Do Moral Values Predict Political Ideologies? A Cross-Religious Analysis Using Multilevel Modeling

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Abstract

In seeking to explain variations in political ideologies, scholars have often appealed to values and core beliefs. A major strand of literature has shown that people who endorse fairness and justice values are more likely to be left-wing oriented, whereas those who endorse traditional and conservative values are more likely to be oriented to the right. However, it remains unclear whether the link between values and political ideologies varies across religions. The present study addresses this question and examines the association between values and political orientation across religions. I argue that the tendency to endorse certain values is shaped by the content of religious teachings, however, it cannot be attributed solely to religion, but also to the presence of religious parties that reinforce core religious values. Using multilevel regression modeling, I test these assumptions in more than 50 countries from the World Value Survey data (6th wave) by focusing on Abrahamic faith traditions and specifically Islam. Results show that values of fairness and justice are positively associated with right-wing ideology in Muslim countries given their importance and salience in the sacred text. I also show that this link only exists among Muslims living in Muslim-majority countries, but not among Muslims living in non-Muslim countries. Most importantly, I find that this link is stronger in contexts where there are strong beliefs about political Islam. These results illustrate the importance of comparative research and how it contributes to understanding values and political ideologies across religions.

Keywords: moral values, political ideologies, multilevel modeling, religion and politics, comparative research.

A core question for social scientists is what drives a person to be left-wing or right-wing oriented. One of the factors that has been heavily used to explain political ideologies are values. Values are defined as the guiding principles that help one decide whether an action is acceptable or not. In politics, people rely on their core values and particularly moral values to make their political decisions and evaluate politicians. This link has been documented in political science (Inglehart, 2000; Inglehart & Flanagan, 1987), sociology Smith (2003), and psychology (Franks & Scherr, 2015; Graham et al., 2009; Greene, 2013; Schwartz, 2012).

While this body of research has contributed enormously to our understanding of values and their predictive validity with respect to political orientation, its cross-religious validation remains overlooked. Little has been done to explore the role of values in shaping political ideologies across religions, particularly Islam. Until now, most studies have examined values either in single case studies (Barnea & Schwartz, 1998; Cizmar et al., 2014; McCann, 1997) or in one dominant religion, primarily Christian majority countries (Finke & Adamczyk, 2008; Schwartz, 1992). This paper theoretically and empirically investigates the link between values and political ideologies across religions using a variety of countries. Specifically, it focuses on Muslim majority countries, where there is little empirical evidence about the link between moral values and political orientation. Using a multilevel modeling approach, I show that contrary to what has been predicted by existing research, people in Muslim majority-countries who endorse fairness and justice are more likely to be right-wing oriented. I explain this association through two key contextual factors: the role of religious teachings and Islamist political parties in shaping values.

The contribution of this paper is threefold. First, this paper has both a micro and a macro approach to studying values. Existing research has mainly looked at values at the micro-level by studying ordinary people's value preferences. Macro-level analysis provides evidence about which values individuals endorse, but also which macro-level factors (such as religion, repression, and political system) explain variation in moral values. Therefore, using multilevel regression models, this paper addresses both questions. Second, this paper seeks to shed some light on the meaning and understanding of values in Abrahamic faith traditions and specifically Islam. Fairness and justice are one of the overriding goals of Islam and occupies central stage in the Qur'an and Sunnah [1], yet little has been done to explore their predictive power over political orientation. Finally, this paper goes beyond the monolithic picture of Muslim societies and illustrates the diversity of values shaping Muslims' political orientations.

The paper is structured as follows: the first section begins by providing an overview of the study on moral values and political ideologies in comparative research. Then, I survey the literature on morality and political ideologies in Muslim contexts. Based on this literature, I state my hypotheses regarding the association between values and political ideologies across religions. Finally, I discuss the findings and examine their significance for the field of comparative politics and cross-cultural research.

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[1] *Sunnah* refers to the sayings *(hadith)* of the Prophet Mohammed.

Moral Values and Political Ideologies

Political scientists have long argued that people lack a comprehensive ideological structure that allows them to evaluate parties and politicians (Campbell et al., 1960; Conover & Feldman, 1984; Converse, 1964; Kinder, 1983). In light of this, scholars have proposed another approach to better understand political views: the value-based approach. Values [2] are the guiding principles that help individuals organize and make sense of the complex political world around them. In the words of Tetlock et al. (2000), "underlying all political belief systems are ultimate or terminal values that specify the end-states of public policy. These values [...] function as the back stops of belief systems" (p.247). People support the candidates and policies that best represent their value preferences and defend them. To date, there is no agreement about the content and structure of values, but I limit the discussion of this paper to two dimensions: conservatism values and justice values. These two value dimensions have a long history in social science research with significant predictive validity over several issues such as political orientations, voting behavior, and policy preferences. I use 'conservatism values' to mean concerns towards traditional morality, social hierarchy, and order and security whereas 'justice values' to mean those concerns encompassing several elements such as equality, equity, and fair treatment.[3]

Several studies have documented the link between values and political ideologies. Rokeach (1973) shows that supporters of liberal candidates in the US are more supportive of equality than supporters of Republican candidates and the former are more likely to place egalitarian values at the top of their value priorities. Similarly, Feldman (1988) finds that equality value is associated with support for Democratic presidents. Graham et al. (2009, 2011) demonstrated similar results with their five-value model – also called the Moral Foundations Theory (MFT). According to MFT, people who endorse care and fairness values are more likely to identify as liberals, while those who endorse all five foundations and particularly authority, loyalty, and sanctity values are more likely to identify as conservatives. Voelkel & Feinberg (2018), show that liberals are more persuaded by fairness-related moral framing whereas conservatives are more persuaded by loyalty to the group-related messages. In a recent study, Bizer (2020) examines how responses to unfair treatments differ across individuals using the Emotional Response to Unfairness (ERU) scale. He finds that there is a positive relationship between ERU and political liberalism on the one hand and a negative relationship between ERU and Social Dominance Orientations on the other. His study also looks at differences in actual political behavior where he shows that people high on ERU were more likely to vote for Hillary Clinton whereas those low on ERU were more likely to vote for Donald Trump during the 2016 election. Using the Schwartz 10 basic values, conformity, security, and tradition were found to be associated with right-wing political ideology, whereas universalism and benevolence were associated with left-wing political ideology (Caprara et al., 2006; Piurko et al., 2011).

While there are numerous studies that examine the link between values and political ideologies, very little is

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[2]Different scholars use the word 'values' to capture different things. For the purpose of this paper, I focus on moral values and distinguish them from personal values. The former are set by the community and the social context while the latter are set by the individual for himself or herself.

[3]In value-based research, concerns over traditional morality, hierarchy, and order often cluster together under one factor, whereas concerns over equality and fair treatment form another cluster. For this reason, I use the broad family dimensions: conservatism and justice respectively.

done to incorporate Muslim-majority countries into cross-cultural research, whether in political science, psychology, or sociology. Most of the comparative work has either no Muslim countries (Schwartz, 1992, 1994), just one or two Muslim countries in their cross-national surveys (Caprara et al., 2017), or exclusively Muslim countries (Ciftci, 2019, 2021; Davis & Robinson, 2006). Caprara et al. (2017) cross-cultural study of 16 countries for instance, included only one Muslim-majority country – Turkey. Schwartz (1992) relied initially on 20 countries to test the universality of his 10 basic values model, none of them were from the Muslim world. Such designs hinder the study of values and political ideologies from a comparative perspective. Most importantly, existing research has been theorizing about values and value structures using a predominantly Western framing (Caprara et al., 2006; Conover & Feldman, 1984; McClosky & Zaller, 2013; Rokeach, 1973). This paper fills this gap and examines the link between values and political ideology by incorporating Muslim-majority countries into the analysis and shedding some light on core themes in Islam.

Moral Values in the Muslim World

Before talking about what is peculiar to Islam, it is important to point out that Islam shares some key values and concerns with other religions such as Christianity and Judaism. Christian conservatives, like Muslims, care about the conservation of traditional morality (such as family and marriage norms) and preserving the social order. They all have deep concerns about how secularization processes are changing their moral values and challenging their religious beliefs. Such values can be found among social conservatives in the US (Graham et al., 2009; Lakoff, 1996), in Israel (Barnea & Schwartz, 1998), or in Europe (Aichholzer & Zandonella, 2016; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2000). Furthermore, one of the key issues in Muslim societies is the political nature of Islam. Islam does not only care about spirituality but all aspects of Muslims' lives including the political aspect. According to a 2013 PEW survey, people from South Asia (Afghanistan 99%, Pakistan 84%), Southeast Asia (Malaysia 86%, Indonesia 72%), and the Middle East and North Africa (Morocco 83%, Egypt 74%) support the enforcement of Sharia as the law of the land (with the exception of Lebanon which had only 29%). Although to a different degree, this mix between religion and politics can also be found among some Christian and Jewish groups such as the Moral Majority in the US, the Christian Voice in the UK, the Assemblies of God in Brazil, or ultra-orthodox Jews in Israel, who call for more influence of religion in the political life.

