations. In almost every house, there is a Diyanet calendar used frequently as a reference, and most people tune in to TRT for news and Ramadan programs. In personal conversations, residents express reverence towards their imam, a civil servant appointed by the Diyanet and are decidedly negative about “outsiders” who come to preach them about “their own religion.” (Celik Wiltse, 2014-16) In sum, the pious rural population of Trakya adheres to a more traditional form of religion, and the mainstream Sunni interpretations of Diyanet, which repels
the modern, puritan interpretations that are frequently advocated by Islamist movements. However, given “overtly political” turn that Diyanet is taking, (Fabbe, 2016: 12-16) there might be backlash or some lasting changes in the region.

The components of Hatay’s social fabric, and the ways in which religion is incorporated into the social life also serve as a salient barrier that, at a minimum, slows down the penetration of Islamist political movements in this province. Similar to Trakya, Hatay residents do not automatically fit the elite/secular profile either. However, while Trakya enjoys relative ethno-national and religious homogeneity, the opposite quality in Hatay shapes the social fabric of the province. Residents of Hatay pride themselves for having harmonious relations for centuries, despite their incredible ethnic, national, and religious diversity. Many of its residents are fluent in Arabic. Intermarriage among Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as among Sunnis and Alevis is not uncommon. People talk about a “delicate balance” that has been historically sustained in the region that enables each group to respect each other and mutually thrive. (Celik Wiltse, 2016)

In terms of their socio-economic outlook, Antakya, Iskenderun, Arsuz and Samandag all have vibrant communities with strong tourism and service sectors, renowned local cuisines, and a strong tradition of entertainment. Even the ongoing civil war in neighboring Syria does not seem to have dampened the nightlife in many of these cities. Compared to its conservative neighbors to the north, Hatay is more open, socially less restrictive, and overall, more accommodating of diversity and heterodoxy.

Having established strong footholds in the region, particularly in Gaziantep, Adiyaman and Urfa, the ruling AKP has been consistently flexing its muscles in Hatay, to gain electoral support. Many locals lament that it tries to do so by rocking the “delicate balances” in Hatay, and pitting the ethno-religious groups against each other. For example, prominent CHP politician and party spokesperson Selin Sayek Böke of Antakya was systematically harassed.

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3 She quit her position as the party spokesperson over post-referendum controversies within the party in Spring 2017.
for her Christian heritage. (Haberturk, 2016) Locals state that in Hatay (population 1.5 million), most people knew the faith of their neighbors, but it was considered vulgar to express it publicly, let alone use it for political gain. However, since the AKP came to power, they claim each election tested ethnic and religious loyalties. (Celik Wiltse, 2016)

After several electoral defeats, the AKP resorted to extreme gerrymandering in Hatay. Three new municipalities were created in 2012, separating neighborhoods and villages that were consistently voting against the ruling party. According to most locals, the lines were drawn almost exclusively along sectarian lines, segregating the Alevis into separate enclaves. Defne was separated from Antakya city center. Neighborhoods that were long administratively and socio-economically part of Iskenderun were cut off and linked to the brand new administrative center of Arsuz, compelling people to travel 30 kilometers for basic services. Finally, Payas emerged arbitrarily, by dividing off the southern one-third of Dörtyol.

**Figure 4. Gerrymandering & its impacts on constitutional referendum in Hatay**

*Map Authors: Dinesh Shrestha & Murat Keçeci, using ArcGIS 10.3. software, South Dakota State University, Department of Geography, September 2017.*
As the 2017 referendum results illustrate, elections in Hatay remain a thorn in the side of the ruling AKP. Gerrymandering transformed Hatay into an extremely polarized province. In the 2017 referendum, Defne and Samandag scored record high pro-CHP votes (with more than 90 percent voting “no”), while Yayladagi and Altinozu next door were staunch pro-government constituencies (with over 70 percent voting yes). Despite these deliberate attempts to segregate the population between Sunni Turkmens and the rest, the AKP could not succeed in winning the metropolitan municipality of Antakya. During my interviews, local CHP leaders stated that collectively, they decided to not play the “sectarian game” that the AKP was trying to set up. (Celik Wiltse, 2016) The CHP nominated an openly pious, Sunni candidate for Antakya mayor, despite having its strongest electoral support from majority Alevi districts. Yet they were able to beat the heavyweight AKP candidate, Justice Minister Sadullah Ergin in the 2014 local elections.

The ruling party has continued to liberally apply sectarian pressure over Hatay. The recently established “village guard” (korucu) positions, which come with a rifle, steady paycheck and healthcare and retirement benefits, favor only Sunni villages. Arab Alevis of Samandag express growing sense of discrimination, especially in terms of refugee settlements practices, since the outbreak of Syrian civil war. Despite all the gerrymandering and sectarian public policies, Islamist politics have made only partial gains in the province. Local social dynamics and identities matter greatly in smaller provinces of Turkey.

Conclusion

Each province offers a densely rich palette of diversity in Turkey. Even the most homogenous, nationalist areas harbor variation in terms of ethno-nationalist heritage. Migrants from the Balkans or the Caucasus, nomadic Turkmens along the Mediterranean and settled Turkmens of central Anatolia, the Azeris in the northeast, Kurds in the southeast, and the Roma in the northwest all contribute to complex socio-cultural dynamics at the local level. Islamist movements in Turkey have to negotiate their way within this medley of distinct communities and identities. While some of these collective identities might be welcoming towards Islamic movements and parties, others might form effective barriers against them. How a group collectively defines itself at the local level, and the predominant norms and values they
endorse, are important indicators of their relative predisposition towards Islamic mobilization. The works of Marschall et al (2017) clearly illustrate how local governments in Turkey have increasingly become critical venues to project the predominant norms and identity aspects of provincial communities.

Broad-brush explanations at the national level may not capture the significant variations and identity dynamics at the local level. Variables that may have strong explanatory value at the national level may not be as pliable at a local scale. This paper tried to illustrate that the average CHP voter in rural Trakya, who is fasting during Ramadan and probably saving money for a coveted visit to Mecca, is very different from the average CHP voter in Izmir. In fact, these two CHP voters might be very different from the average CHP voter in Hatay, who probably speaks fluent Arabic. In short, attention to local level politics offers significant insights. It can unpack some of the dichotomous ways of seeing Turkish electorate as monolithic pro-government Islamists in the heartland versus secular elites along the coasts. Second, local dynamics can help explain why, despite all their material perks and vast organizational networks, Islamist movements cannot gain headway in certain parts of the country. If localities have distinct socio-cultural identities that are inhospitable to political Islam and some economic means to resist the perks of patronage, they may stay outside the Islamist sphere of influence, despite the victory of Islamist politics at the national level. Comparative studies of localities that have similar socio-economic and identity characteristics but different voting behavior can offer important puzzles for political analysts.

References


Clientelism and Services in the Periphery
Municipal Service Delivery, Identity Politics and Islamist Parties in Turkey
Melissa Marschall and Marwa Shalaby, Rice University; Saadet Konak Unal, University of Houston

The rise of Islamist politics over the past few decades has yielded distinctively diverse outcomes across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Despite the short-lived ebb of the Islamist parties in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, more recent electoral victories have proved these parties to be an enduring phenomenon showing little signs of abating. Turkey’s Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) is a particularly strong case in point. It remains the only Islamist party in the region to have won four consecutive national elections, maintaining a solid support base for almost two decades. Though much has been written about the party’s electoral and governing strategies on the national level, few studies have examined its efforts on the local level. This is a striking oversight given the importance of urban processes and outcomes for the both the AKP and the Islamist parties that preceded it.

In this research note, we refocus attention to the local level and investigate a set of research questions related to municipal politics and governance under the AKP and Turkey’s other Islamist parties. We briefly describe the rise and consolidation of Islamist parties in Turkish municipal politics and then consider how these parties have fared when it comes to governance. Focusing first on service delivery, we present results from related research that suggests Islamist parties do tend to prioritize redistributive policy more than their secular counterparts, but that under the AKP this has been achieved largely through housing policy, that are more neoliberal in nature. From here, we ask whether and how municipalities address issues related to identity and morality. In particular, do municipalities governed by Islamist mayors promote Islamic political identity? Using qualitative methods of analysis, we content analyzed municipal websites to evaluate whether municipalities that strongly support Islamist parties in mayoral elections feature web content promoting religion, morality, and Islamic identity, while those strongly supporting secular parties shy away from such content and instead highlight activities, events and images consistent with Western lifestyles and secular identities.
The Rise and Evolution of Islamist Parties in Turkish Local Politics

Religious parties are a relatively recent phenomenon in Turkey, in part because the Turkish constitution prohibits the use of religious symbols for political purposes. It was not until 1970 that the first Turkish party with clear Islamic credentials, the National Order Party (MNP), emerged. Although the MNP and its most immediate successor, the National Salvation Front (MSP), were both banned in relatively short order by Turkey’s Constitutional Court, the Welfare Party (WP), proved to be not only more durable, but also much more effective at winning elections. Though the WP won less than 5 and 10 percent of the vote respectively in the 1984 and 1989 municipal elections (Eligur 2010), by 1994 it had established itself as formidable party, winning nearly 20 percent of the vote and more than 100 mayoralties. As Figure 1 shows, the WP had elected mayors in more than half of the provinces, and more than 40 percent had two or more municipalities governed by this Islamist party.

Figure 1.

While the WP was truly distinctive in its emphasis on the provision of social services, its strident pro-Islamic, pro-Ottoman (and thus anti-secular and anti-Western) message and culture led it to also be banned by the Constitutional Court in 1997 (Akinci 1999). By 2001, the National Outlook Movement had split into two parties: the AKP and the Felicity (Saadet) Party. While the former, led by (current president) Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, adopted a reformist,
pro-western stance, tempered its Islamist identity and aggressively sought to broaden the party’s base, the latter remained loyal to Necmettin Erbakan and the core ideas of the National Outlook (Gumuscu & Sert 2009; Taspinar 2012). In the 2004 local elections, the AKP registered an extremely strong showing capturing 512 of the 914 (56 percent) district municipal mayoralities.1 The Saadet Party had much less impressive results, winning only 4 percent of the vote and 13 district municipal mayoralities. Similar results obtained in the 2009 and 2014 municipal elections – with the AKP continuing to dominate and the Saadet Party averaging less than 5 percent of the vote.

Service Delivery, Developmental Policy, and Municipal Governance

The question of how Islamist parties govern once in office is an important one. Unfortunately, much of what we know about service delivery in Turkish local politics comes from research on early Islamist parties, particularly the WP. The WP was essentially an urban party-machine that capitalized on the social, economic, and existential problems brought on by the processes of urbanization and rural-urban migration that had accelerated in the 1970s and 1980s (Eligür 2012). Using machine-style politics, the party provided newly arrived urban residents with material benefits such as patronage, jobs and social services in exchange for their votes. The WP also featured an extremely loyal cadre of foot soldiers who went door-to-door to provide material support in the form of food, financial assistance, and to spread and the party’s message of “Just Order” (Atacan 2005; Eligür 2010; White 2002).

Previous studies suggest that the WP largely followed through on its promises to provide social and economic support for the working-class voters who represented the core supporters of the party. Not only did WP mayors tend to be less corrupt and more effective at providing municipal services to working-class neighborhoods than mayors representing other parties (Akinci 1999; Sayari 1996), but in WP municipalities, buses ran, the garbage was collected, and the quality of social services had generally improved (White 1997: 26). When it comes to service delivery under AKP led municipalities, however, evidence suggests that the party’s commitment to social welfare may not be as strong. From the beginning, the party adopted a

1 AKP was a majority winner in 177 of the 512 (35 percent) mayoral elections it won.
pro-business stance and promoted market forces and neoliberal policies (Karaman 2013). One concrete example of this is housing policy, where urban transformation projects and a massive expansion of social housing under Turkey’s Mass Housing Development Authority (TOKİ) have stimulated the construction sector. However, recent work by Marschall et al. (2016) found that housing contracts awarded by the central government to local municipalities also fueled distributive politics in the form of jobs, contracts, and subsidized housing, which, in turn, played a key role in consolidating and expanding the AKP’s electoral base.

In related research, we analyzed municipal expenditures on housing and social welfare to see if municipalities with AKP or Saadet Party mayors spend more on these policies than municipalities with non-Islamist mayors. Our multivariate models also tested to see whether municipalities formerly governed by WP mayors spend more on social welfare today. We found that whereas municipalities with AKP or Saadet mayors do not allocate more to social welfare than non-Islamist municipalities, those with the experience of WP mayors (in 1994) have significantly higher social welfare program expenditures. On the other hand, municipalities with AKP mayors have significantly higher expenditures on housing than all other municipalities. Together these findings suggest that, ceteris paribus, the presence of Islamist parties in municipal government matters for local service delivery outcomes in Turkey. At the same time, not all Islamist parties in Turkey are the same. When it comes to social welfare spending, what matters most is whether the municipality has historical ties to the WP, not which party occupies the mayor’s office today. On the other hand, the mayor’s party plays a substantial role in housing policy: Controlling for migration and other factors that might influence housing demand, AKP-led municipalities spend significantly more on housing than municipalities with secular mayors.

Identity Politics and Municipal Governance

Beyond service delivery, our final research question focuses on identity politics and builds on work by urban politics scholars like Sharp (2002), who argue that identity issues involve values and moral concerns and are not only distinct from “politics as usual” – fixing potholes, picking up garbage, and getting the buses to run on time – but also quite salient in people’s everyday lives. Because these issues typically involve competing claimants who can be extraordinarily passionate and strident, the way in which local governments involve themselves in identity
politics has important implications for their ability to govern, manage conflict, and win elections. How does this work in Turkish local government? Do Islamist mayors promote Islamic political identity and the Islamization of Turkish society, while those governed by secular parties promote a secular and/or Turkish political identity?

As a first step in investigating identity politics in municipal governance, we selected a set of municipalities with strong support for either Islamist or secular parties and content analyzed their websites (see Appendix for details about the sampling frame and coding). Our goal was to systematically measure the extent to which municipal websites communicated Islamist versus secular frames and identities. We expected municipalities that strongly support Islamist parties would feature web content promoting religion, morality, and Islamic identity, while those strongly supporting secular parties would highlight activities, events and images consistent with Western lifestyles and secular identities.

Though the conflict between secularists and Islamists is longstanding, identity issues came to play an especially important role with the rise of the WP (Yavuz 1997:74; see also Evren Celik Wiltse’s essay). At the local level, WP mayors undertook actions that ranged from the purely symbolic (changing street names and removing statues), to the more substantive (closing down restaurants and nightclubs that served alcohol) (Akinci 1999). The promotion of Islamic identity by AKP mayors has also become more apparent in recent years. The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality’s 1.2 million dollar Panorama 1453 History Museum, which gives visitors the opportunity to see (in 3-D) Constantinople’s fall to the Turks, is but one example of this trend.

