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ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY
Micro-Level Indications of Compatibility

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Very few studies have attempted to empirically examine the relationship between Islam and democracy at the level of the individual. Using cross-sectional ordinary least squares regression, the author compares the sources and patterns of democratic support among Muslim and Christian respondents in eight countries undergoing varying degrees of democratization or attempting to consolidate democratic regimes. The results indicate that levels of support for democracy as an ideal are generally higher among Muslim respondents than Eastern Orthodox respondents in the countries included in the study. Furthermore, the study suggests that Muslims may more closely approximate the ideal envisioned by scholars who view civic engagement and political trust as essential to democracy. At the same time, however, the model reveals that in the countries included in the study, religion may play only a minor role in individuals' evaluations of democracy as an ideal concept.

Keywords: *Islam; democracy; Eastern orthodoxy; religion; politics*

The past two decades have been marked by a scholarly debate concerning the relationship between Islam and democratic forms of governance. A number of scholars have argued that Islam and democracy should not be considered mutually exclusive (see, e.g., Beinin & Stork, 1997; Eickelman & Piscatori, 1996; Entelis, 1997; Esposito & Voll, 1996; Kramer, 1993; Salame, 1994), whereas others stress supposed areas of incompatibility, stating or suggesting that Islam acts as a hindrance to democratic forms of government and/or democratic values and ideals (see, e.g., Fukuyama, 1992; Huntington, 1984, 1991, 1996a, 1996b; Lipset, 1994). If one focuses solely

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on macro-level indications of Islam's compatibility with democracy, the views of the latter group appear to be supported.[1]

At present, very few studies have attempted to systematically assess Islam's compatibility with democracy at the micro level. However, realizing how democracy is evaluated at the individual level is essential to gaining a better understanding of the prospects of present and future democratization and democratic consolidation in the Muslim world.[2] Furthermore, there have been few attempts to compare levels of support for democracy among Muslims and adherents of other religions in noninstitutionalized democracies, which would allow for a greater comparative understanding of religion's micro-level role in democratization processes.

In an effort to address these gaps in the literature, I use cross-sectional ordinary least squares regression using data from the World Values Survey for 1995 to 1997 to examine whether intermediate micro-level links between factors that have been posited by scholars to influence or be associated with support for democracy function the same way in the Muslim and Christian (primarily Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox) populations of eight countries, namely, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Croatia, Georgia, Macedonia, Russia, and Turkey. At the time of the surveys, some of the countries included in the study were clearly in the process of democratization; all had made at least some effort to move away from clear-cut authoritarian rule. An index of support for democracy as an ideal[3] is used as the dependent variable of the study; explanatory variables include civic engagement, political trust, assessments of a country's political past, and expectations of a country's political future.

1. Currently, 47 countries have citizenries composed of Muslim majorities. Mali was the only such country given a rating of "free" by Freedom House (2002) for the period from 2001 to 2002; of the remaining 46 countries, 28 were rated "not free." During the same period, only 11 of the 47 countries were considered electoral democracies by Freedom House.

2. Diamond (1999), for example, defines democratic consolidation as

the process of achieving broad and deep legitimation, such that all significant political actors, *at both the elite and mass levels* [italics added], believe that the democratic regime is the most right and appropriate for their society, better than any other realistic alternative they can imagine. (p. 65)

In short, democratic consolidation requires a shift in a country's political culture.

3. When referring to democracy, I have in mind what Dahl (1971) calls polyarchy, namely, a regime characterized by high levels of public contestation and participation. The dependent variable of the study attempts to capture support for democracy as an ideal; although the four survey questions that make up the index of democratic support are unable to reveal if the respondents have a Dahlian conception of democracy in mind (see also footnote 13), Esposito and Voll (1996) state that the Muslim world has witnessed not only a resurgence of Islam but also an increasing demand for greater popular political participation.

The results of the study lend support to scholarly works that stress possible points of fusion between Islam and democracy. The sources and patterns of democratic support are not found to systematically differ between Muslim and Christian respondents in the countries included in the study. In fact, a comparison of Eastern Orthodox and Muslim respondents suggests that the latter group holds views of democracy that may be more conducive to democratic politics. However, the model also suggests that in the countries included in the study, religion may play a fairly minimal role in shaping individuals' attitudes concerning democracy.

VIEWS OF ISLAM AS A
MONOLITHIC, ANTIDEMOCRATIC IDEOLOGY

Prominent scholars in the field often describe Islam as a uniform and unyielding force that is detrimental to the development of democracy. For example, Fukuyama (1992) writes,

> It is true that Islam constitutes a systematic and coherent ideology, just like liberalism and communism, with its own code of morality and doctrine of political and social justice . . . . And Islam has indeed defeated liberal democracy in many parts of the Islamic world, posing a grave threat to liberal practices even in countries where it has not achieved political power directly. (p. 45)

Likewise, pointing to the fact that Muslim nations have been absent from the third wave of democratization, Lipset (1994, p. 6) notes the similarities of Islam and Marxism and states that political freedom is a concept unknown to the religion, making the growth of democracy in Islamic countries in the near future highly unlikely.

Huntington (1996a, 1996b) speaks of an imminent "clash of civilizations" between Islam and the West. Arguing that the West is "unique," Huntington (1996b) states that "Western Christianity, first Catholicism and then Protestantism, is the single most important historical characteristic of Western civilization" (p. 30). In contrast to Western Christianity, Islam is still bound to the idea that the church and state are one; in essence, "God is Caesar" (Huntington, 1996b, p. 31). Islam is also burdened by a "poverty of civil society" and characterized by a spirit of collectivism rather than the individualism so vital to the development of liberal democracy in the West. The few Muslim countries that have attempted to copy the West have not produced stable, modern democracies but rather "torn" countries that are unsure of their cultural identities. In short, Huntington views Islam (as well as other

non-Western cultures) as a serious impediment to the development of Western democratic ideals.