While Islam, Christianity, and Judaism share some key values, they diverge on other issues. For the purpose of this paper, I outline two main issues that distinguish morality in Muslim societies from other contexts: (1) the way morality is interpreted and (2) the emphasis on justice and fairness values. The first distinction that should be made is the way Muslims interpret morality. Scholars tend to agree that moral judgments cannot be made in isolation of religion in the Muslim world (Ahmad, 2006; Halstead, 2007; Nyazee, 2004). Judging whether something is good or bad, right or wrong should not be left to human reasoning alone. Halstead (2007) explains this complex relationship between religion and morality and argues that Muslims make little to no distinction between moral duties and religious duties. To illustrate his argument, he writes: "Questions like 'what should I do?' or 'how

should I behave?' may receive both moral and religious answers, but the moral answers are themselves couched in religious language because they are equally considered to be part of the eternal truth revealed by God through his messengers" (Ibid, p.287). The Pew Research Report from 2017 [4] illustrates this strong relationship between morality and religion and shows that Muslims widely agree that it is necessary to believe in God to be moral and have good values. Islam is not only a religion but also a comprehensive way of life that provides Muslims with moral guidance in all aspects of life (Haron et al., 2020). In light of this, actions such as stealing, not paying taxes, or cheating might be defined as violations of secular laws in non-Muslim contexts [5]. Yet, for a Muslim mindset, they have a religious meaning. In Judaism and Christianity, it is common also to find individuals who interpret the sacred text literally and believe in it word for word, but their proportion is significantly smaller due to the secularization process that altered most of the world population (Folvarčnỳ & Kopeček, 2020; Marczewski, 2018).

The second feature that distinguishes morality in the Muslim world is the high emphasis on justice and fairness values in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. Justice occupies a supreme place in Islam and the Qur'an is very specific about the obligation of every Muslim to act 'justly.'According to Fish (2011), "justice occupies pride of place in Muslim moral thinking. In broadest general terms, it is the essence of the Muslim ideal and message, much as the essence of the Christian ideal and message is love" (p.222). One of the fundamental beliefs is the idea that man is the vicegerent of God on earth – also known as 'Khalifa' [6]. Therefore, as a representative of god, it is man's responsibility to make the world a just place and promote god's moral laws (Abou El Fadl, 2004). Kamali (2002) highlights this idea by arguing that justice "stands next in order of priority to belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*) and the Prophethood (*risala*)" (p.107). According to this, justice is a supreme goal in Islam that all Muslims should seek to achieve and promote (Kamali, 2008). Justice and fairness also appear in other religious groups' discourses but not in the same way Muslims talk about these values. For example, Evangelicals in Latin America do speak about equal treatment to express their grievances about the dominance of the Catholic Church. Justice also appears in the agenda of the Polish Law and Justice Party; however, it is often mentioned in relation to preserving security and order in society and defending Christian values from the threatening secular political order.

Religious teachings about justice and fairness values can emanate from three primary sources [7]: religious education, clerics and Imams, and Islamist parties. First, Islamic education is mandatory in most Muslim countries. This type of education is offered both in Quranic and public schools as part of the mandatory curricula. It involves citing the Qur'an, learning about the Prophet's hadith, and studying Islamic values. The second way through which Muslims can get religious teachings is through the Imams. Friday sermons (*'Khutba'*) are weekly speeches delivered before the Friday prayers by Imams and are mandatory for Muslims to attend. The aim of the sermons is to inform, guide, and educate Muslims about fundamental rules and values in Islam. Finally, justice values can also emanate from Islamist parties and movements. Scholars have extensively shown that people evaluate parties and

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[4]See full Pew Research Report of 2013, retrieved from: `https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2013/04/30/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-morality/`, accessed on 13.02.2023

[5]See the distinction between morality sanctioned by the state and morality that is not by Finke & Adamczyk (2008).

[6]*Khalifa* is one who succeeds another and takes his place.

[7]I distinguish between two sources of Islamic teachings: primary and secondary sources. The former are more institutionalized and have a bigger influence on society whereas the latter are rather local and peripheral such as charity organizations, businesses, and private schools.

policies based on how the parties connect to their core values (Druckman, 2001; Druckman et al., 2013; Goren, 2012; Petersen et al., 2010; Tomz & Van Houweling, 2008). These Islamist actors often use religious discourses to shape public opinion by sending signals to voters about their core values, and hence helping them connect their values to their political orientations. As noted by Livny (2020) "what defines all these organizations as "Islamic-based" is more about means than ends. They couch their appeals to supporters in Islamic terms, making regular and explicit use of religious language and symbols" (p.1). It is worth mentioning that scholars often draw relative distinctions among Islamist parties [8] based on a number of dimensions such as the type of political activities they engage in, their ideology, and their organizational style (Nazar, 2016; Wittes, 2008). However, for the purpose of this paper, I use a rather broad definition that captures the core normative and cultural elements of these parties across regions (Middle East, North Africa, and Asia) and across a large variation in political systems. Islamist parties' shared characteristics consist of belief in the Islamic community and endorsement of Islamic values. As Mecham & Hwang (2014) write: "Islamist parties speak a common language of shared references about what is right and wrong, share a mythical history of the glory days of the original Islamic community (umma), have common scriptural and linguistic (Arabic) referents, share some expectations on legal issues (through knowledge of the shari'a), and have a common understanding of the negative role of Western imperialism, with particular reference to perceived injustices in Palestine" (p.17-18). To summarize all the above-mentioned literature, Figure 1 illustrates how religious teachings and political parties shape values and political orientations.
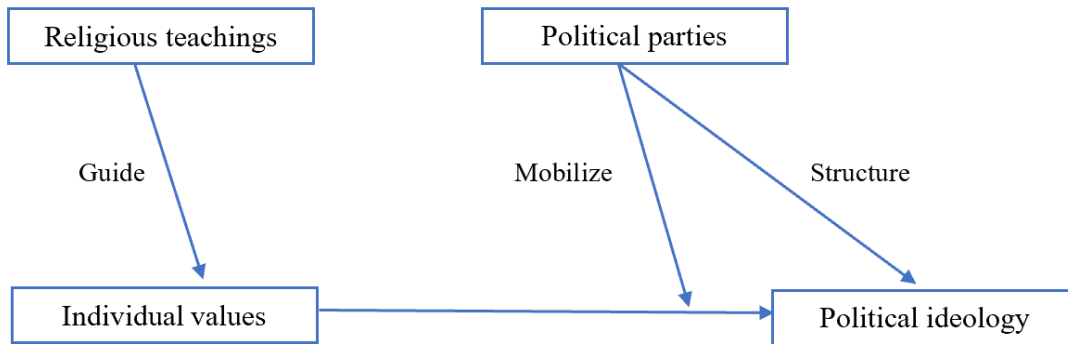

Figure 1: The role of religious teachings and religious political parties in shaping people's values and political orientations in Muslim contexts

Despite the salience of justice and fairness values in religious teachings, little empirical work has been done to investigate their predictive power over political outcomes. Davis & Robinson (2006) analyze seven Muslim-majority countries and find that orthodox Muslims are more likely to possess egalitarian preferences than modernists. Moreover, Ciftci (2019) explains why religious Muslims are more supportive of democratic contexts than non-religious Muslims. He argues that since Islam emphasizes social justice as a core value, Muslims should support a political system that minimizes injustices and inequality, hence, democracy is seen as more likely to fulfill those goals. Using

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[8]Some of the labels used to define and classify Islamist parties are fundamentalist, militant, pragmatic, participatory, moderate, legal, and illegal.

survey data from 19 Muslim countries, he shows that religious Muslims have a higher preference for democratic systems and this effect is mediated by social justice and benevolence values. Single case studies provide some evidence that justice values are positively correlated with right-wing political preferences. Using representative survey data from Tunisia, Mehrez (2023, forthcoming) shows that people who endorse justice values were significantly more likely to vote for Islamist parties than any of the other left-wing parties. Using text analysis of political parties' discourses [9], 'justice' and 'fairness' words are shown to be more likely to appear in the discourses of right-wing Islamist parties than left-wing parties in Tunisia. These studies are in line with the above-surveyed literature and suggest that in Muslim countries, individuals who embrace justice and fairness values are more inclined to be right-wing (conservative) oriented given the emphasis on these values in Islamic teachings and among Islamist parties.

