"Voting for Islam": Ideologies, Brands, and Demographics

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Introduction

In this chapter I review recent research on popular support for Islamic parties. I distinguish among several different linkages between voters and political parties that generate votes for Islamic parties: religious ideology, party brand, and demographic association. Voters face choices among religious and non-religious parties that bundle together various appeals, only some of which are directly tied to religion, and voters may vote for parties either out of policy concerns or as an expression of their identity. The central implication of this argument is that voting for an Islamic party is not always a vote for Islam, and voting for a non-Islamic party sometimes is. This warrants caution in interpreting popular support for religious parties as evidence of popular support for religious agendas. It also warrants caution in interpreting the success of non-Islamic parties as a defense against religious agendas.

I build this argument with special reference to Islam and Islamic parties in Indonesia and Malaysia, two majority Muslim countries with long histories of both competitive and uncompetitive elections among Islamic, nationalist, and other kinds of political parties. Close engagement with these two cases allows for a careful consideration of how religious and non-religious factors shape party strategy and voter responses to it using the wealth of qualitative and historical data available about religion and partisan competition in these two countries. That said, all of the conceptual arguments presented here generalize beyond these two countries, to any

election in a Muslim majority country with elections that feature parties that identify as Muslim parties, either explicitly or implicitly. In fact, the scope conditions of my account in this chapter include any electoral regime in which at least one major political party either competes on a religious platform or identifies with a religious community.

Before proceeding, a note on terminology. In this chapter I will use the term *Islamic* to refer to any party, organization, or movement that either implicitly or explicit invokes Islam as part of its history, foundation, or platform. I will reserve the term *Islamist* to refer to parties, organizations, or movements that explicitly seeks to align national politics with Islamic principles (compare to Masoud 2014: 1; Pepinsky et al. 2018: 25). As an empirical matter, such labels are always contested, and parties may evolve over time and partisan platforms may be opaque. But the conceptual distinction between religious identity and religious program is important for the argument that follows.

Islam and Electoral Politics

The absence of competitive elections in many Muslim-majority countries means that the literature on religion and voting behavior in Muslim countries is comparatively less developed than the literature on religion and voting behavior in Europe and North America (for recent reviews, see Esmer and Pettersson 2007; Manza and Wright 2003). There are many questions of interest to scholars of religion and voting behavior, but for the purposes of this chapter, I confine my overview to perspectives that explain *why voters choose religious or non-religious parties*. Broadly speaking, there are three ways to conceptualize the linkages between party's religious appeals and the choices that voters make: religious ideology, party brand, and demographic association. Each of these has analogues in the literature on partisan competition beyond the Muslim world, and in what follows I make brief mention of the wider literatures on electoral

behavior from the United States and Europe in order to link these perspectives to the general comparative literature.

The most straightforward link between religiosity and partisan vote choice runs through religious ideology. Here, the argument is that voters choose religious parties because they have religious preferences. Applied to voting behavior in the Muslim world, this perspective holds that votes for Islamic parties depend on the beliefs that Muslims have about the role of Islam in political life, and that voters choose parties that promise to achieve such goals. In the same way that an individual who holds economically conservative views may vote for a conservative political party that campaigns on conservative economic principles, so too may voters who hold religious views vote for a party that espouses religious views. This view has long been the standard view in the study of Islam and democracy. Based on an impressionistic overview of the elections of Ahmadinejad in Iran, Hamas in Palestine, and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey in the early 2000s, for example, Esmer and Pettersson (2007: 497) conclude that "Religiosity is a major factor influencing voting behavior throughout the Islamic world." In this, the effects of religiosity on voting behavior in the Muslim world do not follow the predictions of the secularization thesis (see Norris and Inglehart 2004), either because secularization is not happening in the first place, or because Muslims do not respond to secularization in the way that Christians do.

It is surely true that some religious voters choose religious parties because they support these parties' religious platforms. But there is a wealth of evidence from beyond the Muslim world suggesting that voters do not vote for parties or for candidates based on their policy platforms, or indeed, based on any knowledge of what parties' and candidates' actual positions even are (for an early articulation of this view in the United States context, see Campbell et al.