ISLAM'S COMPATIBILITY WITH DEMOCRACY: REASONS FOR OPTIMISM

The view that it is difficult if not impossible for Islam and democracy to coexist has garnered a great deal of attention among scholars and policy makers and is certainly not without controversy. Those who disagree with this assessment argue that Islamic scripture, *sunna* (the words and actions of the prophet Mohammed), and *hadith* (narrations about the prophet and what he approved) may be able to serve as the foundation of the development of democracy in Islamic countries. Furthermore, the words and deeds of a number of Islamic movements and political parties have revealed their commitment to procedural democracy and democratic ideals.[4] Those who hold Islam to be incompatible with democracy unfortunately seem to discount these facts.

For example, Huntington (1996a, 1996b) states that the Koran may serve as a hindrance to the development of democratic ideals and believes that Islamic scripture is at least partially responsible for the lack of democratic political systems in the Muslim world. However, others have pointed to the fact that Koranic views of political matters are open to interpretation and have suggested that Islamic scripture, *sunna*, and *hadith* may be able to serve as a "blueprint" for the construction of democracy. The Islamic concepts of *shura* (consultation), *ijma* (consensus), and *ijtihad* (informed, independent judgment) seem to be compatible with democratic concepts and ideals (Esposito & Voll, 1996). Furthermore, the democratic ideals of freedom of speech and diversity of thought appear to be upheld by the following words of the prophet Mohammed: "Differences of opinion within my community is [*sic*] a sign of God's mercy" (Takeyh, 2001, p. 69). Islam also stresses racial equality and religious tolerance. The latter notion is exemplified by the Koranic verse "Let there be no compulsion in religion," as well as examples from the life of Mohammed (Smith, 1991, pp. 254-256). In short, the Koran, *sunna*, and *hadith* are open to interpretation; rather than serving solely as the basis of authoritarian and fundamentalist dogma, they may be able to act as the foundation for the development of Islamic democracy.

4. In contrast, the avowedly secular governments of Algeria, Egypt, and Turkey are known for banning Islamist political parties from the political process; Algeria not only outlawed the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) but nullified the elections of 1991 and 1992 that would have likely brought the FIS to power.

In recent years, a number of Islamic political parties have operated within the framework of democratic political systems, and democratic Islamic movements have played key roles in attempts to liberalize fundamentalist and authoritarian regimes. In the mid-1990s, the Welfare Party (Refah) briefly led a coalition government in Turkey. Yavuz (1997, p. 76) states that the ideology of the Welfare Party was a form of "Islamic liberalism" insofar as its goal was to "integrate Islamic identity and its symbols into the political sphere" rather than to promote Islam as an alternative to politics. Like a number of Islamic political parties before it, Refah was banned from political participation in 1998 by Turkey's Constitutional Court, but not before it proved its ability to function peacefully within the Turkish political system. Iranian president Mohammed Khatami's reformist Second of Khordad Movement seeks political liberalization within the framework of an Islamic constitution, a goal that has been met with resistance by the country's conservative clerics. In Indonesia, the democratic turn of events in 1999 was aided by the open opposition to the authoritarian Suharto regime by Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, the country's two largest Islamic organizations. These examples, by no means constituting an exhaustive list of such movements, provide compelling evidence that political Islam is not inherently anti-democratic.

In summary, descriptions of Islam as a monolithic force that severely hinders the development of democracy seem to focus on interpretations of the Koran, *sunna*, and *hadith* conducive to authoritarianism and seem to disregard cases of democratic Islamic movements and Islamic political parties that adhere to democratic political processes.[5]

The following section seeks to provide empirical evidence of the presence of micro-level support of democracy among Muslims, which would further call into question the notion that Islam has an invariably malefic effect on the development of democracy.

METHOD

Again, the goal of this article is to determine whether Islam acts as a hindrance to the development of support for democracy at the micro level. To address this question empirically, it will be important to establish the actual levels of support for democracy that exist among Muslims; in the analysis

5. Eickelman and Piscatori (1996) summarize this view well, stating that "rather than being monolithic, Muslim politics, while aspiring to *umma*-wide universals, derives its force and significance from the specific contexts, times, and localities in which it takes place" (p. 163). This in turn allows for the possibility of political change, including democratization.

below, these levels of support are compared with levels of democratic support among Christian[6] respondents to provide a useful point of reference. Were Islam truly a monolithic antidemocratic belief system, one would expect to find low levels of support for democracy among Muslims across nations.

One must also examine the sources and patterns of these evaluations to gain a better understanding of the role of religion in Muslims' views of democracy. If the view of Islam held by Huntington (1996a, 1996b), Fukuyama (1992), and Lipset (1994), among others, is correct, one would expect to find that the effects of factors posited in the scholarly literature to be associated with or to influence support for democracy vary between the two groups of respondents. For example, in his study of the effects of political trust in the United States, Hetherington (1998) shows that such trust affects specific and diffuse support. However, if Muslims truly believe that "God is Caesar" (i.e., that the ultimate source of political authority is God),[7] this would suggest that political trust may play a less vital role in strengthening support for democracy among Muslims than among Christians. As for the relationship of civil society and democratic support, Gellner (1991, p. 6) argues that there exists "little yearning for civil society but a great commitment to faith" in the Muslim world, which suggests not only that one should find lower levels of civic engagement among Muslims but also that those voluntary associations and institutions that do exist in Muslim countries may not function as schools of democracy but rather as tools of the state.

The analysis below searches for such patterns of prediction in an effort to gain stronger purchase on the micro-level role of Islam on Muslims' evaluations of democracy. By examining the direction of the signs and the statistical significance of the coefficients of the regressions, each of which is restricted to Muslim or Christian respondents of a particular country, one should be able to spot similarities and differences regarding the patterns and influences of democratic support within and across groups.

The data used in this study are from the third wave of the World Values Survey, conducted between 1995 and 1997 (Inglehart et al., 2000). Because of the inclusion of a number of questions regarding respondents' religious

6. The sample includes Eastern Orthodox and Catholic respondents (Protestant respondents are omitted because of their small numbers in the countries included in the study). The term *Christian* when used here refers to these respondents in toto. At times, I also compare Muslim respondents specifically with Eastern Orthodox or Catholic respondents.

