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In early December 2017, the Iraqi state of Haidar al Abadi announced the end of the 'war against ISIS', roughly three years after the Caliphate was announced in Mosul by the notorious Abu Bakr al Baghdadi. Yet, this war was not without challenges. Rising from the ashes of Al Qaeda in Iraq and out of a conflict with the higher leadership of Ayman al Zawahiri – Osama bin Laden's heir as head of global Al Qaeda – the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (*ISIS*) made use of very basic means to overcome the weak and unwilling Iraqi military in Mosul in 2013. From there on, it struggled to take hold in Syria, where it had started encroaching against the Al Qaeda branch that was supposed to have rein over this territory – Jabhat al Nusra. In these two countries, it was opposed by the determination of Shia forces – namely the Lebanese Hezbollah and the Iraqi Popular Mobilization (*al hashad al shaabi*) which maintains close ties to Iran.[1]

Despite the dominance of Islamism in Arab politics in the post-Arab Spring world, opportunities were not always as abundant for Islamists in the region. Indeed, the Arab world before the 1980s was remarkably dominated by secular nationalist forces that sought to establish specific conceptions of Arab nationalisms throughout countries of the region. Such forces were staunchly secularist, like the Nasserist trend in Egypt and the Baᶜth trend in Syria and Iraq, and they imposed secular nationalist authoritarian regimes that shared some similarities with other regimes in the region like Ataturk's Turkey or Pahlavi Iran. Moreover, such nationalist secular forces positioned themselves with the USSR and struggled against the Gulf monarchies that remained religious traditionalist, conservative and pro-US during the Cold War, in shaping what has been known as the 'Arab Cold War'. The tug-of-war between these two camps only started to shift with the shock of the defeat of Arab nationalist regimes against Israel in 1967 and led to a turning point in regional politics that was further concretized by the Saudi dominated oil shocks of the 1970s and 1980s, and the Islamic revolution of Iran in 1979. From there on, scholars note the resurgence of Islamic politics in the region more than half a century after it had relatively vanished from popular interests with the downfall of the Ottomans in the 1920s and the Golden Age of Arab nationalism that ensued.[2]

Despite the profusion of historical and qualitative literature on the rise of Islamism in the Arab world starting in the 1980s, very few – if any – quantitative analyses of the resurgence of Islamist public opinion, behavior and attitudes have been conducted to this day.[3] To date, most studies have focused on public opinion and democracy in the Arab world,[4] with only a few notable contributions discussing public opinion and Islamist militancy or Islamist attitudes.[5] Such an outcome is understandable considering the lack of quantitative data available for the Arab world before the advent of mass surveys, such as Ronald Inglehart's World Values Survey or Mark Tessler's Arab Barometer. Yet the rise of the information age also allows us to have access to data that were once neglected – such is true with the surveys conducted by United Arab Emirates (UAE) based Kuwaiti academic Jamal al Suweidi in 1988 in Kuwait and Egypt and the

survey conducted by Khalil Shikaki and Nadir Said in 1995 in Palestine.[6] Such 'early surveys' allow us to have a much closer and precise understanding of the background against which Islamism rises in the Arab world in the late 1980s. More importantly, such datasets allow us to understand the reasons why individuals have positive attitudes toward issues that become central to Islamism in the 2010s, such as the issue of the Caliphate.

It is important now more than ever to understand why Arabs have specific dispositions towards the Islamic Caliphate in 1988 and 1995, and what dynamics affect such dispositions, as important forms of Islamism take shape within this era of resurgence for political Islam. The institution of the Islamic Caliphate takes multiple shapes throughout Islamic history but maintains one central component: it is intended as a form of leadership for Muslims around the world after the passing of the Prophet of Islam. Theoretically, it inherits some of the political, religious and social responsibilities endowed upon Muhammad in leading the *ummah*, the Islamic community. From the *Rashidun* (Well Guided) to the Ottoman, and passing by the Umayyad and the Abbasid, Islamic Caliphates had different levels of political and religious authorities. Sometimes, it was strong and unified, and resembled Plato's virtuous absolutism of the Philosopher King. At other times, it was weak and divided, having to share political power with ambitious princes, or having to deal with competing Caliphates. It remains a central matter to Islamic politics to this day, whether in philosophical discussions or in practical aspirations, even if its last conventional form, the Ottoman Caliphate, was abolished in 1922. Today, the Caliphate is more than ever relevant to Islamist politics and debates due to the wrongdoings of extremist groups in Syria and Iraq.[7]

The issue of the Caliphate dominates discussions of politics in the formative years of modern Sunni Islamism, in the 1930s through to the 1950s.[8] Islamism can be defined in James Piscatori's terms, as 'Muslims who are committed to political action to implement what they regard as an Islamic agenda'.[9] Up until the 1950s, Hassan al Banna and Sayyid Qutb were engaged profusely with the issue of the Caliphate when discussing the ideology and political goals of the Muslim Brotherhood, the forefather of Sunni Islamism in the modern age.[10] Central to this discussion was the realization that the Sunni Caliphate was now absent, despite being a pillar of Islamic politics for much of Muslim history.[11] From there on emerged the interrogation of whether a Caliphate ought to be re-instated in the age of modern nationalist politics.[12] But Islamism and its aspirations die down during the Cold War era, to the benefit of more secular nationalist forms of politics in the Arab world.[13]

In the late 1980s and early 1990s Islamism re-emerges in more diverse manners, asserting what were often considerable ideological and practical differences between Islamist groups. After decades of secular and nationalistic politics, Arabs start looking again at Islamism in the 1980s and 1990s and this era becomes the formative years of the Islamist politics witnessed in the Arab world throughout the 2000s and 2010s.[14] The *takfiri* (extremist) group Al Qaeda was famously formed in 1988, while the more democratic minded Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt considerably re-emerges in the 1980s and 1990s, and finally Shia Islamism takes shape in the 1980s with Khomeini's success in Iran and the birth of Lebanese Hezbollah.[15] For a range of reasons, Islamist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood substantially 'metamorphose' during this era and take the path of moderation, *wasatiyya* (middle ground) politics and democracy.[16] Shia Islamism also moderates in the late 1990s and 2000s with Lebanese Hezbollah committing to pluralism and democracy in Lebanon.[17] But *takfiri* politics remain constant, emerging slowly but surely in many Muslim majority societies; from Afghanistan to Mali, Al-Qaeda starts emerging from the 1990s to the 2010s.[18] It becomes so salient in the 2010s that it splinters in war-torn Iraq and Syria into what comes to be known as *ISIS*, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.[19]

From the late 1980s and early 1990s onward, the issue of the Caliphate re-emerges in Islamist politics at the instigation of *takfiri* groups, who make of the issue a central one to Islamism today. It all starts with Al-Qaeda and its allies in Afghanistan, the Taliban, who substantially engage with the concept of the Caliphate during these years and seek as a secondary objective to establish a global Islamic caliphate.[20] But in the 2010s, the sinister emergence of ISIS's

'Caliphate of terror' out of war-torn Syria and Iraq shocks Arab and international audiences. It forces mainstream Islamic scholars and moderate Islamist groups alike to re-engage with the concept of the Caliphate.[21]

