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Culturalists claim that political outcomes, such as respect for human rights, are deeply rooted in culture. Some have singled out Islam as particularly problematic. We assess whether Muslim societies suffer higher levels of political terror compared with others. Our results show that countries containing larger shares of Catholics, and those dominated by Catholics, fare the worst. The share of the population Muslim and Membership in the Organization of the Islamic Conference predicts lower levels of political terror. Claims about the uniqueness of Islam for accounting for political repression seem to be exaggerated. Consistent with the findings on religion and democracy, our results indicate that it is the Arab region, not religion that matters, but Latin America shows the largest impact. Substantively, political and economic factors matter a whole lot more than do the variables on religion. This is good news for policy that seeks to end the scourge of political repression.

In July 2004, a prominent Norwegian politician, Carl I. Hagen, in an address to a religious group, commented that Jesus Christ was kind to children whereas the Prophet Mohammed would turn them into suicide bombers. Such rhetoric resonates with a large segment of public opinion across the globe. The portrayal of the Prophet Mohammed as a terrorist by a Danish cartoonist, which led to massive protests in many parts of the world, is emblematic of a Western public’s image of Islam. Even the Pope became embroiled in controversy for quoting an 11th Century text that suggested that Islamic teachings incite violence. In the post-9/11 world, “Islamist” terrorists have used suicide-bomb tactics from Bali to London, which has spawned a public discourse that ties Al Qaeda’s ideology to a larger Muslim cultural trait—the use of violence for political ends. These events

Author’s note: We are grateful to Nils Petter Gleditsch, Rodwan Abouharb, Halvard Buhaug, Erich Weede, Richard Pape, and Ulrika Märtensson for comments and suggestions. We deeply appreciate the comments and suggestions of the editor and several anonymous reviewers, who were unusually constructive. Only we are responsible for errors. The replication data are available at http://www.isanet.org/data_archive/. Equal authorship. We dedicate this article to the memory of Steven Poe, who has inspired us and taught us much.

1 The European Union decided to ban the term “Islamic terrorism” because it was too emotive, as terrorism by Protestant fundamentalists, Hindus, Buddhists, and Catholics are rarely prefaced by the religious denomination (Beunderman 2006).
play into anti-Muslim feelings, even within bastions of liberal Western states, such as the Netherlands, Denmark, and France. Discussion on the Turkish bid to join the European Union is illustrative. Europeans view Turkish membership as problematic largely because it is a majority-Muslim country. Violent fundamentalist groups, such as Al Qaeda, also claim that they represent those oppressed by “false” Islamic governments, vowing to restore “true” Islam. Discussions in the West on questions of tolerance and human rights are often reduced to contrasting a progressive liberal West with a “backward” Islamic world, which is mired in tradition (Esposito 1999:245). Do Muslim societies have particularly “bloody inwards,” as some culturalists have claimed? (Huntington 1996). This study addresses this debate by empirically examining whether countries with larger shares of Muslims, and those demographically dominated by Muslims, are more likely than others to experience state-sponsored repression.

Recently, the influence of religious-cultural factors have received much attention in economics, political science, and peace studies (e.g., Diamond 1994; Esposito 1999; Fox 2000; Hasenclever and Rittberger 2000; Russett, Oneal, and Cox 2000; Fish 2002; Norris and Inglehart 2004). Apparently, norms, values, and attitudes conditioned by religion determine political and economic life to a significant extent (North 1990; Landes 1999). Many argue that “culture matters” (Price 1999; Harrison and Huntington 2000; McTernan 2003), and some depict Islamic culture in particular as worrisome, largely because of Islam’s inability to deal with a secularizing, modern world (Barber 1995; Huntington 1996; Juergensmeyer 2000; Hutchinson 2005).

We use the 5-point Political Terror Scale (PTS), which is based on country reports by Amnesty International and the United States’ State Department, as our main measure of political repression. Using these data, we find that countries with higher shares of Muslims suffer much lower levels of political repression, relative to states with higher shares of Catholics. The results are robust to different operationalizations of the religion variables, including dichotomized measures capturing Muslim dominance and membership in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Fortunately, the substantive impact of religion seems to be very slight when compared with political-economic variables, such as democracy, per capita income, oil wealth, and involvement in civil war. Our results are robust to different measures of repression, such as the physical integrity rights (PIR) measure of the CIRI data project (Gingranelli and Richards 1999), alternative specifications of the model, sample size, and several appropriate testing procedures for cross-section, time-series data, and continuous and ordinal data.

Why Repress?

It is not obvious why religion should predict the level of political terror in a society. We first outline a model of repression from the extant literature on the subject and then discuss the ways in which Islam may relate to such a model. Human rights practices depend primarily on decisions made by leaders from a menu of choice about how to respond to a perceived or real threat. According to Poe (2004), repression is likely when state leaders try to decrease threats

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2 Ironically, Serbia, a country against which NATO went to war for preventing genocide, has a greater chance of joining Europe than Turkey, a NATO ally!