7. Of course, the "God is Caesar" argument is less applicable to Muslim states with secular regimes than to truly Islamic states (i.e., those with constitutions, legal systems, etc. that are derived from Islamic doctrine and law); however, if the Islamic belief system is monolithic, it seems reasonable to suggest that this idea may hold true to some extent even among Muslims living under secular governments.

beliefs and practices, the World Values Survey can be particularly useful to those interested in comparing the political views of the adherents of various religions, as is done here. Furthermore, the third wave of the survey was conducted in 54 countries, allowing for comparisons across countries with widely divergent histories, cultures, and socioeconomic and political conditions.

The countries included in the analysis are Turkey, Bangladesh, Azerbaijan, Russia, Georgia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Macedonia,[8] each of which was rated by Freedom House as either partly free or not free during the years in which the surveys were conducted. The populations of the first three countries listed are overwhelmingly Muslim, whereas the last two are composed of a mixture of Christians (primarily Orthodox) and Muslims. Russia and Georgia are primarily Orthodox, whereas Croatia is predominantly Roman Catholic. Six of the countries, the exceptions being Turkey and Bangladesh, have recent histories of communist rule; Russia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan are former republics of the Soviet Union, whereas Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia were formerly part of Yugoslavia. Democratic consolidation or at least some level of democratization was taking place in each of the countries analyzed during the time the surveys were carried out.

The countries included in the study should shed light on the two hypotheses of Islam as a cultural obstacle to democracy detailed by Huntington (1991, pp. 298-311). If Islam is indeed "peculiarly hostile" to democracy (the "less restrictive" version), one would expect to see little evidence of democratic support among Muslims at the micro level in any of the countries included in the study, regardless of the countries' political histories; furthermore, one would expect to see higher levels of democratic support among Christian respondents (both Catholic and Orthodox). The more restrictive version of the argument that Islam acts as a cultural obstacle suggests that a line dividing "those areas where democracy may take root from those where it will not" (p. 300) cuts through central Europe; this fissure separates Western, Christian culture from that of Eastern orthodoxy and Islam as of circa A.D. 1500. If this argument is correct, one would expect to find relatively low levels of support for democracy among both Muslim and Orthodox respondents in comparison with the Catholic respondents of Croatia, which falls to the west of this dividing line.

8. Nigeria and Pakistan, countries with large Muslim populations included in the third wave of the World Values Survey, are excluded from this analysis. In Nigeria, a Muslim category was not in the list of responses provided to answer the question "Do you belong to a religious denomination? If yes, which one?" In Pakistan, surprisingly, almost all respondents are listed as Catholic. Unfortunately, no Middle Eastern countries were included in the third wave of the survey.

THE MODEL

Dependent variable. The mean score of four questions asking respondents to assess the political and economic effectiveness of democracy as an ideal serves as the dependent variable of the model.[9] Although this variable is almost certainly influenced by the current socioeconomic and political circumstances of a country, there are reasons to believe that it is a better reflection of actual feelings toward democracy than other possible alternatives.[10] For example, creating an index from questions that specifically ask whether certain types of government would be good for respondents' countries (e.g., a democratic system, a strong ruler who does not need to bother with elections, military rule, etc.) may underestimate the support for democracy in nations undergoing democratization, especially when this process is tumultuous. Under such circumstances, a large percentage of a population may feel that a "strong ruler who doesn't need to bother with elections" or even military rule is necessary in the short term to keep its country from falling into more chaos, while still holding the belief that a democratic system is the best solution for the country when it can be effectively implemented. Furthermore, because respondents were asked to assess various aspects of democratic systems (on a 4-point scale, with 4 being the most favorable assessment of democracy possible), the index conveys more information than the use of a single question as the dependent variable, such as "Democracy may have problems but it's better than any other form of government".[11] A question such as this does not allow one to know what considerations were taken into account by a respondent at that time. Finally, although this variable measures one's assessment of democracy as an ideal form of government, it seems likely that the more favorably one views democracy, the more likely he or she would also be, in practice, to support democracy.[12]

9. The specific operationalizations of the dependent and explanatory variables are included in the Appendix.

10. It may be argued that the index is more likely to capture respondents' evaluations of the performance of an existing regime rather than general support for democracy as a concept. However, citing evidence from World Values Survey data collected during the 1990s, Klingemann (1999) shows that in general, respondents are able to distinguish between their evaluations of a regime in practice and their evaluations of democracy as an ideal form of government. I thank an anonymous reviewer for mentioning this concern.

11. This is V163 of the third wave of the World Values Survey. Although of limited use and information when considered separately, it was included in the additive index used as the dependent variable in this analysis because it provides an overall assessment of democracy.

12. One limitation of this variable, however, is the fact that it still does not fully capture the fact that democracy is a "polyvalent symbol" that elicits three distinct views: Some view democracy in institutional terms, others in socioeconomic terms, and a third group emphasizes its liberal-individual aspect (Rose, 2000).

Table 1
Mean Assessment of Democracy Scores (Muslim vs. Christian respondents)

Group	Mean Score	SE	SD	n
Muslims	2.97	0.009	0.503	2,916
Christians	2.80	0.011	0.674	3,780

Note: Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic respondents are included in the Christian category.

Table 1 reveals the mean assessment of democracy scores for Muslim and Christian respondents included in the sample. As can be seen, in the countries included in the study, Muslims actually provide more positive assessments of democracy than Christians. A difference-of-means test also indicates that the difference in mean support levels between Christians and Muslims (2.80 and 2.97, respectively) is statistically significant ($F = 134.446$, $p < .001$).

Explanatory variables. Viewed as an integral part of civil society, the effects of membership in voluntary organizations have been examined by a number of scholars (de Tocqueville, 2000; Putnam, 1993, 2000; Verba, 1965). Putnam (1993, 2000) suggests that membership in voluntary associations is an essential means of fostering a civically healthy society, which in turn allows democracy to run more smoothly. In the context of democratizing nations, membership in such organizations may play a vital role in spreading popular support for democracy. Concerning democratization in Muslim countries, Nasr (1995) suggests that membership in Islamic revivalist organizations can lead to broader support of democracy, stating that "revivalists have by and large responded positively to the burgeoning democratization process in many parts of the Muslim world . . . they are an important element in the civil society that will serve as the pillar of democracy" (p. 272). The mean score of nine questions asking whether respondents are active members, inactive members, or not members of various voluntary associations is used to operationalize this explanatory variable.

