Religion in the Arab Spring: Between Two Competing Narratives

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Did religion promote or discourage participation in protest against authoritarian regimes during the Arab Spring? Using unique data collected in Tunisia and Egypt soon after the fall of their respective regimes, we examine how various dimensions of religiosity were associated with higher or lower levels of protest during these important events. Using these original new data, we reach a novel conclusion: Qur'an reading, not mosque attendance, is robustly associated with a considerable increase in the likelihood of participating in protest. Furthermore, this relationship is not simply a function of support for political Islam. Evidence suggests that motivation *mechanisms rather than political resources are the reason behind this result. Qur'an readers are more sensitive to inequities and more supportive of democracy than are nonreaders. These findings suggest a powerful new set of mechanisms by which religion may, in fact, help to structure political protest more generally.*

Observers have characterized the Arab Spring as a watershed moment in the relationship between religion and politics in the Middle East. These characterizations, however, have not all been consistent.[1] On the one hand, a popular account of the Arab Spring maintains that it was driven by secular liberals who wanted democracy, not the theocracy advocated by the region's best-known opposition movements. On the other, narratives abound about protesters walking from Friday prayers to central squares in order to demand the removal of the regime, motivated by the sermons heard at their mosques. It is unclear from existing accounts whether the Arab Spring protesters were particularly religious (or just the opposite) and whether or not they are more likely to support secular politics; this issue is particularly important given that these revolutions brought religious parties to power—at least temporarily—in both Tunisia and Egypt.

This article will attempt to address the role of religion in the Arab Spring protests. In doing so, it will assess the relationship between religious belief (and practice) and the likelihood of participation in protest. Using newly available data from the second wave of the Arab Barometer in Tunisia and Egypt (collected shortly after the fall of the regimes in each country), it will consider whether religious individuals in these countries were more (or less) likely to participate in antiregime protest during the recent spate of uprisings in the Arab world. In this article, we will suggest that religion was an important motivator of protest in the Arab Spring but in a manner that is perhaps different from that proposed by the "mosque to square" narrative. The evidence presented here suggests that individual piety, not communal practice, is associated with higher levels of protest. This surprising finding marks an important contribution to the study of religion and political behavior: in this setting, religion's influence on protest behavior has less to do with networks of mobilization and more to do with individual-level commitments that *inspire and motivate* participation.

Background

While many observers have speculated about the causes and motivations behind the Arab Spring, little

systematic analysis of who actually protested has been conducted. On one side, commentators have argued that the Arab Spring was a fundamentally secular phenomenon: the protesters mobilized in opposition to not only the existing regimes, but to extremist religious ideologies as well (Wright 2011). Knickmeyer (2011) writes that ''Rather than the Arab world's usual suspects–bearded Islamists or jaded leftists–it is the young people, angry at the lack of economic opportunity available to them, who are risking their lives going up against police forces.'' In a similar spirit, Noueihed and Warren state that ''the Arab Spring was not an Islamic Spring. The initial surge in early 2011 was not about religion but was an expression of anger over elite corruption, economic inequalities, widespread injustice and geriatric leaders who were out of touch with reality'' (2012, 304). Indeed, some analysts were struck by the Arab Spring as a departure from a history of religious motivations for political activity. As Zubaida writes, ''After decades of the dominance of religion and ethno-religious nationalisms in the region, the 'revolutions' in Tunisia and then Egypt seemed to eschew religion and nationalism in favour of classic political demands of liberty, democracy and economic justice'' (2011). In this sense, it is conceivable that the Arab Spring was, at most, a nonreligious phenomenon (and perhaps even antireligious; al-Rasheed [2011] suggests that religion has been used as a counterrevolutionary strategy in Saudi Arabia.) On the other hand, scholars have pointed to the role of Islam as a catalyst for antiregime mobilization. Lynch notes that Fridays frequently became ''days of rage'' (2012, 81, 91) in Egypt and elsewhere because of the convenience of organizing would-be protesters during Friday prayers. Benhabib (2011) suggests that the Islamic notion of *shahada*, meaning both ''witness'' and ''martyr,'' belongs in any Arab Spring narrative because of the importance of this concept in motivating antiregime activity. Likewise, mosques themselves are often said to have served as organizational hubs for protest. We call this the ''mosque-to-square'' narrative: as Ardıc suggests, ''mosques...functioned as a locus of anti-government agitation and logistical centers of preparation for demonstrations'' (2012, 38).

This article seeks to examine these two competing narratives more closely. Before proceeding with the data analysis, however, it is important to briefly summarize the key moments of the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt. Lynch (2012) notes that the commonly accepted starting point of the Arab Spring was December 17, 2011, when Mohammed Bouazizi, a young Tunisian in the small city of Sidi Bouzid, set himself on fire. Bouazizi had been attempting to sell produce on the

street when he was approached by police officers who accused him of not possessing a permit (presumably, these officers wanted a bribe—this story is not an uncommon one in Tunisia). When some of his goods were confiscated, Bouazizi walked to the governor's office to file a complaint, but he was ignored. He then found a can of gasoline and set himself on fire, shouting ''how do you expect me to make a living?''

In response to this event, Tunisians began to protest—first in Sidi Bouzid, then rapidly spreading to other areas of the country. Within a month, most Arab countries had been affected by protests. Protests began in earnest in Egypt on January 25 and grew in size and intensity until the resignation of longtime president Hosni Mubarak on February 10. One of the key moments in the Egyptian revolution was the January 28th ''day of rage,'' where hundreds of thousands of Egyptians marched from mosques to Tahrir Square in order to protest (Lynch 2012, 91). To some degree, this was the date on which the Egyptian revolution truly took on the character of a mass uprising.