3 This measure was first introduced by Stohl, Carleton, and Johnson (1984) and compiled by many researchers, foremost among them Gibney and Dalton (1996). We use the Hafner-Burton replication data available at http://www.prio.no/jpr/datasets. We refer the reader to her article for details.

4 We also run robustness tests using the Physical Integrity Rights (PIR) index (Gingranelli and Richards 1999). The results using PIR support the findings using PTS. The PIR data are described at http://ciri.binghamton.edu/index.asp. All results are available in the web Appendix.

5 Membership in the OIC is obtained from the OIC website: http://www.oicoci.org/.
or/and increase its strength relative to domestic adversaries. Others, too, have variously argued some version of this parsimonious model when they have suggested that political leaders are most likely to use repression as a means to gain control over serious dissent (Gurr 1986; Gartner and Regan 1996; Moore 2000; Landman 2005). Such practices as political murder, torture, disappearances, and imprisonment for political activity, reflected in the standard measures of political terror, are more likely to occur when some level of political dissent threatens incumbent rulers. We do acknowledge, of course, that some rulers may also repress without facing any level of dissent and use other means, such as reform and cooptation, to deal with threats. Nevertheless, if in fact Islam is uniquely “bloody”—our main focus of study—then these data are ideally suited for testing the proposition that ordinary people face harsher conditions for political activity in Muslim states.

Given this model, the importance of religion for repression can be conceptualized in two broad ways: on one hand, particular aspects of a religion may increase the level of dissent from below because religious dogma provides the impetus for challenging rulers in violent ways. On the other hand, certain features of religious institutions, or social attitudes and beliefs, may legitimize some state actions against individuals over others. With this broad schema in mind, we examine arguments about why Islam may matter for predicting the dissent-repression nexus.

Why Islam?

Culturalist see political practices and outcomes as deeply rooted in cultural practices and beliefs, shaped by theology (Huntington 1996; Lewis 2003; Pipes 2003). Huntington (1996:258) argues that there are sharp cultural differences between the political values of a western Christian heritage and Islam—apparently Islam has bloody borders as well as “bloody innards.” Rather than geo-strategic issues, it is cultural values that make Muslim states prone to violence. Others suggest that state repression relates to structure, political strategies, short-term strategic questions of power and profit, and that culture is merely an epiphenomenon (Jackman and Miller 1998; Booth and Seligson 2004; Nasr 2005).

In the first instance, we examine possible “bottom up” effects of Islam on the level of state repression. Particular teachings of Islam could empower ordinary people to high levels of dissent. The most commonly discussed aspect of Islamic teaching is the socially sanctioned right of *Jihad*, where every individual is bound by faith to fulfill this duty. Some Islamist leaders, such as Ayatollah Khomeini and Osama Bin Laden, have issued *fatwahs* that include suicide bombing as a legitimate tactic, and these events are seen as a civilizational trait of Islam (Friedman 2005). Anti-western sentiments, particularly over the West’s support for the state of Israel, may allow radicals to rally the masses against their ruling elites. According to Huntington (1996:175), Muslims are less loyal to the state because of the concept of the *Ummah*, which emphasizes allegiance to a larger religious community, as opposed to a territorially bound, secular state. The rise of so-called Islamic fundamentalism is often equated with the desire of true believers to bring about the realization of the sovereignty of *Allah* over secular political authority. All of this suggests that ruling elites within Muslim states could face uniquely high levels of dissent from below.

Does religion also determine state responses and strategies from the “top down”? State elites and the ruling class could be overly sensitive because

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6 On whether it is Islam rather than other convictions that may have driven the September 11th hijackers to crash planes into buildings in the U.S.A., see Holmes (2005).
religious opposition to secular rule is ever present; a pattern identified in the Islamic world (Hafez 2003). According to Smock (2002:8), authoritarian regimes in Turkey, Malaysia, and Algeria have employed harsh measures to suppress Islamic movements that were gaining support. Even more liberal forms of political Islam have been subjected to repression by state authorities as "undesirable expressions of political dissent" (Smock 2002). Apparently, one cultural trait attributed to Islam is the preference for order over chaos, which legitimizes the use of harsh methods against any forms of organized opposition (Esposito 1999). As a result, Price (1999:162) claims that "the abusive treatment of citizens by governments became acceptable in many Islamic societies." Moreover, in Egypt, "opposition groups are tolerated only as long as they remain relatively weak, or accept government control and do not threaten the regime" (Esposito 1999:244). Thus, Muslim states may engage in uniquely high levels of repression because of topdown processes, where the violent actions of rulers against society are accepted as legitimate measures for restoring social order.