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1960). An alternative perspective is that voters choose parties based a complex mix of policy beliefs and reputation that amount to a "party brand" (see Lupu 2016). Applied to the case of religious parties and vote choice, this linkage holds that parties may have religious identities, but voter choose them because they believe that party represents religion as well as other things that they care about beyond religion itself. This is most apparent with Christian Democratic parties in Europe as parties of the center right, chosen by voters often with no reference to their religious heritage even though that heritage exists and is explicit in their party platforms.[1] Observing that a voter identifies as a Christian and votes for a Christian Democratic party does not convey much information about what drives her vote choice, because Christian Democratic parties have broader economic and social platforms, with positions on issues ranging from economic management to welfare policy to women's and minority rights and status. So, too, do parties in Muslim majority countries, and this observation underlies a long line of research on the source of Islam's political advantage (see Cammett and Luong 2014 for a review). The implication is that voters may support Islamic parties because of their party brands, which may be conservative, progressive, or reformist; or business- or social justice-oriented. Equivalently, some voters may support non-Islamic parties because they believe that these parties have *latent Islamic* brands.

Still another perspective draws attention not to parties' policy positions, but rather to the demographic characteristics of voters. In plural societies with political systems in which confessional, linguistic, ethnic, or other kinds of parties represent different social groups, voters may choose parties because they represent their group. The simplest articulation of this perspective emerges in the literature on consociationalism in the Netherlands, where under the

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[1] See e.g. the program of the Christian Democratic Union in Germany, https://www.cdu.de/grundsatzprogramm-2007: "Orientierungsmaßstab ist das *christliche* Menschenbild und davon ausgehend die drei Grundwerte 'Freiheit, Solidarität und Gerechtigkeit'" (emphasis added) [accessed April 2, 2019].

model of pillarization that predominated prior to the 1960s, religious communities voted for parties that represented them (Lijphart 1975). As religious attendance and identification with a particular faith community waned, in turn, so did votes for confessional parties (van der Eijk and Niemöller 1987). Applied to religious voting in Muslim-majority (but still religiously heterogenous) societies, this argument implies that Muslims vote for Islamic parties because it they are the parties that represent their coreligionists.

These explanations for vote choice are obviously interrelated, and voters may have complex and multifaceted explanations for the choices that they make. The distinction between demographic association and religious ideology, for example, may be hard to discern among many voters. Are they voting for religious parties because they believe these parties will implement religious policies that benefit their religious group, or are they voting for religious parties because their existence represents the group's general interests regardless of the policies they enact? Likewise, the distinction between party brand and demographic association may be particularly subtle when it comes to ethnic parties. If ethnicity and religion overlap, then Muslim voters may choose ethnic parties because they know that their religious identities will also be reflected in the policy priorities of such ethnically-based parties. Despite these and other empirical challenges in identifying the determinants of voting for Islamic and non-Islamic parties, these conceptual distinctions help to reveal the subtle issues involved in assessing why voters choose particular political parties, in the Muslim world and beyond.

It is also important to distinguish religious ideology, party brand, and demographic association from explanations focusing more narrowly on partisan identity. More than simply a "running tally of party performance, ideological beliefs, and proximity to the party in terms of one's preferred policies," partisan identity is an expression of identification with the party itself

as the in-group (Huddy et al. 2015). Fowler (2018) provides a recent synthesis of the literature and some evidence on what he terms the "partisan intoxication" hypothesis in the United States. This approach differs in that it locates the motivation for vote choice in identification with the party rather than with the community that that party claims to represent, as in the demographic association perspective. Applied to other cases of confessional parties, it would imply that voters support a party such as the Catholic People's Party in the Netherlands out of identification *with the party* rather than with the Dutch Catholic community; or in Israel, voting for Shas because of identification *with the party* rather than with the Haredi community that it aims to represent. Although I do not rule out that there may be intoxicated partisans the Muslim world who vote for (or against) Islamic parties purely for reasons of expressive partisanship, I do not entertain this approach any further in this chapter.