The content analysis of municipal websites targeted issues, activities, and events related to religion, morality, and Islamic versus secular/western identity. One of the most prominent dimensions of identity politics relates to veiling. Here we find a sharp contrast in the images featured on websites for municipalities with Islamist and secular mayors. As the summary statistics in Table 1 reveal, 87 percent of AKP municipalities and 89 percent of core Islamist municipalities (those with WP mayors in 1994 and consecutive Islamist party mayors since 1994) feature pictures of covered women on their websites, whereas only 44 percent of CHP municipalities do. Images of veiled children are also present on 50 percent of websites for
municipalities classified as strong Saadet party. In contrast, none of the websites in our sample of CHP and BDP municipalities (Turkey’s main secular parties) include any images of veiled children.

We also find religious symbols are much more visible on Islamist municipalities’ websites: 40 percent of AKP and 56 percent of core Islamist municipalities feature images of mosques on the front page of their website, whereas none of the CHP municipality websites do. In addition, these municipalities are also much more likely to prominently advertise religious holidays, events, customs, and symbols on their municipal websites. For example, 70 percent of all Islamist municipalities include content about circumcision festivals, religious feasts such as kandils, the holy birth of Mohammed, or Ottoman Empire military victories (conquest of Istanbul) that the municipality organizes or sponsors. This contrasts sharply with the CHP municipalities we analyzed, where none of this type of website content was found.

Table 1: Summary Statistics from Municipality Website Content Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Secular/Non-Islamist Frames &amp; Identities</th>
<th>Islamist Frames &amp; Identities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attire</td>
<td>Picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong CHP</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong BDP</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong AKP</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong SAADET</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core (WP) Islamist</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of municipalities in sample=42. Municipal types arranged from most secular (CHP) to most Islamist (Core Islamist) based on vote share for parties in last three mayoral elections.
When it comes to websites of municipalities with strong secular (CHP and BDP) support, we found content prominently featuring the arts, music, sports, and national holidays such as National Sovereignty Children’s Holiday (April 23), the Commemoration of Ataturk (November 10), and Youth and Sports Day (May 19) – all of which celebrate secular values. For example, every CHP municipal website in our sample featured its own centers where children and adults can participate in music, arts, and sports. In addition, 89 percent of CHP and 80 percent of the BDP municipal websites have a picture of Atatürk, the founder of Turkish Republic, on the front page of their websites. In contrast, only 20 percent of the AKP municipalities and 25 percent of the Saadet municipalities have a picture of Atatürk on main page their websites. Overall, our analysis finds that the activities and events sponsored by municipal governments vary considerably and align closely with the cultural frames and values of the governing parties.

Conclusion

In this brief research note we have documented the evolution of Islamist parties in Turkish local politics and provided evidence to suggest that they govern in ways that distinguish them from their secular counterparts. Our quantitative analysis reveals that Islamist parties not only differ from non-Islamist parties in terms of prioritizing municipal services that promote redistributive versus development policy, but that key differences also exist among Islamist parties. Our qualitative analysis finds that overall Islamist and secular parties sharply differ from each other with respect to identity politics. Municipalities with strong electoral support for Islamist parties use their websites to advertise religious values, lifestyle, and morals, whereas municipalities with strong electoral support for secular parties feature website content that promotes Western lifestyles and secular values. While this investigation reveals primarily symbolic aspects of identity politics, the next step of this research involves more systematic analyses based on surveys of the municipalities themselves. This survey will allow us to measure mayors’ priorities and attitudes about a more comprehensive set of municipal services so that we can better evaluate the processes and outcomes of municipal governments in Turkey.
References


**Appendix**

**Case Selection and Methodology for Municipal Website Content Analysis**

Empirical data for our content analysis were collected from the websites of 48 district municipalities in Turkey (April-May 2017). The cases were selected with two criteria in mind: (1) the electoral strength of Islamist versus other parties, (2) broader contextual features of the municipality (population, region). District municipalities were selected based on parties’ vote share over the past three municipal elections (2004, 2009, 2014). We included cases where Islamist and secular parties were uniformly in power since 2004 and won with the largest vote shares in municipal elections. Among these cases, we selected municipalities where Islamist parties compete both with each other (e.g., AKP and Saadet are the two top vote getters) and where they compete with secular parties (e.g., AKP and CHP are the two top vote getters). In selecting these cases, we also took our second criterion into account to ensure that our sample captured variation in the size and location of municipalities.

For the present analysis, we focus only on the municipalities where single parties are dominant (for CHP, AKP, and BDP, this is defined as winning all of the last three municipal elections, for Saadet this is defined as winning at least one election out of three municipal elections). We define Core Islamist municipalities as those electing WP mayors in 1994 and having consecutive Islamist party mayors since 1994. Table A1 reports cases included in our sample for each of our municipality types.
Table A1: Sample Cases Analyzed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Municipalities (by Region &amp; Province)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong CHP</td>
<td><em>Aegean</em>: Aydin (Didim), Izmir (Karşıyaka), Muğla (Datça); <em>Marmara</em>: Balıkesir (Ayvalık), İstanbul (Beşiktaş, Kadıköy), Edirne (Keşan); <em>Mediterranean</em>: Hatay (Defne, Samandağ)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong BDP</td>
<td><em>Southeast Anatolia</em>: Diyarbakır (Lice, Dicle), Şırnak (İdil); <em>Eastern Anatolia</em>: Hakkari (Yüksekova), Van (Başkale)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong AKP</td>
<td><em>Black Sea</em>: Ordu (Kabadüz), Rize (Güneysu, Iyidere), Trabzon (Hayrat), <em>Central Anatolia</em>: Ankara (Altındağ, Çubuk), Karaman (Başayıla), Kayseri (Kocasinan, Melikgazi) Nevşehir (Açğöl); <em>Eastern Anatolia</em>: Malatya (Pütürge); <em>Marmara</em>: İstanbul (Bağcılar, Bayrampaşa, Güngören); <em>Southeastern Anatolia</em>: Şanlıurfa (Haliliye)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Saadet</td>
<td><em>Black Sea</em>: Amasya (Hamamözü), Rize (Kalkandere); <em>Eastern Anatolia</em>: Muş (Korkut); <em>Southeastern Anatolia</em>: Adıyaman (Gerger)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Islamist</td>
<td><em>Central Anatolia</em>: Konya (Karatay, Meram, Selçuklu), <em>Eastern Anatolia</em>: Erzincan (Kemaliye); <em>Southeastern Anatolia</em>: Adıyaman (Kahta); <em>Marmara</em>: Bursa (İnegöl), İstanbul (Esenler), Kocaeli (Gölcük), Sakarya (Akyazı)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cases</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The content analysis was based on a coding scheme developed to measure website content promoting or explaining: (1) issues, activities and events related to religion, morality and identity, (2) social service provision. Coders examined the home/front page of each municipality’s website based on the following set of questions:

Q1- Is there any picture of Atatürk on the front page of the municipality’s website?
Q2- Is there any picture of covered women on the front page of the municipality’s website?

Q3- Is there any picture of non-covered women on the front page of the municipality’s website?
Q4- Is there any picture of covered girls on the front page of the municipality’s website?
Q5- Does the municipality organize any secular events? Does it celebrate the national holidays and deliver messages on these days?
Q6- Does the municipality organize any religious events? Does it celebrate the religious holidays and deliver any religious messages on these days?
Q7- Does the municipality have activities related to arts and music?
Q8- Does the municipality have activities related to sports?
In May 2016, municipal elections took place in Lebanon amidst severe polarization and a tense climate due to the Syrian crisis. While Hezbollah appeared to have suffered important defeats during these elections at the national level, the party achieved a major victory in South Lebanon despite the unprecedented challenges it faced by independent candidates and the Lebanese Communist Party. These results reaffirm the ‘grassroots’ quality of Hezbollah’s local actors. Their political strategy is entrenched in the patron-client relations that regulate local politics in Lebanon, which points our attention to the discourses and narratives of Hezbollah’s ruling elite on social entrepreneurship and how they form “a tactic of neoliberal governmentality” (Dey 2014: 55).

Hezbollah’s political control of local political dynamics has typically been attributed in part to the large array of social services it provides to its constituency and the strong legitimacy the party has gained for its role as the Islamic Resistance in Lebanon. Recent scholarly works on Hezbollah have highlighted the need to contextualize Hezbollah in relation to other Lebanese Islamist group on the one hand, and within the context of contemporary neoliberalism in Lebanon on the other (Daher 2016). However, works that look at the nuts and bolts of Hezbollah’s local “politics of doing” (Goirand 2000) as consolidation and legitimacy mechanism remain rare, particularly in South Lebanon.

After the 2006 war in Lebanon, Hezbollah took the lead in the reconstruction process in South Lebanon and became a necessary partner for most international relief agencies and reconstruction donors. To better understand how Hezbollah leadership adapted their organizational capacities and mobilization strategies to the south Lebanese rural terrain during the post-2006 reconstruction context, I look at the role played by the Party’s reconstruction experts from Mū’asasat Jihād al-Bināʾal-Inmāʾiya or Jihād al-Bināʾ (Jihad for Construction) within the institutional and political apparatus of development aid coordination. Building
primarily on in-depth interviews and informal conversations I conducted between 2009 and 2014 in South Lebanon and Beirut as part of an ongoing research on post 2006 reconstruction projects in Lebanon, I show in this memo that, similarly to the case of PJD in Morocco, Hezbollah’s experts act as both community leaders and “political brokers” by adopting a managerial discourse and claiming credit for successfully coordinating the reconstruction process. This allows Hezbollah to position themselves as the main coordinators of the reconstruction process in the local political landscape, while the “adoption scheme” initiated by the Lebanese government (whereby individuals, institutions, and foreign states could adopt an area and directly contribute to its reparation and reconstruction process) resulted in a patchwork of assistance rather than a geographically-oriented or needs-driven allocation of resources and donors’ priorities.

**Expertise and Development Activism**

Experts play an underappreciated role in Hezbollah’s success. In her comparison of the formation of regimes of “civic governmentality” in Beirut and Mumbai, Ananya Roy (2009) argues that the mediating role of Hezbollah is undergirded by a fundamental governing technology: the production of knowledge. In order to achieve sustainable results for the community, the reconstruction process requires that the community be rendered technical. It must be “investigated, mapped, classified, documented, and interpreted” (Rose 1999: 332). Technical expertise was needed in this context to make sure any reconstruction activity takes the community’s particular characteristics into consideration, and that Jihād al-Bināʾ would be best suited for the job.

For Jihād al-Bināʾ development experts, their social capital enabled them to constitute the community as a terrain of technical intervention, and thus reconfigure power relations at the municipal level. As technical experts, Jihād al-Bināʾ employers and volunteers played the role of social workers whose responsibility it was to bring the community together and create a common platform, using their “expert knowledge” to ensure active citizen participation. Using common result-based management techniques adopted by international NGOs and their local counterparts, Jihād al-Bināʾ developed their own parallel empowerment programs, which included various techniques like capacity-building workshops, videos, and participatory
damage mapping. In Fact, Jihād al-Bināʾ’s leadership take pride in the participation of their employees and volunteers in trainings and workshops offered by international organisations. Such opportunities provide them, they say, with important tools to be more responsive to local needs.

Municipality leaders were the first pillar of Hezbollah’s structure of local legitimacy. Building their legitimacy on a capacity to intercede at both local and national levels in favor of local populations, Hezbollah municipal leaders brought forward new rationalized, modern, and professionalized competencies and presented themselves as development experts within the new decentralized political competition (Harb 2009: 62). Hezbollah-affiliated mayors could count on the support of Jihād al-Bināʾ for “raising awareness” on reconstruction processes in their predominately Shiia communities. As demonstrated by Melani Cammett, competition for political representation within the same sectarian group leads, counterintuitively, to more ethnocentrism and subsequently a narrower scope of welfare coverage (Cammett, 2014). In the municipalities where they faced political competition from the Amal Movement with whom they share the same sectarian identity, Hezbollah experts were significantly less present. Jihād al-Bināʾ first organized public consultation meetings in the main Hezbollah-controlled towns of Southern Lebanon to present their assessments and promote themselves as housing developers. At the same time, they began to actively coordinate capacity-building activities with United Nations organizations and their local partners in order to ensure the appropriate targeting of assistance. In Bint Jbeil and Marjayoun, for instance, Jihād al-Bināʾ officials took an active part in setting up the agenda and supporting local coordinators in technical details. Their participation was also key in selecting participants from local associations and municipality workers. One of my contacts stressed during an informal conversation the need to “empower…those who have the knowledge.” Training community colleagues in fundraising skills was, for him, a central activity of the initial phase of collaboration. Yet, even in this scheme, there were limits on participation. People were told that the complexities of the reconstruction of urban environments demanded professional expertise from architects, planners, and engineers.
Similarly to the case of Islamist parties in Turkey, my qualitative analysis on local development practices also suggests that Hezbollah’s leadership adapted their Islamic identity politics to the particularities of the south Lebanese reconstruction context. While Hezbollah had the monopole of the reconstruction in the southern suburbs in Beirut, they had to coordinate their efforts with those of other development actors and organizations in South Lebanon. When international organizations highlighted the secular aspect of Jihād al-Binā’ development work in the South, Jihād al-Binā’ officials accordingly foregrounded the purely technical aspect of their work when engaging in a relationship with them.

The Politics of Credit Claiming for Electoral Gain

After the 2006 war, Jihād al-Binā’ has played more of a political role by actively co-opting influential and prominent villagers and civil society representatives into their small coordination councils (see Brooke and Ketchley’s memo on the Islamic brotherhoods’ co-optation strategy in rural Egypt).

Due to the specific thematic nature of their expertise, Jihād al-Binā’ experts were much sought-after by nongovernmental agencies, not only because they provided a link to the villages, but also because they had a vision about its problems and provided a type of knowledge about the villages and South Lebanon as a whole that was unavailable to governmental and municipal politics. At the same time, Jihād al-Binā’’s mode of interacting with national and international organizations’ officials was not only aimed at securing instrumental, material gains for the region, but also strove to include the Party in the post-2006 war development community. Studies on undeserved credit claiming have demonstrated how politicians at the local level exploit foreign aid project for electoral purposes (Cruz & Schneider 2016; Dietrich 2013; Labonne & Chase 2009). My fieldwork shows mayors and Jihād al-Binā’ leaders advertised the receipt of foreign aid projects as a sign of their ability to extract resources from donors for the benefit for the benefit of their communities. However, in the Lebanese case, it was not the poor-quality information environment that enabled the politics of credit claiming, but rather the highly politicized context of post-2006 war reconstruction. The discourse of Hezbollah experts on selflessness and the moral obligation to serve marginalized communities was often coupled with a discourse on the conditions attached to foreign aid. When Hezbollah experts discredited foreign development actors by pinpointing the solely political and conditions-
driven aspect of their interventions, they were trying to underline the importance of their local sociability networks, not only as a political advantage but also as the foundation guaranteeing success in meeting their commitments.

