

# Islam and Democracy: Evidence from a new dataset

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## **Abstract**

The past three decades have been marked by a scholarly debate concerning the relationship between Islam and democracy. Constitutions differ among Muslim-majority countries and by no means all Muslim-majority countries exhibit an “Islamic Constitution”. By using a newly developed coding of the degree to which Muslim-majority countries incorporate Islam into their constitutions, we investigate the relationship between Islam and democracy in Muslim-Majority countries. We find evidence that supports the theories stating that a high level of Islamicity, mirrored by the constitution of a respective country, may reduce the probability of this country to be a democracy. This relation remains robust when controlling for other variables known to affect democracy, including education, per capita GDP, oil abundance, and degree of globalization.

**Keywords:** democracy, Islam, countries with Muslim majority, constitution

**JEL Classification:** O11, P16, P48, Z12

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## Introduction

“*Shari’a*” and “Religion” are synonymous for Muslims (Zidan, 1969, p. 38). *Shari’a* is defined as the whole body of beliefs, rituals, transactions, policies and norms that Allah has ordered Muslims to abide by. Consequently, *shari’a* not only provides spiritual guidance for Muslims on how to practice the religion of Islam properly, but also includes normative implications for the design of the political sphere of a state. Beyond the sheer scientific interest, these implications of Islam became relevant (again) in the context of the recent transition processes in the Middle East and North Africa. Despite not being finished yet, the transformations will raise new challenges for the political systems, as many religion-based parties as e.g. Al Nahda in Tunisia have become important (if not the leading) forces in their respective countries.

A considerable body of literature investigates the compatibility of Islam with democratic principles. Some have argued that Islam has many resources to accommodate a successful democratic state (Esposito & Voll, 1996; Salame, 1994). Nevertheless, numerous studies find that Islam is inherently incompatible with democracy, judging from the (usual) low scores of democracy recorded by Muslim-majority countries (Huntington, 1996; Lewis, 1993; Fukuyama, 1992). Zakaria (2004, p. 4) argues, “certainly the Koranic model of leadership is authoritarian”. This can be explained by the historic context of the origin of Islam. At this time (about 622 AD), authoritarian leadership was the rule, not the exception – not only in the Arabian Peninsula, where Islam has its origin, but in most parts of the World.

Consequently, some authors argue that democratic values are not coherent with the Muslim tradition: “The idea of representation, of elections, of popular suffrage, of political institutions being regulated by laws laid down by a parliamentary assembly, of these laws being guarded and upheld by an independent judiciary, the ideas of the secularity of state ... all these are profoundly alien to the Muslim political tradition” (Kedourie, 1994, p. 6). Evidence from many countries with Muslim-majorities worldwide suggests that this observation is correct – most of these countries are not democratic. But does that automatically mean that democracy (or at least democratic values) is not rooted in the Quran or *shari’a* as such, or that they are generally refused?

Using more rigorous methodology, a considerable body of quantitative studies finds that even when other variables are taken into consideration, a statistically significant negative relationship

between Islam and democracy still holds (Barro, 1999; Fish, 2002; Rowley & Smith, 2009; Potrafke, 2012; 2013; Hanusch, 2013). Although data limitation do not allow for identifying a causal relationship, Rowley and Smith (2009, p. 298) state that democratic deficits in the Muslim world “appear to have something to do with the nature of Islam itself.” Nevertheless, other studies refute this claim, arguing that other factors, such as Arab culture or oil, could be the main driver of lack of democracy in Muslim-majority countries (Ross, 2001; Stepan & Robertson, 2003; Chaney, 2012; Schomaker & Wentzel, 2014).

Bayat (2007, p. 4) and Kubicek (2015, p. 2) argue that most of the empirical studies investigating the relationship between Islam and democracy suffer from a fundamental flaw; proportion of Muslim population in a given society is often used an appropriate measure for Islam, ignoring the fact that religiosity among Muslim population significantly varies in time and place. For instance, Nigerian Muslims, comprising around 50% of population, are significantly more observant to Islam than Turkish Muslims, representing around 98% of population (PEW Research Center, 2008). It could thus be argued that the manifestation of religion in a given society depends on the number of adherents, as well as the level and strictness of adherence, as represented by degree of religiosity.