Islamist groups and a very large number of Islamist scholars coming from a great many schools of thought organize conferences and deliver statements, clarifications and vindications regarding ISIS and its bloody Caliphate.[22] Naturally, these moderate forces clarify the concept of the Caliphate and, by the same token, make of it an issue that is central to Islamism today.[23] For instance, the 22nd point of the 'Open Letter to Baghdadi' penned by a number of Islamic scholars engages directly with this issue, arguing that 'it is forbidden in Islam to declare a caliphate without consensus from all Muslims'.[24]

In sum, the issue of the Caliphate becomes central to Islamism today for two reasons: because *takfiri* forces seek to implement it in malevolent ways, and because mainstream Islamists must re-engage with it, discredit *takfiri* practices, and justify their own political goals and agendas. But understanding what types of dynamics affect Arabs' opinion on the Caliphate during the emerging years of Islamism, only a few decades before the emergence of ISIS's *takfiri* Caliphate, may allow us to have a better sense of what factors caused in parts its very emergence on the Syrian and Iraqi political scenes. To do so, I look at three country cases: Egypt, Palestine and Kuwait.

The only data on the issue of the Caliphate contains observations for these three cases and two timelines, namely Egypt and Kuwait in 1988, and Palestine in 1995. This data remains of high value as both dates and places are representative of important contexts in the Arab world when political Islam was re-emerging on regional political scenes. At the time, Egypt and Palestine are both led by nationalistic movements and both have relatively strong Islamist movements by 1988 and 1995, respectively. On the other hand, Kuwait is in 1995 a Gulf monarchy with a weaker Islamist movement than the ones in the other two countries.[25]

In this article, I ask: what are the determinants of public opinion on the issue of the Caliphate in the Arab world? My answer to this question outlines the key role played by Islamist elites, religiosity and age in influencing Arab opinion on the issue of the Caliphate in three countries during the early Age of Islamism (1980s–1990s). I do so by using Binary Logistic Regression Models on observations that I found in survey data collected in 1988 in Egypt and Kuwait, and an Ordinal Logistic Regression Model for data collected in Palestine in 1995. My results suggest that elites play a key role in spreading Islamist ideas in Egypt and Palestine, while generational attitudes and religiosity are most salient in Kuwait.

Development

What causes some ideas to be adopted and supported in a society while others are not? What does the theoretical literature on the adoption (or rejection) of political ideas tell us about the reasons why Arabs may or may not appreciate an Islamic Caliphate? Much has been written in the past regarding the reasons why some ideas are adopted while others are not; a great many have outlined the influence of elites in stemming idea change,[26] some have emphasized the role of socioeconomic conditions,[27] some again have discussed the role played by strong exogenous shocks or gradual disillusionment,[28] and finally yet another group of scholars have looked to explain idea change through discussing the fit of ideas with the issues and environment of the target public.[29] In a nutshell, these theories have emphasized the following relevant variables which I look to operationalize in the later sections of this article: (a) elite pressures and strength of elite carriers, (b) religiosity and (c) socioeconomic conditions.

Philip Converse and the scholarship that followed his work emphasize the centrality of elites to the formation and shift in political ideas since the 1960s.[30] They consider elites as the center of the 'creative synthesis' of ideas, and public opinion therefore changes based on the 'direction of the information and leadership cues supplied to it [the mass public] by elites'.[31] Some, like

John R. Zaller, even go to the extent of arguing that 'elite discourse has the same effects on public opinion across a broad range of topics'.[32] Zaller also argues that the large part of the mass public is 'blown about by whatever current of information manages to develop the greatest intensity', while the attentive minority stayed uncritical and moved by 'partisanship and ideology of the elite sources of the messages'.[33] Similarly, Converse emphasized the divisions between well informed elites and an uninformed mass public, which helped the first in co-opting the latter and convincing them to make specific political choices – like voting for the Nazi party in Weimar Germany.[34]

Moreover, R. Huckfeldt and J. Sprague also attribute the diffusion of ideas to the entrepreneurship of elites, here through the 'catalyst' of party canvassing which they consider as a draw to specific parties and ideas as the public encounters them in their daily lives.[35] In a similar fashion, C. B. Cochrane and N. Nevitte argue that public opinion toward immigrants shifts through the influence of far-right party elites and unemployment.[36] Finally, some like Kathleen R. McNamara do emphasize that the strength of the elite carriers of the ideas in question does play an important role in defining whether the ideas they peddle upon society are adopted or not by looking at the case of Germany and German elites' push for the adoption of monetarist policies in Europe.[37]

An important concept in the literature on the effect of elites on public opinion is that political elites mainly influence the public through the abstract ideas that they convey rather than specific, rigid stances on policy issues. For instance, followers of the Republican party may be more in line with the general conservative and 'America first' approach of the party's elites than its specific stances on the Iran deal, abortion, or immigration. In other words, elites do not have to argue specifically for a stand on a policy issue for the idea to be potentially accepted or embraced by the followers of the said elite.[38]

In fact, members of the mass public who are attentive to some political elites are sometimes affected mainly by the abstract ideas that these elites embody rather than their intricate stances on specific policy issues. For instance, followers of Islamist elites may be more affected by their advocacy of Islamic politics overall than their intricate stances on the ideal state, or the ideal implementation of Islamic law. This, in turn, may lead them to embrace ideas on specific policy issues that are in line with these abstract ideas but not necessarily with their party. For instance, Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley find that American public opinion on foreign policy in the 1980s is more affected by the abstract ideas of some political elites – like militarism, isolationism and anticommunism – than by rigid party lines on the matter.[39]

Theories of elite centered diffusion of ideas suggest that we should explore the link between elites' abstract ideas and mass publics' attitudes on a range of specific policy issues. But these theories have mainly been developed with Western audiences in mind and were never tested in the context of the Arab world. One may expect, based on this theory, that Arab audiences attentive to Islamist elites may simply be more open-minded to a variety of Islamic politics even if it diverges from the party line of the elites they follow. Such expectations may not be too far-fetched considering that some liberal Islamist parties in the Arab world have had a strong conservative followership in their ranks, like Ennahda's strong Salafi partisan base around 2011.[40] We may therefore expect followers of Islamist party elites in the Arab world to be more open minded to the relevance or the implementation of a Caliphate in their country than those not following them. Such would be true even if the party line on the Caliphate is to reject it as an objective of the Islamist political party in question.