Finally, note as well that the three competing perspectives outlined above ignore completely the role for mobilization and party organization in explaining vote choice. Plainly, voting for Islam does not occur in a vacuum: voters are mobilized by political actors who make deliberate religious and other appeals, through organizational efforts in mosques and elsewhere (Brooke 2019; Cammett and Issar 2010; Hamayotsu 2012; Wickham 2002; Wiktorowicz 2003), and occasionally bought off directly (Aspinall and Berenschot 2019). Moreover, as Kalyvas (1996) observes in his criticism of the early literature on Christian democracy in Europe, the very existence of religious parties also requires explanation. Although a full account of voting for Islam would encompass all of these steps, putting individual votes in their sociological and historical context, I keep the analytical focus on individual decisions given an existing set of partisan options.

Party Competition in Muslim Southeast Asia

As noted previously, the literature on religion and voting behavior in the Muslim world is far less developed relative to the literature in Europe, the Americas, and other advanced industrial democracies. One simple explanation for this pattern is that elections held in Muslim-majority countries are far less likely to be free and fair than elections in the rest of the world. To establish this point, Table 1 compares elections using data on all elections around the world from the National Elections across Democracy and Autocracy (NELDA) dataset (Hyde and Marinov 2012) as well as data on Muslim population share across countries from the Pew Research Center (2017). Muslim-majority countries are all countries whose Muslim populaton share exceeds 50%.[2] I examine both the presence of multiparty elections (*NELDA4*) and whether or not there are concerns about the freedom and fairness of elections (*NELDA11*).

Table 1: Electoral Competitiveness in Muslim and Non-Muslim Countries

More than One Party is Legal (NELDA 4)

Concerns about Electoral Freedom and Fairness (NELDA 11)

	Non-Muslim	Muslim		Non-Muslim	Muslim
No	253	193	No	1,586	217
%	10.6	29.07	%	66.47	32.68
Unclear	5	2	Unclear	30	20
%	0.21	0.3	%	1.26	3.01
Yes	2,128	469	Yes	770	427
%	89.19	70.63	%	32.27	64.31
Total	2,386	664	Total	2,386	664

Source: Hyde and Marinov (2012)

From Table 1, it is evident that elections in Muslim-majority countries are simply less likely to be competitive referenda across multiple parties than are elections in non-Muslim-majority

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[2] This coding rule thus includes Nigeria (Muslim population share is 50.4%) and excludes Guinea-Bissau (42.2%) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (40%).

countries.[3] Table 2 tabulates the number of multiparty elections (*NELDA4* == "Yes") in Muslim-majority countries, differentiating among levels of concern about electoral freedom and fairness (*NELDA11*).

Table 2: Concerns about Electoral Freedom and Fairness in the Muslim World

Country	No	Unclear	Yes	Country	No	Unclear	Yes
Afghanistan	1	0	1	Lebanon	11	0	4
Albania	0	2	10	Libya	0	0	2
Algeria	1	0	4	Malaysia	9	0	3
Azerbaijan	0	0	7	Mali	2	0	7
Bahrain	2	0	1	Mauritania	2	0	6
Bangladesh	3	0	6	Morocco	5	0	5
Burkina Faso	5	3	0	Niger	1	2	4
Chad	3	0	1	Nigeria	5	0	6
Comoros	4	0	3	Pakistan	2	0	7
Djibouti	0	0	4	Senegal	5	0	4
Egypt	2	0	17	Sierra Leone	4	0	4
Gambia	8	0	2	Somalia	2	0	0
Guinea	0	0	2	Sudan (2012-)	2	0	2
Indonesia	7	0	3	Syria	2	2	3
Iran	0	1	18	Tajikistan	0	0	7
Iraq	1	0	7	Tunisia	1	0	8
Jordan	8	0	2	Turkey	15	0	7
Kazakhstan	0	0	9	Turkmenistan	1	0	0
Kuwait	1	0	1	Uzbekistan	0	0	6
Kyrgyzstan	2	0	6	Yemen	2	0	1
Total	119	10	190				