Muslim societies also lack separation of religion and state, which some suggest is problematic (Fox 2006). According to them, the alliance between religion and state is key to understanding the status of human rights in Muslim societies (Mayer 1988). The dissent-repression cycle could occur when state-sponsored religious dogma clashes with the rights of minorities. Religion is often formally integrated into government policies, as religious laws regulate the personal sphere, such as dress codes and dietary laws, and bans on "infidels" from holding certain political posts is a common feature (Price 1999:2). According to systematic data collected by Jonathan Fox and associates, "both Catholic and Protestant states engage less in religious regulation," while Muslim states are identified as uniquely interventionist (Fox 2006:560). While all, or many, of the features of Islam identified above may matter, we are not aware of any study that has directly examined whether Muslim societies are any worse than states with majorities of other believers in terms of predicting the level of state-sponsored repression.\footnote{Some political scientists (Chehabi and Linz 1998) identify a unique brand of autocratic regime, which they term "sultanistic." Despite the reference to the Ottoman Empire and its heritage, the large majority of their cases are Catholic countries in Latin America and Africa. Only Iran is presented as a "sultanistic" regime that contains a majority of Muslims.} If it is Islam, rather than other factors, that really matters, then countries with larger shares of Muslims (and those dominated by Muslim populations) should correlate with the adverse outcomes many expect in the political sphere.

The empirical literature on the effects of Islam on democracy confirms some of the negative arguments. Apparently, Islamic attitudes toward women make Muslims culturally non-conducive to modernization (Fish 2002; Karatnycky 2002). Donno and Russett (2004) found that repression of women's rights is indeed more widespread in Islamic countries, particularly in the Arab world. Some find that Islam has an independent effect on lower levels of democracy (Ross 2001; Fish 2002). However, Donno and Russett (2004) suggest that the effect of culture has changed dramatically over time. Before 1980, predominantly Catholic countries were "even less likely than Islamic ones to have democratic governments, but this relationship subsequently turned strongly positive" (Donno and Russett 2004:583). They argue that rather than an effect of religion, it is cultural factors peculiar to the Arab region that may matter.

Mayer (1993) warns that the Western tendency to believe that Islam is special can "lead to a failure to recognize the common dimensions of human rights issues in Muslim and non-Muslim societies" (Mayer 1993:117). An overemphasis on Islam can obscure the mechanisms that explain human rights violations in these societies, particularly if other factors more salient to human rights go
unacknowledged. Following 9/11 and subsequent events, the tendency to focus negatively on Islam has grown. Addressing this important issue systematically, thus, is even more pertinent today, using a methodology that holds factors constant across several cultural traits, so that Islam’s uniqueness for explaining repression of human rights can be estimated more precisely. Given recent discussions about the effects of religious fundamentalism and religious discrimination on terrorism and violent conflict, testing how the share of a religious population predicts repression is crucial for gaining further insight into how and why religion features in violent political outcomes (Marty and Appleby 1995; Reynal-Querol 2002; Hafez 2003; Fox 2004; Nordås 2004).

Methods, Variables and Data

Our dependent variable, the PTS (Stohl et al. 1984; Gibney and Dalton 1996; Hafner-Burton 2005), captures negative rights, as it measures arbitrary physical harm and state coercion with threat of harm against ordinary people. Generally, there is high congruence among differently defined scales of repression (Landman 2005). We follow the conservative strategy of testing our models with both the PTS and a measure of PIR (Cingranelli and Richards 1999), but we report only tests using the PTS because of space limitations (see web Appendix for results using PIR).

The PTS scale rates the yearly performance of countries on an interval scale of 5 categories (Hafner-Burton 2005:689).

1. If countries are under secure rule of law, political imprisonment and torture are rare, and the political murders are extremely rare.
2. If imprisonment for non-violent political activities is limited, torture and beating are exceptional, and political murder rare.
3. If political imprisonment is extensive, execution and political murder may be common, and detention for political views are acceptable.
4. If the practices of level 3 are expanded to a larger segment of population, murders, and disappearances are common, but terror affects primarily those who interest themselves in political practices and ideas.
5. If level of terror are population wide, and decision makers do not limit themselves by which they pursue private and ideological goals.

Our main independent variables are the percentages of the major religions that make up a state. The variables are constructed as percentage of Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, and other religions, for each country, summing to 100 (La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanes, Schleifer, and Vishny 1998). Secondly, we create dichotomous measures to capture aspects of dominance of one or another religion within a country. We create a Muslim-dominance dummy variable taking the value 1, if Muslims are >80% of the population, and 0 if below. We created similar dummy variables for Catholics, leaving out Protestant- and “other”-dominance as reference categories. The data on the share of the population Muslim correlates at $r = .98$ with Fearon and Laitin’s (2003) measure of the size of the Muslim population, which is reassuring. Thirdly, we test a dummy variable coded according to membership in the OIC (see note 5). As expected, this variable correlates at $r = .83$ with the share of the population Muslim (the first indicator).

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8 In robustness checks, we also conduct all out analyses with the PIR data (Cingranelli and Richards 1999). The correlation between the PTS and PIR is $r = .82$. The results are in the web Appendix.