Hypotheses

This paper investigates the link between moral values and political ideology across religions. Specifically, I test two main factors linking values and political ideology in Muslim-majority societies as compared to Christian ones: The role of religious teachings and religious political parties. For moral values, I rely on a two-dimensional model of values: conservatism values and justice values. First, the effect of moral values will vary depending on the type of values being studied. Given their salience in both Christian and Muslim societies, I hypothesize that values related to conservatism will not vary across religions and will be associated with right-wing political ideology (**H1**). In contrast, the effect of justice and fairness values will vary depending on the context in which they are used. In Islam, unlike Judaism and Christianity, justice is a core value that occupies a central stage both in Islamic teachings as well as in right-wing Islamist parties' discourses. Accordingly, I expect this value dimension to be positively associated with right-wing political ideology in Muslim-majority countries only (**H2**).

To test whether this is an individual-level effect or contextual-level effect, I distinguish between Muslims socialized in Muslim-majority countries vs. Muslims socialized in non-Muslim majority countries. The former have received both the Islamic teaching education as well as the influence of religious parties' political discourses, while the latter have been exposed to a different political culture where Islamist parties play little to no role in politics and society. Hence, I hypothesize that the positive link between justice values and right-wing political ideology will be stronger among individuals living in Muslim-majority countries than Muslims living in non-Muslim majority countries (**H3**).

Finally, to explain why justice value is positively associated with right-wing political ideology in the Muslim world, I test two potential mechanisms: political oppression and the belief in Islamist political authority (political Islam) as an ideal form of government. The first reason is the disenchantment with the political oppression employed by ruling elites in their respective countries. Across the Muslim world, Islamist parties and movements are either in opposition or banned from politics. They have been regarded as a threat to the stability and legitimacy of the ruling elite particularly after the success of the Iranian revolution in 1979. Hence, they were banned from the

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[9]Mehrez, A. manuscript in preparation.

political scene, jailed, and repressed. The parties condemned the oppression exercised against them and called for a new political order that is more just. Except for very few countries [10], Islamist parties in most of the Muslim world face repression and legal restrictions (Hamid, 2010). Often, they are perceived as a threat to the regime with their religious ideology. Therefore, one might expect that mounting repression and exclusion may be driving the positive association between justice values and right-wing political ideology in the Muslim world. I hypothesize that in Muslim countries with less political pluralism (little to no freedom to compete in politics), the link between embracing justice and being on the right will be stronger **(H4)**.

The second potential mechanism is the belief in Islamist political authority. In many Muslim-majority countries, people support and favor an Islamist-led authority rather than a non-religious political authority. For Muslims, the Islamic Caliphate represented the ideal type of political order where justice prevails, and individuals' rights are protected. The emergence of Islam in the 7th century is understood as a quest to pursue justice among people and fight oppression. The Prophet Mohammed was sent to establish justice as the Qur'an illustrates: "We sent Our Messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and the Measure in order to establish justice among the people" (57:25). The Rightly Guided Caliphs (successors of the Prophet) were also known to be the pioneers of justice and fairness among people. In *Nahjul-Balagha*, Ali Ibn Abi Talib Abu-Talib et al. (2009) (the fourth Guided Caliph) once said: "My mission, today, is the same as it was at the time of the Prophet[...]. I shall strive till I eradicate impiety and injustice, and till I establish a rule of justice and truth, - a humane and heavenly regime" (Sermon 38). A recent study by Isani (2019) confirms this idea and shows that the word "Caliphate" is associated among Muslims with the idea of an efficient dispensation of justice. Therefore, by emphasizing justice values, contemporary Islamist figures and parties are appealing to those who believe in the symbolic role of a Caliphate and the establishment of just order – long lacking in much of the Islamic world. Several Islamist parties today use the word 'justice' in their labels and discourses to connect with their supporters on the principles of Islamic justice (for example the Justice and Freedom Party in Egypt, Justice and Development Party in Morocco and Turkey, People's Justice Party in Malaysia, Prosperous Justice Party in Indonesia). By using such labels, they send clear messages to their supporters that they pursue justice and fairness as God commands, and they seek to illuminate injustice in Muslim societies just as previous Caliphates did. Based on this, I hypothesize that the link between justice and right-wing political ideology will be stronger in those countries that are more likely to favor Islamist political authority **(H5)**.

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[10]It is important to note that oppression has not been the only strategy used by the regimes in the Muslim world to deal with Islamist parties. Other strategies such as cooptation, moderation, and partial integration have also been employed (Sallam, 2022).

Data and Method

To test these hypotheses, this paper uses data from the 6th wave[11] of the World Value Survey (WVS)[12] conducted between 2010 and 2014. The dataset consists of 60 countries and a sample size of around 89,500 respondents (see Appendix A). Multilevel regression analysis is used to examine the effect of moral values on political ideologies across individuals and across countries simultaneously. The model includes the dependent variable, political ideology, predictors (independent variables and control variables), and level 2 variables (contextual variables). The dependent variable is political ideology measured by the respondents' self-positioning on a 10-point scale where 1 means left-wing and 10 means right-wing. Several researchers argue that a uni-dimensional scale is not sufficient to capture the structure of political ideologies and propose instead a multi-dimensional structure such as the socio-economic dimensions (Ashton et al., 2005; Feldman & Johnston, 2014). To test the measurement validity of the left-right self-placement across contexts, I correlate it with social and economic issues. I rely on three main issues from the WVS to capture one social issue (abortion), one religious issue (religious authorities interpret the laws), and one economic issue (it is the government's responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for). Results show that the correlations work in the expected directions across the three regions of interest (see Figure 2-4). Right-wing political ideology positively correlates with rejection of abortion and supporting a religious authority interpreting the laws, and negatively correlates with government spending.

Most importantly, the left-right distinction proves to be a useful measure of ideology because it helps differentiate between ideas and people that hold opposing views. The left-right also serve as heuristics or shortcuts to make sense of the political world and orient people in their political choices (Kerlinger, 1984; Sniderman et al., 1993). Besides its practical utility, the left-right is maybe one of the most widely used measures that existed for the last three centuries and still continues to be used in politics today. While multi-dimensional measures capture more variation of the ideological spectrum, they come with disadvantages. Social and economic issue positions, for example, are rarely applicable in comparative analysis as they vary tremendously across countries and sometimes even within a single country. They also vary across time as one issue might be salient now but no longer be the case in a few years or months. Based on this, I argue that the left-right ideological dimension better suits the empirical goal of this paper and its comparative purpose.

To measure moral values (level 1 predictors), I use a two-dimensional-value model – conservatism value dimension and justice value dimension. The conservatism value dimension is measured using 5 items from the WVS related to conformity, family, respect for authority, security, and tradition. The justice value dimension is measured using 4 items[13] that are related to claiming government benefits, cheating on taxes, avoiding a fare, and giving a bribe (see Appendix A for full item descriptions). Both value dimensions yielded acceptable alpha reliability scores: 0.61

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[11]I use the 6th wave of the WVS data instead of the 7th more recent wave because some questions of interest (the Schwartz's value questions) were only asked in the older waves.

[12]The WVS is used in this paper for the following reasons. First, it provides data from all over the world covering five broad regions which makes it more suitable than other regionally focused surveys (such as Arab Barometer, European Social Survey, and American Barometer) to do a comparative analysis. Another important characteristic of the WVS is that it highly focuses on values and contains a variety of questions that can be used in cross-national analysis.