Political trust is also argued to be of critical importance to the proper functioning of democracy (Gamson, 1968; Hetherington, 1998; Mishler & Rose, 1997, 2001). Trust in political institutions lends legitimacy to a regime; when such trust is combined with a sense of high political efficacy among a country's citizens, a sense of allegiance to the political system is likely to result (Paige, 1971). Political trust is especially important to new democracies but not likely to be in abundant supply (Mishler & Rose, 2001, p. 30). Within the context of this study, if those who exhibit higher levels of trust assess democracy as an ideal more favorably, the result would be a significant positive relationship between the two variables. Political trust is operationalized here as

the mean score of seven questions that ask respondents to list, on a 4-point scale, the levels of confidence they have in various political institutions.

Religious service attendance is included as an independent variable of the model because of the role that religious institutions have been posited to play in the development of civil society, namely, "providing social support to their members and social services to the wider community, and . . . by nurturing civic skills, inculcating moral values, encouraging altruism, and fostering civic recruitment among church people" (Putnam, 2000, p. 79). Of course, Putnam (2000) is speaking of American religious institutions in this passage. However, there are indications that attending religious services on a regular basis is also related to broader civic involvement in the countries included in the study. A moderate positive correlation exists between religious service attendance and voluntary association membership among both Muslims and Christians (.155 and .181, respectively). Conversely, Huntington (1984) suggests that Islamic doctrine may be incompatible with democracy. If this is true, and if one accepts the premise that Muslims who frequently worship at mosques adhere to Islamic doctrine to a greater extent than those who rarely do so,[13] one would expect to find that higher levels of mosque attendance are tied to negative evaluations of democracy among Muslims.

The model also includes evaluations of the previous regime as well as expectations of the political system's future as explanatory variables. Retrospective evaluations are of interest here because of the recent communist pasts of six of the eight countries included in the study. Rose and Mishler (1994) identify four different views of past and present regimes in nascent postcommunist democracies: Democrats approve of new regimes while disapproving of the former communist regimes, skeptics disapprove of both the old and new regimes, the compliant approve both, and reactionaries approve the communist regimes but do not lend approval to the democratic regimes. If theories claiming that Islam is incompatible with democracy are correct, one would expect to find Muslims living in Azerbaijan and Bosnia to be either skeptical or reactionary in their evaluations of democracy when compared with the former communist systems. Regarding the future expectations of the political system, if higher expectations of the political system's future are found to be linked to more positive evaluations of democracy, this would indicate that both proponents and opponents of democracy expect the process of democratization to continue into the future.

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13. Admittedly, this is a less than ideal means to measure the level of Muslims' adherence to Islamic doctrine (see Rose, 2002, p. 105); however, in the absence of a survey question that asks respondents to what extent they follow the precepts of their religions, it is the best available option.

Finally, the model also includes the usual sociodemographic variables of gender, age, and education.[14] No strong correlations were found between any of the independent variables in the model.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Table 2 reveals the results of two pooled models, the first of which includes a dummy variable for religious denomination, the second also including countries as variables. Pooling the countries in this manner allows one to discover whether the predictors of citizens' evaluations of democracy are similar across the nations included in the analysis. As can be seen, the inclusion of country dummy variables in the second model changes the signs of the coefficients for activity in voluntary organizations, mosque/church attendance, and education; increases the variance explained by the pooled model; and results in statistically significant country variables. These results strongly suggest that the relations of the predictors included in the model with the independent variable, evaluation of democracy, are country specific. It should be noted, however, that the religious denomination dummy variable remains positively signed and statistically significant ($p < .01$) in both models, which again reveals that a statistically significant difference in levels of positive evaluation exists between Christians and Muslims, with the latter group exhibiting higher levels than the former. The findings revealed in Tables 1 and 2 suggest that it is unwise to consider Islam peculiarly hostile to democracy. Furthermore, the variance captured by the pooled models is relatively small, which suggests that religion may play only a minor role in shaping individuals' views of democracy.[15]

It is necessary, then, to test the model separately in each country. The regressions displayed in Table 3 are limited to the majority religious group of each country, with the exception of Bosnia, which has a sufficient number of both Muslim and Orthodox respondents to include regressions for both groups. The results suggest that the patterns and sources of democratic support do not systematically differ between Muslim and Christian respondents.

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14. Income is not included as a control variable because of the large number of respondents who failed to provide this information.

15. This finding complements that of Rose (2002, p. 108), who finds only a weak correlation between religion and political attitudes in his study of Muslim, Eastern Orthodox, and nonreligious respondents in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan; social rather than religious divisions are found to be the primary influence on support for democracy as an ideal in the two countries.

Table 2

Effects of Individual-Level Variables on Evaluations of Democracy: Pooled Model Estimates

	Model	
Explanatory Variable	OLS	OLS Including Country Dummies
Activity in voluntary membership organizations	.076*** (.027)	−.098*** (.028)
Political trust	.063*** (.012)	.019 (.012)
Mosque/church attendance	.018*** (.004)	−.001 (.004)
Assessment of political system's past	−.041*** (.003)	−.032*** (.003)
Expectation of political system's future	.034*** (.003)	.024*** (.003)
Religious denomination (Islam high)	.189*** (.016)	.097*** (.030)
Gender (male high)	.047*** (.015)	.037*** (.014)
Age (measured by decade)	−.020*** (.005)	−.004 (.005)
Education	−.007** (.003)	.034*** (.004)
Russia		−.806*** (.045)
Georgia		−.372*** (.039)
Azerbaijan		−.276*** (.028)
Turkey		−.231*** (.027)
Macedonia		−.413*** (.039)
Croatia		.123*** (.044)
Bosnia		−.125*** (.034)
Intercept	2.531*** (.051)	2.968*** (.070)
Adjusted R^2	.10	.19

Note: $N = 6{,}696$ (for both models). The second model includes $N − 1$ country dummies; the reference category is Bangladesh. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. All tests of significance are two-tailed. OLS = ordinary least squares. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.