9 We also test the dominance variables at the 70% and 90% thresholds respectively, and the results are the same.
Controls

We control for several relevant factors gleaned from previous studies. Poe and Tate (1994) and Poe, Tate, and Keith (1999) find that past levels of repression (the human rights legacy), the level of formal democracy, population size, economic standing, the threat of organized violence in the form of involvement in international and civil wars, have significant effects on repression (Davenport and Armstrong 2004; Poe 2004; Landman 2005). Civil wars are a real threat to leaders, but the justification Poe and associates provide as to why international war matters is somewhat vague. One possible explanation might be that the state leaders see an increased need for instituting measures, such as states of emergency, out of concerns over internal dissent, traitors, and saboteurs. However, external crises may lead to “rally round the flag” effects when states shift their focus from domestic to international threats. The empirical evidence on whether international war leads to human rights repression is mixed (Richards, Gelleny, and Sacko 2001; Landman 2005). We include controls for both types of armed conflict—civil and interstate war. Using the Uppsala/PRIO data set that includes all conflicts with at least 25 battle-related deaths (Gleditsch, Wallensteen, Eriksson, Sollenberg, and Strand 2002), we compute the number of years of peace since the last conflict and include ongoing conflict coded as dummies. We do this for both types of conflict.10

Democracy is an important predictor of respect for human rights (Davenport and Armstrong 2004; Landman 2005). The existence of an organized, legal, political opposition, a free press, and civil society are constraints on leaders who may be tempted to violate citizens’ rights. Established democracies contain norms of non-violent means of conflict resolution, such as protest, strikes, and other civil actions to make demands on government. Authorities responding to demands are constrained by laws of due process and political oversight. Some argue a curvilinear effect of democracy on repression, where states at intermediate levels of democracy are most likely to be repressive (Fein 1995). Davenport and Armstrong (2004) find, however, that the effect of democracy is linear and negative, and most significant when the democracy score is relatively high. Following these writers, as well as others, we define our control for regime type as a dummy variable taking the value 1 if the Polity IV (variable Polity 2) score is above 6 on the 11-point scale (i.e., 7–10) and 0 if below. In our sensitivity analyses, we test the robustness of our main variables by including democracy defined at various thresholds.

Whether or not countries are petroleum exporters is a crucial control variable when assessing Islam’s effects on repression. As oil-wealthy countries are largely in the Middle East and North Africa, tend to be undemocratic, and are largely Muslim, we isolate religion’s effects from this potential confounding factor. We enter a dummy variable that takes the value 1, if oil exports are <1/3 of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 0 if not, taken from Fearon and Laitin’s (2003) replication data set.11 Several find that natural resource wealth is a problem for governance and peace (Auty 2001; de Soysa 2002). Resource wealth raises the stakes for state capture and lowers the incentive of rulers to reform (Jensen and Wantchekon 2004; Acemoglu and Robinson 2006). We expect, therefore, that states that are resource wealthy, such as oil-rich ones, will be more willing to resort to human rights violations than those that are not (de Soysa and Binningsbø 2006). Despite a correlation of only \( r = .30 \) between our oil-exporter dummy and the share of the

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10 The peace years variables are defined as the number of years since the last conflict. The count is begun at the time a country enters the system between 1946 and 2000. If a country enters the system with ongoing war, then peace years would be 0, and if a country has never experienced conflict, peace years would be 54, and so forth. We calculated the peace years using the Binary Time Series Cross Section (BTSCS) program working in Stata (Beck, Katz, and Tucker 1998).

11 The data are available at: http://www.stanford.edu/~jfearon/
population Muslim, we follow others who treat the question of religion and democracy by controlling for oil wealth (Ross 2001). In sensitivity analyses, we also enter a continuous measure of energy rents as a percentage of GDP (Bolt, Matete, and Clemens 2002) to assess the strength of this relationship further.

Previous research has explicitly controlled for legal traditions of states. Apparently, a British (common law) legal tradition that has independent bureaucracies and court systems constrain arbitrary acts by government (Poe et al. 1999). Likewise, leftist governments are found to be kinder to human rights (Poe et al. 1999). As governments may go in and out of office, while repression scores are relatively inert, we use a more permanent measure capturing a socialist legal tradition—a measure that captures socialist law. Both measures are obtained from La Porta et al. (1998).12 The exact reason for why socialist states are more likely to respect human rights is unclear, except that they may be less likely to be challenged because of an ideology that emphasizes class equality and a unique capacity for social control. Yet, another argument could be that many of the socialist states did not have open dissent out of fear of Soviet intervention.

Economic conditions can affect the likelihood of repression. Poe et al. (1999:294) state that “in countries with economies characterized by scarcity, regimes will be more likely to repress domestic threats.” Henderson (1991) argues that in more developed states the population will be more content, and thus less repression is needed to keep control. Richer states also have higher capacity to deal with dissent through more organized channels, such as bureaucracies and public agencies (Fearon and Laitin 2003). Moreover, richer people may have high opportunity costs for engaging in dangerous (violent) dissent that threaten states (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). We use logged Gross National Income per capita in PPP terms (Gleditsch 2002) and the growth rate of income per capita to capture economic effects (World Bank 2005).