To secure legitimacy in a period of crisis, Hezbollah capitalized on the growing popularity of Jihād al-Bināʾ’s experts and integrated them within the party’s clientelistic system by highlighting their affiliation to notable families from the South. Moreover, the legitimacy they gained from their capacity to “do something” allowed them to position themselves within the local political leadership. Jawad, an agricultural engineer from Ibl al-Saqī who has been working for the organization for more than five years, explained that “people started to look for me in my village. They know I can help them. The olive harvest was very affected and many people lost their harvest and press machines. They know I have contacts within the party and they need the money as soon as possible… People started to call me on my mobile directly and come to my family house looking for me. I felt like the new mayor of the village!” Jawad comes from a very prominent family and his uncle is the local mukhtar, or locally chosen leader. He admits that his last name helped him gain people’s trust. Hasan, a civil engineer from Jdaydet Marjaʿyoun, thinks that “people started to believe that having scientific knowledge is good to govern the village. And when there are technicians in the municipality, NGOs start taking us seriously. Instead of spending all their money on capacity building, they can give the municipality the money to implement real projects that our community needs.”

In this context, local populations began to scrutinize the municipality council of their hometown for its representation of local families as well as its aʿila (performance). One of the most interesting outcomes of the 2010 and 2016 municipal elections was that Hezbollah not only carefully choose its candidates from within notorious local families but also according to the role they played in the reconstruction process. These elections also illustrate the malleability of the ‘aʿila (family) as an idiom that is entrenched in the larger social and political environment. In some villages, Hezbollah choose to present young candidates who did not belong to “traditional” local families and thus could be more easily co-opted within the Party’s local clientelistic network. To justify its political choice, Hezbollah “ennobled” these candidates’ families by inserting them within heroic and territorial representations of Shia history (Picard 2011: 50). In ‘Aytaroun, for instance, an agricultural city in South Lebanon with
a population of 17,000 close to the border with Israel, the local memory of the population is deeply rooted in the long history of resistance against the occupation as well as the destruction caused by the 2006 war. During the elections, the Party capitalized on its reconstruction efforts in the region and the glorification of their own martyrs. Hezbollah also took advantage of the reconstruction campaign driven by a mayor who was able to channel Italian and German funds. This mayor, who had been assigned a high position at Jihād al-Bināʾ, came from one of the two main local communist families.

**Conclusion**

The case of Jihād al-Bināʾ is an interesting local adaptation of the neoliberal approach, an adaptation that has tried to be more culturally appropriate, cost-effective, sustainable, and empowering to the local population. To understand Hezbollah’s accommodation strategies within Lebanese and regional politics, it is important to shift our focus beyond its religious and ideological identity. In this case, looking at South Lebanon as a public space and not as a religious sphere helps clarify the problematics of euphemizing religious symbolism by Islamist parties and understand the interrelationships between the political and religious fields. Jihad-Al-Binaa’s experts compelling narrative shows that Hezbollah’s resilience finds roots within state-society relations that have long undermined state institutions, while empowering a system of patronage and clientelism often endorsed directly or indirectly by the international community. This trompe l’oeil resilience is indeed the resilience of Hezbollah’s ruling elite, not of the Shiia community. A closer look at Hezbollah’s capacity to reconfigure local networks of dependencies shows us how that the party is able to secure its resilience despite the crisis of legitimacy it is confronting due to its involvement in the Syrian war.
References


Cruz, C. & Schneider, C. J. (2016), Foreign Aid and Undeserved Credit Claiming. American Journal of Political Science, 61, pp. 396–408


Do Islamists govern differently than non-Islamists, and does this relationship vary across the local and national levels? Burgeoning literature seeks to explain the politics of authoritarian and transitional legislatures (Malesky and Schuler 2010) and its relationship with regime durability (Gandhi and Przeworski 2006, 2007). So too researchers investigate why Islamist parties have been electorally successful (Masoud 2014). In both literatures, service provision and patronage are central mechanisms (Lust-Okar 2009; Malesky and Schuler 2010). Yet detailed and systematic data on citizen-legislator linkages across Islamist and non-Islamist members and at different levels of government is limited.

In this memo, I take a preliminary step toward filling this gap by leveraging original data from a survey of 780 Algerian citizens I conducted in 2006 with Ellen Lust. This unique dataset allows me to test whether the service provision practices of Islamist parties differ from non-Islamist members and across levels of government. Here, the emphasis is on linkages between elected legislators and citizens, through which citizens asks for help with personal and community problems, or express opinions.

I find that Islamist parties do indeed govern differently; more often than other parties, they receive requests from citizens with whom they have no personal connection and citizens who are more likely to be marginalized from patronage networks with political elites – operationalized here as women (Benstead 2016). Moreover, I find that the extent to which Islamists serve these citizens increases at the local level.

These findings have several implications for existing literature, and for addressing why Islamist movements and parties are often electorally successful. First, they extend existing work on Islamist parties’ strategy to reach citizens outside established patronage networks by suggesting that these efforts are more effective at the local than the national level. Second, they highlight variation in governance patterns across two Islamist parties – one allied with the government and the other outside the governing coalition – and suggest that cooperative relationships with
the regime may be needed to reach disengaged citizens with services. Third, they underscore the need to examine why local politics differ from the regional and national levels in authoritarian regimes.

Along with other contributions in this volume, the findings suggest that authoritarian states’ reliance on patron-client relationships leaves them vulnerable to challenges by opposition movements when they are able to mobilize support among marginalized groups.

**Theoretical Framework**

Extant literature suggests that Islamist parties govern differently from other parties, bypassing existing patronage networks through institutionalization of service provision and direct contact with citizens. This strategy impacts both their electoral success (Masoud 2014), as well as the extent to which citizens who are not tapped into existing state-society patronage networks, including women, benefit from opportunities to request clientelistic services (Blaydes and Tartouy 2009; Meyersson 2014; Blaydes 2014; Abdel-Samad and Benstead 2016; Benstead 2016).

Extending this literature, I investigate several hypotheses:

*At all levels of elected office (national, provincial, and municipal councils), Islamist members will reach out to citizens who are outside existing patronage networks more than non-Islamist officials, such that:

H1: Citizens who approach Islamist members are more likely than those who contact non-Islamist members for help to say they have no personal connection with the legislator.

H2: Female citizens are more likely to approach Islamist members than non-Islamist members.

Islamist parties’ strategy to institutionalize service provision, engage in redistributive politics, and establish direct contact with citizens in their district (Cammett and Jones Luong 2014; Arat 2005; Abdel-Samad and Benstead 2016) will also impact their governance practices differently at the local than at the national level. Specifically, the extent to which Islamists’
serve citizens with whom they have no previous connection will be greater at the local level. This “local advantage” results from greater social embeddedness – that is, the greater ease maintaining contact with citizens through offices and social and religious institutions at the local than the national constituency.

H3: The gap between Islamist and non-Islamist member in governance practices – serving citizens with whom legislators have no prior connection and women – will be greater at the local than at the national level.

Legislative Elections in Algeria

Algeria holds elections by universal suffrage to five year terms for its National Popular Assembly (L’Assemblée Populaire Nationale, APN), which had 389 seats as of the 2002-2007 mandate covered by the survey, as well as to its 48 regional assemblies (Popular Assembly of the Wilaya/L’Assemblée Populaire du Wilaya, APW) and 1541 municipal assemblies (Popular Assembly of the Commune/L’Assemblée Populaire Communale, APCs). The upper house of parliament is comprised of 48 seats appointed by the president and 144 seats indirectly elected by the APWs. Elections are held by closed-list proportional representation in multi-member districts. For elections to the APN, the electoral districts are the country’s 48 provinces (wilayat; Image 1). During the 2002-2007 APN mandate, districts had between 4 and 32 seats and there were 8 overseas seats.
Figure 1. Algeria’s 48 wilayat


Semi-Competitive Elections and Executive Dominance

Algeria has a single party dominant regime in which military and intelligence officials and civilian elites, including the President and the cabinet, compete to shape major political and economic policy (Entelis 2011). While President Bouteflika succeeded in consolidating unprecedented power behind the presidency, powerful, unelected military elites and intelligence services – called “le pouvoir” or “les décideurs” – still wield influence behind the state’s civilian political institutions. These individuals are at the pinnacle of Algeria’s patronage system, an informal system of largely personalistic relationships through which rents from the state’s vast oil reserves are distributed (Volpi 2013).

Algeria’s political system is highly centralized, with electoral structuring, institutional design, and clientelism ensuring regime continuation through executive dominance at the national, regional, and local levels. Since 1997, national, regional, and local levels have been structured to ensure that the two regime parties – National Liberation Front (FLN) and National Rally for Democracy (RND) – make up a majority in all legislative bodies, thereby guaranteeing that
the executive branch wields law-making power. This executive dominance extends to the regional and local levels.

Without autonomy, national, regional, and local assemblies potentially offer their members opportunities to benefit personally, or to utilize state patronage networks to help voters with personal problems – and enhance future personal or party electoral prospects. To a large extent, this requires maintaining cooperative relationships with regime patrons and gaining party representation in the cabinet and ministries, who can help legislators resolve citizen requests.

**Data and Methods**

To investigate governance practices across Islamist and no-Islamist parties and levels of government, I use a household survey of 780 Algerians conducted face-to-face by a local team from August-September 2006. The response rate was 73 percent. At the time of the survey, members of the APN, APWs, and APCs had been in office since 2002. Since 2002, national/regional/local elections were held in 2007, 2012, and 2017. No significant changes to the electoral code or prerogatives of the assemblies occurred during this time.

The survey was conducted among a nationally-representative sample in 8 wilayat and 36 communes selected through multi-stage probabilistic sampling with the electoral district (wilayat) as Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) and communes as the Secondary Sampling Units (SSUs). The eight communal seats were self-representing.

**Measurement**

To measure linkages, respondents were asked if they had a parliamentarian during the current mandate for help with a personal or community problem, or to express an opinion. This includes both successful as well as unsuccessful requests. Respondents were then asked a series of questions about the most recent time, including the member’s party. To measure personalistic and rationalized linkage types, respondents were asked why they contacted the parliamentarian. Response choices included “just because the deputy was elected” (“rationalized” ties/no connection), or “member of your tribe,” “friend,” “another connection
such as business,” and “a member of the party you belong to” (personal ties). Respondents could answer more than one type (Benstead 2017). This battery was repeated for the APW and APC. (See Appendix for questions wording).

**Islamist and Non-Islamist Parties**

When the survey was conducted in 2006, the parties held a similar proportion of seats at the national, regional, and local levels. In the 389-seat APN elected May 30, 2002, pro-regime parties, the FLN and the RND has 199 and 47 seats, respectively. Two Islamist parties, el-Islah and MSP, held 43 and 38 seats. The socialist Workers’ Party (PT) had 21 seats, while independents and smaller parties held 41 seats. The Constitutional Rally for Democracy (RCD) and Democratic and Social Movement (MDS) boycotted national, regional, and local elections.

At the time of the survey, one Islamist party, the Movement for Society and Peace (MSP, formerly HAMAS), was in a coalition with the governing FLN and RND parties and had representation in the cabinet – while a second, Islah, did not join the coalition and was weaken by regime interference and had split it into two groups within the parliament (Benstead 2008).

These same parties were similarly represented in the APW and APC after October 10, 2002 elections. Partial elections were later held for 60 communes in the Kabylie in 2003 due to electoral violence which closed the polls in 2002.

The FLN, which was the only party fielding candidates in all districts in 2007 (Bustos, 2012), won 2.5 million votes, RND (1.2 million), Islah (960,000), MSP (600,000), PT (500,000), and 19 more parties receiving 270,000 or fewer votes each (Hamidouche 2012). APW results were similar to those of the APCs.

**Member-Citizen Linkages**

I present bivariate analyses using two-tailed Chi-squared tests of independence to investigate member-citizen linkage across parties and levels of government. I find that, while relatively fewer citizens have contacted a member of the APN or an APW for help with a problem or to express an opinion, many more contacted a local councillor. About 11 percent had
contacted an APN or APW member and 25 percent of citizens have asked for help from a local councillor (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Percentage of citizens who have contacted a member, by wilaya and level

Contact rates for APN members shown in light grey in Figure 1 vary across districts. The rate is highest in Batna, where 19 percent have asked for help from a parliamentarian and lowest in El Oued, where only 2 percent have asked for help. Batna is part of the BTS triangle (Batna-Tébessa-Souk Ahras) – a region with dense state-society patronage networks, due to the large number of public officials and military personnel originating from the region since the 1980s (Hachemaoui 2013, p. 21). Contact rates for deputies from the APW (shown in black in Figure 1) also vary across wilayat, and the difference is statistically significant (p<.001).

When it comes to asking for help from APW members, Batna also stands out as the wilayat with the highest rates, suggesting similarities in electoral politics across the national and provincial levels. There, 21 percent have asked for help in Batna, while only 2 percent in El Oued have. That Batna has the highest rates for both the APN as well as the APW suggests...
that similar political mechanisms underlie national and regional electoral politics and shed light on electoral politics in a highly centralized authoritarian state. APN and APW elections are likely more tightly controlled since the incumbents must ensure a majority for the regime parties, the FLN and RND in the APN and the APWs, which indirectly elects 2/3 of seats in the Senate, a key institution guaranteeing regime stability.

There are also important differences in the type of member-citizen linkages across the national and local levels. Many more citizens have contacted members of APCs for help, with rates varying significantly across provinces (p<.001) and municipalities (p<05). While Batna has the highest rates of legislator-citizen linkages for the APN and APW, its rate for APC members is 19 percent, below 25 percent average for local councils. El Oued has among the lowest rates of legislator-citizen linkages for all three legislative levels. There, only 7 percent of citizens have contacted a member of a local council for help with a problem. The highest levels of local service provision are in Tissemsilt, where 39 percent have asked for help, and lowest in Tipaza, where 7 percent have done so. As noted, this suggests that the mechanisms underlying local political recruitment differ from the regional and national levels in ways that are unexplored in the literature.

There are other differences across the levels as well. Citizens infrequently contact a deputy at the APN without having a connection, but rationalized linkages (“just because they were elected”) are more common for the APW and APC. While only 24 percent of attempts to contact APN members were rationalized, the proportion increases to 28 percent for APW and 57 percent for APC members (Figure 3).
Figure 3. Percentage of citizens who contacted official with whom they have no personal connection, by party and level

N=30 (APN)/N=44 (APW)/N=69 (APC). Where the figure indicates “0%”, this indicates that 0% of the reported contacts for that party were rationalized (i.e., 100% were personalized). No citizens reported contacting local councillors (APC members) from Islah or PT, while no citizens reported contacting parliamentarians (APN members) from MSP or PT.