Source: Hyde and Marinov (2012)

The data in Table 2 have important implications for how we conceptualize voting behavior in Muslim-majority countries where voters have a choice among different candidates. Even under these circumstances, voters frequently must anticipate that there is some chance that their votes will not be fairly counted. Even in countries with long histories of elections (such as Egypt, Iran,

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[3] These figures account for all types of elections—legislative, executive, and for constituent assemblies—and remain substantively identical when the analysis is restricted to only legislative/parliamentary elections.

and Pakistan) restrictions on who can compete, how parties may campaign, and the likelihood of electoral interference make it difficult to ascertain linkages between voters and parties. For example, in countries like Egypt, explicitly Islamist parties are popular but under the regime of Hosni Mubarak were unable to form parties. In Iran, by contrast, an unelected council of religious figures may prevent candidates from competing in elections. Among Muslim-majority countries with extensive histories of elections, Burkina Faso, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, and Turkey are notable for the relative prevalence of competitive multiparty elections. But even in these cases it is important to remember that these elections usually still fail to meet the basic standards of democratic competition in the minimalist sense (Alvarez et al. 1996; Przeworski 1999).

It is with this background in mind that I turn to a closer analysis of elections and partisan competition in Indonesia and Malaysia. These two countries both have majority Muslim populations, but with different ethnic and religious compositions. Indonesia is 88% Muslim, but the Indonesia constitution does not give special consideration to Islam over other religions. Malaysia is 60% Muslim, but Islam is the country's official religion. The two countries likewise differ in ethnic and religious heterogeneity, as Table 3 (using data from Alesina et al. 2003) shows.

Table 3: Fractionalization Indices

	Religion	Ethnicity	Language
Indonesia	0.23	0.74	0.77
Malaysia	0.67	0.59	0.60

Source: Alesina et al. (2003)

Both countries are diverse, plural societies. But Indonesian diversity is characterized by ethnolinguistic differences among Muslims, whereas Malaysia's is characterized by the overlap between religious and ethnolinguistic difference.[4]

Partisan Competition in Indonesia

Indonesia's post-independence political history can be divided into four periods: Liberal Democracy (1949-1957), Guided Democracy (1957-1966), the New Order (1966-1999), and the current democratic period (1999-now). A constant theme in Indonesian party politics, both during periods of democratic competition and under authoritarian rule, is a cleavage between Islamic parties and movements and their nationalist opponents. However, this cleavage is only one of many cleavages in Indonesian politics and society, that fact has implications for how to interpret votes for an against explicitly Islamic parties. Table 4 summarizes the four periods and identifies the main political parties, both Islamic and nationalist, in each.

Table 4: Periodizing Indonesian Politics

Era	Years	Non-Islamic Parties	Islamic Parties
Liberal Democracy	1949-1957	Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI), Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI)	Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Masjumi
Guided Democracy	1957-1966	PKI, Functional Groups (Golkar)	NU marginalized, Masjumi banned
New Order	1966-1999	Golkar, Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI)	United Development Party (PPP)
Contemporary Democracy	1999-now	Golkar, PDI-P, Democrat Party, People's Conscience Party, Great Indonesia Movement Party, others	PPP, Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), National Awakening Party (PKB), National Mandate Party (PAN), others

Indonesia's short experience with Liberal Democracy in the 1950s featured a complex mix of partisan cleavages that reflected the social complexity of a newly independent state that

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[4] See Hamayotsu (2002) for a comparative perspective on Islam and political development in these two cases.