Studies find that countries with larger populations will be more repressive than countries with smaller populations (Poe 2004; Landman 2005). Theoretically, a large population implies larger numbers of potential dissenters and weaker state capacity. A large population may also mean a larger geographical area, which can be more difficult to control than a smaller area because of factors that affect the technologies of insurgency, such as rough terrain (Fearon and Laitin 2003). Poe et al. (1999:294) argue that “a large or dense population may increase the occurrence of state terrorism by increasing the number of occasions on which threats and coercive acts can occur,” and that having a large population also affects repression because of the strain on available resources. We also control for the degree of ethnic heterogeneity by a measure of ethnic fractionalization taken from Fearon and Laitin (2003).13 The size of a population and the degree of heterogeneity are correlated. As some argue, governance under conditions of social heterogeneity is supposed to be difficult (Alesina, Baqir, and Easterly 1999; Easterly 2001). The results of ethnicity on repression, however, are mixed (Walker and Poe 2002; Lee, Lindström, Moore, and Turan 2004). We also test population density in our sensitivity analyses for gauging the robustness of the basic model. The demographic data are from the World Bank (2005), expressed as total population (logged) and people per square kilometer (logged).

Others find that a lagged dependent variable (LDV) is highly significant (Poe 2004). The LDV controls for time dependence and serial correlation, and it presumably captures effects of those factors omitted in the models (Landman

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12 We might also have entered a term for Sharia law. However, Sharia is a major argument for why majority-Islamic society might suffer repression. Thus, entering a separate term would mask any independent effect that Islam may have on repression.

13 This variable indicates the likelihood that two individuals drawn at random from the population belong to the same ethnic group.
2005). On the other hand, the LDV may soak up so much of the variance that it masks potential causal factors explained by the other independent variables of interest (Achen 2000; Plümper, Troeger, and Manow 2005). We will test our models with and without LDVs.

In our sensitivity analyses, we test the effects of regional factors, as human rights conditions, much like democracy, may cluster in space, and others report that women’s rights issues are better predicted by regional factors rather than religion (Donno and Russett 2004). Finally, we control for time trends in the data. Human rights data may be affected over time by the increased sophistication of the technologies of detection. Some find that while the reporting of violations by Amnesty International and the US State Department differed somewhat in early years, they have tended to converge in later years (Poe, Vazquez, and Carey 2001). We enter year dummies to capture such potential time trends in the data. Time dummies also take care of any unobserved factors, such as the end of the Cold War, or global policy shifts that may affect human rights through the process of diffusion and increased activism across the globe (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Simmons and Elkins 2004).

An examination of all of our variables did not show correlations that would lead us to be concerned about multicollinearity (see correlations in Appendix). As seen there, a regional dummy variable for the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) correlate at \( r = 0.64 \) with the share of the population Muslim. Hence, we only use these variables together in our robustness checks. The next highest correlation is that between income per capita and democracy (\( r = 0.51 \)), but as income and democracy are often used together and show statistical significance independently, collinearity is probably not a factor. As seen in the table in the Appendix, there is a positive but rather small bivariate relationship between the share of the population Muslim and the level of repression (\( r = 0.19 \)).

We estimate the PTS scale using Ordered Probit analysis because the cut-off points of this 5-point scale are easier to interpret. We use probit rather than logit because the scale is very close to being normally distributed (Long 1997). Additionally, time-series, cross-section data may contain complicated correlation patterns because of the spatial and temporal nature of the data setup. With the ordered probit models, we cluster the analysis on countries and estimate the Huber-White corrected robust standard errors, a method which is robust to heteroskedasticity and serial correlation (Wiggins 1999). By clustering on country, we assume that the data is correlated within clusters but not across. The summary statistics of each of the variables are described in the Appendix. The estimates are based on data for 141 countries with over 1 million inhabitants covering the period 1980–2000. The data set is unbalanced (i.e., the number of countries is not the same for each of the years), and the availability of data for all of the controls determined the size of the data set (see Appendix for country list).

### Results

In Table 1, column 1, our baseline model confirms many of the findings of previous studies. The high levels of significance reflect the fact that we did indeed

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14 We could also have controlled for how committed a country is to the norms of human rights by adding a variable measuring whether countries participate in human rights conventions, but the existing evidence suggests that this variable does not matter (Keith 1999; Neumayer 2005).