Do Islamists Reach More Citizens With Whom They Have No Connection?

To what extent do Islamists reach those who are marginalized from existing patron-client relations, and do they do so more than do non-Islamists? As shown in Figure 2, I find that Islamist parties do govern differently; they serve more citizens with whom they have no connection, and the gap increases at the local level. When considering the FLN, 14 percent of contacts at the national level, 39 percent at the regional level, and 54 percent at the local level were characterized by “no connection.” For the RND, 0 percent at the national level, 17 percent at the regional level, and 28 percent at the local level were rationalized.

In contrast, at the national level, there was no data recording Islamist contacts, yet 100 percent of contacts at regional level and 80 percent at the local level involving the MSP took place involved a citizen who had no connection with the legislator, in partial support of H1 and H3.

At the same time, there are differences across the two Islamists parties in this respect. All of the reported contacts of Islah deputies were via a personal connection. One possible reason
for this difference is that the MSP, due to its coalition with the government, has better connections within the state and greater freedom to implement an Islamist mandate by reaching out more broadly and directly within their constituencies (Abdel-Samad and Benstead 2016). Islah may simply have had fewer resources and connections to effectively reach out to citizens. Islamist parties, like other movements and parties, must adapt their strategies, based on the constraints and opportunities they encounter (see Margot Dazey’s memo in this volume).

**Do Islamist Parties Serve More Women?**

As shown by Figure 4, both Islamist parties are more likely than non-Islamist parties to contact women, in support of H2. Due to the small number of respondents, differences are not statistically significant, but they are large. At the APN, 67 percent of those who contacted Islah were women, compared to 25 percent who contacted deputies of the FLN and 33 percent who contact the RND.

**Figure 4. Percentage of female citizens contacting member, by party and government level**

![Chart showing the percentage of female citizens contacting members by party and government level.](chart.png)

N=30 (APN)/N=44 (APW)/N=69 (APC). No citizens reported contacting local councillors (APC members) from Islah or PT.

Women were more likely to contact Islamist legislator than those from other parties at the regional level as well, in support for H2. 100 percent of those who reported contacting Islah for a services were women. Local officials from the Islamist MSP party, like those from the RND, serve 50 percent women, in partial support for H2.
Conclusions and Implications

Three conclusions emerge. First, according to citizen reports, Islamist members serve more female citizens than do non-Islamist members. Second, more than non-Islamists, Islamists are in contact with citizens who report having no personal connection with them. And, this gap in rationalized connections across Islamist and non-Islamist parties becomes larger at the local level – evidence for a “local advantage.” At the same time, these relationships were more pronounced for the MSP, an Islamist party in coalition with the government, than Islah, which did not join the coalition. This difference across Islamist parties should be examined in future research.

These findings have several implications for existing literature and speak to the themes of this volume, which emphasize the ways that weak institutions and reliance on patron-client relations in authoritarian regimes create opportunities for opposition parties to reach the disengaged. When Islamist movements mobilize populations outside existing state patronage structures, they are more likely to succeed electorally (Masoud 2014). Following this same logic, rebel groups also take advantage of these gaps in state capacity and legitimacy to build a nascent state structure and control territory, as IS has in Iraq and Syria (see Mara Revkin’s piece in this volume).

First, Islamists’ greater use of rationalized connections, particularly at the local level, indicates that they may utilize social and political institutions relatively more effectively at the local than the national level. This suggests that the extent to which rationalized linkages will be dominant in a given case depends not only on institutional settings and rents, but also on the presence of Islamist members and the level of government (Benstead 2017). Further research should explore this “local advantage” with additional qualitative and quantitative data.

Second, at all levels, Islamist legislators reach out to those who are marginalized from patronage networks and women more than do non-Islamists. For literature on Islamist parties and gender and governance, this finding supports existing literature by showing that Islamist parties bypass existing patronage networks and serve citizens broadly. This also has a positive impact on women’s access to services not only at the national level, but also at the local level.
There are broader implications as well for theories of authoritarian politics. Local linkages differ from national-level linkages, suggesting that different mechanisms drive service provision at the local and national levels. For instance, in Algeria, the types of parliamentarian-citizen connections – largely personalistic, non-tribal connections – that dominate at the national level are less common at the regional level, and even less common at the local level. Local councillors from all parties are more likely than those at the national level to be in contact with citizens with whom they have no direct connections. Existing theories of electoral and legislative politics in authoritarian regimes should be extended to explain this variation across levels of government and its implications for authoritarian regime persistence and Islamist success.

These preliminary findings shed light on the ways that local and Islamist politics – and the intersection of the two – differ from traditional understandings of national level legislative politics. Because of the small N in this survey (and the infrequency of the event being measured), more survey data are needed to measure member-citizen linkages that questions asking about state-citizen linkages and include the party and use a large N sampling approach that is representative at the communal level, similar to the methodology employed by the Local Governance Performance Index (LGPI) conducted the Program on Governance and Local Development (GLD 2017).

Future work should examine differences in Islamists strategies across urban and rural areas. This could better inform efforts to understand why the PJD has been unsuccessful in rural areas in national elections in Morocco (see Yasmina Abouzzohour’s memo) and why the AKP party has had varying levels of success across localities in municipal elections in Turkey (see the contribution of Melissa Marschall, Marwa Shalaby, and Saadet Konak Unal; Evren Celik Wiltse). Following the approach of Brooke and Ketchley (in this volume) and Margot Dazey writes (in this volume), it is critical to interrogate the relationship between the local and national officials in Islamist movements. Research should explore how networks between local and national officials affect the successfulness of efforts to provide services to citizens. These and other extensions will help to better explain how and why local Islamist and other movements reach citizens who are outside established patronage networks and fill spaces left by authoritarian states.
References


Appendix

Question wording.

Local Councils (APCs)
Have you or any member of your household living here tried either successfully or unsuccessfully to contact an elected official of your local council to seek help with a personal problem, to seek help with a social or economic problem your community is facing, or to express an opinion? No(=1), Yes(=1), Yes we tried, but could not contact(=1).

(Now I am going to ask just about the most recent request you made to an elected official in your local council). Which party this member represent?

Which of the following best describes why you tried to contact this official specifically? This official was a member of your family or tribe? A member of the party in which you are/were a militant? A friend or someone you knew through a previous connection (e.g. business, association, etc)? Or was it simply because this official was elected to your local council and you had no previous connection with him/her? [Check all that apply]

Regional Councils (APWs)
As above (“your regional council”)

National Popular Assembly (APN)
As above (“the Chamber of Representatives“)
Local Organizing
Local Religious Leaders and the Rise of Political Islam
Steven Brooke, University of Louisville and Neil Ketchley, King's College London¹

In his memoir, Mahmoud Abd al-Halim (1979, 38-40) recalls first encountering the Muslim Brotherhood in the al-Rifai mosque in Cairo's Citadel in the mid-1930s. Abd al-Halim, who went on to be a founding member of the Brotherhood's militant “Special Section,” regularly performed Friday prayers at the Citadel so that he could listen to the khutba delivered by Shaykh Mahmoud Ali Ahmad, the mosque's well-known and respected imam. According to Abd al-Halim, following the conclusion of prayer, Shaykh Ali Ahmad would encourage the congregation to buy the latest issue of the Muslim Brotherhood's newspaper, al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun, which was on sale in the mosque. Abd al-Halim purchased the paper and thus began a lifelong association with Egypt's most prominent Islamist movement.

This vignette somewhat complicates the conventional story about the estrangement of early political Islam from traditional forms of Islamic religious authority. These accounts usually focus on how the Muslim Brotherhood was built upon those with “lay” professions recruited from neighborhood coffee shops rather than shaykhs embedded in local mosques. In other words, “effendis” rather than imams. In this paper we revisit these arguments using a Muslim Brotherhood branch survey published in 1937. Not only do we find that the modal branch leader during this period was identified as a “shaykh,” but also that the proportion of branch leaders with religious titles in a district increased with that district’s distance from Cairo. While exploratory, these findings suggest that the ways we conceptualize and understand Islamist movements is quite sensitive to the local context. More substantively, our conclusions join a newer line of research focusing on areas of synthesis between Islamist movements and traditional structures of religious authority (Rock-Singer 2016, Ketchley and Biggs 2017).

¹ Authors are listed alphabetically. We appreciate comments from participants in the June 2017 POMEPS/ GLD workshop on Islamists and local politics hosted by the University of Gothenburg. This research was supported by the Project on Middle East Political Science.
The paper proceeds as follows. We begin by briefly describing the dominant narrative of a conflictual relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and traditional forms of Islamic authority. We then describe the Muslim Brotherhood branch survey and present descriptive statistics highlighting the prominence of shaykhs in the Brotherhood's branch leadership. A simple regression analysis suggests that local religious figures became more prominent in the Brotherhood as distance from Cairo increased. We close by suggesting potential extensions of this research agenda.

**Political Islam and the Religious Establishment**

As Nile Green (2011) has argued, much of the scholarship on Islamism has tended to follow a heuristic in which lay Islamists calling for religious reform stand at a distance from Islamic scholasticism. To take but a few examples from this literature, the Brotherhood's activist interpretation of a “living Islam” is set apart from the textual and esoteric approach of the traditional religious class (Mandaville 2014, 121). According to Ayoob, Islamists like Hasan al-Banna, the Muslim Brotherhood's founder, “condemned the ulama for practicing and preaching an ossified form of Islam incapable of responding to contemporary challenges” (2009, 29). Baer concurs, interpreting the Brotherhood's appeal as a function of its lay character, explicitly counterpoised to traditional sources of Islamic authority. “In the movement of the Muslim Brethren, for the first time, the exponents of Islamic politics were people belonging to the urban middle classes – teachers, officials, and professionals, but not necessarily and even not predominantly people who fulfilled religious functions,” he argues. After reviewing al-Banna's disappointment with the Egypt's professional religious class, Esposito and Voll conclude that, “the failure of old-style ulama to provide any real alternative to the secular intellectuals in the nineteenth and early twentieth century may be the single most important aspect of the rise of the contemporary Muslim activist intellectual” (2001, 16).

This tension purportedly circumscribed the Brotherhood's ability to establish an organizational presence beyond Egypt's urban centers. Kupferschmidt, for example, notes how the Brotherhood's more orthodox and literal approach to Islam butted up against the popular and occasionally heterodox forms of religious practice that obtained in rural settings. As he suggests, “the main reason for the Brotherhood's limited success in rural Egypt lies therefore in the tension between normative and popular Islam” (1982, 165-167). This approach dovetails
neatly with scholarship emphasizing the urban, educated, and “modern” nature of the Brotherhood, emphasizing the group’s appeal to a social class which was apparently caught between their frustrations with the ulema’s inability to speak to modern problems, and their discomfort with and distance from the folk forms of Islam they had left behind when they began to pour into Egypt’s growing cities.

In the next section we use a unique cache of historical data in an attempt to systematically investigate the relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood's local leadership and networks of religious authority.

**Muslim Brotherhood Branch Leaders**

In 1937, the Muslim Brotherhood's newspaper published an inventory of more than 200 of the movement's branches. Included for each was the location, stage of organizational development, and the branch leader's name, honorific, and occupation (branch leaders were exclusively male). Honorifics included “shaykh,” “effendi,” “doctor,” “lawyer,” and “judge” (note that shaykhs were also sometimes identified as imams of local mosques, but no other information on their religious background was included). Prompted by the basic claim in the literature about the particular profile of the Brotherhood, we abstract these collections of titles of branch leaders into two categories: religious and lay, presented in Figure 1.

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2 The most frequently occurring honorific in the survey was “shaykh” (64 percent). The second most frequent was “effendi” (33 percent) suggesting that some of these branch leaders fit the “classic” profile of Muslim Brothers- literate individuals who belonged to the upwardly mobile “effendiyya” class (Ryzova 2014).
Figure 1 complicates the usual narrative, showing that in the movement's earliest years a majority of Muslim Brotherhood branch leaders had titles that suggest religious authority. And so, despite a considerable literature suggesting that the Brotherhood drew from those with “modern” professions, it is notable that, during the group's first decade of existence the backbone of the organization – the leaders of hundreds of local chapters of the organization – were religious figures. While offering no cause to disregard the traditional story of the Brotherhood's strength in places with higher literacy and lower percentages of citizens employed in agriculture (Brooke and Ketchley 2016), these findings do suggest that an important part of the story of the Brotherhood's emergence – particularly in its earliest years – has not received the attention it is due.

We now turn to a simple regression analysis to investigate the conditions under which branches are headed by “religious” (vs. “lay”) figures. The dependent variable is the proportion of Muslim Brotherhood leaders in a given census district identified as shaykhs in the 1937 branch survey.\(^3\) We are interested in the growth of the Brotherhood outside Cairo, Egypt's urban center and site of the movement’s headquarters, and so the independent variable of interest is the distance between a census district's central point and the Brotherhood's

\(^3\) Multiple subdistricts make up a district. Muslim Brotherhood branches identified in the survey are assigned to the subdistrict.
headquarters in central Cairo, transformed to its square root. As the dependent variable is a proportion, it is naturally estimated using fractional logistic regression. Figure 2, shows the marginal effect of distance from Cairo on the predicted proportion of religious branch leaders in a district.

**Figure 2. Proportion of religious branch leaders per census district as a function of distance from Cairo, 1937**

![Graph showing the proportion of religious branch leaders per census district as a function of distance from Cairo, 1937.](image)

Figure 2 shows that there is a positive association between a given district's distance from Cairo and the proportion of Muslim Brotherhood branches in that district headed by religious figures. To give an illustration: moving from central Cairo to the district of Girga in Upper Egypt (now in the governorate of Sohag), the conditional mean of religious branch leaders in a district roughly doubles, from approximately 30 percent to nearly 60 percent (p < .001). One plausible interpretation of this finding is that, especially outside Cairo, the village shaykh played an important role in the Brotherhood's growth. This finding also finds support in qualitative work on the Muslim Brotherhood's early history. For example, Brynjar Lia argues that the Brotherhood was able to reach beyond the cities because they managed to tap into local elite

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4 In future work we plan to refine this measure to better discriminate urban and rural environments, as well as the uneven development of the Egyptian state, along the lines discussed in Brooke and Ketchley (2016).
networks. “In traditional villages and provincial towns, those relatively untouched by the process of modernization and industrialization, the religious elite still held an enormous influence over the local populace. Winning the support of the local elite was therefore of fundamental importance” (1998, 132). Our quantitative finding supports this argument: by recruiting and co-opting religious leaders to lead branches, the Brotherhood would have stood to gain not only legitimacy and social acceptance in the eyes of constituencies on Egypt's periphery, but also an ability to access networks and associational spaces that were already fairly robust and well-developed.