Protests have spread across the Arab world, bringing down dictators not only in Tunisia and Egypt, but in Libya and Yemen as well, and threatening to do so in Syria. Most Arab regimes were forced to respond to these protests in one way or another, employing accommodation, repression, or some combination of the two. Although the experiences of various Arab countries during this tumultuous period share many key features, each country possesses unique characteristics (as Anderson [2011] is careful to warn us). The focus of this article, however, is on the behavioral aspects of the Arab Spring protests. Particularly, we ask: which of the two major narratives of religion in the Arab Spring holds more water? In other words: was the Arab Spring motivated by religion or were the uprisings nonreligious or even antireligious in character?

Protest and Religion

Religion does not figure prominently in studies of protest behavior.[2] Much of the existing social science literature on protest focuses on protest behavior as a collective action problem. Simply put, protest is

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[2]In fact, there is a significant body of literature that has begun to question the omission of the role of religion in key theories in International Relations and Comparative Politics. For examples, see the works of Elizabeth Shackman-Hurd, Monica Toft Duffy, Jose Casanova, Timothy Shah, Eva Bellin, and Daniel Philpott, among others.

a costly behavior that becomes progressively less risky as the number of participants increases. As Kuran (1991, 1995) observes, the dynamics of protest participation can perhaps be described in the following way: potential protesters will only participate if a sufficient number of other citizens also participate; consequently, chain reactions are possible once a relatively small number of highly motivated individuals decide to participate. Furthermore, as Lohmann (1994) notes, public-protest displays make information available to would-be protesters who were previously not engaged. The available information facilitates collective action because citizens learn about the preferences of other similarly aggrieved segments of the population and are more likely to join them in protest. Marwell and Oliver (1993) suggest that such information can aid in building a "critical mass" in which an increasing number of individuals become willing to participate. Using World Values Survey data, Dalton, van Sickle, and Weldon (2009) find that protest activity becomes more likely not as a result of dissatisfaction with the government, but because of access to the resources necessary for protest, such as education and involvement in social groups. A major implication of these models of protest behavior is that the key condition for such behavior is not merely the existence of sufficient grievances, but conditions that allow protesters to overcome the collective action problems inherent to such costly behavior.

The collective action genre of protest literature was developed in response to earlier theories of protest behavior that emphasized the role of grievances. Gurr's (1970) concept of relative deprivation is the most famous of these theories, emphasizing inequality, oppression, and regime mistreatment as key determinants of protest behavior. In these theories, adverse conditions motivate protest, and less emphasis is placed on the factors that make high-cost behavior more feasible. A variety of adverse conditions may motivate such behavior. While Gurr's account generally emphasizes economic factors, Goodwin (2001) suggests that revolutions are typically responses to political oppression and violence rather than economic considerations. In either case, this literature argues that opportunities are less important than grievances and motivations in driving protest.

Religious engagement may either increase or decrease an individual's propensity for protest.[3] As Johnston and Figa state: "there is wide variation in the role religion plays in oppositional processes" (1988, 33). The recognition of the potentially different effects of the various aspects of religion as a social-scientific phenomenon stretches back to Durkheim, who famously distinguished between "beliefs" and "rites." Durkheim writes that "religious phenomena fall quite naturally into two basic categories: beliefs and rites. The first are states of opinion and consist of representations; the second are fixed modes of actions. These two classes of phenomena differ as much as thought differs from action" ([1912] 2008, 36).

Religion may motivate high-risk behavior at both the individual and collective level primarily because religious motivations—which may include divine inspiration and sanction—and resources and opportunities linked to religious practice—which may include individual efficacy and social capital—bolster the likelihood of political protest. Roeder argues that religious considerations "make it harder to find mutually acceptable outcomes and raise the cost of side payments that might bring agreement" (2003, 513). Svensson makes a similar claim, arguing that when combatants' demands are anchored in a religious tradition, "they will come to perceive the conflicting issues as indivisible, and the conflict will be less likely to be settled through negotiations" (2007, 930). Relatedly, Bruce suggests that the otherworldly concerns addressed by religion can motivate believers to participate in "acts of extraordinary bravery and folly" (2003, 12), A similar theme is emphasized by Toft, Philpott, and Shah (2011), who argue that motivations draw those with religious attachments to mobilize more fervently on issues relating to religious freedoms.[4]

Much of the reason for this relationship between religiously driven *grievances* and *opportunities* linked to protest is that in religious societies, religious legitimacy and mobilization are often essential for the success of political causes. As Fox suggests, "religious frameworks can be used to legitimize grievances and mobilization efforts that are not religious in nature" (2002, 125). Indeed, religion may have a particularly strong impact on the nature and intensity of social movements; as Davis and Robinson argue, religious belief can help social

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[3]See Gaskins, Golder, and Siegel (2013) for a discussion of how religious participation may involve a trade-off in which religious activities reduce the amount of time available to obtain secular goods.

[4]These claims are supported by a large number of studies finding that religious conflicts tend to be more violent and more intense than nonreligious conflicts (Basedau et al. 2011; Henne 2012a, 2012b; Lai 2006; Pearce 2006; Reynal-Querol 2002).

movements succeed "by providing a transformative vision, a message of hope and inevitability, and a conviction of moral correctness" (2012, 26). Toft argues that this pattern may be particularly common in Muslim societies where "elites attempt to outbid each other to enhance their religious credentials and thereby gain the support they need to counter an immediate threat" (2007, 103). The same logic, therefore, should apply to both religious conflict and antiregime protest: religion will make believers less likely to compromise with or accede to the demands of a corrupt (or infidel) enemy, whether that enemy is a different religious group or an incumbent regime.