was still in the process of developing a national identity and establishing unified control over its territory. President Sukarno's Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI) represented one centrist faction that united Muslims and non-Muslims on a broadly nationalist platform emphasizing development and territorial unity. On its left stood that Indonesian Communist Party, one of the largest communist parties anywhere in the world, which represented a more secular vision for Indonesia's political future. Two separate parties represented Muslim interests explicitly. Masjumi (short for Majelis Syuro Muslimin, or Council of Muslim Organizations) and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU, or Awakening of the Ulama). The former traces its organizational lineage to the Japanese occupation, as an organization representing Muslim elites and interests; the latter emerged as a party in a split from Masjumi but does claim an organizational heritage that dates to the late Dutch colonial period. NU and Masjumi differed sociologically in that the former invokes traditionalist (and especially Javanese) Muslim beliefs, whereas the latter is more modernist in orientation. Importantly, the process of writing the Indonesian constitution had occasioned fierce debate about the role of Islam in Indonesian politics, but the final outcome of this process saw no role for Islam itself, and instead emphasized the generic religiosity of Indonesian politics under the banner of belief in one god.

Indonesia's 1955 parliamentary elections saw PKI, PNI, NU, and Masjumi each taking approximately twenty percent of the seats—leaving no party with anything close to a majority or even a clear plurality (van der Kroef 1957). Amidst general dissatisfaction with the divided and fractious parliamentary order, Sukarno brought the liberal democratic period to an end by proclaiming the establishment of Guided Democracy, a system that would ostensibly resolve the contradictions inherent in multiparty democracy. Sukarno banned Masjumi in 1960, and NU's influence as a party declined during this period. Guided Democracy, in turn, ended abruptly

when Soeharto seized power in 1966 in the aftermath of the 1965 coup and the ensuing extermination of the PKI. Soeharto's New Order regime used Golkar—a corporatist mass organization created under Guided Democracy to represent different groups in Indonesian society—as its mobilizational vehicle (see Reeve 1985). Following elections in 1971, Soeharto ordered all opposition parties to merge into one of two official opposition parties: the United Development Party (PPP) to represent Islamic interests, and the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) to represent nationalist (and non-Muslim) interests.

Following Soeharto's resignation and Indonesia's subsequent democratization, Golkar formally became a political party, and was joined not only by PPP and the PDI-P (successor to PDI), but also by a wide range of parties across the political spectrum (aside from the communist left). Today, the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) campaigns on Islamist and developmentalist principles, whereas the Crescent Star Party (PBB) claims the heritage of Masjumi. Two other Islamic parties represent the interests of Indonesia's two largest Muslim organizations: the National Awakening Party (PKB) is associated with (but organizationally independent from) NU, and the National Mandate Party is similarly associated with but independent from Muhammadiyah, NU's modernist Muslim counterpart. Other nationalist parties have emerged as well, largely built as the personal vehicles of aspiring presidential candidates: the Democrat Party for Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the People's Conscience Party for Wiranto, the Great Indonesia Movement Party for Prabowo Subianto, and others.

This brief historical overview of party development in Indonesia immediately reveals the different ways that Islamic parties capitalize on religious votes. Islamist parties like PKS and PBB campaign on religious principles, although these are coupled with developmentalist platforms. PKB and PAN have associational links two large religious organizations representing

distinct groupings of Indonesian Muslims. As I will discuss later, all other parties of any national standing also have primarily Muslim constituencies, and these nationalist parties too may appeal to religious Muslims.

Partisan Competition in Malaysia

Malaysia's post-independence political history also falls into distinct periods, although the country's form of electoral authoritarianism differs substantially from the New Order and Guided Democracy models in Indonesia, as do the cleavage structures that underlie Malaysian politics and society. Paralleling the discussion of Indonesia above, Table 5 summarizes the four periods and identifies the main political parties, both Islamic and nationalist, in each.