Conclusion

Of all the organizations and movements active in interwar Egypt, how was the Brotherhood singularly able to expand into the country's considerable rural provinces? How was al-Banna able, according to one of his chroniclers, “to enter a village in order to establish a branch, despite the fact that he knows no one there” (al Guindi 1978, 30)? Using a branch survey published at the end of the Muslim Brotherhood's first decade, we offer a preliminary but promising answer: the Brotherhood, it seems, was particularly adroit at working inside traditional structures of religious legitimacy and authority. In the process, they were able to gain opportunities for mobilization in Egypt's periphery that had escaped their competitors.

While our aim in this paper is largely descriptive, is also important to note the weaknesses of our findings. Our argument is static – we do not discuss in any depth the specific processes through which the Brotherhood incorporated these religious figures into their organization (and, presumably, failed or never attempted to incorporate others). Nor can this data support an analysis of how ties with the Brotherhood allowed these figures to reconfigure their local social and political contexts, using affiliation with a larger movement to access resources and social status that may have otherwise remained unavailable.

The common story of the Muslim Brotherhood is one of activists with “modern” educations fanning out across Egypt's cities, attracting adherents by jettisoning hoary religious speech in favor of a colloquial sociopolitical vernacular that spoke directly to the hearts and minds of Egyptians. Our findings, in contrast, highlight the important role of local Islamic leaders in the emergence and diffusion of organized political Islam outside urban centers. But the current
data cannot speak to the precise reasons why local religious figures were so important to the Brotherhood’s early expansion into Egypt’s periphery.

Three mechanisms seem to us a good starting point for future research. First, these local leaders may have provided an imprimatur of religious legitimacy that allowed the Brotherhood to penetrate dense pre-existing social networks that often proved resistant to new ideologies and social movements. Secondly, assumedly higher rates of illiteracy in the countryside effectively centralized information transmission, raising the importance of brokers such as clerics at the expense of newer forms of print media that enjoyed more influence in urban, more literate districts. Third, these local religious figures controlled important physical infrastructures – such as mosques – that the Brotherhood needed to establish permanent platforms in local communities (Munson 2001, Langohr 2005). But whatever the precise mechanism (or blend of mechanisms) the Brotherhood's adept co-optation of religious leaders seems to have eased their entree to a deep pool of potential followers. Not only does this shed new light into the Brotherhood's early history, it also suggests a fresh look at how Islamist movements, both contemporary and historic, interact with traditional religious authorities, especially in contexts outside the metropole.

References


Central-Local Relations: Issues of Autonomy and Control
Within the Union des Organisations Islamiques de France
Margot Dazey, University of Cambridge

Muslim Brotherhood-inspired organizations in Europe are often portrayed as centralized, hierarchical and disciplined structures (Amghar 2008). Post-Islamist literature further depicts the bureaucratic culture of these organizations, stressing their pyramidal decision-making and rigid management, in opposition to informal networks of young European-born Muslim activists (Haenni 2006, Boubekeur 2007). Privileging a headquarters-focused perspective on organizational structures, these broad characterizations are predicated on a national-level approach, to the neglect of more localized dynamics in cities and provinces. They also tend to present a static picture of the organizations, overlooking the historical evolutions of their inner workings as multi-level institutions.

This memo addresses these lacunae by looking at the internal structure at different territorial levels of the Union des organisations islamiques de France (UOIF), one of the most prominent umbrella organizations in the French Islamic landscape. While some authors have examined the processes of organizational differentiation – with the creation of group-specific associations, for instance youth, students and women (Maréchal 2008) – or specified the movement’s ties with European ikhwani networks (Vidino in Meijer, Bakker 2012), almost nothing is known about the intricate interplay between the Parisian central apparatus and the provincial local sections of the organization.

Departing from top-down methodological approaches and borrowing insights from organization studies (Davis et al. 2005), this memo draws on ethnographic observations, interviews and archival work in both local sections and headquarters of the UOIF. Compared to most case studies in this collection, the focus of analysis does not lie on externally-oriented activism – such as local mobilization of constituents or linkages with state/non-state actors. Rather, it shifts the gaze towards intra-movement dynamics, following fresh lines of inquiry: What is the degree of local autonomy vis-à-vis the central UOIF leadership? Where are the decision-making processes located within the movement? How is unity preserved despite diverging local itineraries? In answering these questions, I argue that (i) a key organizational characteristic of the UOIF stems from its federal structure, (ii) giving some room for local initiatives and
self-direction. As a consequence of this structuration, (iii) channels of cooperation and mechanisms of group cohesiveness are necessary tools developed by the central leadership to assure discipline among local factions.

It should be noted that in stark contrast with Muslim-majority countries, Muslim Brotherhood-inspired movements in Europe have jettisoned the primary goal of participating in state governance (Roy in Amghar 2006). Comparisons of their organizational structures need therefore to be drafted cautiously: while in the Middle East “the Brotherhood were working inside of Majority-Muslim societies under the thumb of autocratic states,” in Europe, they are building upon “minorities inside democratic states amongst … secular societies” (Brooke in Meijer, Bakker 2012). Embracing these differences of environments and purposes, Muslim Brotherhood-inspired movements in Europe have built elitist organizations with a very narrow base of educated middle class members, rather than broader mass movements spread in society.

**Branch Formation: A Federal Structure**

The UOIF was officially established in 1983, but was an amorphous movement since 1981 – a period which remains poorly researched. In particular, little has been written about the initial debates surrounding its organizational features. The founding members of the movement – a handful of North African and Middle Eastern students influenced by Islamic reformism, who had arrived in France in the late 1970s to early 1980s – spent time discussing the most appropriate infrastructure in the French context. They were cautious not to mimic the organizational patterns of Muslim Brotherhood movements in their home-countries. Faysal Mawlawi, their spiritual leader and future guide of the Lebanese Brotherhood, was vocal about the need to craft an organizational machinery adapted to their environment. As an early member described to me in an interview:

> I recall that Sheikh Faysal used to say that we were not bound to copy existing structures: we have to think of the reality as it is. France is a big country and linking people through ‘sections’ would prevent them from taking initiatives in their city or their region. It would be better if we allow them to organize
themselves locally but also federate them around core elements. (H., Paris, 2017)

Avoiding top-down models also offered a way for UOIF members to distance themselves – at least rhetorically – from their rival group at the time: the *Association des étudiants islamiques en France* (AEIF). The AEIF was an older association which functioned as an intellectual hub for Arab students with Islamist sympathies and which chose to align itself with the Syrian branch of the Brotherhood, as opposed to the Egyptian parent-movement. Based in Paris and deploying its main activities in the capital, the AEIF started creating sections in other cities (Toulouse, Strasbourg, etc.) and operated as a loosely hierarchical organization.

In the wake of these discussions and other pragmatic considerations – notably the difficulty for provincial members with limited time and financial resources to gather regularly in Paris – founding members of the UOIF opted to establish a federal structure. The bylaws of the organization clearly stipulate its ambition to federate pre-existing autonomous associations rather than to create sections through a vertical approach. As noted by an early member of the movement, this adaptable design partly accounts for the UOIF’s successful expansion:

The UOIF, as we built it, takes care of localities. It federates them. It was born decentralized and… its decentralization is its strength. To be sure, we hear of the central UOIF, the UOIF in Paris, but what really strengthens the organization is its local embedding. (O., Marseille, 2017)

**Branch Development: Personality-Based Local Factions**

In the 1980s, the central apparatus of the UOIF was characterized by a low degree of bureaucratization: the headquarters were not yet registered in the state capital and the central bodies were still lacking adequate resources in terms of budget, full-time staff and facilities. In local settings, however, emerging leaders were taking advantage of their relative autonomy to run their own activities and build up their strategic positioning in the local public sphere.

A few studies have briefly discussed the diverging itineraries of these local sections (Geisser 2006, Haenni 2006). Darif has aptly contrasted the development of the Bordeaux branch, built
by a group of former university students with an ambitious intellectual project, with the evolution of the Lille branch, composed of Moroccan workers from the Rif mountains concerned with grassroots educational programs in religion and Arabic (Darif 2004).

These distinctive local features are accentuated by the concentration of power into a few emblematic figures. The personalization of leadership (Tareq Oubrou in Bordeaux, Moncef Zenati in Le Havre, Azzedine Gaci in Lyon, to cite but a few) has led to the establishment of local “fiefdoms,” with relative autonomy from the headquarters and a dominant position within the local Islamic landscape.

These self-governing figures and the exclusive circle of local leaders that surround them often represent “factions” within the organization. To draw on the Bordeaux case, the local section is regarded both internally and externally as the “liberal” and “progressive” but also “politically acceptable” wing of the UOIF. Its members are heavily involved in gaining public recognition outside the Muslim community, by participating in interreligious discussions and social events and by maintaining close relations with the local authorities. This process of notability-building, accompanied by an euphemization of the UOIF’s Islamic rhetoric, is subject to internal debates and illustrates the tensions between value commitments and survival concerns explored in other memos (see Clark and Zeidan in this collection).

The autonomy of local sections can lead them to take decisions contradicting the national strategy. For instance, a few branches decided to run for the 2011 election of the French Council of the Muslim Faith (Conseil français du culte musulman, established in 2003 by then France’s Minister of the Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy), while the central level of the UOIF boycotted these elections. Similarly, while the executive committee of the UOIF chose to align itself with other Islamic organizations about the date of Ramadan in 2015, as a gesture of political compromise, some local sections opted for remaining loyal to astronomical calculations for the determination of the beginning of feast.
Branch Management: Mechanisms of Cohesiveness

Studying the degree of autonomy of local sections is therefore not enough: a correlated riddle lies in the ways these movements maintain unity over time. In other words: How does the UOIF manage to reconcile rival currents? How does it remain resilient in the face of disintegrative forces? A national leader underscores the increasing need to address issues of coordination and control in light of the local sections’ expansion:

We want an evolution of the UOIF because, before, we were just a federation of associations. We were managing small mosques, small groups ... In the small sections where we used to have five or six members, we now possess big mosques, with institutes, with middle schools, with high schools… So how can we structure all this to avoid organizational issues and diverging visions? (K., Paris, 2016)

In order to consolidate the cohesion of the movement, the central bodies of the UOIF use various methods for homogenization. While some are less successful than others, their effectiveness and limitations is out of the scope for this memo.

The first one is the training program arranged by the central apparatus. Local cadres, teachers, imams, and youth members are regularly invited to attend joint educational programs organized in the headquarters. These training sessions are opportunities to align members around common norms, values and objectives and to foster cross-sections interactions. In the words of a mid-range executive working for educational reform within the movement, it is essential to strike a balance between local initiatives and central unity:

For regional leaders or delegates, autonomy should not equate to independence. The question we ask ourselves is: How to take initiatives but keep respecting the general spirit? This should be done without constraints but with a general idea and a common reference in mind. (O., Paris, 2016)

Another instrument for ensuring coherence lies in institutionalized spaces of discussion between senior members of the central level and representatives of local branches. Each section’s representatives meet annually at the UOIF headquarters to confer about local issues
and testify about the right understanding of the leadership’s decisions. In addition, local representatives gather annually at a regional level, with the central direction visiting them for follow-up discussions. These meetings give local members a further channel through which to voice their interests and grievances, and allow the national leadership to adjust strategies to current needs. Another national leader delineates the conditions for these exchanges to take place:

We give lot of room for debates for those who think differently…What is important for us is that the board of directors and the general assembly remain strong, so that when they make decisions, these decisions are followed by everyone. As long as these instances are protected, the resilience of the structure is assured. (K., Paris, 2016)

Finally, the management of internal conflict is illustrative of these techniques of accommodating factionalism. The central apparatus has the power to intervene directly in sections’ affairs in case of disagreements that cannot be resolved locally and to remind members of their allegiance to the head of the organization – which has been done occasionally in the last decade. Following specific procedures, the central organization usually acts as a conflict mediator between two conflicting clans, inspired by the Islamic juridical tradition of arbitration.

Conclusion

In a word, this memo could be read as a preliminary examination of the UOIF’s organizational culture. By enquiring power sharing arrangements between the local and central levels, it challenges the “unitary actor assumption” underlying the widely-held image of the UOIF as a monolithic structure and suggests directions for further research on the internal life of Islamic organizations in minority contexts.

References


Islamist and Non-Islamist Local Activism: Comparative Reflections from Egypt’s Popular Committees
Asya El-Meehy, University of California, Berkeley

The end of Hosni Mubarak’s rule in Egypt saw tightening government controls over national civil society organizations throughout the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood and the popular neo-authoritarian military regime that followed it after the 2013 coup. Nonetheless, the ongoing political transformations in Egypt also opened new spaces for civic activism at the local level. Grassroots popular committees, or lijan shaabya, emerged as a vital actor in the post-Mubarak Egyptian political landscape. Committees, which sprang up during the January 25th uprising as citizen watch brigades, were locally embedded structures loosely bound by common ideological framing, shared symbols and overlapping social networks.

This phenomenon is the unique outcome of what sociologist Sydney Tarrow calls, “moments of madness” during which revolutionary politics invades all aspects of life (Tarrow 1993). Because the state’s very weakness created the committees’ sine qua non, and the latter derive their legitimacy from protest in opposition to the state, the movement has been linked in public imagination to grassroots contentious action. Many committees disbanded after public order was gradually restored, but a few reinvented themselves amid widespread criticisms of being baltageya, or armed troublemakers. To raise awareness and galvanize support, committees waged innovative campaigns like “know your rights,” and “the people own.” Access to services, particularly energy for households, waste collection, subsidized bread, and lighting of public spaces, emerged among the most prominent rallying cries for committee activists in poorer informal areas of greater Cairo. The movement has overall waned since 2013. As the state cracked down on popular mobilization, the space for activism narrowed sharply. With increased social polarization between Brotherhood and July 3rd supporters after Rab’aa, and media campaigns propagating the committees as illegal disruptive forces, activists disengaged from public life, seeking to disassociate themselves from the committees or re-branding their work in less politically controversial terms as “youth groups.”

Since their emergence, successive authorities attempted to capitalize on the committees as a revolutionary force, in order to bestow legitimacy on their policies at the local level. Under the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the state attempted to legally sanction their
operation by formalizing the committees into a hierarchical structure. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Supply embarked on collaboration protocols with the committees to assist with the local implementation of social protection initiatives. Most recently, policymakers proposed the incorporation of popular committees into official local governance structures, in an attempt to revive the role of local councils, that have been disbanded since the January 25th uprising. Some committees, on the other hand, have spearheaded opposition to the state. For instance, against the backdrop of deadly clashes between residents of Ramlet Bulaq, who live in shacks and lack access to facilities, and management of neighbouring Nile City Towers home to wealthy companies, nightclubs and the Fairmont Hotel, committee activists not only pressed for upgrading of the slum area as well as securing market-level land prices from prospective investors, but also demanded justice for residents arbitrarily arrested by the police (al Jaberi 2012). In other cases, popular committees struck less confrontational tones with the authorities, opting either to collaborate, for instance in distributing subsidized butane cylinders, or to engage in claims-making in order to secure gains like access to essential public services.