Various forms of individual religiosity are considered important determinants of public opinion in many countries around the world.[41] The debate on the influence of religious beliefs in politics has often focused on issues of same sex marriage and left vs. right wing ideologies in the United States.[42] More recent publications have attempted to enlarge the scope of such analysis in understanding the influence of religiosity on public opinion in other parts of the world[43]; some find that religiosity is consistently correlated with right wing ideologies in most Western

countries except Australia.[44] Others find that participative and active religiosity have a strong correlation with the propensity to take part in collective action.[45] Another group of scholars have found that increased forms of Islamic religiosity in various parts of the Islamic world – Arab countries, Central Asian countries and Turkey – does not impede positive attitudes towards Liberal Democracy or make individuals more prone to authoritarian attitudes.[46] Finally, some other findings suggest that religiosity does not account for distinctions in attitudes towards different types of democracy, whether secular or Islamic, in the Arab world.[47]

Theories explaining political ideas by looking at their socioeconomic roots abound in parallel to the idea change literature that emphasizes the role of elites. Known mainly as 'modernization theories', they look to explain aggregations of ideas around the world – political cultures – by looking at specific sets of socioeconomic variables, namely education, individual or societal wealth, or even age and gender. Ronald Inglehart's work deeply affects this side of the literature as he argues that the 'postmaterialist syndrome' which he describes in many Western countries is based on an increase in material condition over the decades that follow the Second World War.[48] On the other hand, Seymour Martin Lipset's account of democracy emphasizes the role of education and socioeconomic conditions in the rise of democratic features in a society, among others.[49] Robert Putnam's work on Italy and the United States find an important correlation between democratic attitudes and active community life, while Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba describe similar features when attempting to explain what leads to a democratic political culture. At the same time, socioeconomic conditions have also been related to Islamism and radicalism, with a great many arguing that both emerge from poor socioeconomic conditions, political resentment and/or grief.[50] Finally, some have connected age with different attitudes in the Arab world, in the context of the Arab Spring.[51]

What leads to positive (or negative) attitudes toward the Caliphate in the Arab world decades after its abolition in the 1920s? Why do Arabs take a positive stance on sensitive Islamist political ideas like the establishment and relevancy of an Islamic Caliphate? Theories attempting to explain idea change put the accent on a range of variables relevant to this research, namely elite pressures and strength of elite carriers, religiosity and socioeconomic conditions. These causal theories can allow us to better understand attitudes toward the Caliphate in the Arab world and shed additional light on the reasons why Arabs appreciate or belittle the issue of the Caliphate in the politics of their region. In this article, I use the only available datasets that contain observations on Arab attitudes toward the Caliphate: the 'early surveys' conducted in Egypt and Kuwait in 1988 by Jamal al Suweidi and conducted in Palestine in 1995 by the Centre for Palestine Research and Studies.[52] Such data offer important insights into the determinants of public opinion on the issue of the Caliphate in the Arab world and may shed important light on why it remains relevant to this day, only sometime after the fall of the *takfiri* (radical) Caliphate in Iraq and Syria.

Before advancing causal hypotheses and the causal mechanisms that animate them, I start by providing a historical background of the conditions that surrounded Arab politics in 1988 and 1995 in order to best capture all the determinants of Arab public opinion in this important time of Middle Eastern history. I then move on to discuss causal hypotheses and causal mechanisms. From history, we know that secular nationalism arises in the Arab world in the 1800s and early 1900s against the backdrop of Ottoman reformation, the attempt by the Young Turks in power to Turkify the 700-year-old empire, and the abolition of the Caliphate by Ataturk in 1924.[53] It is solidified in many post-Ottoman Arab countries with its defeat of the Ottoman empire with the help of the Allied forces in the First World War, following which Britain's betrayal of its engagement with the Arab nationalist forces of Sheriff Hussain through the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour declaration leads to divided Arab states.[54] Many of these independent states are, over the next decades, taken over by nationalist forces – most notably Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt, the Baᶜth of Hafez el-Assad in Syria and the Baᶜth of Saddam Hussain in Iraq, while Palestine, now divided in two, sees the rise of local Marxist-nationalist factions dominated over

time by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The overarching goal of Arab nationalist forces was the creation of a unified Arab state, which faced the opposition of French and British colonial forces from one direction, the existence of a Jewish state in Palestine from another, and the opposing politico-cultural model offered by the Conservative Gulf Monarchies from yet another one.[55]

The opposition with Gulf monarchies is worth emphasizing, as it played out in what is known to historians as the 'Cold War of the Middle East' with Arab nationalist republics siding with the Soviet Union and the Conservative Arab monarchies siding with the United States. An important component in this opposition remained the attempt by Arab nationalist republics to overthrow the conservative monarchies of the region – such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, and as was done in Egypt, Iraq and Syria – and replace them with Arab nationalist republics that would converge to form a unified Arab state. All things considered, the Arab nationalistic cause was advancing at great length in the 1960s with the recent liberation of Algeria from French occupation in 1963. So much so that Arab nationalist forces (most eponymously led by Nasser in Egypt and Assad in Syria) set on to wage war on Israel for a second time in 1967, only to fail so considerably that the Egyptian Sinai and the Syrian Golan were occupied by Israeli forces.[56]

From there on, the literature considers that the shock of the defeat of Arab nationalism in 1967 stemmed considerable dissatisfaction with Arab nationalism.[57] The shock of this defeat was well noted in scholarly circles, to the extent that 'generations of Middle East scholars […] tell a general story of 1967, repeated with small variations, in which Arab societies had invested their hopes of renewal in Nasser and were brutally awakened by the defeat'. It was also well emphasized in Arab thought itself, as 'the defeat was either a setback (naksa), if one believed in the possible retrieval of the Nasserist project, or a hazima (defeat), if one saw it as a wholesale civilizational rout'.[58] Overall, the defeat of 1967 can be considered a 'Stunde Null', 'before which great hopes and ambitions shaped Arab political culture, and after which radically new visions for the future had to be conjured'.[59]

The literature also considers that the Saudi-led oil shocks in the third Arab-Israeli war against Israel in 1973 and the Islamic revolution of Iran in 1979 stemmed a rise of interest toward Islamism as an alternative solution to Arab politics.[60] The literature again considers that the influence of these powerful new players in the Arab world in the 1980s onward – Saudi Arabia with the Wahhabi/Salafi da'wa (missionary work) and Iran with Shia da'wa and Hezbollah – would have led to the rise of Islamism in the region, as a new and fitting alternative to Arab nationalism.[61]

Having established the historical background against which the causal mechanism sought after is supposed to work, one may now address the minutiae of its workings and suggest a few workable hypotheses. What determines public opinion on the issue of the Caliphate in the Arab world? The literature outlines the following variables of interest: (a) elite pressures and strength of elite carriers, (b) religiosity and (c) socioeconomic conditions. The only data available contain observations for three cases and two timelines, namely Egypt and Kuwait in 1988, and Palestine in 1995, and this remains of high value as both dates and places are representative of important contexts in the Arab world. Both dates fit perfectly within the timeline of interest, the 1980s and 1990s when political Islam was re-emerging on Arab political scenes, and all three places fall within two categories outlined in the previous section. Egypt and Palestine are both led by nationalistic movements and both have relatively strong Islamist movements by 1988 and 1995, respectively, and Kuwait is a Gulf monarchy with a weak Islamist movement.