It is evident that there are no cases for which membership in voluntary organizations is positively signed and statistically significant. However, among Orthodox respondents in Bosnia and Macedonia, this coefficient is statistically significant and negatively signed, which indicates that as activity in voluntary organizations increases, democracy as a concept is judged more harshly, all else held equal. This finding is troubling and is discussed in more detail below.

Political trust is statistically significant and positively signed in the regressions of Bangladeshi and Bosnian Muslims, which signifies that these groups assess democracy more favorably as trust in political institutions rises, all else held equal. This variable fails to reach statistical significance in any of the cases limited to Christian respondents. As mentioned above, institutional trust is viewed as vital to democracy's success, especially in nascent democracies. The fact that the posited link between institutional trust and demo-

Table 3
Predicting Muslims' and Christians' Evaluations of Democracy (ordinary least squares regression)

Predictor	Russia Orthodox	Georgia Orthodox	Azerbaijan Muslim	Croatia Catholic	Macedonia Orthodox	Bosnia Orthodox	Bosnia Muslim	Turkey Muslim	Bangladesh Muslim
Activity in voluntary membership organizations	-.013 (.161)	.010 (.095)	.143 (.136)	-.114 (.094)	-.212*** (.080)	-.251*** (.091)	-.140 (.101)	-.000 (.075)	.050 (.050)
Political trust	.083 (.053)	.012 (.024)	.022 (.038)	.021 (.045)	-.043 (.050)	.076 (.070)	.113* (.063)	-.000 (.024)	.173*** (.029)
Church attendance	.023 (.019)	.008 (.011)	.046*** (.013)	-.005 (.014)	.010 (.023)	-.058** (.028)	.000 (.019)	-.027*** (.007)	-.000 (.011)
Assessment of political system's past	-.083*** (.010)	-.063*** (.005)	.020** (.008)	-.043*** (.011)	-.026** (.010)	-.037** (.017)	.010 (.015)	-.000 (.006)	-.001 (.009)
Expectation of political system's future	.017 (.012)	.027*** (.006)	-.022** (.010)	.027** (.012)	.054*** (.012)	.020 (.018)	.058*** (.019)	.012** (.005)	.038*** (.009)
Gender (male high)	.104* (.057)	.076*** (.029)	.078** (.035)	.043 (.044)	.016 (.055)	.035 (.074)	-.161** (.071)	.074** (.032)	-.072** (.037)
Age (by decade)	-.019 (.018)	.003 (.010)	-.037*** (.014)	-.027* (.014)	.003 (.020)	.020 (.027)	.019 (.027)	.042*** (.010)	-.004 (.014)
Education	.044*** (.014)	.018** (.008)	.000 (.010)	.162*** (.036)	.059*** (.014)	.019 (.022)	.043** (.019)	.050*** (.007)	.013** (.006)
Adjusted R^2	.16	.12	.04	.06	.10	.04	.07	.10	.09
n	469	1,524	690	890	411	283	299	1,025	668

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors appearing in parentheses. All tests of significance are two-tailed. Regressions are limited to the majority religious group of each country, with the exception of Bosnia, which has a sufficient number of Muslim and Eastern Orthodox respondents to include regressions for both groups. Binary logit regressions (the categories being low to moderate assessment and high assessment) were also tested, yielding essentially the same results as above.
*p < .10. **p < .05. ***p < .01.

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cratic support is displayed in two of the four regressions limited to Muslim respondents (one a postcommunist society, the other a country without a communist past) yet absent in all five of the regressions limited to Christian respondents is another reason to question those who assert Islam's incompatibility with democracy.

No pattern is apparent regarding the predictive power of religious service attendance. Among Muslims, this coefficient is statistically significant and positively signed in Azerbaijan, indicating that higher levels of mosque attendance are linked to more positive evaluations of democracy. On the other hand, increased mosque attendance among Muslim Turks is related to lower assessments of democracy. Among Christian respondents, the coefficient for church attendance is negative and significant in the case of Orthodox respondents in Bosnia, and in no case is it positively signed and significant. In short, the findings suggest that Muslims who regularly worship at mosques are not systematically more likely to evaluate democracy harshly than Christians who worship frequently.[16]

Among Christian respondents in every postcommunist country included in the study, the variable measuring the assessment of the political system's past is statistically significant and negatively signed. In other words, higher evaluations of the communist regimes are related to lower evaluations of democracy. This reveals the prevalence of reactionaries, the term used by Rose and Mishler (1994) to describe those who approve of the communist regimes but disapprove of the new democratic regimes. However, the regression of Azerbaijani Muslims suggests the presence of what Rose and Mishler call compliants, that is, those who approve of both the old and new regimes. In this regression, favorable assessments of the communist regimes are linked to favorable assessments of the current regimes. The presence of compliants in Azerbaijan and the lack of a reactionary trend among Muslims in Bosnia may aid in the long-run consolidation of democracy in these nations, because of the relative lack of citizens standing firm in their belief that communism is a better alternative than democracy. On the other hand, the presence of a compliant society in Azerbaijan may pose a problem, which is discussed below. In Muslim countries without communist histories, namely, Turkey and Bangladesh, the variable is insignificant.[17] This is not surprising considering that respondents in these countries, when answering this question, were evaluating regimes that had remained relatively stable

16. This result is similar to that of Tessler (2002), who finds that higher levels of "personal piety" among Muslims in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, and Palestine do not uniformly lead to harsher assessments of democracy.

17. Respondents in countries in which no regime changes had recently taken place were asked to rate the political systems of 10 years before.

over the previous 10 years, at least in comparison with the sharp regime changes that had taken place in postcommunist nations.