15 Nevertheless, we examine variance inflation factor (VIF) scores in the sensitivity analyses (see web Appendix).

16 We use the statistical software package Stata version 9 in all estimations. The data and do files containing all the results will be available at http://www.isanet.org/data_archive.html. The estimations using the PIR scale and other diagnostics will be presented in a web Appendix.
Table 1. Ordered Probit Estimates of Religion and Political Terror, 1980–2000. Dependent variable: PTS

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oil exporter</td>
<td>0.553*** (3.67)</td>
<td>0.582*** (3.84)</td>
<td>0.323*** (3.81)</td>
<td>0.583*** (3.87)</td>
<td>0.589*** (3.83)</td>
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<td>GNI per capita</td>
<td>−0.517*** (6.83)</td>
<td>−0.515*** (6.77)</td>
<td>−0.293*** (6.76)</td>
<td>−0.524*** (6.89)</td>
<td>−0.535*** (7.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth per capita</td>
<td>−0.006 (1.19)</td>
<td>−0.007 (1.30)</td>
<td>−0.015*** (2.89)</td>
<td>−0.007 (1.21)</td>
<td>−0.006 (1.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>−0.869*** (7.85)</td>
<td>−0.953*** (8.30)</td>
<td>−0.564*** (7.20)</td>
<td>−0.924*** (7.97)</td>
<td>−1.004*** (8.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British legal system</td>
<td>−0.260* (1.92)</td>
<td>−0.136 (0.91)</td>
<td>−0.017 (0.19)</td>
<td>−0.200 (1.37)</td>
<td>−0.105 (0.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialism</td>
<td>−0.207 (1.30)</td>
<td>−0.104 (0.49)</td>
<td>−0.026 (0.22)</td>
<td>−0.146 (0.69)</td>
<td>−0.063 (0.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic fractionation</td>
<td>−0.665** (2.55)</td>
<td>−0.630** (2.35)</td>
<td>−0.360** (2.41)</td>
<td>−0.532* (1.95)</td>
<td>−0.565** (2.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population size他们</td>
<td>0.241*** (5.67)</td>
<td>0.228*** (5.50)</td>
<td>0.115*** (5.00)</td>
<td>0.224*** (5.30)</td>
<td>0.231*** (5.70)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil war</td>
<td>1.034*** (7.50)</td>
<td>1.035*** (7.67)</td>
<td>0.718*** (7.38)</td>
<td>1.024*** (7.73)</td>
<td>1.035*** (7.66)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Civil peace years</td>
<td>−0.025*** (5.55)</td>
<td>−0.025*** (5.45)</td>
<td>−0.009*** (3.32)</td>
<td>−0.024*** (5.30)</td>
<td>−0.024*** (5.52)</td>
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<td>Interstate war</td>
<td>0.469** (2.23)</td>
<td>0.511** (2.38)</td>
<td>0.252** (2.01)</td>
<td>0.469** (2.25)</td>
<td>0.489** (2.29)</td>
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<td>Interstate peace years</td>
<td>0.014*** (3.27)</td>
<td>0.010** (2.23)</td>
<td>0.004* (1.75)</td>
<td>0.011*** (2.58)</td>
<td>0.010** (2.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim (%)</td>
<td>−0.006** (2.29)</td>
<td>−0.003** (2.25)</td>
<td>−0.007* (1.67)</td>
<td>−0.003 (0.98)</td>
<td>−0.322** (2.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant (%)</td>
<td>−0.008* (1.82)</td>
<td>−0.006** (2.15)</td>
<td>−0.002 (1.31)</td>
<td>−0.003 (0.98)</td>
<td>−0.322** (2.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (%)</td>
<td>−0.004 (1.40)</td>
<td>−0.002 (1.31)</td>
<td>−0.003 (0.98)</td>
<td>−0.322** (2.05)</td>
<td>−0.322** (2.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIC member</td>
<td>1.225*** (19.96)</td>
<td>0.006 (0.03)</td>
<td>0.567*** (2.93)</td>
<td>0.567*** (2.93)</td>
<td>0.567*** (2.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political terrorb</td>
<td>0.006 (0.03)</td>
<td>0.567*** (2.93)</td>
<td>0.567*** (2.93)</td>
<td>0.567*** (2.93)</td>
<td>0.567*** (2.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim dominancec</td>
<td>0.006 (0.03)</td>
<td>0.567*** (2.93)</td>
<td>0.567*** (2.93)</td>
<td>0.567*** (2.93)</td>
<td>0.567*** (2.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic dominancec</td>
<td>0.006 (0.03)</td>
<td>0.567*** (2.93)</td>
<td>0.567*** (2.93)</td>
<td>0.567*** (2.93)</td>
<td>0.567*** (2.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wald chi-square</td>
<td>616.6</td>
<td>595.6</td>
<td>1400.9</td>
<td>623.3</td>
<td>623.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p &gt; chi-square</td>
<td>0.00001</td>
<td>0.00001</td>
<td>0.00001</td>
<td>0.00001</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. countries</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>140</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>2,576</td>
<td>2,567</td>
<td>2,544</td>
<td>2,567</td>
<td>2,576</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust z statistics in parentheses. Two-tailed tests. Due to the lagged dependent variable, Model 3 covers the period 1981–2000.

aLog-transformed.
bLagged 1 year.
cPopulation share ≥80%.
Significant at *10%, **5%, ***1%.
choose to include those variables others have also found to be robustly related to repression.