Egypt is, in 1988, a country that finds itself in the US side of the Cold War, at peace with Israel after the Camp David Agreements of 1978, and in an era of economic growth after the policies of infitah (economic liberalization) that start in the 1970s, and is given a score of 'Partly Free' by Freedom House.[62] On the side of Islamic politics, the Muslim Brotherhood – the oldest Islamist party in the Arab world – is starting to gain ground on the local political scene after the politics of participation in the semi-democratic Egyptian system starts to attract more and more

young professionals in forming a new generation of liberal Islamists.[63] It is important to note here that the Muslim Brotherhood was not advocating the establishment of an Islamic Caliph state in Egypt or anywhere in the region from the 1950s, and its main objective was the establishment of what it termed a 'civil state with an Islamic reference'.[64] Understanding the Brotherhood's impact on attitudes towards the Caliphate may allow us to understand how elites' abstract ideas affect public opinion towards specific ideas not endorsed by the party in the Arab world in a fashion outlined by some in the United States.[65] In other words, we may be interested to analyze how the Brotherhood's advocacy for Islamist politics – the abstract idea of this party – may lead its followers to adopt more positive stances on a specific Islamist issue, such as the relevance of a Caliphate for their country, even if the party line engages with it in mitigated terms.

Palestine, for its part, starts to be divided between the Fatah camp of the Palestinian Authority that has just gained recognition from Israel through a series of agreements that culminate in 1993, and the Hamas Islamist party which rises rapidly in popularity despite its being established only in 1987.[66] The country is still given a score of 'Not Free' by Freedom House due in part to its occupation by Israel[67]; here too, it is important to note that Hamas had not been advocating the establishment of an Islamic Caliph state.[68] Yet, the effects of abstract party ideas on public opinion remains an important consideration,[69] and the same mechanism relevant for the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt may simply be relevant in the Palestinian case too.

Finally, Kuwait is considered among the most liberal Islamic monarchies of the Gulf region at the time, with a constitution and parliament that draws from the British parliamentary system despite remaining a conservative kingdom overall, and a score of 'Free' by Freedom House.[70] On the side of Islamic politics, the ruling monarchs of the Sabah family are known for their inclusive stance regarding the constitution of parliament and Islamic-minded politicians were, in 1988, able to sit in parliament even if no strong organized political Islamic movement existed in the country at that time.[71] The Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait only contested elections in 1993, while its political branch was only created in 1991 even if the movement itself dates back to 1951. It is also notable that the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood was involved in the Kuwaiti resistance and liberation efforts against Iraqi forces, which enhanced the organization and allowed it to gain more support after the First Gulf War. Yet, Islamist politics in Kuwait before that time remain less organized than in other parts of the region.[72]

Based on the features previously discussed, I formulate the following two hypotheses: in the first hypothesis I posit that in Egypt and Palestine attitudes towards the Caliphate are mainly affected by support for Islamist parties. With hypothesis 2, I suggest that in Kuwait attitudes towards the Islamic Caliphate are more affected by socioeconomic conditions and religiosity.

The mechanism behind these two hypotheses should rest upon common logic: pressures from stronger Islamist elites in bounded societies should be more central to the diffusion of Islamist ideas such as the issue of the Caliphate, whether directly advocated or not by the said elites. The strength of these bearers of alternative ideas allows them to be a more attractive voice for opposition politics in bounded societies where the mass public cannot so easily take its grief with government in its own hands. On the other hand, when the society is freer, and the Islamist elites are weaker, then there is only little necessity for the public to lend an open ear to the peddling of these bearers of alternative ideas, and grief may be taken directly to parliament through repeated elections. If anything, religiosity and socioeconomic conditions – such as closeness to religion or secularism, social class of origin, or age generations – would seem more key to determine the repartition of ideas on specific issues such as that of the Islamic Caliphate in the Arab world.

To operationalize my variables, I use variables from the datasets of Jamal al Suweidi and the Centre for Palestine Research and Studies; these datasets are openly available online as they have been aggregated by Mark Tessler in the Carnegie Middle East Governance and Islam Dataset (CMEGID). The data from Egypt and Kuwait were collected in 1988 by Jamal al Suweidi
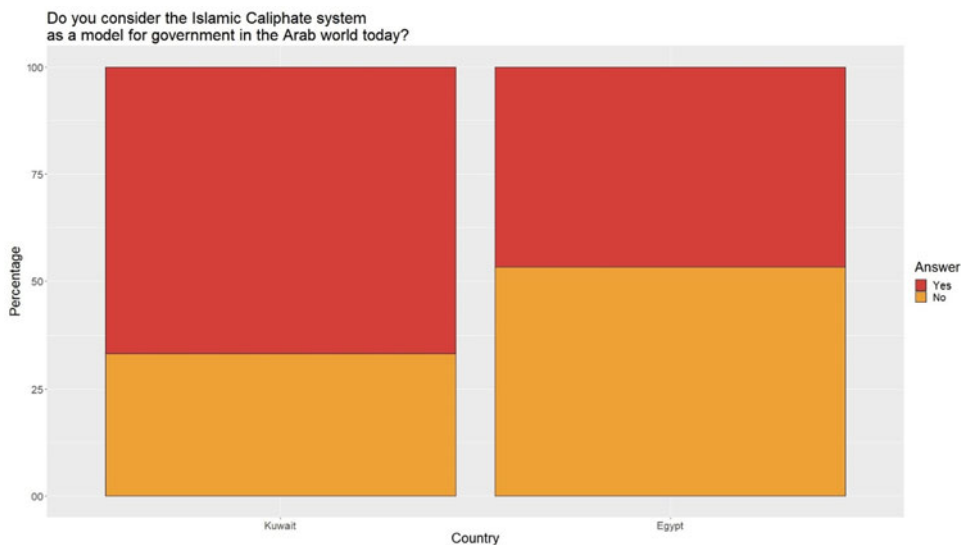
Figure 1. Do you consider the Islamic Caliph system as a model for government in the Arab world today?

based on '292 Egyptian adults in Cairo' and '300 adult Kuwaiti citizens in Kuwait City', in a fashion that seeks to 'represent the heterogeneous nature of the general population' yet focuses on Sunni respondents to 'facilitate comparison of Sunni Muslim populations in other Arab countries'. Both samples are considered to represent the opinions of the 'active, adult, urban population' of these two countries on issues of 'religion and politics' but also on the 'origins of popular support for Islamist movements'. On the other hand, the dataset from Palestine was collected in August 1995 under the supervision of Khalil Shikaki and Nadir Said for the Centre for Palestine Research and Studies using 'multistage area probability sampling' and an interview schedule administered to 2368 adults residing in the West Bank and Gaza and also focuses on Sunni respondents.[73]

I use eight variables from these two datasets in order to operationalize opinions on the Islamic Caliphate, elite pressures, religiosity and socioeconomic conditions. To operationalize opinions on the Islamic Caliphate – my dependent variable – I use variable M602F, which quantifies answers to a survey question on attitudes toward the Caliphate in both surveys. Each survey has a different wording of the question and a different range of answers, but they remain similar enough to operationalize opinions on the issue of the Caliphate in the two different sets of countries. In Kuwait and Egypt, the question is phrased as follows: 'Do you consider the Islamic Caliph system, as a model for government in the Arab world today?' to which answers may either be yes, no, or don't know, and answers have been coded binarily (1 for yes and 0 for no) for this question. In Palestine, the question is stated more directly: 'I support the establishment of Islamic Caliph state' to which the answers may be either 'Apply, To an extent apply, Somewhat apply, Does not Apply' and these have been coded as 4, 3, 2, 1, respectively. Figures 1 and 2 are bar plots showcasing the percentage of attitudes per country – one may immediately notice that Kuwait ranges first in terms of positive attitudes toward the Caliphate with roughly 70 per cent of positive answers, quickly followed by Palestine with roughly 65 per cent of positive answers overall, and finally Egypt with only roughly 48 per cent of positive answers.