Opportunity or Grievances: The Role of Religion in Protest

While the distinction between grievances and opportunities is traditionally applied to civil war, we believe that it serves as a useful framework for studying religion's effect on protest as well. In fact, we argue that at both the communal and individual level the *opportunity* and *grievance* mechanisms linking religion to protest may plausibly be at work. This claim is not entirely new: Smith notes that religion can serve as both "a motivational wellspring" (1996, 10) and a source of "key resources" (13) for social movements. On the one hand, religious engagement might create the opportunity for greater protest. It may reduce the costs of collective action by increasing trust among coreligionists; it may also enhance the availability of information among coreligionists or otherwise serve as an organizational platform for political mobilization. A number of recent experimental studies have shown that religion promotes resources such as cooperation and prosocial behavior, at least within one's own religious group (Blogowska and Saroglou 2011; Johnson et al. 2010; Parra 2011). This account would suggest that *communal* religious practice should be more likely than individual piety to promote protest behavior because the key mechanisms are the social capital built by religion as well as its organizing capacity. Individual religious behaviors, according to this account, would not be likely to have as strong of an effect; as Putnam notes, "privatized religion may be morally compelling and psychically fulfilling, but it embodies less social capital" (2000, 74), However, in addition to fostering resources like social capital, communal religious activity may help to channel grievances that motivate political behavior. Wald, Owen, and Hill state that "churches possess many of the characteristics that

should maximize behavioral contagion" (1988, 531), Jamal (2005) has found that mosque participation in the context of the United States enhances a sense of "group consciousness," useful for political mobilization around issues linked to shared *grievances*. According to these accounts, therefore, the major mechanisms linking religion to protest behavior is religion's *communal* aspect: through both social capital and organization, group religious behavior could facilitate even high-risk political mobilization (Casanova 2012). We refer to these mechanisms as *opportunities* and *motivations* linked to communal religious practice that may increase the likelihood of political action.

The opportunity and grievance framework can also operate at the individual level. Harris (1994, 1999) suggests that the different aspects of religion have distinct effects on political mobilization. Studying the African American religious-political context, he notes that *church* activism provides organizational resources for collective action, while internal religiosity promotes feelings of efficacy, interest in politics, and other motivation-based psychological traits conducive to political activity. In total, he finds that "both organizationally and psychologically, religious beliefs and practices promote political involvement" (1994, 61–62). Thus, it is not only the communal aspect of religion that provides opportunities for political engagement: the individual dimensions of religion may also play a role. This finding is echoed by Loveland et al., who find that "prayer fosters a cognitive connection to the needs of others that manifests itself in the civic involvement choices of the prayerful" (2005, 13). Religion, it seems, may influence political mobilization (and therefore protest behavior) through both the grievance and opportunity channels.

The multiple channels through which religion may have influenced protest behavior can be classified as follows. On the one hand, religion might influence protest behavior through *communal* channels. Here, mosques serve as vehicles of political mobilization. Not only do they structure participation, but they equip participants with the necessary organizational resources to influence policy and participate in collective action. These communal channels are likely to serve as *opportunities* for political mobilization; if religion provides organization, it will likely promote internal cohesion, which Pearlman calls "the one prevailing path to nonviolent protest" (2011, 2). Further, communal religious practices may enhance a sense of *grievance* about a particular political dilemma. Through a growing

sense of group consciousness, individuals may begin to share the concerns of others in their communities. On the other hand, religion may promote antiregime behavior through *individual* channels: an individual's piety or private religious behavior may influence his or her propensity for protest. In this case, there may be a "social justice" mechanism, driven at the individual-level by beliefs and personal convictions about justice and equality (cf. Durkheim [1912] 2008; Harris 1994). Related to research emphasizing the role of grievances in motivating protest, this mechanism suggests that those individuals who are more pious are more likely to care about the plights of others and, consequently, the behavior of their regimes. As such, religious individuals may be more likely to mobilize on behalf of other citizens. Further, personal religion may create additional resources or opportunities for participation. Piety may also enhance an individual's sense of efficacy or trust, either of which would likely increase his or her likelihood of participating in protest. Thus, at both the communal and individual level, religious piety may enhance the resources and grievances necessary for political protest. Adjudicating between these different mechanisms represents an important step forward in the study of religion and protest as well as political behavior more broadly. In the Arab Spring—as well as other popular uprisings—it is important to ask whether religion (in both its individual and communal forms) creates *opportunities* or legitimizes *grievances* necessary for protest.[5] By unpacking these mechanisms, we ask what role, then, religion played in promoting participation in the protests of the Arab Spring.

Data and Methods

To assess the extent to which higher levels of religiosity were associated with a greater or lesser likelihood of participating in antiregime protest, we use survey data from Tunisia and Egypt, collected shortly after the removal of their respective regimes. These data are drawn from the second wave of the Arab Barometer survey.[6] This survey includes nationally representative samples of the populations of each country and is the only survey of its kind in the region. Interviews were conducted face-to-face. The samples cover all 27 governorates of Egypt and all 24 governorates of Tunisia, each in proportion to the population share of the governorates. Tunisia and Egypt were chosen for several reasons, both theoretical and practical: first, and most importantly, they are the two countries where the Arab Spring gained the earliest momentum. Subsequent protests and revolutions drew inspiration from these two cases. Second, the timing of events requires a focus on these two cases: by the time these surveys were conducted, the incumbent dictators in both Egypt and Tunisia had been unseated; this is not the case in Yemen, the only other country in the Arab Barometer in which massive protests took place during the Arab Spring (Libya and Syria are not in the sample). The survey was fielded in Egypt in June 2011 and in Tunisia in October 2011—shortly after the revolutionary tides that swept across both of these countries. It is important to note that the Arab Barometer survey was not originally designed to study the Arab Spring revolutions. However, an additional battery of questions on the revolutions was added to the surveys in Egypt and Tunisia in this second round that captures participation in the Arab Spring protests. In Egypt, 1,220 people were surveyed, while in Tunisia the sample size was 1,196. All regression models in this article use poststratification weights to account for the sampling design.