[13]Items from both dimensions are reverse coded so that higher values indicate higher endorsement of the value.
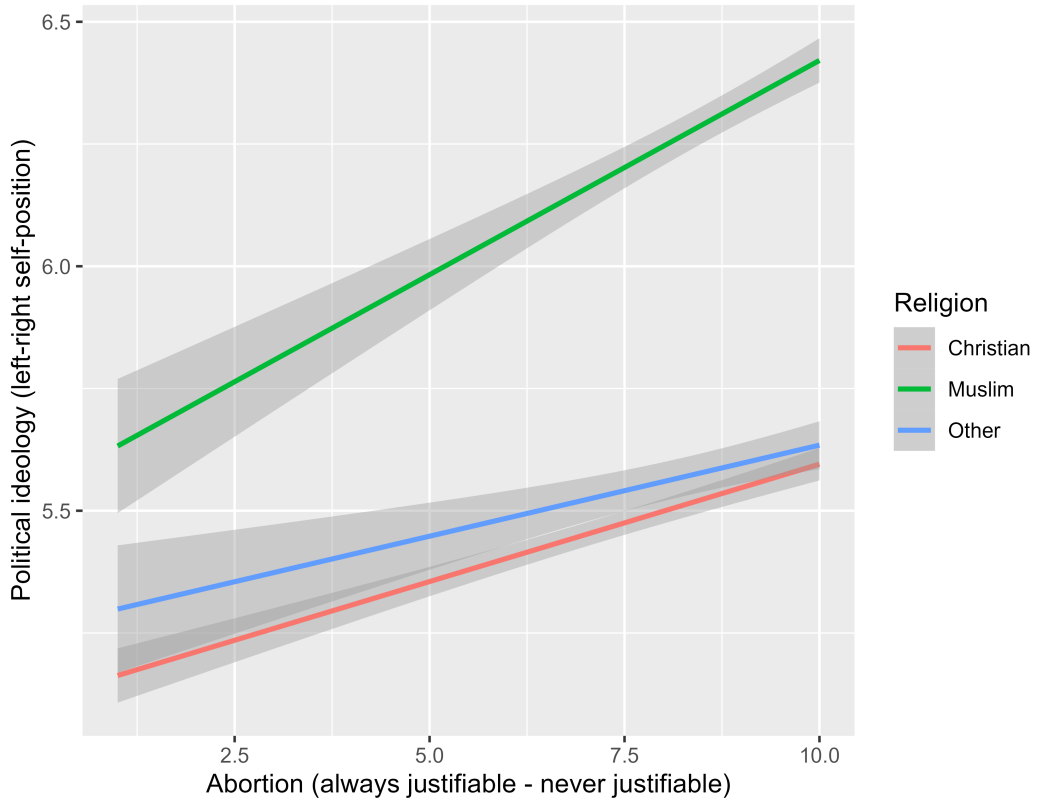
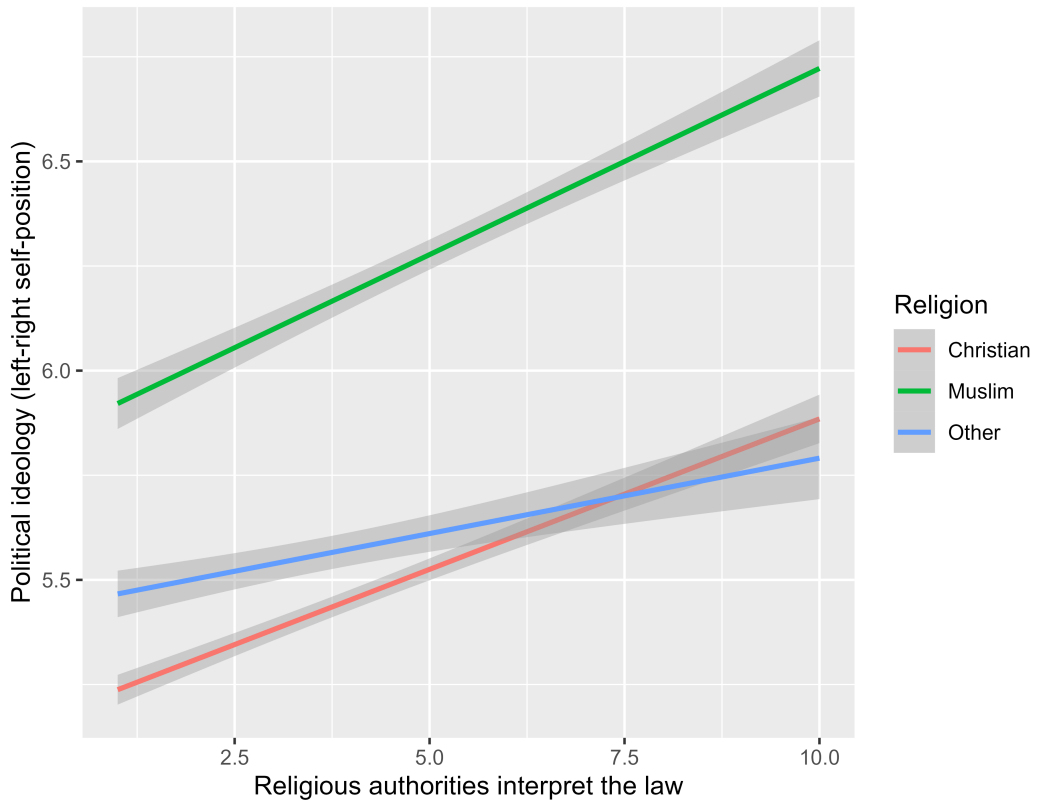**Figure 2: Bivariate regression between abortion issue and left-right political ideology**

Figure 3: Bivariate regression between the religious issue and left-right political ideology
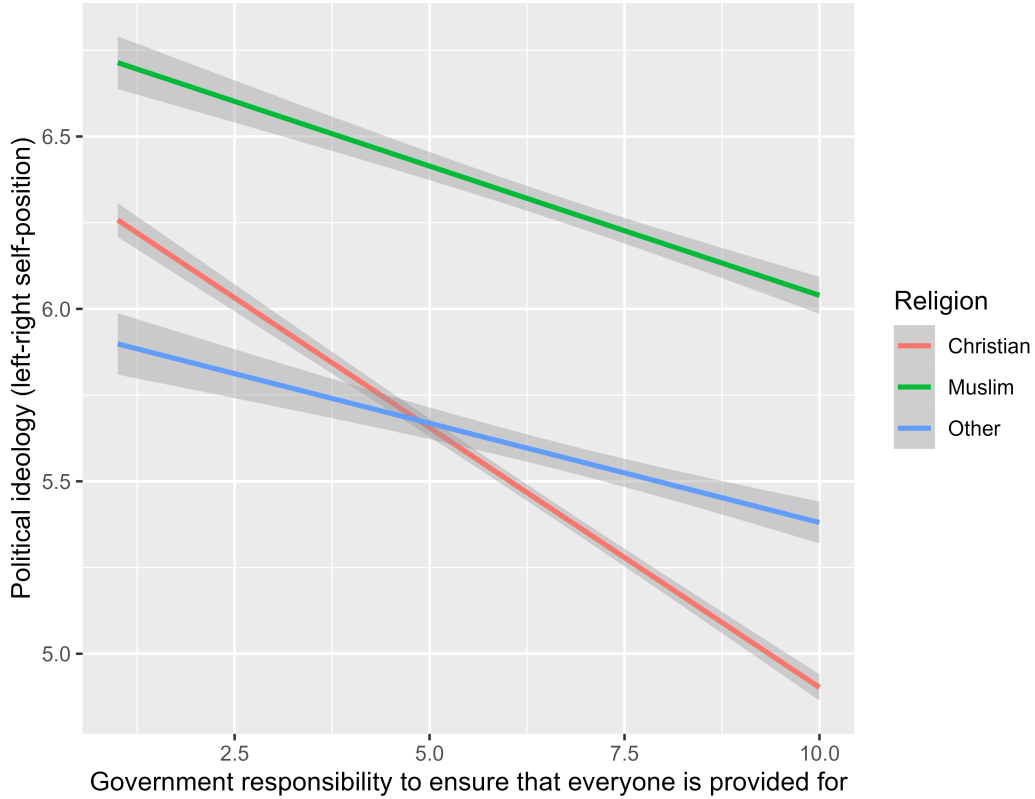
Figure 4: Bivariate regression between the economic issue and left-right political ideology

and 0.79 respectively. A mean score was computed across items to create an average value score for each dimension and for each respondent in the dataset with larger scores indicating greater endorsement of the value. The control variables included the level of education, gender (0 = female and 1= male), age (measured in years), and religiosity (frequency of prayers). To estimate the effect of moral values on political ideology across religions, I include dummy variables for Muslim-majority countries, Christian-majority countries, and others[14] (the countries that fit neither the Christian nor the Muslim category). Countries are assigned to each religion if at least 60% of the country's population is from a Muslim or Christian denomination. Moreover, to differentiate the country effect of religion from the individual level effect, I run an OLS regression[15] where I only look at the sample of Muslims living in non-Muslim majority countries and another with only Muslims living in Muslim majority countries. Finally, to test the two mechanisms of political repression and political Islam, I include the contextual variables, political oppression[16] and support for religious authorities in politics respectively (averaged across participants for each country from the WVS). A total of 53 countries[17] and 61, 975 individuals remained after excluding the ones that did not have

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[14]Given the heterogeneity in the category 'other', I do not infer any conclusion based on it.

[15]For these OLS models, I subset from the WVS data participants who identified with a Muslim denomination then I categorize them into those who live in Muslim countries and those who live in non-Muslim countries.

[16]The measure of political oppression is taken from Freedom House and reverse coded so that higher scores mean more oppression. Originally, it is called "political pluralism and participation" and it measures the extent to which other parties are able to organize, whether opposition parties are able to compete in elections, and whether any kind of censure or pressure is exercised on them.

[17]Out of 60 countries from the WVS, 6 countries did not include the dependent variable question (Jordan, Kuwait, Germany, Qatar, Republic of China, and Singapore) and 1 country did not include at least one of the independent variables (Egypt). In total, 15

information on key variables (see Appendix B for descriptive statistics).