It is important here to distinguish between varieties of Islamic Caliphates so as to acknowledge the diversity of meanings and interpretations it has taken throughout Islamic history. I focus on the Sunni one in this analysis. Without providing a holistic history of the Caliphate, one may say that it was first codified in the Sunni tradition by classical Islamic scholar Abu al-Hassan al Mawardi in the 11th century CE, in his Ordinances of Government, and established as a system different and similar in many ways to the Shia Imamates.[74] Al Mawardi's thought, very *top-*
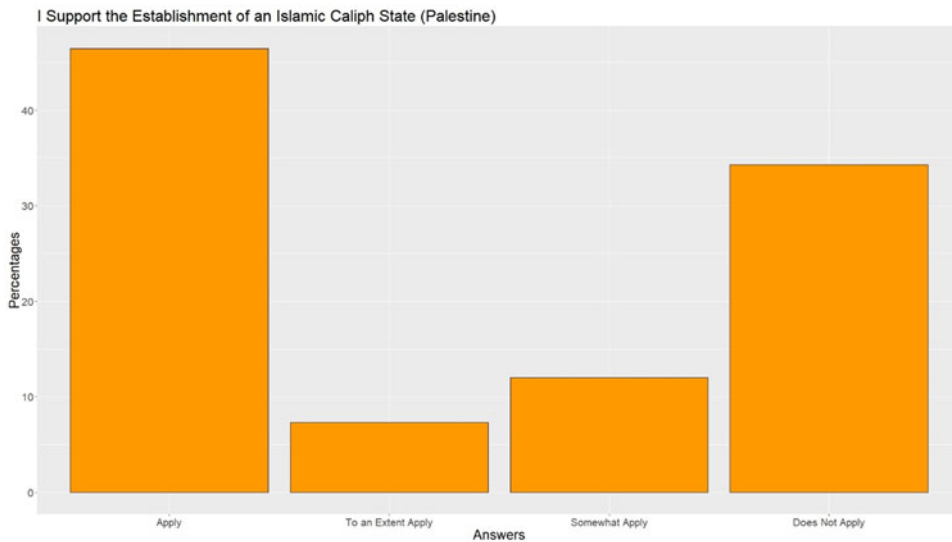
Figure 2. I support the establishment of an Islamic Caliph state (Palestine).

bottom in orientation, is de-compartmentalized and individualized by Ibn Taymiyyah's approach to just war in Sunni Islam and the caliphate,[75] and has been exploited/corrupted by *takfiri* groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS to further their own interests. For my analysis, respondents are mainly Sunni Arabs and so the survey questions of interest would be taken to mean a Sunni Caliphate, and more likely one similar to the Ottoman Caliphate that was only abolished in the 1920s. For only a few would it mean something similar to the *takfiri* Caliphate that was only elaborated in the ideology of the al Qaeda group in 1988. The two survey questions are therefore relevant as most Sunni Arabs would probably approach the question as such today – mainly meaning to them an Ottoman style Caliphate in the Mawardist approach, and only to a few a *takfiri* Caliphate.

I operationalize elite pressures – my main independent variable for Egypt and an important one in Palestine – through variable M704 in Egypt and Kuwait and variable M706 in Palestine, as both quantify support for Islamist movements in all three countries. Here again the wording is slightly different in the two surveys; in Egypt and Kuwait the question is phrased 'Do you support the current organized religious movements?' with possible answers being 'Yes, Somewhat, and No' (coded as 3, 2, 1, respectively). In Palestine, the wording is as follows: 'Support for Islamic Political Parties' with possible answers being 'Apply, To an extent apply, Somewhat apply, Not apply', which have been coded as 4, 3, 2, 1, respectively. These two very similar variables are good operationalizations of the degree of pressure and influence exerted by Islamist elites on surveyed individuals as they quantify how much said individuals support the political parties of these elites and are therefore influenced by the ideas they defend on the political scene. The literature looking at the influence of elites on political ideas has, moreover, often taken parties as being a good operationalization of the influence of elites on ideational matters and my choice here is therefore common practice for the quantitative literature on political ideas.

I operationalize socioeconomic conditions through five variables: income, age, economic satisfaction, gender and education. The first variable quantifies social class by quintile of individual monthly income – it is named M107 in both datasets and takes the following values for the following income groups: 1 for first quintile, 2 for second quintile, 3 for third quintile, 4 for fourth quintile and 5 for fifth quintile. The second variable quantifies age by groups, it is named M102 egku1988 in the Egypt and Kuwait dataset and M102pa1995 in the second dataset. In the first one it takes the following possible values: 1 for less than 20, 2 for 20–29, 3 for 30–39 and 4 for

Table 1. Summary statistics: variables of interest for Kuwait.

Statistic	N	Mean	SD.	Min	Max
Attitudes toward caliphate	202	0.668	0.472	0	1
Economic satisfaction	202	1.554	0.498	1	2
Support for local Islamist movement	202	1.827	0.736	1	3
Religious practice (prayer)	202	4.495	0.999	1	5
Gender	202	1.450	0.499	1	2
Age	202	2.376	0.629	1	4
Socioeconomic class	202	3.559	1.124	1	5
Education	202	3.738	1.077	1	5

Table 2. Summary statistics: variables of interest for Egypt.

Statistic	N	Mean	SD.	Min	Max
Attitudes toward caliphate	223	0.466	0.500	0	1
Economic satisfaction	223	1.480	0.501	1	2
Support for local Islamist movement	223	1.614	0.725	1	3
Religious practice (prayer)	223	3.996	1.272	1	5
Gender	223	1.448	0.498	1	2
Age	223	2.502	0.854	1	4
Socioeconomic class	223	3.233	1.395	1	5
Education	223	3.520	1.342	1	5

40 and over. In the second dataset it takes seven possible values for seven age groups: 1 for 18–22, 2 for 23–26, 3 for 27–30, 4 for 31–35, 5 for 36–42, 6 for 43–50 and 7 for 51+. Economic satisfaction is a good measure of the overall wealth of a society in relation to the modernization theories that postulate that the wealthier the individuals, the more likely they are to be liberal-minded and less religious. Economic satisfaction allows us to look at an effect of wealth adjusted at the psychological level – how satisfied the individual is with his financial situation? – rather than a set standard for a specific financial threshold that may not apply everywhere – a specific amount of wealth might not make citizens satisfied everywhere. It is named M108 in both datasets, but in Egypt and Kuwait it is coded as a numeric value to the question of 'How satisfied are you with the economic situation of your household?' with 1 for satisfied and 2 for dissatisfied. In Palestine the question is 'Personal economic conditions good?' and the answers are 1 for 'Apply', 2 for 'To an extent apply', 3 for 'Somewhat apply' and 4 for 'Not apply'. Gender is a useful variable to assess whether women and increased educational levels are also more correlated than men and lower educational levels with distinct attitudes toward the Islamic Caliphate – as these two societal groups are found to be more liberal on a range of issues in the West. The gender variable is M101 and is coded 1 for 'Man' and 2 for 'Woman', whereas the education variable is M103 and is coded as 1 for 'Illiterate', 2 for 'Elementary and Primary', 3 for 'Secondary', 4 for 'BA (completion of college degree)', 5 for 'MA or higher'.