The dependent variable is measured as follows. Respondents were asked the following question: "Did you participate in the protests against former president [president's name] between [dates of protests]?" In each case, respondents were allowed to answer "yes" or "no." Therefore, the outcome is binary; respondents who said "yes" were scored as a 1 on the protest measure, while those who responded "no" were scored as 0.

Since the outcome variable is binary, we use logistic regressions to test the relationship between our two main independent variables (communal practice and

[5]These terms will be familiar to readers of the civil conflict literature in political science. While we do not claim that these mechanisms will work the same way in promoting protest as in civil wars, we believe that these categories are useful for considering how religion might influence protest behavior: religious factors may either make individuals more *motivated* to participate in protest or may *facilitate* protest behavior.

[6]The Egyptian survey was administered by Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, led by Gamal Abdel Gawad. The survey was administered during the month of June (2011) and relied on a multistage stratified cluster sample that was provided by the Egyptian Central Bureau of Statistics. The survey in Tunisia was administered by Sigma Group, led by Youssef Meddeb. The survey was administered during the month of October (2011) and relied on an area probability sample. In Egypt, 1,220 people were surveyed, while in Tunisia, 1,196 were surveyed.

individual piety) and the likelihood of protest. The independent variables of interest were operationalized as follows. The Qur'an-readership question asked respondents if they listen to or read the Qur'an. The principal investigators of the Arab Barometer have found this question to be the most reliable predictor of religiosity among the questions asked in the survey (Jamal and Tessler 2008).[7] For this question, respondents were asked how often they "Listen to or read the Qur'an/the Bible." The "communal practice" question asked respondents how often they "Attend Friday prayer/Sunday services." For each question, respondents could choose "never," "rarely," "sometimes," "most of the time," or "always." By looking at both communal and individual acts of worship, we are offering a more fine-grained classification of religiosity. Our measures tap into different levels of religious practice, and we stipulate that those individuals who practice more frequently are those who are more religious. Nevertheless, we examine here whether different forms of religious practice have varying effects on protest behavior.

Standard demographic controls (age, gender, income, college education) were included to address possible confounding effects. Two additional controls were included in the models in order to address features that might be particularly important in the Arab world: interest in politics and unemployment.

All of the models in this article are run separately for Tunisia and Egypt. We believe that this method allows for the most conservative tests of our hypotheses—since we expect the key independent variables to have the same direction of association in both countries, pooling the data together would—perhaps misleadingly—increase the precision of our estimates.[8] Our unpooled

estimation strategy allows *every* coefficient in the models to vary by country: we do not assume that the effects of any of the variables, whether of primary interest or included as controls, will be identical between the two countries. Multilevel modeling is not appropriate in this setting due to the small number of groups.[9] Thus, we consider the countries separately (since peculiarities of each case may influence the trends present in them) and do not force *any* of our coefficients to be equal or even related. We believe that these methods present a more rigorous test of our hypotheses than complete-pooling or partial-pooling strategies.

Results

Table 1 displays the likelihood of protest by frequency of Qur'an reading in each of the two countries. This simple sketch of the relationship between individual piety and probability of engaging in protest suggests an interesting result: individuals who frequently read the Qur'an were substantially more likely to protest than those who did not. Although the trend is not monotonic, a pattern emerges: those who never (or rarely) read the Qur'an are the least likely group to protest (in each country), while those who always read the Qur'an are the most likely group. In Egypt, over 10% of citizens who "always" read the Qur'an reported engaging in protest, while less than 4% of those who "rarely" read the Qur'an said that they had participated.[10] In Tunisia, a similar pattern is present. Less than 6% of those who said they "never" read the Qur'an had engaged in protest, while over 19% of those who "always" read the Qur'an said that they had participated. These results should be interpreted with caution, as they do not control for any potential confounders, but these figures are suggestive of an interesting pattern nonetheless.

Table 2 presents the results of the logistic regressions. Model 1 in each country includes both

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[7]This is largely due to the fact that social desirability bias shapes response patterns on two other important questions that tap into religiosity. These include daily prayer and fasting. When asked, respondents in the Arab world have overwhelmingly responded to these questions in the affirmative, thereby providing very little variation to exploit. Further, scholars of the region recognize that there is wide variation in religious observance when it comes to prayers and fasting. Thus, social desirability bias plays an important role here. Scholars working with the Arab Barometer data have pointed that Qur'an readership is a far more reliable indicator of religiosity because there is little to no social stigma against people who do not read the Qur'an (as opposed to people who publicly state that they do not pray or fast). See Jamal and Tessler (2008). The results of a factor analysis on all of our available religious variables are presented in the appendix; all of the religious variables are highly interrelated in both countries. We focus on Qur'an reading because it is the variable that is the least subject to social desirability bias and, consequently, the variable with the most meaningful variation.

[8]Pooled models are available from the authors upon request; when combining the data from both countries, our results are always at least as strong as the more conservative nonpooled tests.

[9]We only have two countries in this analysis for reasons described above; Gelman and Hill state that when the number of groups is less than five, "there is typically not enough information to accurately estimate group-level variation" (2007, 247), and multilevel modeling is therefore not advisable.

[10]Respondents in Egypt were not given the option of saying that they "never" read the Qur'an, so the comparison is slightly different between the two countries. Nonetheless, the overall pattern is the same. Further, the online appendix includes two robustness checks that avoid this problem: (1) excluding "never" responses; and (2) combining "never" and "rarely" responses. In all versions of the model, results are comparable.