Institutions constitute the economic, legal, political, and social systems of a state. According to North (1990), ‘Institutions are the rules of the game in a society ... (they) are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction...they structure incentives in human exchange, whether political, social or economic’ (p. 1). While formal institutions include the written constitution, laws, policies, and regulations enforced by official authorities, informal institutions are (the often unwritten) social norms, values, customs or traditions that shape thought and behavior (Leftwich & Sen, 2010; Berman, 2013).

Religious belief is usually considered an informal institution (Pejovich, 1999; Dobler, 2009; Domjahn, 2012). Yet, it could be argued that religious provisions in constitutions is considered formal institutions, as religion is coded and administrated under constitutional authority. It is noticeable that most of the empirical literature on Islam and democracy focuses on Islam as an

informal institution, as demonstrated by religious population. No research so far has been conducted on the effect of Islam on democracy, when Islam is manifested as a formal institution.

Constitutions differ among Muslim-majority countries and by no means all Muslim-majority countries exhibit an “Islamic Constitution”. In order to assess the “Islamicity” of Muslim-majority countries, Ahmed and Gouda (Forthcoming) develop an Islamic Constitutions Index (ICI) to measure and rank constitutions of Muslim-majority countries according to the number of Islamic provisions included. The authors use a unique Islamic constitution, developed by the Al-Azhar University in 1978, as a benchmark to examine distinctive Islamic characteristics in constitutions of Organization of Islamic Co-operation (OIC) members.

The authors find that roughly half of all Muslim majority countries have Islamic features in their constitutions. Further, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan lead the rankings of constitutional islamization while the Central Asian countries all have secular constitutions. They also show that while Muslim-majority countries’ constitutions generally indicate a number of important human rights and none explicitly incorporate corporal punishments, constitutions that privilege secularism seem to, on average, promise more rights than constitutions that privilege Islam. Indeed, of the top 10 countries in the Muslim world ranked in terms of de jure constitutional promise of rights, all but one—Maldives, are secular. Most importantly to our cause, Ahmed and Gouda find that Islamicity of the constitution seems to correlate negatively with democracy, gender equality and political stability.

By considering Islam as a formal institution, manifested in constitutions of Muslim-majority countries, this study empirically investigates the relationship between Islam and democracy. We will mainly use Islam-source-of-legislation (“ISL”) provisions as a proxy for degree of Islamicity of constitutions. For robustness, we use degree of supremacy-of-Islam (“SI”). While various Islamic provisions exists in constitutions, we believe that ISL and SI provisions are the most important since they give Islam a superior role in shaping legislation in a given state.

There are several advantages for our approach; first, as aforementioned, empirical research on Islam and democracy tends to prioritize informal institutions, as demonstrated by religious Muslim

population in a given society. In practice, formal and informal rules and norms could be complementary, competing or overlapping (Jütting, Drechsler, Bartsch, & de Soysa, 2007). Thus, our study adds a new important dimension in analyzing Islam and democracy. Second, while measuring religious belief is a matter of scholarly debate and significant difficulty, Islamic provisions in constitutions could be easily assessed and codified. Most importantly, it could be argued that lack of democracy in Muslim-majority countries is related to Islamic provisions in constitutions than with share of Muslim population. Regardless of religious Muslim population, when Islam is codified through constitutional provisions, it would be convenient for autocratic rulers to use such provision to suppress any calls for political reform, claiming that Islam is not compatible with democracy. Thus, it would be of importance to empirically investigate such hypothesis.

Our research contributes to different strains of literature; first, literature on Islam and democracy, as we offer a novel approach using institutional economics perspective. Unlike most of the relevant literature, we investigate Islam as a formal institution, integrated into constitution and administered by the state.<sup>3</sup> Second, we contribute to literature on empirical analysis of constitutions. To our best knowledge, our study is the first to empirically investigate the relationship between Islam and democracy through considering Islamic constitutional provisions.

Our study is composed of six sections. Next section will offer a brief background on Islamic constitutional provisions in Muslim-majority countries. Section 3 will present our hypotheses on the relationship between Islamic constitutional provisions and democracy in Muslim-majority countries. Estimation strategy and data will be explored in section 4. Section 5 will provide results of our model. Section 6 concludes.