The variable measuring the expectation of the political system's future is significant and positively signed in six of the nine regressions, and among Orthodox respondents in Russia and Bosnia, the coefficient is positive but fails to reach significance. Among Muslim respondents in Azerbaijan, however, the coefficient is significant and negatively signed. In those countries displaying significant positive relationships between the two variables, one would predict that evaluations of democracy would become more favorable as expectation levels for the future of the political system rise, all else held equal. This may suggest that those who give high marks to democracy as well as opponents of democracy believe that these countries will continue to follow the path of democratization. Azerbaijan, however, reveals the opposite trend. Here, one would predict that as expectation levels for the future of the country's political system increase, evaluations of democracy decrease, all else held equal. The large compliant population, which approves of both the old communist regime and the new quasi-democratic regime, may be indifferent as to what type of regime exists in the future, because they may be able to think of reasons to support both types of regimes, affecting the relationship between expectations of the future and evaluations of democracy.

Finally, of the socioeconomic variables, only education reveals a strong trend. In three of the four regressions of Muslim respondents and four of the five regressions of Christian respondents, education is positively signed and significant. In other words, higher levels of education are linked to more favorable assessments of democracy among both Christians and Muslims. Men provide higher evaluations of democracy than women at a statistically significant level in each of the three formerly Soviet countries. Of the four regressions limited to Muslim respondents, two (Azerbaijan and Turkey) reveal that men provide higher evaluations of democracy than women, whereas the other two (Bosnia and Bangladesh) show that women assess democracy more favorably than men; all four of these relations are at a statistically significant level. Age reveals no pattern of prediction of which to speak.

Table 4 reveals the mean level of democratic assessment for the specified religious group in each country, as well as the substantive effects of activity in voluntary organizations and political trust. When the explanatory variables are held at their means, Muslim respondents provide assessments of democracy that are in all cases higher than those of Orthodox respondents. Furthermore, the two highest mean assessments, those of Catholics in Croatia and Muslims in Bangladesh, are nearly identical, which suggests that the idea of a

Table 4
Assessment of Democracy Values: Mean Scores and Effects of Selected Explanatory Variables

Country (denomination)	Mean Value	Change From Mean					
		Voluntary Membership at Lowest Value	Voluntary Membership at Highest Value	Political Trust at Lowest Value	Political Trust at Highest Value	Both Low	Both High
Turkey (Muslim)	2.878 (0.014)	−0.000 (0.016)	+0.004 (0.127)	+0.002 (0.042)	−0.001 (0.036)	−0.001 (0.043)	+0.003 (0.134)
Bangladesh (Muslim)	3.138 (0.016)	−0.018 (0.023)	+0.074 (0.073)	−0.321 (0.056)	+0.201 (0.037)	−0.338 (0.058)	+0.277 (0.080)
Bosnia (Muslim)	3.093 (0.033)	+0.045 (0.047)	−0.142 (0.107)	−0.224 (0.126)	+0.120 (0.073)	−0.178 (0.126)	−0.022 (0.118)
Bosnia (Orthodox)	2.773 (0.036)	+0.133 (0.061)	−0.371 (0.139)	−0.117 (0.112)	+0.091 (0.089)	+0.015 (0.106)	−0.280 (0.134)
Macedonia (Orthodox)	2.591 (0.027)	+0.052 (0.034)	−0.276 (0.108)	+0.041 (0.055)	−0.088 (0.104)	+0.094 (0.052)	−0.364 (0.119)
Croatia (Catholic)	3.148 (0.022)	+0.030 (0.034)	−0.119 (0.102)	−0.031 (0.073)	+0.028 (0.067)	−0.001 (0.079)	−0.092 (0.122)
Russia (Orthodox)	2.262 (0.027)	+0.001 (0.033)	−0.019 (0.224)	−0.097 (0.068)	+0.153 (0.101)	−0.096 (0.069)	+0.138 (0.283)
Georgia (Orthodox)	2.770 (0.015)	−0.000 (0.016)	+0.011 (0.121)	−0.016 (0.033)	+0.021 (0.043)	−0.017 (0.034)	+0.030 (0.128)
Azerbaijan (Muslim)	2.984 (0.018)	−0.014 (0.022)	+0.139 (0.124)	−0.036 (0.067)	+0.028 (0.053)	−0.050 (0.067)	+0.167 (0.128)

Note: The mean value of the dependent variable is calculated by holding all predictors at their means. The "change from mean" scores result from changing the predictors listed to the lowest or highest possible value while holding other predictors constant at their means. One is the low value for both voluntary membership activity and political trust, 3 is the high value for voluntary membership activity, and 4 is the high value for political trust. The lowest possible assessment of democracy value is 1, and the highest possible value is 4. Standard errors appear in parentheses. These results were obtained using Clarify: Software for Interpreting and Presenting Statistical Results, Version 2.1 (http://gking.harvard.edu/).

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cultural dividing line of democracy separating the East from the West needs to be rethought.

Setting the voluntary membership activity variable at its highest possible value (while holding the other predictors constant at their mean values) reduces support of democracy as an ideal in four of the five regressions limited to Christian respondents, with reductions greater than 10% among Orthodox respondents in Bosnia and Macedonia. Among Muslim respondents, Bosnia is the only case for which higher levels of activity in voluntary associations lessen support of democracy, resulting in a decline of approximately 5%. Increasing the political trust variable to its highest possible value while holding all others constant raises the support of both Orthodox respondents in Russia and Bangladeshi Muslim respondents between 6% and 7%; however, in Russia, this leads to a support of democracy score of only approximately 2.42 (out of a possible 4), still lower than all other mean support scores. When both the voluntary organization activity and political trust variables are set at their highest possible values while holding the other predictors constant at their means, support of democracy among Muslims is raised in three of the four regressions (the exception is again Bosnia); setting these two variables at their maximum values raises the assessment of democracy score of Azerbaijani Muslims to approximately 3.15 and that of Bangladeshi Muslims to a remarkable 3.42. On the other hand, setting both predictors at their highest possible values once again lowers support of democracy as an ideal form of government among Christian respondents in three of the five regressions.

It appears, then, that no systematic patterns exist indicating that Muslims evaluate democracy as an ideal systematically differently than Christians, at least in the countries included in the study. However, there are indications that Muslims may more closely approximate the ideal envisioned by scholars who view civic engagement and political trust as essential to democracy.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The most obvious implication resulting from this study is that it is unwise to suggest that Islam somehow systematically acts as an impediment to the development of support for democracy at the micro level. As the empirical results above show, Muslims (at least in the countries included in the analysis) tend to evaluate the concept of democracy at least as favorably as Christians.