TABLE 1   Likelihood of Protest by Qur'an Reading

	Tunisia				Egypt		
Frequency of Daily Qur'an Reading	Did Not Protest	Protested	Total	Frequency of Daily Qur'an Reading	Did Not Protest	Protested	Total
Never	52	3	55				
	94.55%	5.45%	100.00%				
Rarely	71	10	81	Rarely	71	3	74
	87.65%	12.35%	100.00%		95.95%	4.05%	100.00%
Sometimes	326	67	393	Sometimes	194	12	206
	82.95%	17.05%	100.00%		94.17%	5.83%	100.00%
Most of the time	339	63	402	Most of the Time	283	18	301
	84.33%	15.67%	100.00%		94.02%	5.98%	100.00%
Always	192	46	238	Always	503	61	564
	80.67%	19.33%	100.00%		89.18%	10.82%	100.00%
Total	980	189	1,169	**Total**	1051	94	1,145
	83.83%	16.17%	100.00%		91.79%	8.21%	100.00%
Chi-Squared statistic = 7.58 (4 df), *p*-value = .108				Chi-Squared statistic = 10.32 (3 df), *p*-value = .016			

the "belief" and "communal practice" variables; models 2 and 3 omit communal practice and belief, respectively. The results for the key independent variables of theoretical interest are similar whether the models include both religiosity measures or analyze them separately without controlling for the other. In each model (and for each country), the coefficient on the Qur'an reading variable is positive

TABLE 2   Logistic Regression Results, Protest (Baseline Models)

|	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Egypt	Tunisia	Egypt	Tunisia	Egypt	Tunisia
Age	-0.02*	-0.05**	-0.02*	-0.05**	-0.02†	-0.04**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Income	0.07	0.13*	0.08	0.12*	0.08	0.13*
	(0.11)	(0.05)	(0.11)	(0.05)	(0.11)	(0.06)
Female	-1.64**	-1.97**	-1.46**	-1.81**	-1.43**	-1.70**
	(0.39)	(0.25)	(0.32)	(0.23)	(0.37)	(0.23)
Interested in politics	1.08**	0.50*	1.07**	0.49*	1.19**	0.49*
	(0.35)	(0.20)	(0.35)	(0.20)	(0.35)	(0.20)
College educated	0.98**	0.57*	0.99**	0.58*	1.03**	0.57*
	(0.30)	(0.23)	(0.30)	(0.23)	(0.30)	(0.23)
Unemployed	0.11	0.30	0.12	0.26	0.11	0.21
	(0.53)	(0.26)	(0.54)	(0.25)	(0.51)	(0.25)
Mosque attendance	-0.14	-0.12†			-0.07	-0.00
	(0.15)	(0.07)			(0.15)	(0.07)
Qur'an reading	0.38*	0.43**	0.35†	0.32**		
	(0.18)	(0.11)	(0.18)	(0.10)		
Constant	-3.13**	-0.58	-3.57**	-0.49	-2.40**	0.18
	(0.85)	(0.40)	(0.73)	(0.40)	(0.68)	(0.34)
Observations	1003	937	1020	941	1003	937
Pseudo R²	0.155	0.186	0.156	0.183	0.144	0.171
AIC	500.24	714.36	499.55	719.15	504.36	725.74

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
†*p* < .10, *p < .05, **p < .01.

and statistically significant at the 0.05 level or better. These results indicate that those who read the Qur'an more frequently were significantly more likely to protest than those who read the Qur'an less frequently. The effect of communal prayer is much weaker and works in the opposite direction; citizens in each country who engaged in communal religious practice were somewhat less likely than others to engage in antiregime protest, but this effect is substantively small and fails to reach conventional levels of significance in any of the models in either country.

In order to ensure that these results are not simply due to the omission of key variables, we present a series of robustness checks. These checks include recodings of our education variable (including literacy), controls for political Islam, association membership, political party membership/support, self-reported religiosity, attitudes towards religious leaders' involvement in politics, and alternative codings for the Qur'an reading variable. These results (omitted for space purposes) are available in the online appendix and confirm that our findings are not sensitive to the specification of the model.

Since it is often difficult to interpret logistic-regression coefficients, it is important to consider quantities of interest in order to assess the substantive magnitude of the effects considered. In each country, protesters were a minority among those sampled. About 8% of Egyptians said that they participated in the protests against Hosni Mubarak, while just over 16% of Tunisians reported participating in the demonstrations against Ben Ali. However, religiosity generated some differences in predicted probabilities among individuals. Therefore, it is important to consider the relative impact of each type of religiosity on protest behavior in each country. In order to do so, Figure 1 presents the relative risks of protest (derived from the logistic regressions) associated with each of these types of religiosity.[11] The "relative risk" compares the predicted probability of protest for an "always" respondent versus a "rarely" respondent for each type of religious behavior; therefore, $Relative\ Risk = \frac{\Pr(Protest_i|Qur'an_i=Always,X_i=X)}{\Pr(Protest_i|Qur'an_i=Rarely,X_i=X)}$, where X_i is a vector of covariates. As this figure demonstrates, individuals in Egypt who always read the Qur'an were about 3.3 times as likely to protest