Most of the results, except for the socialist legal system and the growth rate of income, are significant in the baseline model. Both war variables are positive and significant for predicting repression, but the years since the previous international war shows a positive effect. This suggests that countries with less repression have shorter periods of international peace, indicating perhaps that it is the wealthy, democratic states that have banded together in collective security in recent years, such as in the Persian Gulf and the Balkans. Interestingly, oil export dependence, one of the key control variables, predicts higher levels of repression, consistent with various theories of the “resource curse.”

In column 2, we add the crucial independent variables. As seen there, the share of the population Muslim has a negative and statistically significant effect, relative to the share of the population Catholic, our reference category. In column 3, the result upholds when we enter a LDV, suggesting that this result is quite robust to specification. In order to assess the substantive effect of this significant result, we compute a baseline predicted probability of reaching level 4 and above of the dependent variable holding all the independent variables at their mean values. We use PTS >3 because this is the point at which “large segments of the politically active population are affected by political imprisonment and political murder” (see Methods above). Next, we vary each of our variables of interest to its maximum value, holding the others at their means, to see how this change compares with the baseline prediction. While holding all the variables at their means and raising the share of the population Muslim to its maximum value (99.8%) lowers the baseline predicted probability of reaching level 4 or above of political terror by 56%.

In column 4, we test the effect of membership in the OIC. As seen there, being a member of the OIC predicts lower levels of repression. In column 5, we include the religious dominance variables, defined at the 80% and above threshold. Catholic dominance predicts higher levels of repression, a result that is statistically highly significant. Muslim dominance had no discernible effect on higher repression relative to Catholics and others.

In summary, we find that, relative to countries with larger shares of Catholics, countries with larger shares of Muslims, and those demographically dominated by Muslims suffer lower levels of political repression. Moreover, membership in the OIC, too, predicts lower political repression relative to everyone else. It seems that Islam relative to Catholicism is a poor predictor of “bloody inards.” Interestingly, however, examining the substantive impacts of our political and economic variables, relative to the religious ones, is illustrative. Holding all variables at their mean values, going from a non-democracy to a democracy lowers the baseline predicted probability of level 4 and above of the PTS by 70%, while a similar movement from no civil war (0) to civil war (1) increases the baseline predicted probability by 280%—roughly five times the impact at the maximum value of the share of Muslims. Raising per capita income to the maximum value lowers the baseline predicted probability by 94%, again, slightly less than double the impact of the religious variables. Notably, changing from being an oil exporter (1) to being a non-oil exporter (0) lowers the baseline risk of repression at 4 and above on the PTS by 140%, which is roughly three times the impact of a maximum change of the share of the population Muslim. Public and scholarly discussion seems to be wrong about the uniqueness of Islam for predicting levels of dissent and repression, and they may have overemphasized religion over other, more important, factors based on political economy.

17 The effect of having a British legal system is statistically significant only at the 10% level in the baseline model, but it is fragile.
**Robustness Checks**

We conduct a series of sensitivity analyses to assess the robustness of our findings (results in web Appendix). First, we test other thresholds for religious dominance by running our models at the 70% and 90% share of the population respectively. The basic results uphold. Next, we add regional dummies, leaving out the “Western” region, which includes North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. The religion variables lose significance when the regions are added, although the share Islam remains negative and barely misses significance at the 10% level. Latin America, as a region, has the strongest impact of all, followed by the MENA region. These results are similar to those reported by others (Landman 2005). It is interesting that, of all the religions, the share of the population Muslim retains its sign and remains close to significance. Thus, the effect of Muslim societies becomes strong even against the share of Protestants, when regional dummies are included. Clearly, it is the regional effects of the MENA region, not the share of the population Muslim, that helps us understand the nature of human rights violations, a point also made about women’s rights (Donno and Russett 2004). Yet, the fact that the MENA region’s impact is not hugely different from the others is heartening. While the level of human rights, like democracy, may exhibit neighborhood effects, more sophisticated analyses are warranted to examine specifically how levels of human rights may cluster in space.

Given the discussions around Islam and violent conflict, we assess whether the effect of the share of Muslim relative to Catholics changes when dropping the conflict variables. Dropping civil and international war has little effect on the basic results. Dropping oil, too, made only a small difference. We tested a continuous measure of energy rents to GDP (Bolt et al. 2002), as it could be argued that our choice of oil exports above one-third of GDP is arbitrary. This variable is also positively and highly significantly related to the PTS. Despite this highly significant result for the energy wealth variable, the share of the population Muslim continues to show a negative and statistically significant effect on political terror.

The significant effect of Islam is affected if democracy is dropped from the models entirely. When we drop the democracy dummy variable, the statistically significant effect of the share of the Muslim population vanishes, suggesting that the relative effect of Catholicism might be driven largely by majority-Catholic states that have failed to democratize. However, dropping democracy from the model is theoretically questionable, as regime type has such a strong theoretical and empirical effect on levels of political repression. We tried democracy at several different cut-offs on the Polity2 scale. Adding a dummy, defining democracy above 8, made the Protestant variable insignificant, while Islam retained its statistically significant effect, proving once again its robustness. The reported effects did not change when defining democracy at the low end of 3 and above, nor when adding the Polity2 scale without dichotomizing.