## **2. Islam in Muslim-majority countries' constitutions: A brief overview**

Muslims believe that Islam is not simply a theological system, but also a holistic way of life. Mortimer (1982, p. 16) states that “Islam, we are told, is not mere religion: it is a way of life, a

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<sup>3</sup> While enforcing constitutional provisions usually varies across states, we could nevertheless argue that, in a given state, constitutional provisions are usually enforced in a formal way through state actors. Such formal enforcement is not provided for informal institutions, such as values and religiosity.

model of society, a culture, a civilization.” *Shari’a* is the most important and distinctive aspect of Islamic teachings regarding the state, where, for many, its application is becoming an indicator of a society being Islamic (Abdillah, 2008, p. 51). IslamWeb (2002) defines *shari’a* as “the whole body of beliefs, rituals, transactions, policies and norms that Allah have ordered Muslims to abide by”. Zidan (1969, p. 38) argues that “shari’a” and “Religion” are synonymous for Muslims. As such, shari’a is central to any Islamic society.

According to Backer (2008, p. 128) and Brown (1999, p. 491), integrating Islamic *shari’a* into constitutions of Muslim-majority states in the pre-modern era was initiated in the second half of nineteenth century and continued through the twentieth century. These efforts were part of a movement that generated significant intellectual upheaval throughout the Islamic world in these period of time and were mainly aimed to reconcile Islam and *zeitgeist* notions such as nationalism, women’s rights, and constitutionalism.

The influence of Islamic *shari’a* is noticeable through the law of the Tunisian state of 1861, the first written constitution in the Arab world (Brown, 2002, p. 16). Brown (2002, p. 20) notes that the 1861 Tunisian constitution, which was in force for three years only, appears to be a step towards developing a constitutionalist system that is Islamic but not democratic since the essence of this constitution was to render authority accountable to the an elite that keeps the interests of the community under the banner of *shari’a*.

The 1876 Ottoman constitution declared Islam as the state religion and Caliphate was established as a constitutional institution. In addition, the sultan or caliph swore on protecting and applying the rules of *shari’a* (Kocak, 2011, p. 238; Brown, 2002, p. 26). A revised version of the 1876 constitution was implemented in 1908 in the Ottoman Empire until its collapse after the First World War. Backer (2008, p. 128) and Brown (2002, p. 26) notes that, in contrast with the brief period this constitution was in force, it served as a foundation for most Arab constitution writing in the twentieth century, especially in Syria in 1920 and in Egypt in 1923.

Coming to the twentieth century, the Iranian constitution of 1906 can be seen as the first direct confrontation in modern Iran between traditional Islamic culture and the west (Enayat, 1982, p. 166). According to Shevlin (1998, p. 360), The 1906 constitution, and the supplementary laws added to it by the Parliament in the following year, declared *Shi’ism* to be the official religion of

the state and created a council of *ulema*, which sought to guarantee that all legislation conformed to Islam. According to Campo (2009, p. 164), the 1906 constitution had a considerable effect on Iranian politics and helped to shape Islamic governance, based on the concept of the “guardianship of the jurists” (*wilayat al-faqih*), which was to have a crucial impact on the religious, democratic, and constitutional nature of the 1979 revolutionary republic.

According to Lombardi (2013, p. 744), due to significant pressure from Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups, ISL clauses first appeared in article 2 of the post-independence Syrian constitution of 1950. Article 2 declared that “Islamic *fiqh* [traditional scholarly interpretations of Islamic law] shall be the chief source of legislation.” A large number of post-independence Muslim-majority countries followed suit, endorsing constitutions containing provisions that declare Islamic norms to be a (or “the”) source of legislation (e.g. Kuwait 1962, Yemen 1970, Sudan 1973, and Egypt 1980 among others).