Indeed, there is an emerging body of scholarship on the nature of activism and popular resistance in Egypt post-uprising. It offers contrasting interpretations of the degree of continuity and change in evolving forms of grassroots activism, such as popular committees (Bremer 2011; El-Mechy 2017, 2013; Harders 2013; Tohamy 2016). However, relatively little is known on the juxtaposition of these committees vis a vis Islamist local activism. This piece attempts to fill this gap by focusing on the experience of the committee in Kerdasa, which was formed by long established Islamist activists in the neighbourhood, and comparatively reflecting on its record relative to popular committees elsewhere in Greater Cairo.

The research presented here is part of a larger study exploring local governance in the post-Mubarak era. I investigated popular committees in six socio-economically comparable “ashwaeyyat” or informal areas: Ard El lewa, Basateen, Imbaba, Mit Okba, Kerdasa. I relied on semi-structured and in-depth interviews with committee members, as well as local level
officials, in addition to focus groups with residents. Data was collected in two waves June-September 2012 and April-September 2013, with subsequent field trips to update findings in 2014 and 2015. The following starts by setting the context for the study by discussing the origins of the committee movement before delving into links with Islamist politics through examining the case of Kerdasa.

**What Are the Popular Committees?**

In the wake of Egypt’s uprising in 2011, police withdrawal from urban areas triggered unprecedented growth of civic activism in the form of neighborhood-based citizen watch brigades, called popular committees. Young men typically led the formation of popular committees by first organizing at street-level, and then capitalizing on new media (particularly Facebook) to coordinate new social networks at the neighborhood level with the aim of protecting property and maintaining order. By April 2011, popular committees held their first general national-level conference (Gaber, 2011). The de facto freezing of local government institutions, worsening economic conditions, dissolution the former ruling National Democratic Party, and widespread inertia among public officials, created a governance vacuum on the ground that was particularly salient in poorer informal areas. A fluid urban landscape in state of flux has emerged “as individuals and communities challenged authorities and reclaimed their right to the city and public space” (Nagati and Elgendy 2012, 2). Patterns of informal encroachment ranged from claiming sidewalks and streets, extensions to existing structures, building on state land or privately owned agricultural plots to full-scale infrastructural projects, such as the construction of highway exits by communities (Ibid). Along parallel lines, successive public crises over the provision of water, petrol, and electricity as well as garbage collection accentuated already widespread grievances over inequitable and inefficient access of basic services. This is particularly the case as Morsi’s government resorted to encouraging communities to autonomously self-provide, for example garbage collection, while continuing to charge the citizenry for public services (Interview with Marwan Youssef, Cairo, April 20 2013). In response, community activists adopted a range of contestation strategies ranging from protests and sit-ins, to non-payment campaigns, and litigation. Youth

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1 All names of participants in the study were changed.
coalitions and citizens’ committees emerged as autonomous forums for debating and negotiating collective solutions.

**Features of the Committees Movement**

What were the broad contours of the popular committees movement? More specifically, how did the committees represent themselves? How inclusive were its membership bases? And what were their claims to legitimacy?

Despite variations in emphasis, popular committee activists I interviewed by and large ideologically framed their work in terms of participatory citizenship. As one Al-Umaneya activist argued: “We are after empowerment and not pacification (tamkeen wa lays taskyn). This involves teaching people how to claim access to public services, and building youth cadres from various ideological backgrounds,” (Interview, Cairo, July 29, 2013). Imbaba’s committee activists similarly viewed their role as a “watch-dog” of the state, ensuring it delivers on social rights and provides access to services, while Ard El Lewa’s more mildly emphasized their function as to serve as “moral opposition to the state.”

Membership in the committees was, in principle, open to everyone and not even restricted to local residents. My data reveals that, in reality, young citizens, in the 18 to 35 age group represented 80 percent of its base, although older individuals were also included and sometimes even assumed de-facto leading roles. With an estimated 30 percent Christian membership, the movement over-represented Egypt’s religious minority, which accounts for 12 percent of its population. Yet women’s participation was significantly low, ranging from 2 percent in rural areas to 20 percent in cities. Participants in my research recognized that low women representation undermined their representativeness but blamed cultural values for their absence. Few committees, such as Mit Okba’s, attempted to compensate for such exclusion by including a child on their board of directors.

Given their participatory nature, committees face dilemmas both when it comes to how to reach decisions as well as how to reconcile leadership roles. In fact, the process of decision-making as described by activists was often ambiguous. While activists stressed that they collectively deliberated and decided among themselves, they insisted that majority voting was
inadequate. Similarly, these activists also rejected designation of a leader and hierarchy as matters of principle.

**Reinventing Al Gammeyya Al Shareyyya in Kerdasa**

How did the newly formed popular committees relate to local Islamist activism? With the exception of Umranya activists, popular committees did not include among their core members Islamists, or members of the Muslim Brothers, or the Salafist Nour parties. In five out of the six committees I studied, core members were careful to set themselves apart from pre-existing Islamist social activism in their neighborhoods. Activists stressed that they did not perceive their role in terms of charity and criticized the Islamists' approach. Rather than casting their role in terms of service provision, committee activists repeatedly emphasized their ideological mission to empower members of their community, to implant the revolution in the grassroots, or to encourage citizenship.

The exception to this pattern was the popular committee in Kerdasa, where founders of the local popular committee were themselves members of *al-gammeyya al sharayya*, which is a leading Islamic NGO established in 1912. The committee was involved in high-profile initiatives, most notably rebuilding sections of the ring road to enable residents access to major forms of transportation. Activists did not just raise major funds, but also designed in collaboration with activist engineers the remaking of the ring road project, and implemented it without assistance from the authorities. The committee was the first also to be formalized as an NGO named *Al Matemdya Baladna*. Its experiment, however, proved short-lived. In fact, Kerdasa is a stronghold of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is estimated that more than 80 percent of voters in the area chose Mohamed Morsi as president of the Republic in the final round of Egypt’s presidential elections (Mohy El Deen 2014). Following Morsi’s ouster from power, the area witnessed a series of violent clashes between residents and police forces, which culminated in the burning of a police station and the murder of eleven policemen. A high-profile crackdown by the Ministry of Interior ensued. According to eye-witness accounts reported by Mohy El Deen, “the forces of the Interior are careful to target mediation networks and anybody with links to the popular committees. In this way, they take action against all persons of influence and distinction in the traditional society of Kerdasa,” (7). Recently, as part of the “Kerdasa events”
trials, the criminal courts issued death sentences for twenty residents and fifteen to twenty-five years of imprisonment for 114 others.

How did Kerdasa’s Islamist activism under the umbrella of the popular committee movement compare to the records of other committees? More specifically, how did Islamist activists frame their initiatives? To what extent were they inclusionary in their membership and internally democratic in their decision-making?

Members of the popular committee I interviewed framed their initiatives in terms of “doing good” and pursuit of the “public interest.” “In light of pressing social problems that emerged after the uprising, like shortage of bread, and escalating market prices, founders met in the Azahar institute to deliberate possible initiatives and solutions” (Interview with Ahmed Selim, Cairo, March 25 2013). Unlike the case of other committees I studied, here the emphasis was on adequate service provision that meets local needs as opposed to empowering residents. As stated by a founding member of the committee, “I believe in an idea that may seem undemocratic although it is practical…the whole issue is to provide services to the people and to reach people who are in need of material or non-material support, what matters is that they need some sort of support, and this is the logic that guides our work,” (Interview with Mohamed Al Sayyid, Cairo, March 30, 2013). Participants often emphasized continuity between the role of the committee and earlier Islamist activism in the neighbourhood. In the words of one core member of the committee: “We decided to establish a rabta [association] based on our popular committee because companies normally produce several items… and launch the same product under another name but it is still by the same company. Therefore people get attached to the product, and there is competition among products that belong to the same company,” (interview with Atef Mohamed, Cairo, April 2 2013).

Unlike other popular committees, Kerdasa’s committee membership was not open to all residents. Founding members nominated individuals with experience in public service, specifically from the ranks of local Islamist NGO workers, with the understanding that nominations were subject to a veto. The rationale offered was that civil society work is very challenging, likened by one study participant to “chewing stones,” and too often people lose interest. Hence, it is best to screen and appropriately select members. As one explained: “Being democratic and inclusionary actually comes at the cost of long-term sustainability of public
service and activism. And in Islamic law terms, “the better deeds are the sustainable ones even if they are less,” (Interview with Ahmed Selim, Cairo, March 25 2013). Another member stressed that harmony and loyalty are the bases of successful public services. “We select people who share our values and with an eye at harmony in the group based on self-denial and not seeking positions, dreams or fame… Those with similar thinking can identify working mechanisms, and select those who can perform this work based on al-Ikhlāṣ, or loyalty, for we know from religion that salvation is from loyalty (al khalas men al-Ikhlāṣ)...We also know from the Prophet’s teaching that good intentions are mathematically the equivalent of success” (Interview with Saleh Khaled, Cairo April 12 2013).

Participants from Kerdasa’s committee rejected the idea of democratic internal decision-making along the lines of other committees included in my study. They argued that when decision-making is based on broad consultation, there is likely to be a lot of disagreements. Further, deliberation among all committee members can be time-consuming and can slow down implementation. As one activist argued, “It is possible to be more successful when you have a group with a shared vision, rather than the ballot box and democracy,” (Interview with Saleh Khaled). Another founding member similarly argued that the fewer the number of people involved in decision-making the better. “As the director of local NGO, the first thing I opted to do is to lower the number of board of director members from nine to five, in order to ensure efficiency of our work,” (Interview with Atef Mohamed, Cairo, April 2 2013).

Conclusion

Findings from my comparative study of popular committees in Egypt indicate that those with predominantly Islamist activists seem to diverge from non-Islamist ones in important ways, including their ideological framings and degree of inclusion. Kerdasa’s committee activists did not perceive their role in terms of citizenship or resident’s empowerment, but rather viewed their function in terms of service provision for the needy and the marginalized. Compared to other popular committees, their membership practices were more exclusionary, emphasizing screening based on ideological harmony and loyalty. Nonetheless, Kerdasa’s activists shared with other committees their rejection of democratic decision-making, placing more emphasis on creating a consensus, and minimizing broad consultations. These patterns show historical continuity between Islamist local activism pre and post-January 25th uprising.
References


The Non-Economic Logic of Rebel Taxation: Evidence from an Islamic State-Controlled District
Mara Revkin, Yale University

Previous studies of rebel governance predict that armed groups with access to exploitable resources will tend to engage in short-term, opportunistic looting rather than invest in building the complex bureaucracies that are necessary for taxation and long-term governance (Weinstein 2006; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Olson 1993). A related argument from the “resource curse” literature is that complex tax systems are most likely to be found in resource-poor states where governments have no alternative but to extract revenue from their populations (Ross 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2003). Such claims rely on an untested assumption that the sole purpose of taxation is to collect revenue. I challenge this assumption with new evidence from the case of the Islamic State (IS), an insurgent group that taxes civilians in oil-rich areas of Syria, Iraq, and Libya at levels that do not appear to be economically rational. For example, a Deir Ezzor newspaper reported that tax rates are higher under IS rule than they were previously under the Syrian regime, even though the local unemployment rate is at least 75%, according to interviewees, and residents cannot afford to buy food, much less pay taxes. One interviewee from Deir Ezzor was puzzled by IS’s decision to tax so heavily in an area where “they are already rich from oil. It makes no sense.”

IS’s behavior in Deir Ezzor is surprising, because the imposition of taxes is associated with significant economic and political costs. First, effective taxation requires an extensive bureaucratic apparatus that is capable of calculating and collecting taxable assets (Tilly 1975; North 1981; Scott 1998). Second, taxes are universally disliked and are therefore a source of friction between state and society (Levi 1989). Given these costs, why would a rebel group go through the trouble and expense of collecting taxes in areas where abundant resources should greatly reduce or eliminate the need for tax revenue? I argue that the puzzle of taxation in resource-rich areas can be explained by taking into account the non-economic functions of taxation in governance and state-building. Scholars of taxation have long recognized that states derive non-economic benefits from taxation (Heer 1937) and I apply this insight to rebel groups with state-like ambitions for territorial control and sovereignty. I theorize that taxation, in addition to raising revenue, may facilitate rebel governance and state-building through three
additional mechanisms: social control, collective identity formation, and demographic engineering. This theory of the non-economic functions of rebel taxation resonates with other research in this POMEPS series on the ways in which Islamist-governed municipalities promote particular identities and values (Marschall, Shalaby, and Unal 2017).

If I am correct that taxes are imposed for non-economic reasons in addition to their obvious role in the collection of revenue, I should find that IS is statistically just as likely to impose taxes in resource-rich districts as in resource-poor districts because, even though taxation is not economically necessary in the latter areas, it still provides important non-economic benefits for state-building. Second, I should find qualitative evidence of the theorized non-economic mechanisms. In a new working paper, I evaluate this theory quantitatively with an original dataset on seven different types of tax policies from the 18 Syrian districts (rural and urban) that have been governed by IS since 2013. Given space constraints, this memo focuses on a case study of the district of al-Mayadin, where I find support for my theory in qualitative evidence. The data on al-Mayadin is drawn from a 45-month dataset that differentiates between seven types of tax policies: income taxes, border taxes, excise taxes, fines, licensing fees, property taxes, and service fees. For each district, I determined whether or not a given tax policy was being implemented (as a binary variable) during a particular month by triangulating among social media data, local newspapers, archival IS documents, and interviews with 112 key informants conducted over the course of five months of fieldwork in southern Turkey. Each observation is supported by at least one document (and as many as seven) and corroborated by an interviewee from the relevant district. A selection of documents from the larger dataset that are cited in this memo are available online at the following link: https://yale.app.box.com/files/0/f/31617179917/POMEPS_Memo.

Case Study of al-Mayadin

The Syrian district of al-Mayadin is home to the country’s largest and most profitable oil field (al- Omar) and is therefore a “hard test” of my theory. If rival theories are correct, then we should find low levels of taxation in al-Mayadin because IS derives ample revenue from oil. Another reason to expect low levels of taxation is that IS has faced significant opposition in the form of nonviolent protests as well as armed resistance in the district. Since IS captured the district in July 2014, there have been at least two peaceful anti-IS demonstrations and eight
armed attacks against IS personnel or buildings including once incident in which assailants set
fire to IS police cars near a sheep market (Dataset ID #1166). During the same period, there
were at least two peaceful demonstrations: one in which a group of women gathered outside
of the IS court in al-Mayadin to demand the release of their imprisoned sons and another in
which protesters raised the flag of the Free Syrian Army, with which IS is at war (Dataset ID
#496, 539). Since taxation tends to exacerbate unrest, a rational sovereign would be unlikely
to risk further provoking a population that is already on the verge of rebellion.