Table 5: Periodizing Malaysian Politics

Era	Years	Non-Islamic Parties	Islamic Parties
Alliance Rule	1957-1969	United Malays National Organisation (UMNO, Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), Democratic Action Party (DAP), Malaysian People's Movement (Gerakan)	Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)
National Operations Council	1969-1971	- Parliament suspended -	
Barisan Nasional (Pre-Crisis)	1971-1999	UMNO, MCA, MIC, DAP	PAS
Barisan Nasional (Post-Crisis)	1999-2018	UMNO, MCA, MIC, DAP, People's Justice Party (PKR)	PAS
Contemporary Democracy	2018-now	UMNO, MCA, MIC, DAP, PKR, Malaysian United Indigenous Party (Bersatu)	PAS, National Trust Party (Amanah)

The years immediately following independence saw the Federation of Malaya (then excluding the states of Sabah and Sarawak on East Malaysia) ruled by the Alliance, a coalition of parties representing each of Malaya's three main ethnic groups: the United Malays National Organisation for Malays (UMNO), the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), and the Malayan

Indian Congress (MIC).[5] Each party's membership is defined ethnically, but religious affiliation is implicit, as the Malaysian Constitution defines Malayness with reference to Islam (Hirschman 1987: 555). Since all Malays are Muslims, and the party's constituency is Malay,[6] it is a party that represents Muslim interests. In opposition sat three important parties: the Democratic Action Party (DAP) representing social democratic principles, the Malaysian People's Movement (Gerakan) representing liberal principles, and the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PAS). Importantly, although none of these parties is defined by an ethnic constituency, each disproportionately captured particular ethnic groups. DAP and Gerakan remained largely but not exclusively Chinese in membership, and PAS largely but not exclusively Malay. A roster of much smaller parties, some ethnic but most not, tended to capture votes of Malaysian Indians and non-Malay *bumiputeras* in East Malaysia.

After ethnic riots following the 1969 parliamentary elections (Goh 1971), UMNO leaders suspended parliament and declared a state of emergency. Malaysia returned to parliamentary democracy in 1971, with a newly expanded ruling coalition called the Barisan Nasional (or National Front, BN)—now including both Gerakan and PAS as well as other smaller parties. In 1977 PAS left the BN, joining DAP in the opposition. The Malaysian partisan landscape would remain roughly fixed until 1999, when in the aftermath of the Asian Financial Crisis and a leadership struggle within UMNO, the National Justice Party (later the People's Justice Party, or PKR). This party is explicitly multiethnic in character, and joined both PAS and DAP in the country's first—but brief-lived—opposition coalition (Weiss 1999).

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[5] Both MCA and MIC would change their names from Malayan to Malaysian after 1963, when the country became the Federation of Malaysia.

[6] Non-Muslim indigenous Malaysians (*bumiputeras*) may join UMNO, but in practice their numbers are small and their influence negligible. The currently leadership of UMNO is entirely Muslim; see https://umno-online.my/majlistertinggi/ [accessed April 2, 2019].

Further factional struggles both within UMNO and within PAS would lead to the birth of two new important parties in the 2010s: the National Trust Party (Amanah), an Islamist party comprised of progressives from PAS; and the Malaysian United Indigenous Party (Bersatu), a Malay party comprised of old guard UMNO politicians dissatisfied with the leadership of Prime Minister Najib Razak. In the 2018 general elections, a coalition of the DAP, PKR, Amanah, and Bersatu formed Pakatan Harapan (Alliance of Hope, PH), which finally defeated the Barisan Nasional. PH currently forms the government, and the peaceful transition of power through elections from BN to PR is an auspicious sign of democratization (Lemière 2018).

Malaysian partisan politics differs substantially from Indonesia, owing first and foremost to the explicit politicization of ethnicity, in turn reinforced through the party system. But because ethnicity overlays religion in Malaysia, Malay parties such as the long-ruling UMNO are effectively parties that represent nearly exclusively Muslim constituencies. Moreover, even though Malaysia has Islamist parties just as Indonesia has, they also function effectively as ethnic parties in a way that Indonesia's do not.