I operationalize religiosity by using the frequency of prayer. No other indicators of religiosity are available for both datasets and one may make the case that practice is arguably more telling about the religiosity of an individual than personal assessments. It is named M803 for both datasets, is termed as an answer to the question of 'How often do you pray?' and takes the following numeric values for the following factors; 5 for 'Very often (several times a day)', 4 for 'Often (everyday)', 3 for 'Sometimes (once or twice a week)', 2 for 'Rarely (one or two times a month or only on religious holidays)' and 1 for 'Never'.

Descriptive statistics for the variables of interest are contained in Tables 1, 2 and 3. The nature of the data requires specific consideration when choosing a proper model for statistical analysis; using a linear regression model estimated through the ordinary least square method of estimation would violate the assumption of continuous data, as my data is rather discrete. The dependent variables are mainly categorical and ordinal, while in Egypt and Kuwait my dependent variable is binary, and in Palestine it is intended to be ordinal. As such, I opt to use Binary

Table 3. Summary statistics: variables of interest for Palestine.

Statistic	N	Mean	SD.	Min	Max
Attitudes toward caliphate	2206	2.660	1.357	1	4
Economic satisfaction	2206	2.473	1.292	1	5
Gender	2206	1.494	0.500	1	2
Age	2206	3.330	1.974	1	7
Socioeconomic class	2206	3.847	0.988	3	5
Education	2206	2.947	0.908	1	5
Support for local Islamist movements	2206	2.403	1.313	1	4
Religious practice (Prayer)	2206	3.161	1.193	1	4

Table 4. Binary logistic regression models for Egypt (Models 1 & 2) and Kuwait (Models 3, 4, 5) (1988).

|	Dependent variable: Attitude toward Caliphate				
	Egypt		Kuwait		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Support for current Islamist movement	0.835 (0.201)	0.784 (0.215)			0.402 (0.230)
Age		0.107 (0.186)	0.488 (0.236)		0.589 (0.271)
Gender		0.349 (0.304)			0.444 (0.348)
Economic satisfaction		0.256 (0.296)			0.398 (0.326)
Religiosity (prayer)		0.394 (0.127)		0.473 (0.148)	0.503 (0.164)
Socioeconomic class		0.233 (0.113)			0.162 (0.153)
Education		0.093 (0.114)			0.028 (0.154)
Constant	1.483 (0.351)	1.782 (1.040)	1.873 (0.592)	1.403 (0.673)	0.109 (1.214)
Observations	223	223	202	202	202
log likelihood	−144.679	−134.754	−126.192	−123.077	−116.010
Akaike inf. crit.	293.358	285.508	256.383	250.155	248.020

Note: $p < 0.1$; $p < 0.05$; $p < 0.01$.

Logistic Regression Models (BLRM) for Egypt and Kuwait and select an Ordinal Logistic Regression Model (OLRM) for the Palestinian case, given that it passes a nominal test that would confirm whether the assumption of ordered values is not biased. I estimate both models using Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE).

I start by analyzing the results of the BLRMs computed for Egypt and Kuwait. Table 4 shows the summary statistics for a range of BLRMs pertaining to the Egyptian and Kuwaiti cases – model 1 includes only the main independent variable for Egypt and shows the influence of elite pressures as operationalized by support for current Islamist movements on Egyptians' opinions on the issue of the Caliphate. Model 3 shows the influence of age on Kuwaiti attitudes toward the issue of the Caliphate, while Model 4 only includes prayer. Table 4 also contains the summary statistics for the same models including all the other control variables – Model 2 for Egypt contains age, gender, economic satisfaction, prayer, socioeconomic class and education, while Model 5 for Kuwait contains support for Islamist movements, gender, economic satisfaction, prayer, socioeconomic class and education.

The estimation results of a BLRM cannot be approached as coefficients of a linear regression –as showcasing a change of the dependent variable per one unit of change in the independent variable. Moreover, the only way to assess the strength of the correlation between these independent variables and the dependent variable would be to have all the independent variables on the same scale, which is not the case in these BLRMs. Yet one can still use them to assess the direction and statistical significance of the correlation between independent and dependent variables and compare the value of the estimates between models to assess substance in comparison.

Models 1 and 2 support the hypothesis of a positive relationship between Islamist elite pressures and public opinion on the Caliphate in Egypt, as the estimation results show a positive
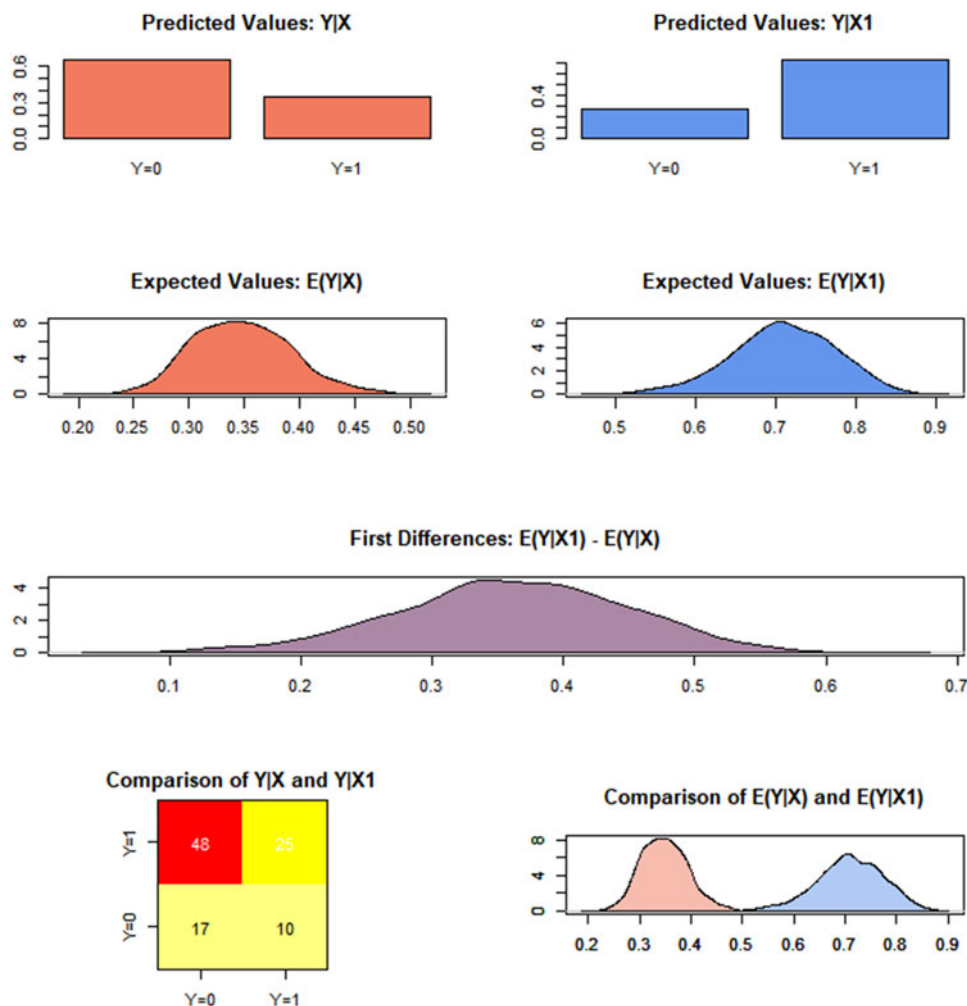
Figure 3. The influence of support for local Islamist movements (X = No Support, X1 = Support) on public opinion on the Caliphate in Egypt (Y = 0 for negative opinion, Y = 1 for positive).