FIGURE 1 Relative Risk of Protest by Type of Religiosity and Country
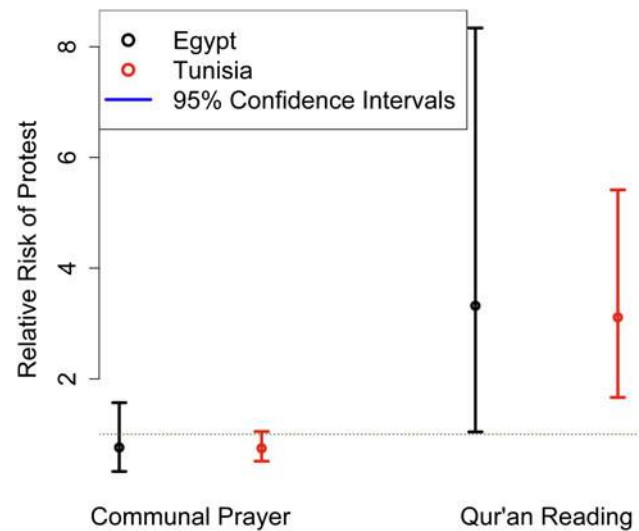
Note: This figure presents the relative risks of protest according to two dimensions of religiosity: communal prayer and Qur'an reading. In both cases, the relative risks are calculated by comparing the probability of protest by an "always" respondent to that of a "rarely" respondent; for instance, in Egypt, people who always read the Qur'an are 3.3 times as likely to have protested when compared to those who "rarely" read the Qur'an. Other variables in the model are held at their observed values for each respondent (see Hanmer and Kalkan 2013).

compared to those who rarely do. In Tunisia, "always readers" were about 3.1 times as likely to protest compared to "rarely readers." The impact of communal practice is much weaker and in the opposite direction: in Egypt, "always attenders" were about 76% as likely to protest compared to those who rarely engage in communal practice; the corresponding figure in Tunisia is about 75%. The result for communal practice is not statistically significant in either country, but the effect of Qur'an reading is significant at the 0.05 level or greater for both Egypt and Tunisia. Equally importantly, the effect size is large: the marginal effect of Qur'an reading is even larger than the marginal effect of political interest (see the online appendix).

Discussion

What do these results suggest about the role of religion in the Arab Spring? On the one hand, it is clear that the Arab Spring protests were not, in general, motivated by antireligious sentiment. On the contrary, individuals who read the Qur'an more often were three to four times as likely as others to participate in the protests.

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[11]The quantities of interest in this section are calculated by leaving the control variables at their observed values for each respondent, then calculating predicted probabilities under both the "treatment" and "control" status for each respondent. This method is generally preferable to holding the control variables at constant values such as their means (Hanmer and Kalkan 2013). However, results were virtually identical using either method.

On the other hand, the "days of rage" narrative does not have much empirical support. People who engaged in communal religious practice were, in fact, slightly less likely than others to engage in protest. The evidence from the second wave of the Arab Barometer suggests that in the Arab Spring itself, belief rather than communal practice was the more important source of religious motivation for protest. It appears, therefore, that the role played by religion in the Arab Spring—at least from a behavioral perspective—was primarily psychological rather than organizational.

It is possible that the positive association between Qur'an reading and likelihood of protest is simply due to social desirability bias. In order for this to be true, it must be the case that social desirability concerns lead individuals to be more likely to report both Qur'an reading and protesting. Such a relationship is plausible, but our findings suggest that this mechanism is not driving the results. The findings displayed in Figure 1 show that mosque attendance is not associated with an increased likelihood of protest (indeed, the relationship is perhaps slightly negative). Were it the case that social desirability concerns were driving respondents to report both Qur'an reading and protesting, presumably the same concerns would push them to report attending mosque as well. Since mosque attendance is not at all associated with protest in our sample, there is evidence to suggest that social desirability concerns are not motivating respondents to overemphasize their piety as well as their participation in protest.

Mechanisms Underlying Quran Reading and Protest: Grievance vs. Opportunity

There are many possible explanations for the positive link between Qur'an reading and protest behavior. While it is impossible given the available data to determine with any certainty what precise causal process was at work, it is useful to consider a handful of potential mechanisms relevant to the ongoing opportunity/grievance debate in the protest literature. The first possible mechanism we present below fits more within our "motivation" classification, while our second mechanism fits in the "opportunity" classification outlined above.[12] The first possible mechanism

emphasizes grievances. Most of the regimes targeted by the Arab Spring were not primarily legitimized by Islamic values. Hosni Mubarak, for instance, viewed political Islam as the greatest threat to his rule. It is conceivable, therefore, that more religious people mobilized in greater numbers because they viewed the regimes they targeted as unfaithful to Islam. Given this account, it becomes easier to believe that Qur'an readers were more likely to protest because they were more likely to view government abuses of power as unjust. Another similar grievance-based explanation pertains to the link between religion and politics more broadly. Putnam (1993) famously claimed that religion in Italy makes individuals focus more on the city of God than the city of man; however, he made the opposite claim when discussing the United States (Putnam 2000). Depending on the context, religion may make individuals more inclined to mobilize in order to change their societies. As Philpott notes, religious convictions may promote antiregime mobilization because religious actors may believe that the regime "is illegitimate for having defiled and failed to promote authentic faith" (2007, 520). The potency of political Islam in many Arab countries suggests that such a mechanism may be at work: in many cases, Islam *motivates* pious Muslims to work to change the world around them rather than simply inducing them to stay out of politics. Either of these mechanisms suggests a means by which individual piety might induce individuals to engage in higher levels of antiregime protest. A test of these mechanisms represents an important advancement in the study of Islam as a mobilizer of antiregime behavior in the Arab World.

A second possible mechanism that links Qur'an readership to protest behavior is about the mechanism of opportunity. Here, piety may enhance citizens' self-efficacy and levels of interpersonal trust, which may serve as resources for greater political participation. Wald and Calhoun-Brown (2007, 120–22) note that *theological* influences (of which scripture is certainly one example) can make believers more inclined to change the world around them. The perception that "God is on my side" can, under the right circumstances, be a powerful influence on political efficacy. Further, Harris (1994, 57) finds that *internal* religiosity—as distinct from institutional or communal practice—is highly predictive of political efficacy.