Voting for Islam in Muslim Southeast Asia

As noted previously, the literature on voting behavior and partisan competition in the Muslim world is underdeveloped. This is also the case for Indonesian and Malaysian politics. Although both countries have been part of the East Asia Barometer since Wave 2 (Welsh et al. 2007), I am aware of no publications using these data that have sought to explain votes for Islamic versus other parties. Political conditions in each country have also constrained research. In Malaysia, academic research on voting behavior has been politically difficult, although polling firms such as the Merdeka Centre for Public Opinion Research have been able to produce reports that have implications for research on Islam and politics (e.g. Martinez 2006). By contrast, since

Indonesian democratization, there has been an explosion of public opinion polling (Mietzner 2009), with increasing involvement by social scientists seeking to understand what explains voter support for political parties (see e.g. Mujani et al. 2018). However, the observation that Islamic parties have not managed to grow in size and influence relative to their position in 1955 (see Table 6) leads most Indonesia specialists to conclude that the drivers of vote choice in Indonesia must lie outside of religiosity.

Table 6: Parliamentary Vote Share in Indonesia, 1955 and 2014

Year	Islamic Parties	Other Parties
1955	43.9	55.9
2014	31.4	68.6

Source: https://bit.ly/2FX2TxR and https://bit.ly/2K0hyMz

The task of disentangling religious ideology from other drivers of vote choice is a difficult research design problem. A naïve approach would be to calculate the conditional correlation between a measure of religious identity or religiosity and whether or not a voter supports an Islamic party, but for the reasons described in the previous sections, this is unlikely to be informative if parties differ for reasons other than just their religious ideology. Indeed, Liddle and Mujani (2007) adopt this approach and find evidence that more religious Muslims in Indonesia are more likely to support some Islamic parties (specifically, PPP or PKB but not PAN or PKS) relative to PDI-P, the most nationalist[7] of democratic Indonesia's political parties.

The first study to outline the inferential challenges associated with inferring motivations for vote choice in the Muslim world was Pepinsky et al. (2012), which developed an experimental approach to disentangle the effects of religious ideology and economic motivations for supporting political parties. Their finding—that under conditions of economic policy

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[7] They use the term "secular," but it is more accurate to describe this party as *non-Islamic*.

uncertainty, Indonesia's Islamist parties have a small but statistically significant advantage over non-Islamist parties—shows that non-religious factors drive support for Islamist parties, and is consistent with the argument that party brands can explain votes for Islam. But isolating the effects of religious ideology from other factors requires presenting survey respondents with hypothetical parties rather than actual ones, and is incapable both of assessing the relative weight of different linkages relative to one another in the aggregate, or even in inferring individual voter motives at all.

The interaction between ethnicity, religion, and partisan competition in Malaysia makes this task still more difficult. Absent individual-level data, most analyses of electoral behavior have used ecological correlations that estimate the correlations between constituency characteristics and party vote shares (Ng et al. 2015; Pepinsky 2009, 2015). But because of the definitional equivalence of Malay and Muslim under the Malaysian constitution, most research exploring the drivers of support for Malaysia's incumbent and opposition parties focus distinguish whether or ethnicity or urbanization (a proxy for broader processes of modernization) explains vote choice. There is limited research on religiosity *per se*, and what exists is methodologically unsophisticated (Welsh 2014). The fact that UMNO and PAS tended—prior to 2018—to run head-to-head in constituencies with large Malay majorities might suggest that it would be possible to explore the correlation between religiosity and vote choice in this subset of electoral contests, but even here, party lineages differ across states for historical reasons (Funston 1980), confounding any comparison of religiosity among Malays. And moreover, PAS and UMNO differ across multiple dimensions aside from their Islamist character. UMNO under BN rule was a hegemonic party with vast resources of patronage at its disposal and an agenda that focused explicitly on Malay rights and protection of the political and economic status quo,

whereas PAS is an opposition party with reformist ambitions, comparatively limited access to patronage and an agenda that emphasizes Malay rights only indirectly. A vote for PAS might be a signal of northeast peninsular regional identity (evidence of the demographic association linkage), a demand for reform with anti-regime ambitions (evidence of the party brand linkage), or a signal of support for its religious platform.