correlation statistically significant at 99 per cent. The influence of prayer and income groups is also noticeable in Egypt, with a positive correlation between prayer frequency and opinion on the Caliphate statistically significant at 99 per cent, and a negative correlation between socioeconomic class and opinion on the Caliphate statistically significant at 95 per cent. On the other hand, Model 3 confirms the hypothesis of a relationship between age and opinion on the Caliphate in Kuwait, while model 4 confirms the hypothesis of a significant and positive relationship between religiosity and attitudes toward the Caliphate in the same country. Model 3 shows an estimate that is statistically significant at 95 per cent while model 4 shows one that is significant at 99 per cent, and both are considerably higher and more significant altogether in comparison to the same coefficients in the Egyptian models (models 1 and 2). It is also notable that the Kuwaiti model that involves all the independent variables as controls of one another – model 5 – also shows an increase in strength of correlation between the main independent variables and the dependent variable. Another key point that supports the hypotheses put forward for Egypt and Kuwait is that the estimate pertaining to the influence of support for the current Islamist movement – which operationalizes elite pressures – is much lower in the Kuwaiti case, in Model 5, than in the Egyptian cases, in models 1 and 2.
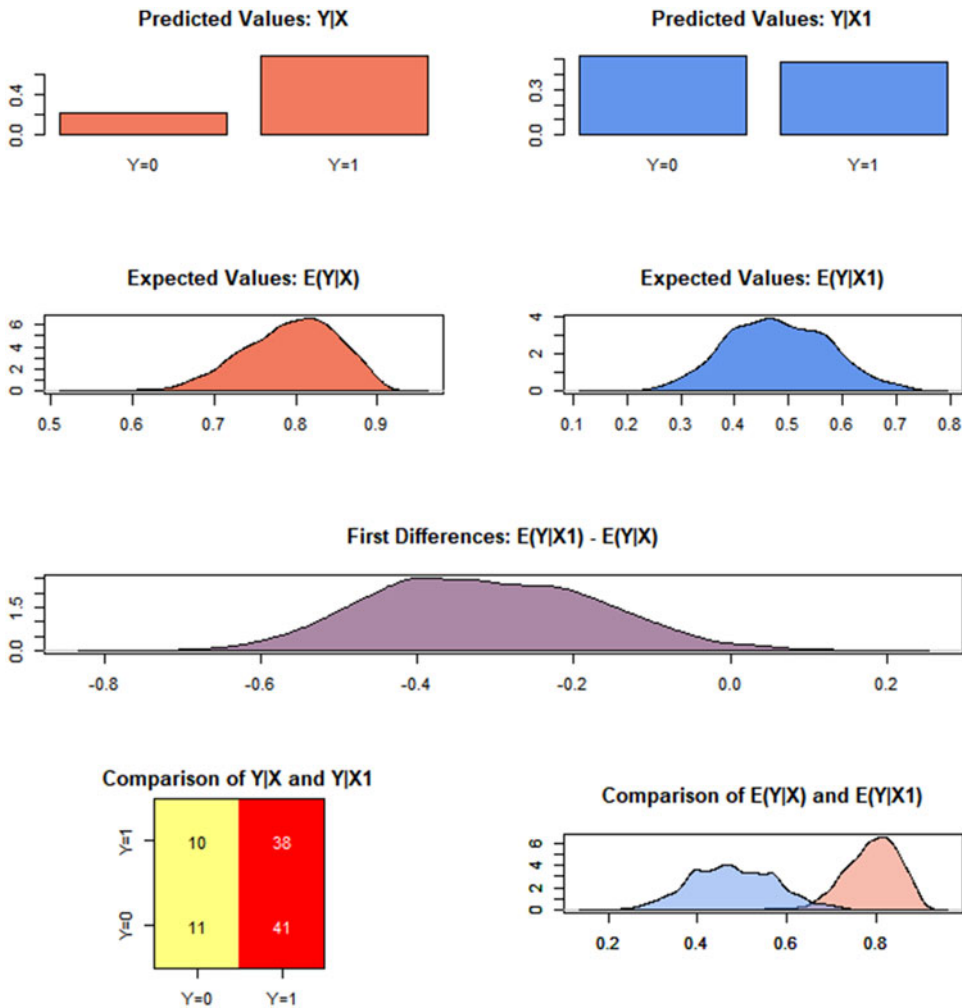
Figure 4. Impact of age (X = 18 to 22, X1 = 40 and over) on opinion toward the Caliphate in Kuwait (Y = 0 for negative opinion, Y = 1 for positive).

I use out-of-sample predicted probabilities to best understand the substantive strength of the correlation between dependent and independent variables in Egypt and Kuwait. The results of this estimation are presented in Figure 3 for the influence of elite pressures as operationalized by support for the local Islamist movements – such as the Muslim Brotherhood – on public opinion on the issue of the Caliphate in Egypt. It shows a strong and positive correlation between the two, whereas individuals that are more supportive of the current organized religious movements are much more likely to also have a positive opinion on the relevancy of the Islamic Caliph state as a model for politics in the Arab world of 1988. Indeed, the predicted value of y when x is equal to no support for the current organized religious movements (Y|X) is more than 60 per cent of the time a negative attitude on the relevancy of the Caliphate. The opposite is similarly substantive; the predicted value of y when x is equal to support for current organized religious movements (Y|X1) is more than 65 per cent of the time a positive answer to the relevancy of the Caliphate for Arab politics in 1988. The expected values, first differences in expected values, and comparison of expected values are similarly substantive.