However, this case study demonstrates just the opposite: Not only did IS collect taxes during
29 of the 35 months that it has controlled the district, but it has also imposed seven different
types of tax policies. If IS were taxing the oil industry itself, then this data might still be
consistent with rival theories. But of the 45 instances of taxation in the dataset, only one was
related to oil: a 2.5 percent zakāt tax imposed on the owners of independent refineries (Dataset
ID #791). Regardless, rival theories cannot explain why IS imposes taxes on so many other
types of activities and commodities that are unrelated to oil including: service fees for internet,
phones, electricity, sanitation, and roadwork (Dataset ID #531, 535, 868); licensing fees for
motorcycles and vegetable market stalls (Dataset ID #890, 528); and fines for smoking
cigarettes, shaving beards, and littering (Dataset ID #859, 861, 1142). I use this case study to
illustrate the non-economic dimensions of IS’s tax policies.

**Collective Identity Formation**

The first tax introduced in al-Mayadin was a border tax of 5,000 Syrian pounds (then about
$23.33) per month on buses transporting passengers from other areas of Syria in August 2014
(Dataset ID #945). Border taxes play an important role in the symbolic construction of
sovereignty by demarcating the spatial boundaries of rebel-controlled territory and
demonstrating the group’s capacity to regulate the movement of people and commodities
across those boundaries. The next tax policies to appear were fees on drinking water in
September 2014 and household gas in October 2014 as IS began to provide these basic services
(Dataset ID #947). The provision of services in exchange for tax payments is an observable
indicator of the presence of a social contract (Arjona 2016). In al-Mayadin, the introduction
of these fees was symbolically significant because it indicated that IS had attained the status of
a de facto state with the ability to provide services and the coercive capacity necessary to collect payments from the beneficiaries of those services.

In January 2015, IS opened an income tax collection office known as a diwan az-zakāt. During the Friday sermon, an imam announced that civilians would be required to pay 2.5 percent of their annual earnings and warned that these taxes would be collected “by force” if not given voluntarily. Shortly thereafter, tax collectors began visiting the shops of goldsmiths and other merchants to calculate their taxable assets (Dataset ID# 1157). According to official IS doctrine, the payment of zakāt is a religious obligation, and therefore tax evasion is considered an act of apostasy (Islamic State 2015). The fact that these taxes are imposed universally on all but the poorest Muslim civilians contributes to a sense of membership in a common political and religious community. IS has erected billboards publicizing its tax policies and warning of the punishment for tax evasion. At least some residents viewed these taxes as fair and legitimate based on the services and charity being provided by IS. According to one, “At first, we were annoyed by the collection of zakāt, but when we saw [IS] registering the names of the poor and giving them money and food, our admiration for them increased … The money goes back to the people through the services that [IS] provides.”

By March 2015, IS had introduced a property tax of 200 Syrian pounds (then about $0.93) per dunam (0.25 acres) of land (Dataset ID #1098). In al-Mayadin, the introduction of a universal income tax and property tax was not only a means of revenue collection but also a symbolic assertion of sovereignty over people and territory. It is noteworthy that IS did not impose these taxes immediately upon capturing al-Mayadin in July of 2014 but instead waited many months until it had built up sufficient coercive capacity to be able to enforce the policies. During these six months, IS was also creating a judicial system and providing services in an effort to legitimize its rule. If the goal of taxation was simply to generate as much revenue as possible, why would IS limit the rate of income taxation to only 2.5 percent? And why not impose income and property taxes immediately, rather than waiting six months? The answer, I argue, is that insurgent taxation is more than a means of extracting resources from civilians. Taxation turns civilians into citizens of a new political community. Multiple interviewees referred independently to the “symbolic” significance of taxes. According to one man who
had paid taxes to IS in al-Mayadin, “They tax because that is what states do, and they want to be a state.”

**Social Control**

Interviewees from al-Mayadin described the IS tax system as an instrument of social control. One former resident said of his encounters with tax collectors, “It wasn’t about the money… They tax us to show that they are in control.” Several interviewee reported being fined for violations including wearing colorful shoes, listening to the radio, and failing to close shops during prayer times in order “to teach us a lesson,” in the words of one man. In some cases, fines were accompanied by publicly administered corporal punishments including whipping with leather straps and a form of public shaming in which the alleged wrongdoer is forced to wear a sign stating the violation and corresponding punishment. In one example from al-Mayadin, a man received 200 lashes and a fine for possessing a satellite dish (Dataset ID #1155). These cases suggest that the revenue-generating function of fines is secondary to their function as a tool for social control and discipline. It is possible that IS collects such fines for the sole purpose of raising revenue, but I believe it is more likely that these policies are implemented with the intent of conditioning the behavior of civilians in ways that are consistent with IS’s strategic or ideological objectives. For example, imposing fines to deter civilians from using satellite dishes is a means of regulating their access to information and communications with the outside world.

**Demographic Engineering**

The case of al-Mayadin also supports my claim that rebel groups use tax policies as a tool for demographic engineering. In October 2014, IS announced that it would impose a *jizya* tax on Christians in exchange for guaranteeing their protection as non-Muslim subjects of the caliphate. At the time, there was only one family of Christians living in the district and IS presented them with three options: convert to Islam, pay the *jizya* tax, or leave IS territory. After the Christians chose to leave, IS confiscated the property they left behind (Dataset ID #1145). The *jizya* tax, by imposing costs on non-Muslims, has the effect of discouraging and stigmatizing the practice of minority religions. In the case of al-Mayadin, the tax led to the departure of the only remaining Christians.
IS also appears to be using border taxes to manage the demography of al-Mayadin. As it becomes more difficult for IS to attract foreign recruits, the group has become more focused on preventing human capital flight out of the areas that it controls (Revkin 2016). In an apparent attempt to discourage out-migration, IS imposed a tax of approximately $100 on every resident traveling out of Menbij, a district adjacent to al-Mayadin, in January 2016 (Dataset ID #363). A resident of al-Mayadin reported that similar “exit taxes” were levied there.

Finally, women expressed the view that IS police were deliberately harassing them with gender-based fines to discourage them from going outside. According to one woman, “The threat of these fines and other punishments made us prisoners in our own homes,” where their only role is to serve their husbands and raise children. In this rural district with many family-owned farms, women have traditionally worked alongside men in fields and pastures. When IS took control, however, the religious police began issuing fines to female farmers who did not comply with the new dress code (Dataset ID #925). One female farmer was arrested for wearing “shoes that drew attention” and brought before the local IS court, where the judge ordered her to pay a fine and gave her a new pair of dark shoes to wear. As a result of these fines, “most women prefer to stay home and not go outside,” she said (Dataset ID #1087). In some cases, IS punished husbands for violations committed by their wives. For example, one man was publicly whipped and fined because his wife was not wearing the mandatory face veil (Dataset ID #1138). Such punishments create incentives for husbands to monitor and control their wives. IS envisions a society in which women exist only to raise the caliphate’s next generation, and the group appears to be using certain tax policies to enforce particular gender roles.

**Conclusion**

Much of the literature on rebel governance has been shaped by an untested assumption that the sole purpose of taxation is to collect revenue. This memo has challenged that assumption by theorizing that tax policies may promote state-building through three non-economic mechanisms: social control, collective identity formation, and demographic engineering. The memo suggests several directions for future research. First, what is the relationship between rebel taxation and legitimacy? Does taxation, through the mechanism of collective identity
formation, make civilians more inclined to support the insurgency? Or does taxation lead to increased resistance by generating demands for representation and participation? As IS’s footprint in Syria and Iraq continues to shrink, it will become possible to collect new and higher quality data to address these questions.

References


Appendix

Table 1 is a simplified rendering of the shape of the dataset with letters—I, B, E, F, L, P, and S—representing the seven types of tax policies, income taxes, border taxes, excise taxes, fines, licensing fees, property taxes, and service fees. The unit of analysis is the district-month, with columns for each district and rows for each month. Cells are grayed in for months in which IS did not control a particular district, either because the group had not yet captured the area or because it had lost control.

A selection of documents from the larger dataset that are cited in this memo are available in PDF form at the following link:


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Table 1. Visualization of the Dataset
Beyond Maiduguri: Understanding Boko Haram’s Rule in Rural Communities of Northeastern Nigeria
Olabanji Akinola, University of Guelph

From a relatively obscure Salafi-jihadi group whose activities were mainly based in Maiduguri, the sprawling urban capital of the Borno state in northeastern Nigeria, Boko Haram evolved in less than a decade into a major insurgency. How and why was the group able to rapidly expand its reach beyond Maiduguri into many rural communities in northeastern Nigeria? This paper provides an analysis on the emergence and existence of Boko Haram in rural communities in three northeast states of the Nigerian federation: Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa. It examines how and why Boko Haram became a formidable group with a large followership in some rural communities, but little or no support in others. The paper mainly focuses on the post 2009 activities of the group after the group’s former leader and founder, Mohammed Yusuf, was killed by Nigerian security agents during a crackdown on the group’s base in Maiduguri. It examines the differences in how Boko Haram resurfaced in some rural areas after it was dislodged from Maiduguri.

While Boko Haram’s emergence was initially driven by its ability to mobilize support in Maiduguri, the group’s subsequent rise to prominence in Nigeria and abroad has been bolstered by its presence in rural communities such as Gwoza, where it declared its caliphate in 2014. Understanding what kinds of governance institutions and processes it created, and/or whether it adapted or completely abolished pre-existing social, political, and economic governance institutions, helps to explain its differing levels of success.

Boko Haram: A Brief Contextual Overview

Boko Haram was created in the early 2000s by Mohammed Yusuf, a Salafi Islamist from the Kanuri ethnic group born in Yobe state (Reinert and Garcon 2014). Although his diatribes against western education and civilization attracted followers to his mosque in Maiduguri, his fiery sermons against the misrule and corruption of political and religious elites endeared him to many more (Oriola and Akinola 2017). Like many Salafi extremists, Yusuf and his followers
abhorred forms of governments not based on Islamic rule, and he condemned Muslims working in government institutions that are not based on the Sharia (Oyeniyi 2014).

In the early 2000s, the group was primarily engaged with local politics in Borno state. As it worked to influence the application of Sharia law to civil and criminal affairs, the group interacted with prominent politicians who promised to implement Sharia law in exchange for the group’s support. Some elected politicians moved to deliver on their electoral promises between 2000 and 2004 (Kendhammer 2003). Twelve Muslim majority states in northern extended the jurisdiction of Sharia law to criminal matters, albeit depending on the nature of pre-existing judicial institutions in each state (Suberu 2010). But the politicians’ failure to strictly abide by the tenets of Sharia law once it was adopted on one hand, and the increasing violent clashes between members of Boko Haram and the security agencies and other civilians over the former’s refusal to obey state laws on the other hand, created an atmosphere that culminated in the 2009 crackdown that led to the capture and extrajudicial murder of Yusuf (Akinola 2015).

Yusuf’s death, alongside the death of more than 700 suspected Boko Haram members during the July 2009 crackdown, forced many other members into exile in rural communities. While this relocation marked a watershed in the group’s evolution, it also ended the group’s attempt to influence the application of Sharia law through institutional politics. Avenging the murder of Yusuf and the promise of implementing a more puritanical version of Sharia under a Caliphate system became part of Boko Haram’s priorities post 2009. It is the pursuit of these priorities that has encouraged the group to engage in political violence that has so far claimed more than 20,000 lives, displaced over 2 million people, and destroyed properties totalling millions of dollars.

**Engaging the Grassroots: Tracing Boko Haram’s Foray Into Rural Communities in Northeastern Nigeria**

Following Yusuf’s death, one of his former lieutenants, Abubakar Shekau, assumed leadership of the group. Shekau promised to avenge Yusuf’s death and to ensure the Islamization of Nigeria under a caliphate system. With their former base destroyed, Boko Haram members fled into other parts of Nigeria and neighbouring states, including rural communities in Yobe,
Adamawa, and Borno states. Given the weak presence, and in many cases the complete absence, of security agencies and personnel in most rural communities in northeastern Nigeria, Boko Haram began coordinating and attacking the pockets of scattered police outposts, military formations, and prisons where some of its members were held after the 2009 crackdown. Some of the initial post 2009 attacks occurred in and around rural communities where Boko Haram members had resettled.

How did Boko Haram spread its Salafi Islamist ideology in rural communities in northeastern Nigeria? Two main factors contributed to the group's ability to spread its ideology among rural communities in northeastern Nigeria.

First, it is necessary to recognize the connections between the Kanuri ethnicity of most Boko Haram members and the role that rural-urban migration plays in the Nigerian context. Although northern Nigeria contains several ethnicities, the largest include the Hausa/Fulani and the Kanuri. However, while many people in northern Nigeria mainly speak the dominant Hausa language, most of the people in northeastern Nigeria and border areas of neighbouring countries belong to the Kanuri ethnic group and speak the Kanuri language.

During the farming season, many urban dwellers in the region periodically return to the rural areas where they are from. These seasonal rural-urban migrations are further facilitated by the frequent movement of young Quranic students to and from urban centres like Maiduguri, Damaturu, and Yola, the capital cities of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states, respectively. This blurring of the urban-rural divide enabled some Boko Haram members to flee back to their communities in the rural areas following the 2009 crackdown. These returning members understood the terrain, and could draw on their ethnic roots and the narratives of victimhood to mobilize support among rural communities in the immediate aftermath of the crackdown (Pieri and Zenn 2016).

As Boko Haram members began to successfully overrun Nigerian security agencies, acquiring arms and ammunitions in the process, the group’s ability to takeover rural communities with the use of violence became increasingly common. As such, a second factor that facilitated Boko Haram’s ability to impose its Salafi ideology was the use of forced rule. Boko Haram
members began imposing strict Islamic rules purportedly based on the Sharia. Once a rural community is overrun and taken over by Boko Haram, a leader known as the Amir is appointed to oversee the affairs of the community (Voice of America 2017). Community members are then asked to convert to Boko Haram’s version of Islam or face execution, and community members who are accused of being traitors or having committed any crime that is punishable by execution, amputation, or corporal punishment, are publicly paraded and the (appropriate) punishment is applied in the full glare of all the community members. In addition, while young women and girls are sometimes forced to marry Boko Haram commanders, community members, particularly young men, are conscripted to join the ranks of Boko Haram fighters (Voice of America 2017).

