

The Political Economy of Support for Sharia: Unlikely Bedfellows in the North Caucasus

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Under what conditions does Islam serve as a platform for political, even liberal reform?

- Pessimistic view of Islam in Western social science is prolific
- Muslims are more communitarian in their economic views and less liberal in their political preferences (Davis and Robinson 2006, Guiso, Sapienza and Zingales 2003, Tibi 2008)
- Some recent studies have asserted the Islam can be associated with support for democracy (Anderson 2004, Esposito and Mogahed 2008, Inglehart and Norris 2003, Tessler, Jamal and Robbins 2012).
- Others suggested that Islam is an *outcome* rather than the cause of social conditions and attitudes (Platteau 2008)
- Most researchers have ignored the potential of Islam as an ideology of political change

Theory I

- Islam became the rallying point in Iran's revolution of 1979, because the Shah's government had effectively eliminated the secular opposition in the country prior to the revolution (Bayat 2013)
- Muslim activists bypass the state that fails to provide public goods and reach out to the people (Wickham 2002)
- Islam causes constant fissures in modern industrialized society, being a feature of 'entropy-resistant' groups (Gellner, 1983)
- Islam assumes government's functions when supplanting or competing with the government institutions. So Islam can be an outcome, rather than the cause of socio-economic preferences.

Theory II

- When other avenues for political change are blocked Islam (and religion in general) may play the role of a broad platform for reformist-minded individuals
- Precondition 1: repressive state that blocks “normal” political mechanisms of change, such as free and fair elections
- Precondition 2: Muslims are a minority in a non-Muslim polity

North Caucasus and Russia

- 7 autonomous republics within Russian Federation, 5 of them with majority Muslim population and 2 with minority Muslim population
- High levels of support for separatism. Two wars between central government and independence-minded Chechnya in 1990s and in 2000s
- Some North Caucasian societies adopted Islam at the time when they started to fight Russian Empire's invasion in 19th century
- Is Islam the cause of the region's problems or is it a response to the existing challenges the society faces?
- The scope conditions for Islamic orthodoxy's congruency with economic individualism and political liberalism: Muslim minority and repressive political regime

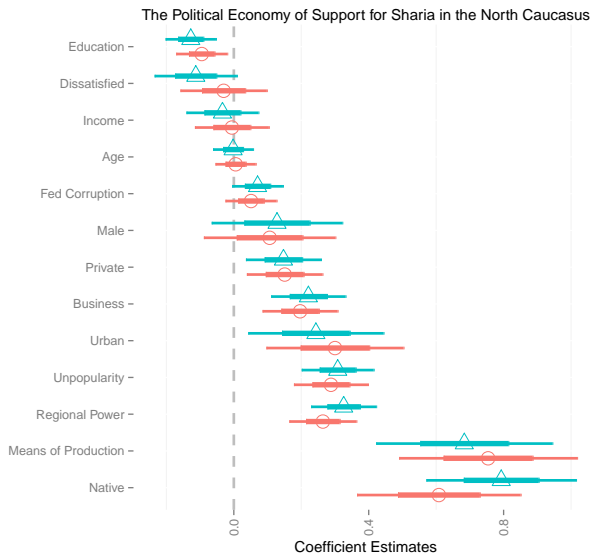
Hypotheses

- Support for private ownership of enterprises and private ownership of means of production should be associated with higher support for Sharia law
- Support for regional autonomy should be associated with support for Sharia law
- Supporters of Sharia law should regard the central government as the culprit for corruption

Description of Data

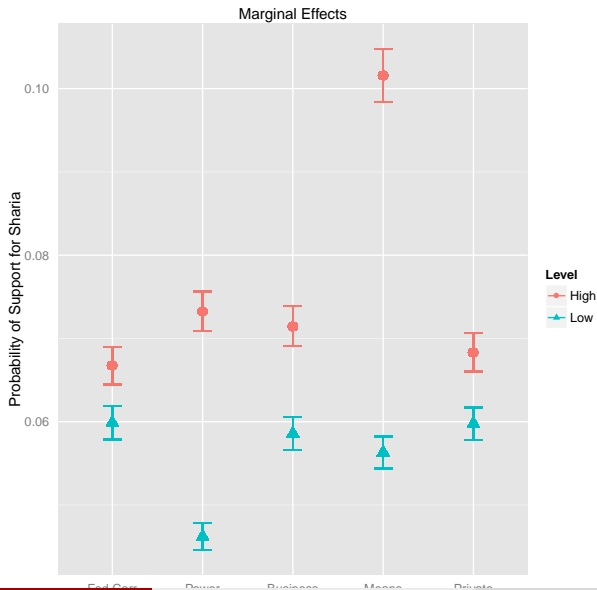
- Survey of respondents in all 7 republics of the North Caucasus. Over 1,700 respondents (2008)
- Dependent variable: four-level ordinal measure of desire to live under Sharia or secular law
- Explanatory variables: approval of private ownership of big enterprises, private or government ownership of means of production, support for redistribution of power between the region and the central authorities, share of responsibility for corruption
- Control variables: education, nativity to the region, approval of the government authorities, settlement type, gender, age
- Group variable: region. 7 republics: Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, Adygea
- Fixed effect: violence, unemployment, average salary

Analysis: Ordered Logit



Model Fixed Effects No Fixed Effects

Analysis: Predicted Probabilities of Support for Sharia



Implications

- Islamic orthodoxy can be compatible with free market institutions and political liberalism
- Scope conditions: Muslims are a minority and the government imposes severe restrictions on political activities
- Social forces for change gather under Islamic slogans, because they have no other avenues to pursue reformist agenda
- Islam may be the result, rather than the cause of social conditions

Limitations and Future Research

- Time and space limitations: need for longitudinal data and cross-country comparison
- Further clarification of the scope conditions
- Possible applications in Muslim-majority countries

	Model 1	Model 2
Private	0.15*** (0.06)	0.15*** (0.06)
Means of Production	0.68*** (0.13)	0.75*** (0.13)
Business	0.22*** (0.06)	0.20*** (0.06)
Regional Power	0.33*** (0.05)	0.26*** (0.05)
Fed Corruption	0.07* (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)
Age x10	-0.02 (0.30)	0.05 (0.30)
Income	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)
Unpopularity	0.31*** (0.05)	0.29*** (0.05)
Urban	0.24** (0.10)	0.30*** (0.10)
Native	0.79*** (0.11)	0.61*** (0.12)
Male	0.13 (0.10)	0.11 (0.10)
Education	-0.13*** (0.04)	-0.10** (0.04)
Dissatisfied	-0.11* (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)

Missing data analysis

Private	0.25** (0.10)
Means of Production	0.41* (0.22)
Business	0.22** (0.10)
Regional Power	0.17** (0.08)
Fed Corruption	0.02 (0.07)
Age x10	0.03 (0.58)
Income	-0.24** (0.11)
Unpopularity	0.17* (0.09)
Urban	-0.26 (0.19)
Native	1.07*** (0.20)
Male	0.24 (0.18)
Education	-0.13* (0.07)

Table of Missingness