The wording of ISL provisions varies significantly. Constitutions of Muslim-majority countries use different terms to describe the Islamic norms that serve as a source of law. Some refer to “*fiqh*,” others to “sharia,” and still others to “the principles of sharia.” Furthermore, these constitutions define the role of Islamic norms differently. Most clauses describe Islamic norms either as “a principal source of legislation” or as “the principal source of legislation”, although a few use slightly different formulations. Such variations reflects the degree of supremacy-of-Islam (“SI”) in each constitution. Ahmed and Gouda (Forthcoming) hypothesize that variations in ISL constitutional provisions plays a key role in determining the level of rigidity with which Islamic law will be applied in a given state.

Lombardi (2013, p. 767) argues that such variations may not be significantly distinctive. Courts interpreted each ISL clause in light of the relevant circumstances in which they were adopted and in accordance to the broader constitutional and legislative context into which the clauses were embedded. Lombardi concludes his study by reasoning that it is safe to assume that a decision to adopt a certain ISL clause making sharia something less than “the chief<sup>4</sup> source” indicates an intention not to be bound by any strict prohibition on legislation inconsistent with sharia. Indeed,

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<sup>4</sup>Lombardi prefers to use the term “chief” instead of the more common “principal”. For more on this issue, see Lombardi (1998).

some governments seem to be relying on courts to adopt this position. It is not absolutely certain, however, that governments will actually be able to insulate themselves from Islamic review simply by favoring constitutional language that makes sharia merely “a” rather than “the” chief source of legislation (Lombardi, 2013, p. 768).

Nevertheless, according to Ahmed and Ginsburg (2014, p. 8), inclusion of these Islamic supremacy clauses has been a major source of anxiety and fear around the constitutions of the so-called Arab Spring countries. The anxiety stems from the prevalent assumption that a constitution that incorporates Islam in a significant way cannot provide for democracy and human rights, as demonstrated by many experiences including Iran since 1979 and Afghanistan under Taliban regime.

The exact wording of ISL clauses is usually a matter of considerable debate among Islamists and seculars constitutional drafters in numerous Muslim-majority countries, such as Tunisia, Sudan, and Egypt. During the drafting of the Egyptian constitution of 2012, a huge debate erupted between Islamists who dominate the body writing the constitution and secular-minded parties regarding the stance of ISL article 2. Secularist parties, along with most Christians, preferred to keep phrasing from Egypt’s previous constitution, which placed the “principles” of sharia as the main source of legislation, with the proviso that non-Muslims are bounded in family matters by their own traditions. Islamists, including Salafists and Muslim Brotherhood, wanted the new constitution to declare either “the rules of sharia”, or simply sharia, as the main source of legislation (The Economist, 2012). Such controversy reflects the importance of ISL phrasing on political and legal institutions in respective states. Thus, we aim to investigate the effect of ISL and SI on democracy.

### **3. Hypotheses**

Over the past decade, the empirical side of constitutional economics has been significantly advancing in both scope and methodology. The Comparative Constitutions Project, a database created by Zachary Elkins, Tom Ginsburg, and James Melton, have served so far for various law and political science studies, the most important of which is Elkins, Ginsburg, and Melton’s (2009)

book about the conditions under which constitutions endure. While the comparative constitutions database has huge potential, it has not been used so far in economic studies (Tarko, 2015, p. 46).

A considerable body of literature empirically investigate the actual practical effect of constitutions. According to Melton et al. (2011), many studies find that constitutions do not matter in reality. Nevertheless, Melton et al. (2011) use data from the Comparative Constitutions Project to make two essential points. First, unlike existing empirical literature on the effect of constitutions, the constitutional provision, rather than the constitution as a whole, should be used as the unit of analysis. Second, the authors find empirical evidence that constitutions matter more for structuring basic legal and political institutions than for rights. Moreover, they find that constitutions do seem to affect behavior for at least some constitutional rights.

Using regression analysis, Law and Versteeg (2013, p. 864) find evidence that rich and strongly democratic countries are considerable more likely to uphold constitutional rights, whereas countries afflicted by civil war or promise a large number of rights in constitutions are more likely to fall short. The authors find no evidence that existence of judicial review nor the ratification of human rights treaties is statistically associated with increased respect for constitutional rights. Moreover, they find no evidence that constitutional clauses that explicitly limit the reach of various rights affect the extent to which those rights are actually upheld.