As the ranks of Boko Haram members swelled as a result of the annexations of many rural communities, not least because of the conscription of young men, the group became even more emboldened to carry out daring attacks against heavily fortified military bases. Consequently, with a larger following and the massive abduction of many individuals, including the much publicized abduction of the 276 Chibok school girls, the use of force gradually became the norm for establishing and expanding Boko Haram’s annexation of many rural communities in northeastern Nigeria. The declaration of a caliphate in Gwoza in August 2014 marked a “formal” declaration of Boko Haram’s attempt to establish a governance structure in northeastern Nigeria. Boko Haram’s Gwoza declaration followed the Islamic State’s declaration of its capture of Mosul in Iraq two months before. However, by the time it declared its caliphate in Gwoza, Boko Haram had also begun facing resistance in many rural communities that it once controlled and in some others where the people were determined to resist its advance into their communities. Why some communities seem to tolerate or embrace Boko Haram’s ideology and others resisted it is examined below.

**Mixed Responses to Boko Haram**

Many rural communities in northeastern Nigeria are predominantly Muslim, but many do not subscribe to the extremist Salafi ideology espoused by Boko Haram. Like most other Muslims in Nigeria, many Muslims in northeastern Nigeria identify with one of the two main Sufi orders; the Tijanniyah and the Qadiriyyah. Although Salafism has gradually gained ground
amongst some Nigerian Muslims, Salafists remain a minority group, and not all Salafists support Boko Haram’s extreme approaches. Indeed, it is worth emphasizing that not all Salafists hold extreme views, and not all Sufis hold tolerant/moderate views (Kane 2008; Woodward, Umar, Rohmaniyah, and Yahya 2013). Nonetheless, the rise of Salafists in Nigeria in recent years has mainly been in response to what many Salafists maintain are the un-Islamic practices of the two dominant Sufi orders. Hence, in their attempt to discredit other Muslims in Nigeria, Boko Haram members anchor their putatively pristine Salafi interpretations of the Quran on puritanical grounds, including calling for other Muslims to convert to their version of Islam or be treated as unbelievers/infidels. The group’s turn to terrorism, including attacks on Muslims in mosques, distinguishes it from other Islamists in post-colonial Nigeria.

As the atrocities of life under Boko Haram are detailed by fleeing survivors, rural communities have employed a number of responses. These range from fear-based compliance to full blown resistance. The latter in particular began to be expressed in the form of vigilante groups that comprise community members who had come together to defend their communities from Boko Haram attacks. Indeed, such vigilante groups have evolved into what are now referred to as the Civilian Joint Task Forces (CJTF). These groups have combined efforts with the Nigerian security agencies to reclaim territories that were once controlled by Boko Haram (Akinola 2015).

Among many potential factors that can explain the resistance to Boko Haram in many rural communities, a key aspect is the violence perpetuated by the group (Oduah 2017). Some of the communities that were seemingly receptive or even supportive of its rule at some point might have done so out of fear. However, where much of its rule was not based on violent executions, beatings, and amputations, particularly in the immediate aftermath of its re-emergence in rural communities, some people were at least willing to give it a chance to try its alternate form of rule. Before it was displaced from Maiduguri in 2009, Boko Haram had set up a functional micro-finance program, provided some support to the needy, and had plans to establish other social welfare services (Hansen and Musa 2013). While these social services represent a key recruitment strategy for the group where the state had severely failed to provide social protection for the poor and the vulnerable (Akinola 2014), they also served as methods of winning the support of local residents, some of whom became loyal followers of the group.
Conclusion

Due to improved coordination of security responses by Nigerian security agencies and those of neighbouring countries, Boko Haram has lost control of many territories that it once controlled in northeastern Nigeria. However, using mostly children and women, the group continues to carry out suicide bombings, and has increased its deployment of guerrilla style ambush attacks across the region (UNICEF 2016). Despite claims by the Nigerian government to have technically defeated and dislodged it from all the territories it once controlled, the group continues to operate in some rural areas (Akinola 2017). Even if Boko Haram is increasingly less visible, the massive destruction of livelihoods remains, highlighting the importance of local level studies of how the group controlled and governed these rural communities of northeastern Nigeria.

References


Preventing the Spread of Extremism by Understanding Sindhi Rural Society
Mujtaba Isani, University of Muenster

Over the past decade, the rural areas of Sindh in Pakistan have gradually seen a spread and rise in extremism with many instances of sectarian and militant violence. This memo focuses on one of the main factors of this spread, by the arguing that a decline in patron-client ties between the tenants and the landlords, has allowed extremist elements in rural countryside to gain a foothold. Previously, the feudals (in this memo, I use the terms “landlords” and “feudals” interchangeably) served as the brokers between citizen and state; however, their decreasing influence has created a political opportunity for other forces to capitalize and possibly become the new patrons. Extremist forces are now threatening rural Sindh, which has historically abhorred radical tendencies due to its Sufi allegiances (Imtiaz & Walsh 2014). Below, I will examine the unique local context of this area, why it was able to hold off certain brands of Islamism for so long, and the implications of the encroaching extremism.

Evidence of a Spread and Rise of Extremism in Rural Sindh

It was almost unthinkable for the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (or the Pakistani Taliban) – many of whose factions have now become part of the so-called Islamic State – to have a presence in rural Sindh until it hit an Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) headquarters in the province’s third largest city Sukkur in July 2013 (Shamsi 2013). In 2014, links to the both the infamous Karachi Airport attacks and the Karachi Naval Dockyard attack were also traced to interior Sindh. Owais Jakhrani, the main culprit in the naval attack was an ethnic Sindhi from the small interior city of Jacobabad. His accomplices hailed from the overwhelmingly rural districts of Larkana and Jamshoro (Khan 2015). Before these incidents, in 2010, 27 NATO oil tankers were torched by Afghan Taliban sympathizers in Shikarpur (The Nation 2010).

Sectarian militant groups have also become increasingly popular in rural Sindh, namely: Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuT) and the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ). These terrorist groups have attacked Sufi shrines, Shia notables and local Hindu communities. The violence is most noticeable in northern and central Sindh, particularly north of Nawabshah district. The Lashkar-e-Jhangvi has been one of the most notorious groups, responsible for
many of the Shia killings in the region. One of its co-founders, Akram Lahori, was born in the more urban district of Mirpurkhas in Sindh, but its base in the province has been the largely rural district of Khairpur, where it conducted many killings – notably of Shia leader Allama Shah Hyderi in 2009 (Dawn 2009). There have been many clashes of Shia and Sunnis in Khairpur resulting in rioting, gunfights and strikes.

It is however not just the Shia that are victims of sectarian killings. Some Sufi-leaning Barelvis (another main Sunni faction in Pakistan) have also been targeted. Attacks on Sufi shrines have been ever-increasing: the recent February 2017 suicide bombing claimed by IS-affiliated Jamaat-ul-Ahrar in the town of Sehwan Sharif cost more than 70 lives and left more than 250 injured (Dearden 2017). Moreover, it took place at the shrine of the famous Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, often regarded as the patron saint of Sindh. The radical’s blatant disregard of the popular saint shows how the very foundations of religious allegiances are being threatened in Sindh.

For centuries, Hindus have been a major trading and business community in the region. Previously, criminal groups targeted them for kidnappings for ransom because of their relative wealth. However, especially in the past decade, extremists are forcing Hindu girls into marriages with Muslim men and kidnapping Hindus for conversion. In November 2016, the Sindh Assembly passed a bill against forced conversion through marriage or other means (Dawn 2016). Accusations of blasphemy also affects Hindus and Christians alike in rural Sindh. A Hindu temple was attacked in March 2014 following accusations that a Hindu had burned the Quran. In May the same year, four Jehovah’s Witnesses were accused of blasphemy because they were supposedly selling pictures of God and Jesus (Reform 2014).

Absence of the state and weak policing have fueled the ever-increasing extremist activity. In parts of Shikarpur where I was conducting fieldwork, even the police were afraid of going to areas seen as extremist havens; only the paramilitary rangers would conduct operations in these areas. Some of these extremists worked for and were protected by top politicians, so that even the police could not do anything about them. A fitting example is the Mehr-Jatoi clan rivalry in Shikarpur, in which the Mehr politicians use Sunni extremist groups and the Jatois use Shia
extremist groups to carry out violence. These radicals are sometimes become powerful entities in their own right, beyond the control of politicians.

**Weakening of Patron-Client Ties and the Emergence of Extremist Forces**

The structure of rural Sindhi society has been historically characterized by strong patron-client ties. Although the system is referred to as feudalism, it is not exactly like feudalism in the classical sense but is predominantly a system of sharecropping (Batai) whereby the landlord reaps 50 percent of the profits and the tenants the other 50 percent. Generally, the hierarchal feudal system in Sindh is arranged such that there is a feudal at the top of the pyramid who owns large quantities of land. In the local language he is often referred to as the vadera or zamindar. There are mainly two kinds of vaderas: those who reside near or in the village in which their land is situated; and those who are absentee landlords and reside mostly in a big city, making infrequent visits to their estates. Then, there is often a head manager, or munshi, who looks after a whole estate and the accounts. Depending on the amount of the land a feudal lord owns, he has several kamdars or head tenants, who each manage a large portion of land usually around 50 acres. The kamdars maintain close contact with the munshi but also often have contact with the vadera depending on how often the vadera visits his lands. Under the kamdars, are the tenants or haris, who work on the land and share, in most cases, 50 percent of the profit with the landlord. The haris often have little contact with the feudal, unless the feudal has a practice of holding regular meetings or katchairis. The munshi is almost always a paid servant of the feudal, however the kamdars share profits with haris. It is through this hierarchal system and often with armed personnel that the vadera maintains control over his haris and his jagir or land. The tenants are usually dependent on the feudal for any contact with the government or when facing any economic hardship. Previously, the increased dependence of the tenant on the landlord ensured that the patron-client ties remained strong.

However, during my field interviews, it became abundantly clear that landlords as well as tenants lamented the gradual breakdown of the feudal system. Those I interviewed blamed this breakdown on many factors, including but not limited to: smaller landholdings per individual due to inheritance, absentee landlordism, exposure of tenants to foreign countries
in the Middle East, the option to pursue alternative careers if the relationship with the feudal soured, and the advent of democracy.

When the feudal-tenant and patron-client relations were strong, Islamist forces found it challenging to gain support of the rural populace. As Benstead (2017) argues in another memo in this series, Islamist parties find it difficult to gain support among people already in strong patron-client relations as depicted by the Algerian case. As soon as feudalism started declining in rural Sindh and the importance of this patron-client relationship diminished, the population started depending on other sources of power.

Relatedly, Abouzzohour (2017) shows the PJD party has seen success in urban centers in Morocco but not in the rural areas. Clark (2017) also points out that patron-client relation in Morocco’s countryside are so strong that do not allow for the PJD success. Historically, this has also been true for rural Sindh where the dynamics of rural politics have differed significantly from the urban centers. For example, Pakistan’s most famous Islamist movement, the Jamaat-e-Islami made significant inroads in Pakistan’s urban centers but failed to make an impact in the rural areas. It was thought that the political grievances of the urban middle classes were not understandable to the rural populations who suffered mainly from economic disadvantages. When Abdul Ala Maududi, the founder and leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami, talked about Islamic revivalism, it was not as effective among the rural populations as when Zulfiquar Bhutto, the leader of the then socialist Pakistan Peoples Party, raised the slogan for “bread, clothing, and housing.” In the 1970 national election, often regarded as the only fair election in Pakistan, the Jamaat-e-Islamist was not able to get a single seat in rural Sindh, which instead voted for Bhutto’s vision of economic nationalism. Similar to Morocco, in rural Sindh, Islamist parties found it quite difficult to establish a foothold where the feudal-tenant patron-client relation was so resilient that the tenant almost certainly voted along the party lines of the feudal.

Like the Muslim Brotherhood, as described by Brooke and Ketchley (2017), the Jamaat also found it quite difficult to gain support of the existing religious establishment, particularly in the countryside and had to look for new religious leaders, especially those with some recognition among the populations. Since this it was comparatively more challenging in the
countryside than in urban centers, the Jamaat became more of a party of the urban middle classes. Also, most of the literature and media produced by these political Islam movements was not accessible to the rural populations due to their low education levels.

Whereas previously low education levels made the rural folk avoid political Islam movements, more extremist movements now seem to be using this to their advantage. With the decline of the traditional left-leaning political parties in Pakistan and with no real alternative to counter a corrupt government regime, it seems as if many rural, southern Pakistanis are turning towards Islamist groups as alternatives. Moreover, mainstream parties have been, in some cases, guilty of overlooking this extremist turn if these groups in any way support their parties.

Not surprisingly, some of the militant organizations have been active in relief across interior to gain the sympathy and trust of the locals. In the aftermath of the floods in 2010 and 2011, when there was dire need for welfare work and the government was ill-prepared to handle the crisis, many religiously affiliated organizations came in to fill the gap. For example, the infamous Jamaat-ud-Dawa, the welfare wing of the banned Islamic militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) was particularly active in the districts of Sanghar and Umerkot in Sindh. With welfare also came proselytization, especially for the significant Hindu minorities in the district, who were given copies of the Quran and prayer mats. The welfare work of the Jamaat-ud-Dawa presents an interesting case, as before the floods their presence was restricted to the Punjab and urban areas of Sindh., After the floods, they were able to establish a network within interior Sindh.

Through my fieldwork, I also found that rural Sindh differs from many of the cases described in the other memos discussed in this collection. Here, the Islamist forces provide not only welfare to the citizens – often by housing, feeding, and educating poor children in madrassas – but also protection for its members either when they get in to trouble with the law enforcement agencies or in the case of personal enmities. Therefore, not only do Islamist forces have an economic and social function but also a security function, which attracts many of its followers.
Conclusion

While feudalism can be rightly blamed for many of the adverse socio-economic conditions in the region, the vacuum created by its erosion is being filled by extremist groups. Given the decline of the landlords, dispute resolution and loans are being provided by these radical organizations (Yusuf and Hassan 2015). Moreover, with falling authority, feudals are not able to guarantee peace or help resolve longstanding tribal disputes. As feudalism declines, the state – which missed its opportunity to step in with strong institutions such as the police and judiciary – is actually on the retreat and it seems as if criminals and extremists are taking over.

Rural Sindh – which was long known for its diversity and progressiveness – is increasingly becoming more violent, intolerant, and extreme. The emergence of alternative forces may be blamed on the breakdown of traditional feudal hierarchies in the region and the state failing to fill in the resulting vacuum. However, with these traditional structures in disarray or transition, local populations crave stability, security, and order. If the state cannot fulfill these functions, other non-state actors trying to create a parallel state will only grow more attractive. Continuing to carefully examine the local context will be essential to understand how and why extremist groups succeed – or fail – to gain support in these rural areas.

References