Fortunately, the Arab Barometer dataset allows us to conduct initial tests of these two overarching potential mechanisms: resources (or opportunity) and motivation (or grievances). In the first category, we consider the possibility that Qur'an reading

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[12]The mechanisms tests presented here focus on the mechanisms behind *Qur'an reading*. While our theoretical discussion allows for the possibility that both communal and individual religious behaviors might operate through the grievance or opportunity mechanisms, the null relationship between mosque attendance and protest makes a test of the mechanisms behind mosque attendance moot.

provides citizens with psychological or cognitive resources that facilitate protest behavior. Such resources might include feelings of political efficacy or trust, which make mobilization easier. In each case, these resources do not promote *grievances* among Qur'an readers but simply make it more likely that existing grievances will translate into political activity such as protest. The second category, *motivation*, addresses the possibility that Qur'an readers may be particularly disenchanted with the status quo; Qur'an readers might be more likely to care about and mobilize against social injustice in their societies. In this case, Qur'an readers would be more likely to protest because they had more *reason* to oppose the incumbent regimes and might be more inclined to mobilize because of divine sanction. These motivations linked to social injustice might include feelings of relative deprivation (Gurr 1970), sensitivity to regime behavior, and outrage against violations of human rights.

A number of items on the Arab Barometer questionnaire address variants of these issues. While analysis of causal mechanisms with observational data is always difficult, we believe that these data allow us to develop a plausible account of how and why Qur'an reading is associated with a greater likelihood of protest. We do so by considering a handful of questions that correspond closely to the phenomena mentioned above, as classified into the "resources" and "motivation" categories.[13] These motivations and resources, we believe, either galvanize political consciousness in ways similar to Gurr's "relative deprivation" thesis and lead to protest participation or reduce the costs of collective action through greater trust and other elements of social capital conducive to widespread participation. First, we consider a number of "resources" that are potentially provided by Qur'an reading. The first of these resources is interpersonal trust. It is conceivable that Qur'an readers might be more likely to protest simply because they are more trusting; if Qur'an reading promotes trust, it is plausible that Qur'an readers may have been more likely than others to overcome the collective action problems inherent to protest behavior. We measure interpersonal trust through a question asking respondents: "Generally speaking, do you think most people are trustworthy or not?" Second, it is possible that political efficacy is responsible for this

link: Qur'an readers might feel a stronger sense of efficacy, thus enabling them to engage in high-risk political activity at a lower cost than other citizens. We measure political efficacy through the following question: "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Sometimes, politics are so complicated that I cannot understand what is happening." We likewise measure a different type of political efficacy through the following question: "In your opinion, are people nowadays able to criticize the government without fear?"

The second category of potential mechanisms linking Qur'an reading to protest behavior addresses *motivations*. One possible motivation for protest behavior is perceptions of social injustice. If Qur'an readers are more likely than others to perceive inequities in the government's treatment of them (or certain members of the society) relative to others, then such perceptions might be the link between Qur'an reading and protest. To measure this concept, we use the following question: "To what extent do you feel that you are being treated equally to other citizens in your country?" Taken together, these questions provide a reasonable test of several possible mechanisms linking Qur'an reading to protest activity. Additionally, it is possible that Qur'an readers might be more supportive of democracy—which is perhaps more compatible with the basic tenets of social justice found in Islamic teachings—than nonreaders and therefore more motivated to engage in protest against authoritarian regimes. To address this possibility, we build a composite measure of support for democracy consisting of three items that capture attitudinal *commitment* to democracy. All items are scored from 1 to 4, with 4 indicating the most prodemocracy response. Each question asks respondents how much they agree with the indicated statement. The first statement is: "Democratic regimes are indecisive and full of problems." The second is: "A democratic system may have problems, yet it is better than other systems," and the third is "Democracy negatively affects social and ethical values in your country." We use these measures as they are the best items available that measure *commitment* to democracy rather than *evaluation* of democracy; i.e., questions about democracy's effect on economic growth are omitted. This composite index can theoretically range from 0 to 12, but no respondents were scored as 0 or 1, so an 11-point scale resulted.

Table 3 displays some tests of the "resources" hypothesis: the results of regressions modeling the likelihood of the outcomes mentioned above as a function of the predictors included in earlier models. Model 1 indicates that, on average, Qur'an readers

[13]We have also conducted factor analyses to confirm that the variables we use for the "resources" and "motivation" tests are indeed distinct. The results suggest that these variables do not load onto any latent dimensions; see the online appendix for details.

TABLE 3 Mechanism Tests, Resources for Protest

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Trust		Efficacy	
	Logistic		*Ordered Logistic*	
	Egypt	Tunisia	Egypt	Tunisia
Age	0.01	0.02**	-0.01	-0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)
Income	-0.23*	-0.06	-0.17†	0.06
	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.04)
Female	-0.10	-0.28	-0.30†	-0.22
	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.17)	(0.17)
Interested in politics	0.23	0.29†	0.22	-0.07
	(0.16)	(0.17)	(0.14)	(0.15)
College educated	-0.12	-0.09	0.19	0.31†
	(0.19)	(0.21)	(0.19)	(0.18)
Islamic-law appropriate	-0.09	-0.23	-0.27	0.09
	(0.19)	(0.28)	(0.19)	(0.27)
Unemployed	-0.49	-0.06	-0.31	0.01
	(0.31)	(0.24)	(0.33)	(0.20)
Mosque attendance	-0.03	0.00	0.10	0.09
	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.06)
Qur'an reading	-0.35**	-0.04	-0.14†	-0.24**
	(0.08)	(0.10)	(0.07)	(0.09)
Constant	1.52**	-1.35**		
	(0.43)	(0.35)		
Observations	920	711	896	707
Pseudo R²	0.033	0.030	0.017	0.013
AIC	1243.25	890.33	1980.53	1584.59

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
†$p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

were *less* trusting than other individuals, and this relationship was highly statistically significant in Egypt. This result suggests that the trust mechanism, at least in the form specified above, is not the reason for Qur'an readers' increased likelihood of protest. On the contrary, the fact that Qur'an readers were significantly *less* trusting than other citizens hints at a potential motivation mechanism, which is considered in other models. Model 2 suggests that political efficacy is not the missing link; Qur'an readers are substantially more likely to agree that politics is "too complicated" for someone like them. In total, the "resource" mechanisms perform poorly in these models: the only significant relationships between Qur'an reading and the dependent variable across these models are in the *opposite* direction of that predicted by the resource theories of mobilization.