Multilevel Model Equations

To simultaneously test the micro and macro-level effects of values on political ideologies, I use a multilevel regression analysis (Hox et al., 2017). The model for examining political ideology with level 1 predictors is as follows:

$$(Political Ideology)_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} conservatism_{ij} + \beta_{2j} justice_{ij}+$$

$$\beta_{3j} religiosity_{ij} + \beta_{4j} education_{ij} + \beta_{5j} gender_{ij} + \beta_{6j} age_{ij} + \epsilon_{ij}, \quad \epsilon_{ij} \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma^2)$$

(1)

Political ideology refers to the political ideology of individual i in country j. 0 is the overall mean across countries. The term ij is the within-cluster random residual at the individual level with a normal distribution $\epsilon_{ij} \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma^2)$. To explore the effect of country-level variables on political ideology, I estimate the following model for the intercept:

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} Muslim_j + \gamma_{02} Christian_j + \gamma_{03}(Political Oppression)_j + \gamma_{04}(Political Authority)_j v_{0j}$$

(2)

In this model, v_{0j} is the country-level random residual assumed to be randomly distributed with a mean of 0 and variance σ^2. To estimate the cross-level interaction between the value dimensions and country-level variables, I estimate the following slope model:

$$\begin{cases} \beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11} Muslim_j + v_{1j} \\ \beta_{2j} = \gamma_{20} + \gamma_{21} Muslim_j + v_{2j} \end{cases}$$

(3)

In this model, β_{1j} and β_{2j} are the conservatism and justice dimensions for individuals in country j respectively. To model the three-way interactions between justice, Muslim majority dummy, and political oppression on the one hand, and religious political authority on the other, I estimate the following slope model:

countries were Muslim-majority countries, 30 were Christian-majority countries, and 8 were coded other. See Appendix A for all countries' categorization.

$$\begin{cases} \beta_{2j} = \gamma_{30} + \gamma_{31} Muslim_j + \gamma_{32}(PoliticalOppression)_j + \gamma_{33}(Muslim)_j(PoliticalOppression)_j + \upsilon_{3j} \\ \\ \beta_{2j} = \gamma_{40} + \gamma_{41} Muslim_j + \gamma_{42}(PoliticalAuthority)_j + \gamma_{43}(Muslim)_j(PoliticalAuthority)_j + \upsilon_{4j} \end{cases} \quad (4)$$

All level 1 predictors in the model are group mean centered, whereas all level 2 predictors are grand mean centered. All random slopes of each of my predictors are included (Heisig & Schaffer, 2019). The multilevel model is run in nine separate steps. In the first step, I estimate the baseline model and compute the Intra-class correlation.[18] The ICC indicates that the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is across countries is around 8%. In other words, much of the variance exists within countries (92%) rather the between countries. In step 2, I estimate Model 2 where I include all the predictors and control variables. In Models 3 and 4, I include the interaction of conservatism and justice values respectively with Muslim majority dummy in separate models to avoid the potential collinearity problem. In Model 5, I include both interactions together to test whether the results change. In Models 6 and 7, I test the individual-level effect and compare Muslims living in non-Muslim contexts vs. Muslims living in Muslim-majority countries. Finally, in Models 8 and 9, I test the mechanisms at play and include the three-way interactions between justice value dimension, Muslim majority dummy, and political oppression on one hand and religious political authority on the other.

Results

Model 2 shows interesting results (Table 1). Both conservatism and justice value dimensions are significant predictors of political ideology. In line with existing research, people who embrace traditional morality are more likely to self-identify as right-wing, whereas those who embrace justice and fairness values are more likely to self-identify as left-wing. All control variables are also significant in the expected direction. Older males with lower education and higher religiosity are more likely to be on the right than on the left side of the political spectrum. Being in a Muslim-majority country seems to have a significant positive effect on political ideology: in the Muslim World, people are more likely to position themselves on the right rather than on the left.

Because the primary interest of the paper is the impact of each value dimension on political ideology conditional on the religious context, I interact both value dimensions with the Muslim majority dummy (see Models 3 and 4). As expected, the link between moral values and political ideologies varies across religions depending on the type of value. The interaction between conservatism and Muslim majority is positive but not significant, which means there are no significant differences between Muslim and non-Muslim contexts (H1). Figure 5 illustrates the positive trends across contexts. As hypothesized (H2), the interaction between justice value and Muslim majority dummy is positive and significant (Model 4 & Figure 6). In other words, people who endorse justice are significantly more likely to self-identify with the right in Muslim societies at the 5% level. In Model 5, I run both interactions in

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[18]ICC is the ratio of the between country variance to the total variance.
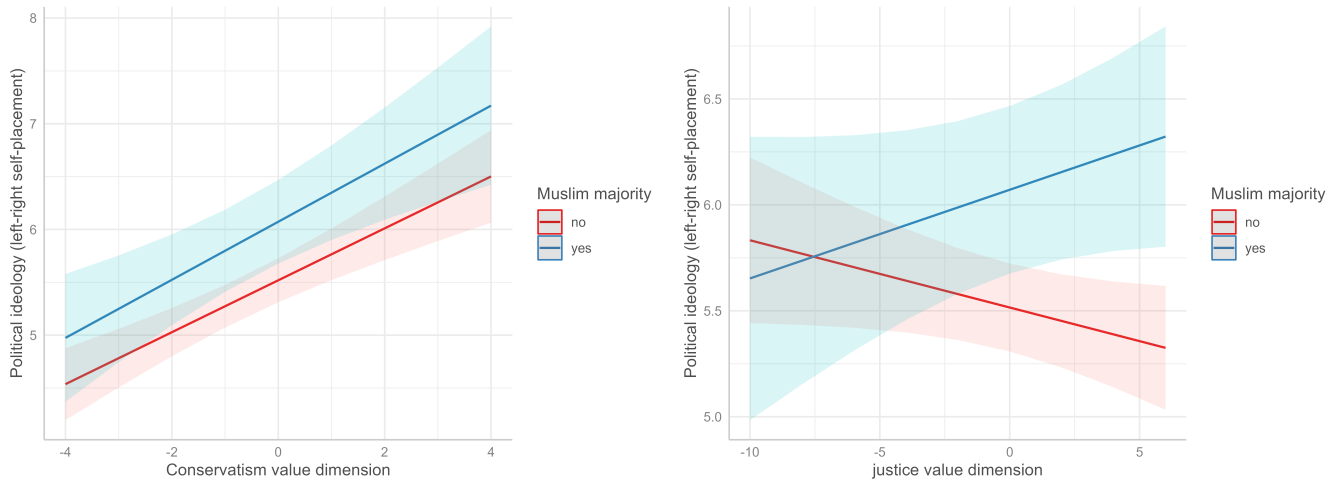
Figure 5 & 6: **Interaction between authority values and Muslim-majority countries and justice values and Muslim-majority countries**

the same model to check whether the coefficients are altered. The results remain robust and consistent with the previous findings.

While these results clearly show different trends across religions, they do not exactly tell whether this link differs across religious contexts or across people from different religious denominations. One might argue that the perceived association between justice values and right-wing political ideology is not specific to Muslim societies but can be linked to Muslims more broadly. If this is the case, one should expect to see the same association also among Muslims who do not live in Muslim-majority countries. To test this, I run two regression models (Models 6 and 7) where I include Muslims who do not live in Muslim-majority countries and Muslims living in Muslim-majority countries respectively. The results show that the link between justice and political ideology is completely different between the two groups. Although not significant, there is a negative relationship between endorsing justice and being right-wing among Muslims living in non-Muslim contexts (see Figure 7). Looking at Muslims living in Muslim-majority countries, there is a positive and significant relationship between endorsing justice values and right-wing political ideology (see Figure 8). These results confirm that the observed effect is a contextual one rather than an individual-level effect (H3).