Empirical research on Islamic constitutional provisions is significantly limited. Ahmed and Ginsburg (2014) empirically investigate the relationship between human rights and “Constitutional Islamization” clauses, which are clauses that make Islamic law supreme or provide that laws repugnant to Islam will be void. Contrary to many studies hypothesizing a negative relationship between the constitutional incorporation of Islam and human rights, the authors find evidence that almost every instance of “Constitutional Islamization” is correlated with an expansion, and not a reduction, in rights provided by the constitution. Moreover, constitutions which incorporate Islamic supremacy clauses are more rights-heavy than constitutions of other Muslim countries which do not incorporate these clauses.

Using coding of the degree to which Muslim-majority countries incorporate Islam into their constitutions, Gouda and Potrafke (2015) find that discrimination against women is more pronounced in countries where Islam is the source of legislation. This relationship remains robust when controlling for other variables known to affect gender equality, including share of Muslim population, per capita GDP, oil production, democracy, and degree of globalization.

Expanding on the considerable literature investigating the relationship between Islam and democracy, we postulate two hypotheses:

H1: The existence of ISL clause negatively correlates with democratic institutions in a given state.

H2: The degree of SI clause negatively correlates with democratic institutions in a given state.

#### **4. Estimation strategy and data**

As can be drawn from the descriptive statistics (Table 1), the nature of the predictors and the dependent variables we use does not allow to assume a normal distribution of most of the indicators. We tested for country fixed effects and time fixed effects, but did not find any significant hint, so we decided to use a pooled cross sectional approach. Hence, we estimate different models using probit and logistic regressions. All our data are from the period 1980-2011.

##### *Independent Variable: Influence of Islam*

Applying different types of econometric models to our new data set, we investigate the relationship between Islam and democracy in Muslim-Majority countries by using the newly-developed coding of Ahmed and Gouda (Forthcoming). We investigate data on Islamic clauses in constitutions of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries<sup>5</sup> from “Characteristics of National Constitutions” dataset, developed by Comparative Constitutions Project. We then codify these clauses using the methodology of the Islamic Constitutions Index (ICI) dataset (Ahmed & Gouda, Forthcoming). We compile a dummy measure related to Islam as a source of legislation that is

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<sup>5</sup> The criteria for membership under the OIC Charter, Article 3(2), are that a country has a “Muslim majority” and that the OIC’s Council of Foreign Ministers approves the new member by consensus. The membership of countries with a Muslim minority (e.g. Gabon, Uganda and Benin) is therefore not in accordance with the provisions on membership of the OIC Charter. Nevertheless, we include all OIC members in our sample for consistency.

used as a predictor. The *ISL* dummy variable assumes the value one when the constitution identifies Islam as a source of legislation, and zero otherwise.

Additionally, we also construct a measure for the supremacy of Islam within constitutions of Muslim-majority countries using the methodology developed by Ahmed and Gouda (forthcoming). In countries where Islam is the source of legislation, the *SI* variable assumes categorical values from 1 (Supremacy of Islam is low) to 5 (Supremacy of Islam is high). The *SI* variable assumes the value zero when Islam is not the source of legislation. As in some models ordinal predictors cannot be used, we also coded the *SI* in dummy variables (*SI\_5* to *SI\_1* with no supremacy of Islam being the reference category, as well as *SI\_high* (5-4) and *SI\_low* (0-1)) to be able to test for the influence also in these cases.

#### *Dependent Variable: Democracy*

Our main dependent variable (*Ch\_Democracy*) is the Democracy-Dictatorship measure of political regimes by Cheibub et al. (2010). Additionally, we tested the variable *Ch\_Type2* that also indicates for democracies vs dictatorships. The dependent variable is coded such that democracies take on the value one and dictatorships take on the value zero (for *Ch\_Democracy* as well as *Ch\_Type2*). The difference between *Ch\_Democracy* and *Ch\_Type2* is that the latter takes the value of 1 for the cases excluded from the set of democracies just because they violate the “alternation” rule; 0 otherwise. These are the cases that would be classified as democratic if the only criteria for democracy were multiparty (direct or indirect) executive and legislative elections.

We also used the *Polity2* variable as a robustness test for the regime type.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, we used an ordinal expression of regime type (*Regime*) that uses a six-fold regime classification<sup>7</sup> following Cheibub et al. (2010).