Model 1 in Table 4 suggests that Qur'an readers were significantly more likely than non-Qur'an readers to perceive unequal treatment of individuals in their countries. Model 2, which uses an 11-point composite index of several items relating to support for democracy,[14] indicates that Qur'an readers in both countries were, on average, more supportive of democracy than nonreaders. All four of these results are statistically significant at the 0.05 level or better, and are all in the predicted direction. Taken together, the "motivation" mechanisms find much more support in these models than do the "resource" accounts. Qur'an readers are significantly more likely to perceive inequalities in their treatment from the regime and are more supportive of democracy than are nonreaders. We interpret these findings to suggest the following: while there are likely many reasons why Qur'an reading was linked to a greater likelihood of protest during the Arab Spring, the main implication of our results is that Qur'an reading *motivated* protest rather than *facilitating* it.

[14]The models presented here using the support for democracy variable use ordinary-least-squares methods, but results are comparable using ordinal logistic regression.

TABLE 4   Mechanism Tests, Motivations for Protest

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Perceives Unequal Treatment		Support for Democracy	
	Logistic		Ordinary Least Squares (OLS)	
	Egypt	Tunisia	Egypt	Tunisia
Age	-0.01	0.01	-0.00	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Income	-0.03	-0.28	0.16**	-0.04
	(0.09)	(0.20)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Female	-0.13	-0.14	-0.18	-0.22
	(0.18)	(0.19)	(0.15)	(0.14)
Interested in politics	-0.39*	-0.22	0.23†	-0.06
	(0.16)	(0.17)	(0.12)	(0.12)
College educated	-0.06	-0.15	0.11	0.16
	(0.20)	(0.22)	(0.14)	(0.13)
Islamic-law appropriate	0.25	0.15	-1.02**	-0.58*
	(0.19)	(0.25)	(0.18)	(0.23)
Unemployed	0.58†	0.62**	-0.05	0.09
	(0.30)	(0.23)	(0.25)	(0.15)
Mosque attendance	0.01	-0.12*	0.08	-0.03
	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.04)
Qur'an reading	0.18*	0.19†	0.41**	0.15*
	(0.08)	(0.10)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Constant	-0.91*	-0.61†	8.29**	10.13**
	(0.42)	(0.36)	(0.34)	(0.25)
Observations	919	712	865	653
Pseudo R^2	0.016	0.029		
AIC	1162.11	954.15	3302.44	2308.93

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
†$p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

Qur'an readers appear to be more sensitive to injustice, a result that is plausible given the social-justice message found in various parts of the Qur'an. This finding is consistent with Davis and Robinson's (2006) observation that orthodox Muslims tend to favor communitarian economic goals. Thus, Qur'an readers were more likely to engage in protest than were non-Qur'an readers despite having much lower levels of overall trust and a much weaker sense of political efficacy. In the Arab Spring, it appears, Qur'an reading increased motivation for protest but did not provide the resources that tend to make protest easier. In this case, motivation seems to have trumped resource scarcity.

Conclusion

This article makes several contributions to the study of the role of religion in politics by examining the

Arab Spring protests. First, we show that religion—even in the Middle East—does *not* necessarily create passive or submissive citizens. In fact, personal piety was systematically linked to greater political activism in this setting. Second, we demonstrate that religion's influence on protest does not always work through the expected channels; personal piety, as manifested through Qur'an reading, appears to have been much more important in driving protest than was mosque attendance. Third, we illustrate how nonbehavioral accounts of the Arab Spring may miss important details about *who* these protesters were. While this article represents only an initial analysis on the ways that religion at the individual level influences political behavior, we believe that these findings constitute an important step towards a fuller understanding of religion's role in models of political behavior.

Even with access to survey data about the Arab Spring protesters, it remains difficult to identify who the protesters were and why they were mobilized into

antiregime activity. Likewise, it is impossible to predict what the future holds with regard to regime outcomes or the relationship between religion and politics. At the same time, systematic analysis of individual-level political behavior is a crucial step towards improving our understandings of the recent Arab uprisings.

Esposito (2011) argues that the Arab youth—who are widely argued to have driven the Arab Spring—want democracy above all else. While this claim might in fact capture the interests of the drivers of the Arab Spring, the results presented in this article suggest that religion should not be discarded as a motivator for protest behavior in the Arab world. The next phase of Arab politics may involve moves towards democracy, but it is unlikely to involve a move away from religion. Thus, the traditional temptation to associate democracy with secularization—particularly common in the West—is likely to be misleading in the Arab world. Indeed, as Filali-Ansary (2012) notes, some of the revolutionaries in the Arab world hope that these revolutions will bring about some sort of fusion between Shari'a law and democracy. Regardless of the type of relationship between religion and politics that will emerge from the Arab Spring, it is clear that studies of these revolutions must rethink the classical assumptions about religion and democracy.

The key implication of the results presented in this article is that religion was a significant factor in *motivating* the Arab Spring but perhaps not in the expected ways. Individual piety played a significant role in influencing protest behavior, but communal religious practice did not. While the mechanisms behind these relationships are indeterminate, there is evidence to suggest that many of the revolutionaries active in the Arab Spring were motivated, at least in part, by a psychological attachment to religion.

Acknowledgments

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