Finally, Table 3 shows the results of the hypothesized mechanisms: political oppression and religious political authority. Contrary to what was hypothesized (H4), political oppression does not seem to be driving the positive association between justice and right-wing political ideology. In fact, more oppressed countries (more specifically oppressed opposition parties), do not significantly differ from those countries where opposition parties have relatively more freedom and room to compete and participate in politics (see Figure 9). However, the second mechanism of Islamist religious authority is positive and significant. The results of the three-way interaction show that in places where there is high support for religious political authority, the effect of justice value on political ideology is stronger

	Dependent variable:				
	Left-right (self-placement)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Conservatism		0.234***	0.244***	0.230***	0.246***
		(0.014)	(0.047)	(0.014)	(0.042)
Justice		−0.038***	−0.038***	−0.033*	−0.032*
		(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.020)	(0.017)
Religiosity		0.067***	0.063***	0.065***	0.062***
		(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Education		−0.036***	−0.034***	−0.036***	−0.035***
		(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Gender		0.103***	0.099***	0.101***	0.098***
		(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Age		0.027***	0.027***	0.027***	0.027***
		(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Muslim		0.645**	0.576**	0.642**	0.556**
		(0.259)	(0.254)	(0.258)	(0.252)
Christian		−0.130	−0.207	−0.137	−0.234
		(0.235)	(0.226)	(0.234)	(0.222)
Conservatism:Muslim			0.071		0.029
			(0.091)		(0.082)
Justice:Muslim				0.089**	0.074**
				(0.037)	(0.033)
Constant	5.680***	5.525***	5.591***	5.532***	5.612***
	(0.092)	(0.209)	(0.203)	(0.208)	(0.200)
Random effects:					
Country variance	0.450	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34
Residual variance	5.08	5.04	5.01	5.01	5.0
Random slope justice				0.01	0.008
Random slope authority			0.07		0.05
N	54	53	53	53	53
Observations	66,334	61,918	61,918	61,918	61,918
Log Likelihood	−148,208.700	−138,064.500	−137,935.300	−137,950.400	−137,852.500
Akaike Inf. Crit.	296,423.400	276,151.000	275,898.600	275,928.800	275,740.900
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	296,450.700	276,250.400	276,025.100	276,055.300	275,903.500

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 1: **Multilevel regression models (1-5). Entries are regression coefficients and their standard errors in parentheses.**

	Dependent variable:	
	Left-right (self-placement)	
	(6)	(7)
Conservatism	0.120	0.348***
	(0.078)	(0.034)
Justice	−0.061*	0.044***
	(0.033)	(0.014)
Religiosity	0.029	0.056***
	(0.027)	(0.010)
Education	0.021	−0.063***
	(0.024)	(0.010)
Gender	0.175*	0.048
	(0.105)	(0.042)
Age	0.004	0.044***
	(0.042)	(0.016)
Constant	5.476***	6.310***
	(0.077)	(0.030)
Observations	2,134	11,913
R^2	0.005	0.020
Adjusted R^2	0.002	0.020
Residual Std. Error	2.387 (df = 2127)	2.286 (df = 11906)
F Statistic	1.883* (df = 6; 2127)	41.244*** (df = 6; 11906)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table 2: **OLS results (6-7). Entries are regression coefficients and their standard errors in parentheses. Model 6 contains Muslim participants from non-Muslim majority countries whereas Model 7 contains Muslim participants living in Muslim-majority countries.**
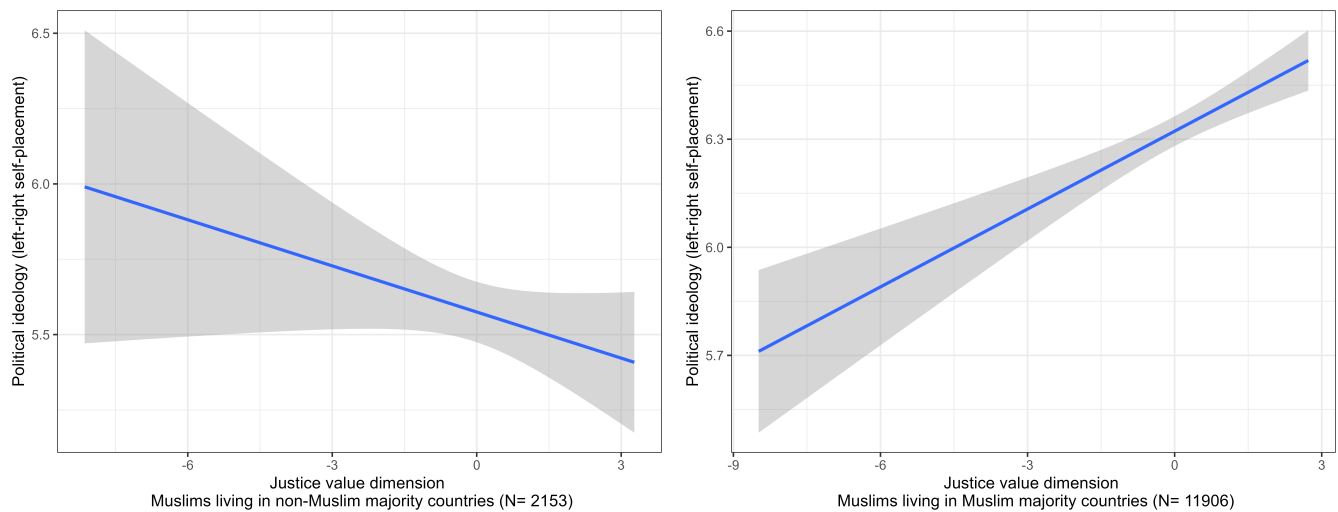

Figure 7 & 8: **The link between justice value and political ideology**

(see Figure 10). This finding confirms the idea that Muslims still hold strong beliefs that under an Islamist political authority, justice and fair treatment prevail (H5).

Robustness Tests

One might argue that other factors, such as social and economic factors, can also explain the positive association between justice value and right-wing political ideology in Muslim countries. To test for potential confounders, I check whether there are other variables that might affect this link. I include contextual predictors such as GDP per capita, inequality coefficient (Gini), and Corruption Perception Index (see Table 4). Results show that GDP and Gini coefficient do not alter the relationship when run in a three-way interaction with the justice value. However, the corruption perception index is positive and significant. In other words, this link between justice and right-wing political ideology is stronger in contexts with higher corruption perception scores.

Discussion

The present article examines the link between moral values and political ideologies across religions. Using a multilevel regression analysis, I show that morality, as measured by conservatism values and justice values, shapes political ideology. People who endorse traditional values, conformity, and social norms are more likely to be to the right, whereas people who endorse fairness and justice values are more likely to be to the left. These results are in line with existing research from political science, social psychology, and sociology (Caprara et al., 2017; Feldman, 1988; Graham et al., 2009). When testing for the variation across religions, two main patterns are observed. The first is similar to what has already been found: People who embrace conservatism views and support traditional morality are more likely to be to the right everywhere (regardless of the context). However, when it comes to the justice dimension new patterns are observed in Muslim-majority countries versus non-Muslim contexts. Interestingly and as hypothesized, there is a positive association between endorsing justice values and right-wing political ideology in Muslim countries only. This finding comes in contrast to what has been found in other non-Muslim countries (mainly Christian countries), where the left is more likely to be associated with justice and fairness values rather than the right. This result is in accordance with Islamic doctrine teachings: fairness and justice are core values in Islam that people and leaders are expected to embrace to lead a 'just' life as God commands. The question that arises then is whether this link is true for Muslims more broadly or whether it is specific to Muslim societies only? Is it an individual-level effect or a contextual one? Results of the OLS regression models show that this effect is rather a contextual one specific to Muslim societies and not generalized to Muslim individuals across the globe. Surprisingly, only Muslims living in Muslim-majority countries are more likely to endorse justice values and be right-wing-oriented. People who identify as Muslim and live in non-Muslim countries exhibit rather a negative association between justice values and right-wing political ideology.