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<sup>6</sup> Polity2 is one of the indicators developed within the Polity IV project that is coding the authority characteristics of states in the world system for purposes of comparative, quantitative analysis. This variable uses a unified polity scale that ranges from +10 (strongly democratic) to -10 (strongly autocratic) (Center for Systemic Peace, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> In this ordinal classification, numbers proxy regime types as follows: 0. Parliamentary democracy, 1. Mixed (semi-presidential) democracy, 2. Presidential democracy, 3. Civilian dictatorship, 4. Military dictatorship, 5. Royal dictatorship

### *Control Variables*

The first control variables test for the wealth level of an economy, using per capita income (GDP per capita as well as GNI per capita and the lnGDP). Additionally, we test for the education standards via using *Education\_net\_enrollment*, which can be seen as a proxy for the general development level of a society: Adjusted net enrollment is the number of students of the school-age group for primary education, enrolled either in primary or secondary education, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group.

Additionally, we include the idea of “openness towards the World economy”, which also can be interpreted as a kind of dependency on (volatile) global markets or on foreign countries by using different indicators:

Firstly, we apply the *Exports\_GDP* variable that indicates for the exports of goods and services as a percentage of GDP as a proxy for the degree of globalization of a country. This indicator represents the value of all goods and other market services provided to the rest of the world relative to GDP, including the value of merchandise, freight, insurance, transport, travel, royalties, license fees, and other services, such as communication, construction, financial, information, business, personal, and government services.

Secondly, to test for dependencies from the international community, we use the indicator net official development assistance (*Net\_ODA*) received (as percentage of GNI), which consists of disbursements of loans made on concessional terms (net of repayments of principal) and grants by official agencies of the members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), by multilateral institutions, and by non-DAC countries to promote economic development and welfare in countries and territories in the DAC list of ODA recipients.

Lastly, we use the indicator *Fuel\_exports* to control for resource-abundant countries: This indicator comprises fuel exports as a percentage of merchandise exports, including mineral fuels, lubricants, and related material as summarized under the standard international trade classification section 3.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Sources**

VARIABLE	N	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	MEAN	SD	SOURCE
ISL	1388	0	1	,29	,454	Ahmed and Gouda (forthcoming), own calculations
SI	1388	0	5	1,06	1,716	Ahmed and Gouda (forthcoming), own calculations
CH_TYPE2	1543	0	1	,27	,442	Cheibub et al. (2010)
CH_DEMOCRACY	1543	0	1	,14	,349	Cheibub et al. (2010)
REGIME	1543	0	5	3,38	1,221	Cheibub et al. (2010)
EXPORTS_GDP	1553	2,52	166,36	35,40	23,455	World Bank (2015)
FUEL_EXPORTS	1013	,00	100,00	35,90	38,638	World Bank (2015)
EDUCATION_NET_ENROLLMENT	830	14,31	99,94	76,28	22,400	World Bank (2015)
NET_ODA	1461	-,47	81,29	8,61	11,389	World Bank (2015)
GNI_PER_CAPITA	1463	110,00	71550,00	3174,10	7130,870	World Bank (2015)
GDP_PER_CAPITA	1578	144,38	81788,96	4448,77	9709,138	World Bank (2015)
LNGDPPC	1578	4,97	11,31	7,21	1,377	World Bank (2015)
POLITY2	794	-10	9	-2,73	6,060	Center for Systemic Peace (2014)
SI_HIGH	1792	0	1	,13	,331	Ahmed and Gouda (forthcoming), own calculations
SI_LOW	1792	0	1	,55	,498	Ahmed and Gouda (forthcoming), own calculations
SI_5	1792	0	1	,04	,203	Ahmed and Gouda (forthcoming), own calculations
SI_4	1792	0	1	,08	,274	Ahmed and Gouda (forthcoming), own calculations
SI_3	1792	0	1	,07	,259	Ahmed and Gouda (forthcoming), own calculations
SI_2	1792	0	1	,03	,163	Ahmed and Gouda (forthcoming), own calculations
SI_1	1792	0	1	,01	,094	Ahmed and Gouda (forthcoming), own calculations

## 5. (Preliminary) Results and discussion

As non-linear models are somewhat complex to interpret, we take the  $\exp(b)$  for the interpretation. This value is the effect of the independent variable on the "odds ratio", which is the probability of the event divided by the probability of the nonevent. Hence, an  $\exp(b)$  of more than one has the implication that a one unit change in the respective variable would make the event more likely to occur.