In fact, this study suggests that countries with large numbers of adherents of Eastern orthodoxy, not Islam, may have more difficultly consolidating

nascent democratic regimes.[18] Lipset (1994) suggests that Orthodox Christianity may be detrimental to the development of democracy because of the traditionally high levels of association between the religious and political spheres not only in Russia but throughout Eastern Europe. Eastern Orthodox countries appear to be doubly cursed when it comes to the prospects of democratization and democratic consolidation, because these countries generally have little or no experience with democracy and are characterized by a tradition of hierarchical religious authority, as well as what Weber calls a "caesaropapist" structure, under which "the national state . . . plays a major role in the national church's finances and appointments" (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 453), calling into question the church's role as an autonomous part of civil society. Radu (1998) argues that Eastern Orthodox churches have been supportive of "ethno-religious absolutist nationalism" since the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and that a fear of Western influence (including democracy and capitalism) currently characterizes Eastern orthodoxy. Although it would be unwise to suggest that Eastern orthodoxy per se acts as a hindrance to the development of democratic support and ideals, the effects of Eastern Orthodox culture and tradition on the prospects of democratization are certainly deserving of further empirical study.[19]

Political trust's usefulness as a predictor of democratic support is unclear. As mentioned above, the results reveal no systematic pattern in the data, and the political trust coefficient reaches statistical significance in only two of the nine regressions shown in Table 3. However, the lack of statistically significant positive relationships between political trust and support for democracy as an ideal in seven of the nine regressions may not be a cause for alarm. The present study includes a number of regimes that were deemed politically corrupt at the time of the surveys,[20] and skepticism of political institutions may

18. It must be noted that the relatively low levels of support for democracy among Eastern Orthodox respondents in the countries included in this study stand in contrast to those of Orthodox respondents in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Using New Europe Barometer survey data, Rose (2002) finds that Muslim and Orthodox respondents in the two Central Asian countries provide relatively similar levels of support for democracy as an ideal concept.

19. Regarding Catholicism, Huntington (1991, pp. 75-77) notes that approximately three quarters of the countries participating in the third wave of democratization are catholic countries, which he argues is a result of changes in the Roman Catholic Church that changed the religion from a force "antithetical to democracy" prior to World War II to a "force for democracy" after 1970.

20. For example, of the 54 countries analyzed in 1996 by Transparency International, an organization that aggregates independent surveys measuring corruption among public officials in various countries by gathering data about subjective perceptions of corruption, Russia and Bangladesh were among the most corrupt; Turkey was also deemed to be characterized by high levels of political corruption. More information can be found at http://www.transparency.org.

be warranted in these countries. If those skeptical of their countries' political institutions still support democracy as an ideal form of government, one would not expect to find a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. Thus, the findings here may indicate that those skeptical of their current political institutions are still supportive of democracy as an ideal form of government.

The Bangladeshi case is particularly interesting. In Bangladesh, one of the most politically corrupt of the 54 countries studied by Transparency International in 1996, higher levels of political trust are related to more favorable assessments of democracy as an ideal (see Tables 3 and 4). Exactly what this indicates is difficult to determine. This relationship seems to support cultural theories of the origins of political trust, which view political trust as a phenomenon determined by socialization to cultural norms rather than a favorable response to the output and performance of political institutions.[21] A less sanguine interpretation of this relationship is that it is indicative of the presence of "excessive" trust among Muslims in Bangladesh; according to Gamson (1968), this may serve to weaken the foundations of democracy. Although trust in political institutions (and political trust more broadly conceived) is likely vital to democracy for a number of reasons (see Hetherington, 1998, p. 792; Mishler & Rose, 2001, pp. 418-419), the current analysis is unable to fully explicate the relationship between the two in democratizing nations.[22]

Perhaps the most intriguing finding is the relationship that exists between activity in voluntary associations and evaluations of democracy. Among Orthodox respondents in Bosnia and Macedonia, higher levels of activity in voluntary organizations are linked to lower levels of support for democracy as an ideal at statistically significant levels; though not statistically significant, the same relationship exists among Catholic respondents in Croatia, Muslim respondents in Bosnia, and Orthodox respondents in Russia. In no case is the coefficient for this variable statistically significant and positively signed. Rather than "instill[ing] in their members habits of cooperation and public-spiritedness" and serving as "places where social and civic skills are learned—'schools of democracy'" (Putnam, 2000, p. 338), voluntary associ-

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21. For an overview and comparison of cultural and institutional theories of political trust, see Mishler and Rose (2001, pp. 33-37).

22. Understanding this relationship is made even more difficult because of the fact that the dependent variable of the analysis is not an indication of respondents' satisfaction with the way democracy is developing in their countries but rather an assessment of democracy as a concept or ideal.

ations appear to have the opposite effect in a number of cases, especially in the former republics of Yugoslavia.

As Hefner (2000) notes, "in assessing whether associations 'make democracy work' . . . we have to look carefully at what their members actually say and do" (p. 24). Ideologically homogeneous associations may have the effect of simply reinforcing the views (whether democratic or antidemocratic) of their members (Putnam, 2000; Verba, 1965). Pluralism was never a widely held ideal in Yugoslavia (Larrabee, 1990), which suggests that voluntary organizations found in its former republics may have been relatively homogeneous; this problem was likely even more acute during the mid-1990s, a period of heated ethnic and religious conflict. In short, this analysis provides empirical support for the sentiment that "voluntary groups are not a panacea for what ails . . . democracy" (Putnam, 2000, p. 341) and that formal civic engagement may indeed, under certain circumstances, have a "dark side".[23]

The fact that higher expectations of the political system's future are associated with higher levels of support for democracy in eight of the nine regressions (six of these reaching statistical significance) is a much more optimistic finding. As mentioned above, this suggests that both proponents and opponents of democracy expect democratization to continue into the future. The one exception is the regression of Azerbaijani Muslims, which reveals that higher future expectations are linked to lower levels of support for democracy, perhaps revealing the prevalence of what Rose and Mishler (1994) call compliants (supporters of both democracy[24] and communism). Scholars have noted the importance of examining support for nascent postcommunist democratic regimes in relation to support for the previous communist system; however, little scholarly attention has been afforded the role played by future expectations on support for democracy among the citizens of democratizing nations. To the extent that such studies would provide a better understanding of citizens' views of the commitment to democratization held by political elites, it is unfortunate that this link has been left largely unexamined.