Based on these results, it is clear that the variation observed in the link between justice values and right-wing
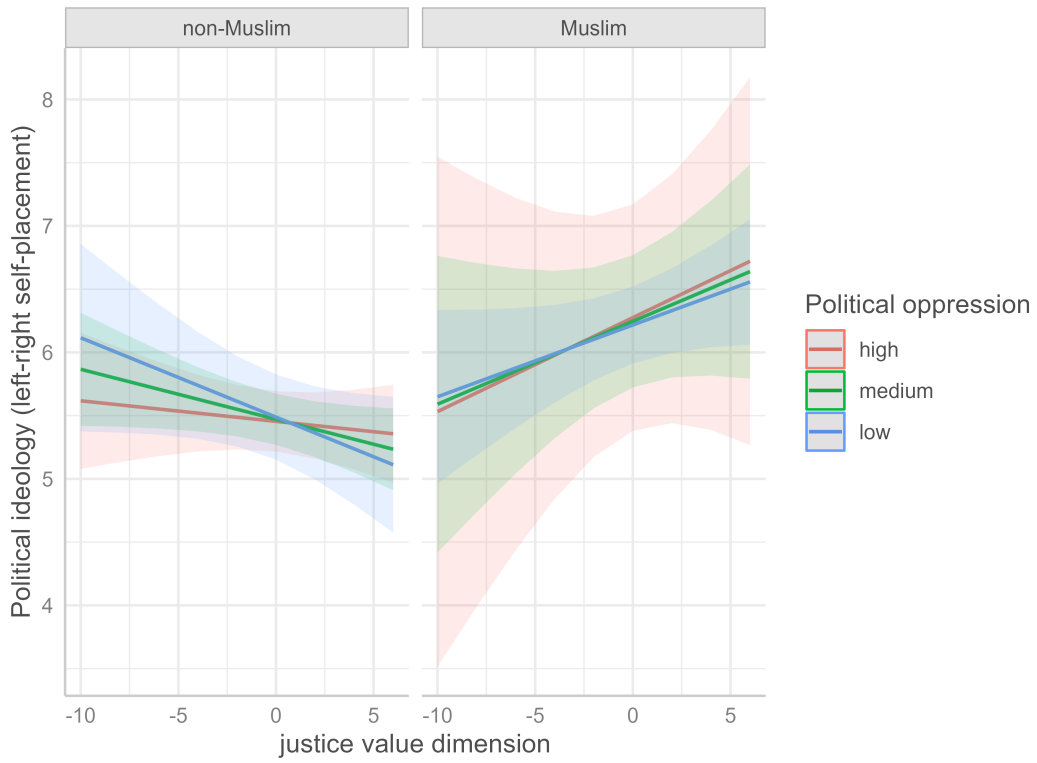
Figure 9: Interaction between the justice value dimension, Muslim majority dummy, and political oppression
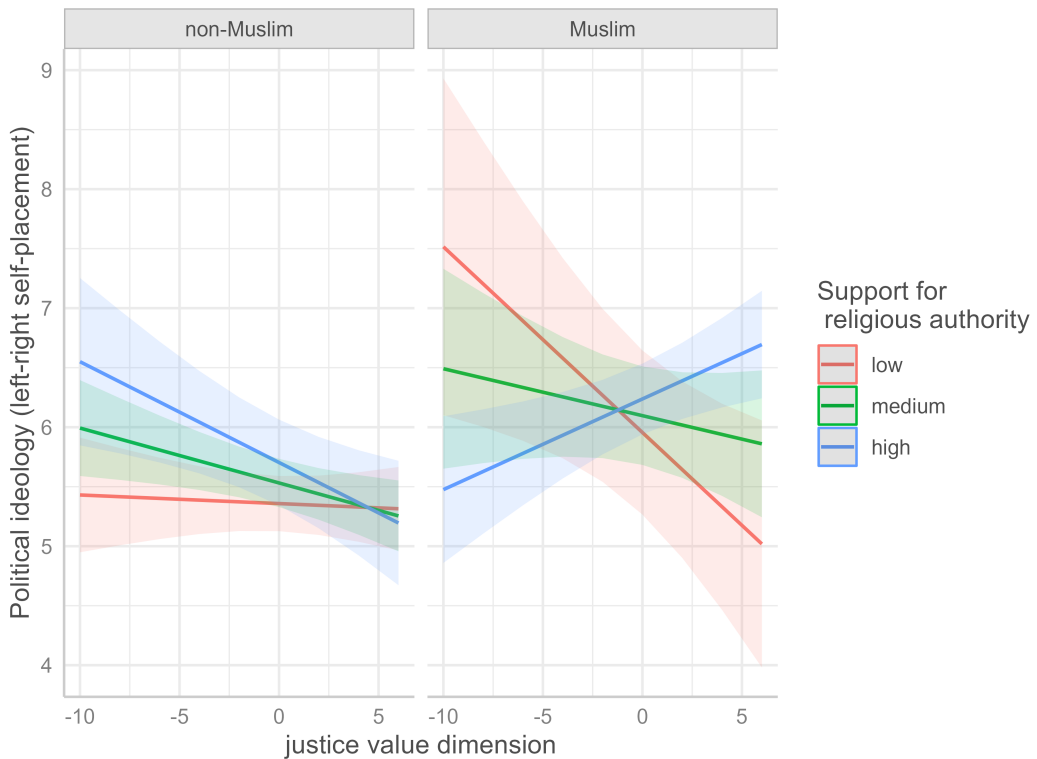

Figure 10: Interaction between the justice value dimension, Muslim majority dummy, and Islamist political authority

	Dependent variable:	
	Left-right (self-placement)	
	(8)	(9)
Conservatism	0.229***	0.229***
	(0.014)	(0.014)
Justice	−0.041*	−0.046**
	(0.021)	(0.018)
Religiosity	0.065***	0.065***
	(0.004)	(0.004)
Education	−0.036***	−0.036***
	(0.004)	(0.004)
Gender	0.101***	0.101***
	(0.018)	(0.018)
Age	0.027***	0.027***
	(0.006)	(0.006)
Oppression	0.004	
	(0.024)	
Authority		0.144
		(0.096)
Muslim	0.771***	0.565**
	(0.274)	(0.234)
Justice:Oppression:Muslim	0.003	
	(0.011)	
Justice:Authority:Muslim		0.130***
		(0.031)
Constant	5.430***	5.490***
	(0.106)	(0.104)
Random effects:		
Country variance	0.35	0.32
Residual variance	5.01	5.01
Random slope justice		
Random slope authority		
N	53	53
Observations	61,918	61,918
Log Likelihood	−137,962.500	−137,949.500
Akaike Inf. Crit.	275,959.000	275,933.100
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	276,112.600	276,086.700
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table 3: **Multilevel regression models (8-9). Entries are regression coefficients and their standard errors in parentheses. Model 8 tests the political oppression mechanism, whereas Model 9 tests the religious political authority mechanism.**

	Dependent variable:		
	Left-right (self-placement)		
	(10)	(11)	(12)
Conservatism	0.229***	0.229***	0.232***
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Justice	−0.039**	−0.027	−0.043**
	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.019)
Religiosity	0.065***	0.066***	0.065***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Education	−0.036***	−0.034***	−0.037***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Gender	0.101***	0.104***	0.104***
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Age	0.027***	0.026***	0.027***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Muslim	0.446	0.729***	0.569
	(0.412)	(0.231)	(0.353)
GDP	−0.001		
	(0.005)		
Gini		0.009	
		(0.009)	
Corruption			−0.0002
			(0.005)
Justice:GDP:Muslim	−0.014*		
	(0.008)		
Justice:Gini:Muslim		0.008	
		(0.008)	
Justice:Corruption:Muslim			−0.010***
			(0.004)
Constant	5.427***	5.407***	5.423***
	(0.099)	(0.098)	(0.102)
Random effects:			
Country variance	0.34	0.35	0.35
Residual variance	5.01	4.95	5.01
Random slope justice	0.01	0.01	0.01
N	53	53	53
Observations	61,918	60,661	61,197
Log Likelihood	−137,963.700	−134,828.700	−136,331.400
Akaike Inf. Crit.	275,961.400	269,691.300	272,696.800
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	276,114.900	269,844.500	272,850.200
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table 4: **Multilevel regression models (10-12). Entries are regression coefficients and their standard errors in parentheses. GDP = GDP per capita; Gini = Inequality Index; Corruption = Corruption Perception Index**

political ideology has less to do with individual factors and more to do with contextual factors that shape people's values and beliefs. There are many possible explanations for what motivates people living in Muslim societies to be more supportive of justice and more right-wing oriented. While it is impossible to test with certainty the causal process at work given the available data, it is useful to consider a few important mechanisms relevant to the literature on religion and politics in the region. The first possible mechanism emphasizes the role of political oppression in shaping people's values. In several of these Muslim countries, opposition groups, and more specifically Islamist opposition parties, are censured, oppressed, and banned from politics. It is conceivable, therefore, that more censorship will yield more endorsement of justice, and since Islamist parties represent the right-wing camp in Muslim countries, people will be more inclined to identify with the right. A second potential mechanism is a belief in Islamist political authority (or political Islam) as a type of government capable of achieving justice in Muslim societies. In his famous work "Making Democracy Work," Putnam et al. (1992) makes a similar argument of medieval Italian cities, and notes that people are more concerned with the "city of God" than with the "city of man." In Muslim countries, Islam plays an important role by providing answers and guiding rules on how to achieve justice in society, how to organize society more fairly, and how to avoid injustices. Therefore, by emphasizing justice values, contemporary Islamist parties are appealing to people who believe in political Islam and the role of Islamist political authority in pursuing fairness and establishing a just order – as the previous Islamic Caliphates aimed at in the golden age of Islam.

Using political oppression and political Islam aggregate measures from the Freedom House and WVS respectively, I compute a three-way interaction to test for the two mechanisms. On the one hand, results suggest that there is no evidence of a political oppression effect on the link between justice values and right-wing political ideology. In other words, the link is not stronger in Muslim countries where Islamist parties are more oppressed, hence, one can argue that restricted access to political competition and participation is not driving the strong endorsement of justice values among right-wingers in the Muslim world. On the other hand, results suggest some evidence of the second mechanism. In countries more favorable for political Islam (religious authorities interpret the laws of the country), the link between justice values and right-wing political ideology is significantly stronger than in those where there is little to no support for political Islam. When controlling for other potential factors (GDP and inequality) shaping this link, only the corruption perception index is significant, which means that in Muslim societies where there are high corruption perceptions, the link between justice values and right-wing political ideology is stronger. I interpret these findings as follows: while there might be many explanations for why people who endorse justice values tend to be right-wing oriented in Muslim societies, political Islam seems to be driving the strongest effect (compared to economic and social factors).