Additionally, we ran all the reported models with the PIR data using linear estimating techniques. Our basic findings uphold (see web Appendix). We also conducted the usual diagnostics using the regression–cluster method. There was little sign of multicollinearity, as the mean VIF scores were always <2, and none

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18 The results are not published because of considerations of space, but they can be generated with the do files made available with the replication data and as a web Appendix (see above). We use both the PTS and PIR in the sensitivity tests.

19 The regional dummies are taken from the Fearon and Laitin (2003) replication data.

20 Logged and non-logged terms yield similar results.
of the individual variables reached the problematic score of 10 (Hamilton 1992; Stata Corporation 2003). As heteroskedasticity consistent robust-standard errors are obtained when clustering on country (Stata Corporation 2003), we ran the models without clustering and examined the residuals. The standardized residuals did not depart from normality. We also checked Cook’s D values to eliminate problems of influential observations. Running the model without several data points with values above the cut-off of 4/n made little difference to the results reported above.

Conclusion

Popular opinion, high political discourse, and several segments of scholarly discussion in the social sciences point to the uniqueness of Islam, often in rather disparaging terms. Discussion on the war against Al Qaeda, immigration-related problems, Middle Eastern wars, and the question of Turkey’s possible entry into the European Union are laced with concerns about Islam’s propensity for breeding religious fanaticism. Islam is apparently antithetical to individual rights and the respect for personal liberties. We also address a parallel debate about whether or not culture, rather than strategic behavior, matters when explaining political life. The policy import of this issue is enormous—if religion is a major driver of repression in a society, then there is little room for intervention from a policy perspective, and the process of change, if it ever gets in motion, could span generations. Fortunately, our estimates show that there is a lot of room for policy that could have more immediate effects. Compared with others, Islam is not associated with greater levels of repression, and religious affiliation is not a strong predictor of political terror.

We have only examined religion’s effect on a particular variety of human rights violations. Future studies may also look at other aspects of human rights, such as economic and gender rights. Case-study based research should examine the institutional bases of social control and interest mediation in Islamic societies. Why such factors might be weaker in majority-Catholic countries from a comparative perspective is also interesting. Questions of the quality of institutions, and institutional factors relating to colonial heritage based on recent work on European settler patterns, may also be extended fruitfully to human rights studies (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2001). Our empirical analyses clearly support those who argue that there is little in Islam that militates against the possibility of decent governance, for political compromise, and institutionalized political competition, as many others have also argued (Mayer 1993; Tessler 2002; Hafez 2003; Nasr 2005).

Apparently, one of the strongest predictors of why people are intolerant comes from real and perceived “threats to a way of life” (Gibson 2006). The current discussion on Islam contains such a tone. Our results certainly question the utility of framing issues around religious/cultural generalities. Policies based on the fear of Islam may itself lead to the violation of human rights and undermine democracy, particularly when Muslim immigrants are treated differently, when Muslims applicants for asylum and sanctuary face added barriers, and people face unfair treatment at the hands of governments simply because they profess a particular faith. As recent reports indicate, based on the fear of Islam, the actions of Russian authorities against some Muslim regions mirror the old Soviet Union, which may be counterproductive to peace and justice (Myers 2005). Our empirical results refute those who view Muslim societies as containing uniquely “bloody innards” relative to the other major religions.
Appendix

Correlation matrix of selected variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>OIC</th>
<th>Muslim (%)</th>
<th>Prot. (%)</th>
<th>Cath. (%)</th>
<th>Other (%)</th>
<th>MENA</th>
<th>Democ</th>
<th>Income/pc</th>
<th>Oil exp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PTS</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim (%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>-0.40</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prot. (%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cath. (%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democ.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNI/pc</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil Exp.</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary statistic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political terror scale</td>
<td>2,567</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim (%)</td>
<td>2,567</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>99.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protestant (%)</td>
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<td>12.1</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>97.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic (%)</td>
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<td>30.3</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (%)</td>
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<td>32.8</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oil exporter</td>
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<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNI per capita</td>
<td>2,567</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth per capita</td>
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<td>0.64</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>-52.1</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
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<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British legal system</td>
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<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>Socialist legal system</td>
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<td>0.32</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Ethnic fractionalization</td>
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<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.93</td>
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<td>1.5</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>0.39</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil peace years</td>
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<td>20.3</td>
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<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interstate war</td>
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<td>0.19</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Interstate peace years</td>
<td>2,567</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List of countries:

**Western Hemisphere**—United States, Canada, Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay.

**Europe & Central Asia**—The United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Spain, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Portugal, Poland, Austria, Hungary, Italy, Albania, Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan.

North Africa & Middle East—Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Sudan, Libya, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Israel, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates.

Asia—Afghanistan, China, Mongolia, South Korea, Japan, India, Bhutan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia.

Oceania—Australia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Fiji \( (n = 141) \).

References


Islam’s Bloody Innards?