23. Diamond (1999) posits that associations themselves

may be independent of the state, voluntary, self-generating, and respectful of the law and still be not only paternalistic, and particularistic in its internal structure and norms but also distrustful, unreliable, domineering, exploitative, and cynical in its dealings with other organizations, the state, and society. (p. 227)

24. Of course, of the countries included in the study, Azerbaijan is one of the least democratic in practice.

CONCLUSION

Simply because nondemocratic regimes are in place in a number of countries in the Muslim world does not mean that the vast majority of these countries' citizens are unsupportive of a democratic alternative, which is an implication of scholars who label Islam as antidemocratic. Because of the absence of survey data dealing with political matters in many of these nations, it is difficult if not impossible to determine the actual levels of legitimacy and support afforded to them by their citizens. Fortunately, as more survey data become available, the relationship between Islam and democracy at the micro level is becoming clearer. Tessler (2002) and Rose (2002) have recently used survey data from the Arab world and Central Asia, respectively, to show that Islam is not the hindrance to democratic support and ideals that some portray it to be.

Likewise, this study indicates that Muslims living in the eight countries included in the study do not evaluate democracy more harshly than Christians; in fact, empirical evidence shows that Muslims, in aggregate, provide more positive assessments of democracy than Eastern Orthodox respondents, calling into question the notion of Islam as peculiarly hostile to democracy. Additionally, no patterns were found that would suggest that Muslims and Christians react systematically differently to factors that various scholars have deemed essential to the development of democracy. The results provide some indication, however, that Muslims' evaluations of democracy as an ideal form of government may be more likely to be positively influenced by trust in political institutions and membership in voluntary associations. There are also signs of the existence of fewer "reactionaries" (i.e., those who approve of the old communist regimes while disapproving of the new regimes) among the postcommunist Muslim population than among Christians living in formerly communist countries. Finally, the pooled models presented in Table 2 suggest that in the countries included in the study, religion may in fact play only a minor role in individuals' evaluations of democracy as an ideal.

Questions remain, of course. It may be argued that countries included in this study have secular governments, as well as fewer practicing adherents of Islam than many other Muslim countries, which may raise doubts about the applicability of these empirical findings to other countries (e.g., those in the Middle East). Furthermore, because of the lack of a survey question that asks if respondents follow the precepts of their religions, the variable used here to measure adherence to religious doctrine (the frequency of mosque or church attendance) is less than ideal; this is especially true in the case of Muslim respondents. With these limitations in mind, the findings presented still

strongly suggest that Islam is not the monolithic impediment to the development of democratic values that it is often portrayed to be.

APPENDIX
Coding of Variables

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Evaluation of democracy is the mean score of responses to the following four questions:

In democracy, the economic system runs badly. (1 = *agree strongly*, 2 = *agree*, 3 = *disagree*, 4 = *disagree strongly*)

Democracies are indecisive and have too much squabbling. (1 = *agree strongly*, 2 = *agree*, 3 = *disagree*, 4 = *disagree strongly*)

Democracies aren't good at maintaining order. (1 = *agree strongly*, 2 = *agree*, 3 = *disagree*, 4 = *disagree strongly*)

Democracy may have its problems but it's better than any other form of government. (1 = *disagree strongly*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, 4 = *agree strongly*)

The variable was computed only for those respondents who answered at least two of the four questions.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Voluntary organization membership. Respondents were asked at what levels they were involved in the following nine types of voluntary organizations: church or religious; sport or recreation; art, music, or educational; labor union; political party; environmental; professional; charitable; and any other voluntary organization. For each, 1 = *don't belong*, 2 = *inactive member*, and 3 = *active member*. The variable is the mean score of responses for those who answered at least five of the nine questions.

Political trust. Respondents were asked how confident they were in the following seven political institutions: the armed forces, the legal system, the police, the national government, political parties, parliament, and the civil service. For each, 1 = *not at all*, 2 = *not very much*, 3 = *quite a lot*, and 4 = *a great deal*. The variable is the mean score of responses for those who answered at least four of the seven questions.

Mosque/church attendance. Respondents were asked, "Apart from weddings, funerals, and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?" (1 = *never, practically never*; 2 = *less often than once a year*; 3 = *once a year*;

4 = *only on special holy days*; 5 = *once a month*; 6 = *once a week*; 7 = *more than once a week*).

Assessment of political system's past. Respondents were asked, "Where on this scale would you put the political system as it was in communist times [10 years ago for those countries with no regime changes]?" (1 = *very bad*, 10 = *very good* on a 10-point scale).

Expectation for political system's future. Respondents were asked, "Where on this scale would you put the political system as you expect it will be ten years from now?" (1 = *very bad*, 10 = *very good* on a 10-point scale).

Gender. Respondents reported their gender (0 = female, 1 = male).

Age. Respondents reported their ages (in decades, 1 = 0 to 20 years, 2 = 21 to 30 years, 3 = 31 to 40 years, 4 = 41 to 50 years, 5 = 51 to 60 years, 6 = 61 to 70 years, 7 = 71 to 80 years, and 8 = 81 to 100 years).

Education. Respondents were asked, "What is the highest educational level that you have attained?" Students were coded at the highest expected level of completion (1 = *no formal education*; 2 = *incomplete primary school*; 3 = *complete primary school*; 4 = *incomplete secondary school: technical/vocational type*; 5 = *complete secondary school: technical/vocational type*; 6 = *incomplete secondary: university-preparatory type*; 7 = *complete secondary: university-preparatory type*; 8 = *some university-level education, without degree*; 9 = *university-level education, with degree*).

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