Conclusion

In short, this article has two important implications for the study of values and political ideologies across religions. First, the variation in value endorsement across religions provides evidence that values differ in meaning and

importance across religions. Contrary to what many scholars claim, values are not universal, instead, they vary depending on the context in which they are produced, interpreted, and practiced. Both Islamic teachings and Islamist political parties place a huge emphasis on the values of justice, hence, the strong and positive association between justice values and right-wing political ideology in Muslim contexts only. Therefore, a close reading of the religious, historical, and political context can provide a better understanding of this link in comparative research.

Furthermore, the findings from this study shed some light on the study of Muslim societies – a group often overlooked in comparative politics and cross-cultural research. Only recently, public opinion firms started incorporating other non-WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) countries into their repository of data. As a result, little comparative work is done on Muslim societies, particularly studies with a comparative cross-national focus. Finally, and most importantly, the findings from this study clearly indicate that we should go beyond the over simplistic categorizations that are often used in cross-cultural research (e.g., individualistic vs. collectivistic cultures, honor vs. dignity cultures, tight vs. loose cultures, authoritarian vs. democratic cultures, traditional vs. progressive cultures). Such typologies do little to nothing to help us understand what really drives people's political orientation and potentially human behavior more broadly. Scholars with essentialist views have for long regarded the Muslim world as an "outlier" and have debated whether Islam is compatible with democracy. As noted by Tessler (2011, 2015), the study of ordinary citizens' values, beliefs, and attitudes in the Arab-Muslim world is the "missing dimension in political science research" .

Although the primary purpose of this paper was to study the link between values and political ideology across religions with a focus on Muslim contexts, it has a number of theoretical and practical implications. First, more empirical studies are necessary to identify better value models that help us understand political ideology and attitudes. As this study has shown, the meaning of a value might vary from one society to another and from one person to another depending on their core beliefs, religious affiliations, and cultural background. Given that, more theoretical work is needed to understand the nature and origins of values. Moreover, this paper only focuses on the Muslim majority countries. Additional research should access other religions such as Hinduism or Buddhism in order to explore more value dimensions and how they shape political views. Finally, an additional limitation of the present research is that all the models were based on the one-dimensional measure of political ideology (self-identification on the left-right scale). Future work should consider multi-dimensional scales that measure social and economic dimensions to capture more variation in political ideologies.

Appendix A

- **Christian majority countries:** Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Belarus, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, Ecuador, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Haiti, Mexico, New Zeeland, Netherlands, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, South Africa, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, Uruguay, USA, Zimbabwe.

- **Muslim majority countries:** Algeria, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Tunisia, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Yemen.

- **Other countries:** Hong Kong, India, Japan, Nigeria, the Republic of China, Singapore, South Korea, Trinidad and Tobago, Taiwan, Thailand

- **Value Dimensions:**

  - **Conservatism value dimension**

    * Tradition is important to this person to follow the customs handed down by one's religion or family, 1 (very much like me), 6 (not at all like me)
    * It is important to this person to behave properly to avoid doing anything people would say wrong, 1 (very much like me), 6 (not at all like me)
    * Living in a secure surrounding is important to this person, to avoid anything that might be dangerous, 1 (very much like me), 6 (not at all like me)
    * One of my main goals in life has been to make my parents proud, 1 (agree strongly), 4 (strongly disagree)
    * Future changes: greater respect for authority, 1 (good thing), 3 (bad thing)

  - **Fairness value dimension**

    * Claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled 1(never justifiable), 10(always justifiable)
    * Cheating on taxes if you have a chance, 1(never justifiable), 10(always justifiable)
    * Avoiding a fare on public transport, 1(never justifiable), 10(always justifiable)
    * Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties, 1(never justifiable), 10(always justifiable)

	n	mean	sd	median	min	max	range	skew	kurtosis
Left-right	66334	5.68	2.37	5	1	10	9	-0.03	-0.40
Authority	79427	3.88	0.75	4	1	6	5	-0.58	0.10
Justice	76745	8.58	1.82	9.25	1	10	9	-1.67	2.81
Religiosity	76419	5.42	2.64	6	1	8	7	-0.64	-1.14
Education	78954	5.63	2.42	6	1	9	8	-0.24	-0.96
Age	79599	41.86	16.62	40	16	102	86	0.50	-0.64
Political authority	79684	4.24	1.25	4	1.99	7.47	5.48	0.36	-0.18

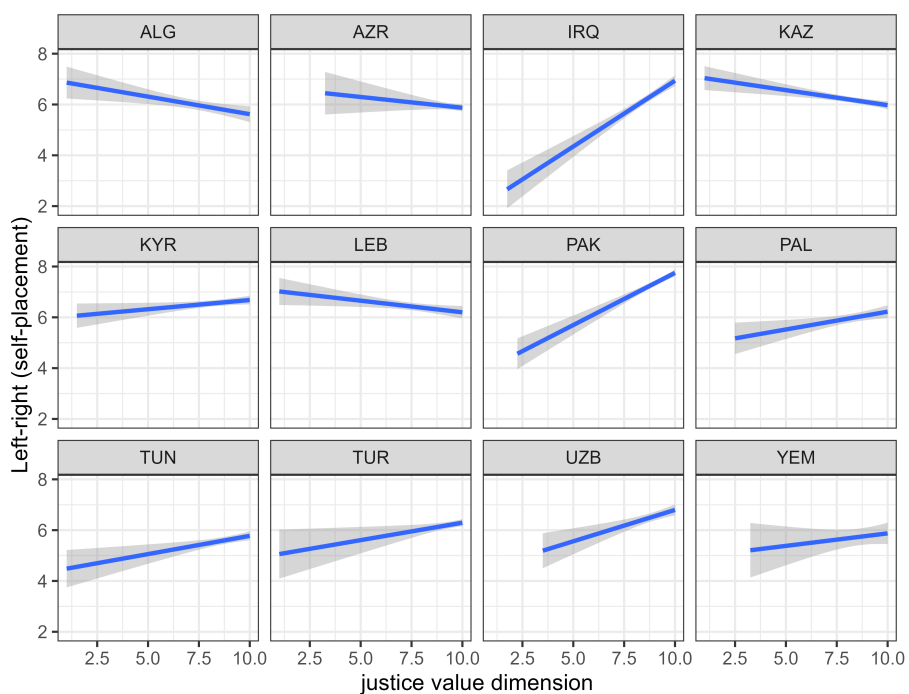Table 5: **Descriptive statistics of key variables**

Figure 1: **Bivariate regression between justice value dimension and left-right self-placement in a sample of Muslim countries**
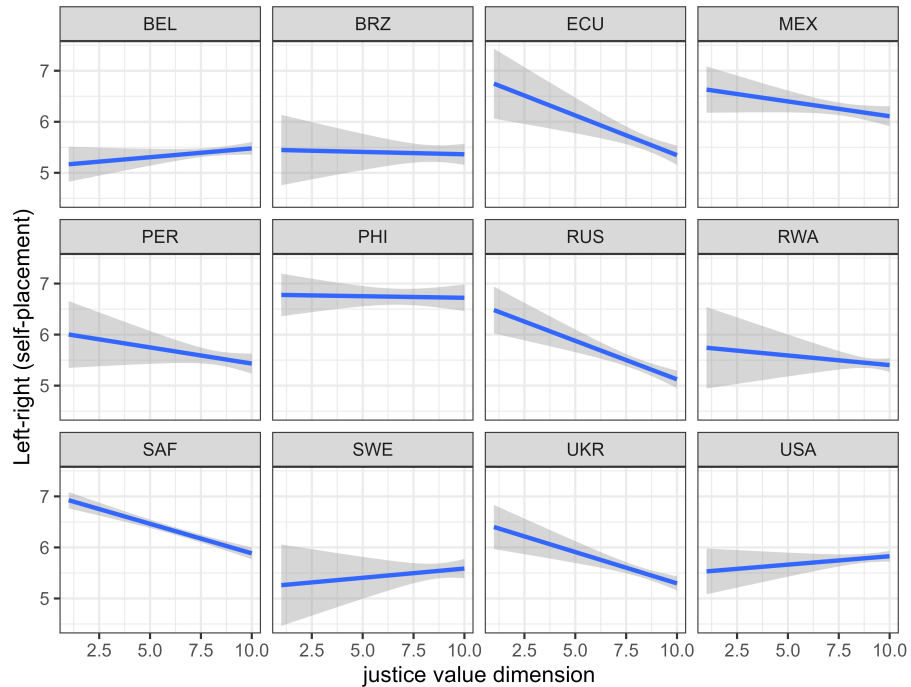
Figure 2: **Bivariate regression between justice value dimension and left-right self-placement in a sample of Christian countries**

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