As can be seen in table 2, our main finding is that all models tested indicate for a negative correlation between the sheer existence of an ISL clause (dummy variable) and the probability that

a democracy exists, and that a high degree of the SI clause (ordinal indicator) negatively correlates with the probability of democracy. Hence, our hypotheses can not be clearly rejected.

In detail, a positive dummy for *ISL* always lowers the likelihood that a democracy exists significantly (some results displayed in table 2) for probit and logit models. Robustness tests using the ordinal regime type as the outcome variable reveal the same link – “low” regime levels, indicating for democracy are less likely if the *ISL* dummy equals one. Also a test using OLS in a linear model shows this link.

The outcomes for the strength of Islamicity (*SI*) are not that consistent. In some cases, the coefficient  $\exp(b)$  had the right direction (lower than 1 for higher ranks of Islamicity), but was not significant. In other cases a complete separation of data was indicated, which can be interpreted twofold: either the model fits nearly perfect, or there is too little data in some cases. As ordinal predictors can not be used without restrictions in many models, we used the *SI\_high* (values of 4 or 5) for proxy for it, also here a negative influence on the likelihood of democracy is given.

**Table 2: Regression results (selection)**

	LOGIT		PROBIT	LOGIT
	Ch_Democracy	Ch_Type2	Ch_Democracy	Ch_Democracy
	<b>Exp(b)</b>			
CONSTANT	,647 (,535)	1,168 (,438)	,809 (,311)	1,453* (,373)
ISL=1	,039*** (1,067)	,253*** (,346)	,220*** (,411)	
IS_HIGH				,073** (1,036)
EXPORTS_GDP	,923*** (,015)	1,029*** (,007)	,959*** (,008)	,959*** (,007)
FUEL_EXPORTS	,990 (,006)	1,007* (,004)	,996 (,003)	,979*** (,004)
EDUCATION_NET_ENROLLMENT	1,025*** (,007)	,979*** (,006)	1,012*** (,004)	
COX&SNELL R <sup>2</sup>	,200	,095		,175
NAGELKERKE R <sup>2</sup>	,311	,130		,284
N	425	425	425	848

Source: Authors' calculation

SE in parentheses, Significance on 10% level (\*), 5% level (\*\*), 1% level (\*\*\*)

As for the control variables, the effects are somewhat inconsistent: in all cases with democracy as the dependent variable, a high export rate and fuel exports lower the probability of democracy, while education seems to have a positive impact.

## 6. Conclusion

Interpreting our findings with the necessary caution, we nonetheless can state that we found some empirical evidence that supports the theories stating that a high level of Islamicity, mirrored by the constitution of a respective country, may have a negative relationship with the probability of this country being a democracy. While this finding is in line with a fair share of the persistent literature, nonetheless we should not over-interpret the empirical outcomes so far.

As for the methodological side of the story, two shortcomings may exist in our approach that will be tackled in future versions: First, as we included only countries with a Muslim majority, the number of constitutions without any influence of Islamic thoughts and values may be reduced, compared to a World sample. Second, and related to that point, some potential predictors have not been included, as e.g. legal origin, a fact that substantially increases the likelihood of omitted variable bias. These issues will be tackled by using an enlarged data set for future modelling that comprises World data.

Another issue that may be scrutinized in future research may be the bias stemming from the very specific governance regimes in many of the (Muslim) countries in the Arab Gulf. While formally these countries are counted as non-democratic, displaying very specific governance schemes that are closely related to “family-led enterprises”, a focus on a more elaborated treatment of the outcome variable to capture these cases may be useful.

As for the theoretical explanation, like other studies discussed above, also our approach does not indicate that the fixation of Islamic principles in the constitution automatically mean that they matter in reality. Hence, the relative absence of democracy in these cases could be explained by the sheer ignorance of constitutional principles in practice.

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