This discussion illustrates just how difficult it is to infer what linkages are at work from observed votes for Islamic parties. Even when precisely articulated using a research design that can identify the effects of party brands independently of religious ideology, conclusions are necessarily limited in scope. For similar reasons, it is also difficult to infer voter motivations from observed votes for non-Islamic parties. As Baswedan (2004) observed early in Indonesia's contemporary democratic period, Golkar built a constituency among religious Muslims in Indonesia beginning in the late New Order period, with particular strength among religious Muslims outside of Java. Although the party does not advocate for the implementation of Islamic law, as Buehler (2013, 2016) has shown, at the subnational level, politicians from Golkar are frequently responsible for implementing Islamic regulations. A voter seeking religious policy may therefore choose *Golkar instead of an Islamic party* due to the party's ability and willingness to implement religious regulations. Likewise, in Malaysia, the fact that PAS sat opposition to the BN, and collaborated with largely non-Malay parties with multicultural and social democratic platforms, raises the possibility that a strict Islamist voter concerned primarily with religious ideology would vote *against PAS and for UMNO*. Liow (2003, 2009) and Weiss (2004) describe how UMNO has moved to adopt the Islamic agenda held by PAS as a way to preempt challenges to its religious credentials.

An Agenda

The chapter has outlined a framework for conceptualizing the links between Islam and voting behavior. Its main conclusions are negative. Because there are multiple linkages between religion and voting behavior, when facing the complexity of partisan competition in plural societies with multiparty elections in countries like Indonesia and Malaysia, it is hard to conclude anything about what a vote for or against an Islamic party actually means for the role for Islam in politics.

To conclude with a more constructive message, a research agenda on the links between religion and voting behavior might build on these uncertain foundations in three ways. The first is to proceed systematically, breaking down the broader problem of characterizing the different linkages between religion and voting behavior into coherent and answerable questions. Although approaches such as that of Pepinsky et al. (2012) cannot on their own resolve all of these issues, they can at least answer one question properly. Assembling multiple studies that tackle different aspects of this broader research area is the first step in a progressive research agenda, but each will need to focus on precise questions and appropriate counterfactuals in order to distinguish among the many different explanations reviewed above for why voters choose different parties. Unfortunately, the methods developed in Pepinsky et al. (2012) are not automatically portable to all such questions. To identify empirically the role of demographic association, for example, will require a method to manipulate respondents' demographic characteristics, perhaps through priming or otherwise making more salient one particular aspect of their social identity (see Sen and Wasow 2016).

The second direction to expand is to look comparatively, focusing on the countries listed in Table 2. Turkey in particular has featured prominently in the literature on Islam and

democratic politics, with Islamism associated both with religiosity and with a particular class formation (see e.g. Çarkoğlu and Toprak 2006; Öniş 2006; Yavuz 1997). And yet the conceptual problems outlined here have not met with satisfactory solutions—the ruling Justice and Development Party embodies, in various accounts, an Islamic, reformist, developmentalist, and pro-business principles. In the case of Egypt, by contrast, Masoud (2014) shows that the Muslim Brotherhood's mobilizational capacity and other social forces explain its success during Egypt's brief experience with democracy in the early 2010s. Further extending this analysis to understand what votes for non-Islamic parties mean in regions like West Africa, where few explicit Islamic parties compete in multiparty elections, would also prove enlightening.

A third direction to extend this research agenda is to question the very assumption that linkages between voters and Islamic parties are important. If my negative conclusions about what we can learn about them are valid, then it suggests that studying the politics of Islam may more profitably focus on party strategies, elite choices, and social movement entrepreneurs. As my coauthors and I concluded in our analysis of piety and public opinion in Indonesia (Pepinsky et al. 2018), there is little evidence that Muslim religiosity explains anything interesting about Indonesian politics. To conceptualize the role of Islam in Indonesian politics is to appreciate the autonomy of politicians and the broader social forces shaping party competition rather than the mundane politics of vote-getting and political behavior, taking seriously Islam as an identity claim rather than a set of individual beliefs and policy preferences.

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