On the other hand, Figures 4 and 5 show the influence of age and religiosity on changes in predicted probabilities for opinions on the Caliphate in Kuwait. The first one shows how younger
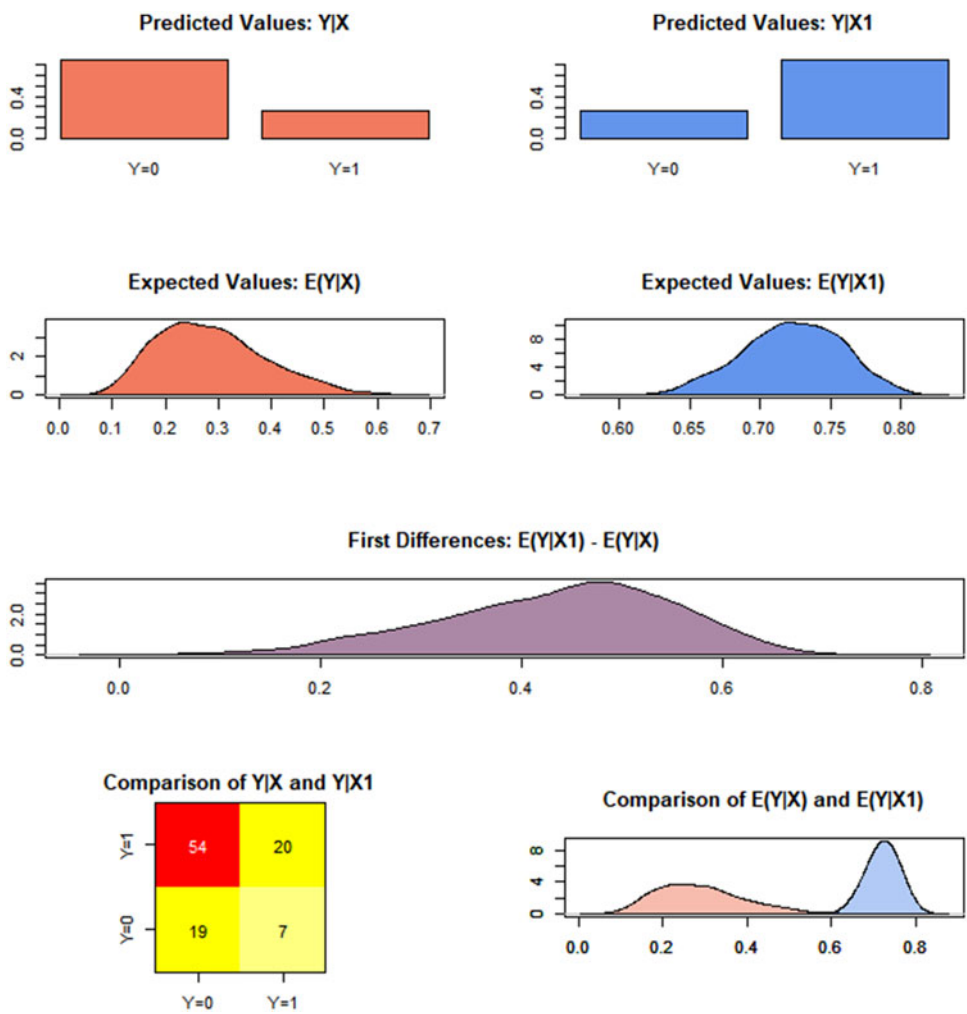
Figure 5. Impact of religiosity (X = never pray, X1 = pray several times a day) on attitudes toward the Caliphate in Kuwait (Y = 0 for negative opinion, Y = 1 for positive).

Kuwaitis are much more likely than older ones to have positive attitudes toward the relevancy of the Caliphate for Arab politics in 1988; it shows how impactful generational trends are on public opinion toward this issue in Kuwait. The second figure shows how crucial religiosity is in determining Kuwaiti attitudes toward the relevancy in Arab politics in 1988; indeed, more practicing Kuwaitis are much more likely to have positive attitudes toward the relevancy of the Caliphate for Arab politics in 1988 than their non-practicing countrymen.

Figure 4 illustrates the very key impact of age through younger Kuwaiti generations on opinion concerning the relevancy of the Caliphate for Arab politics in 1988; the computations predict positive attitudes more than 80 per cent of the time when the surveyed Kuwaiti is between the age of 18 and 22 (represented by Y|X). On the other hand, the comparison of expected values is also telling – the younger generation is much firmer than the older ones (40 and over, and represented by Y|X1) in its opinions concerning the relevancy of the Caliphate, and one may say that the older generation is unsure yet move toward irrelevant.

Figure 5 shows the impact of religiosity on attitudes toward the Caliphate in Kuwait. Here again the relationship is heavily substantive, with a negative attitude predicted more than 70 per cent of the time when Kuwaitis never pray (represented by Y|X), and a positive attitude

Table 5. Test of parallel assumption.

	Df	logLik	AIC	LRT	Pr($>$Chi)
$<$none$>$		$-$ 2379.00	4778.00		
Religiosity (prayer)	2	$-$ 2376.25	4776.51	5.49	0.0642
Support for Islamist parties	2	$-$ 2376.31	4776.61	5.39	0.0676
Age	2	$-$ 2370.63	4765.27	16.73	0.0002
Socioeconomic class	2	$-$ 2375.94	4775.89	6.11	0.0471
Education	2	$-$ 2375.59	4775.18	6.82	0.0331
Economic satisfaction	2	$-$ 2375.79	4775.57	6.43	0.0402
Gender	2	$-$ 2378.39	4780.79	1.21	0.5451

Table 6. Ordinal logistic regression model: Palestine (1995).

	Dependent variable: Opinion on the issue of the Caliphate		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Support for Islamist parties	0.499 (0.033)		0.425 (0.034)
Age			0.112 (0.023)
Socioeconomic class			0.104 (0.047)
Education			0.152 (0.050)
Economic satisfaction			0.075 (0.036)
Gender			0.348 (0.088)
Religious practice (prayer)		0.456 (0.035)	0.445 (0.038)
Observations	2206	2206	2206
Log likelihood	$-$2455.353	$-$2486.500	$-$2379.000

Note: $p < 0.1$; $p < 0.05$; $p < 0.01$.

predicted 70 per cent of the time when the Kuwaiti prays several times daily (represented by Y|X1). Similarly, the comparison in expected values is very telling, with each of the two expected values falling at clear and separate points on the y axis showcasing the distinctiveness of the predicted opinions on the Caliphate for each religious behavior.

So far, the BLRMs have supported the hypotheses advanced for the cases of Egypt and Kuwait – hypotheses 1 and 2. I now turn to assessing the validity of hypothesis 1 for Palestine. As stated previously, I seek to use an OLRM as the dependent variable is supposedly ordered in nature, but before doing so one needs to conduct a nominal test that verifies that the parallel assumption on which the OLRM is based is not violated by the data. The results of this test are included in Table 5 and show that the parallel assumption is not violated for the variables that operationalize religiosity (frequency of prayer), influence of Islamist elites (support for Islamist parties), and for one of the variables operationalizing socioeconomic conditions (gender). On the other hand, age, socioeconomic class, education and economic satisfaction all have a nominal relationship with opinions on the issue of the Caliphate in the case of Palestine to certainty of at least 95 per cent. For these reasons, the potential correlations with many variables operationalizing socioeconomic conditions are already rejected and I continue the rest of the test with religiosity and influence of Islamist elites as my main independent variables, while controlling for all the other variables in another model.

I conduct three different ORLMs in order to test hypothesis 1 for Palestine, and the results of these three models support parts of it – both the influence of Islamist elites and religiosity affect opinions on the issue of the Caliphate in the context of Palestine in 1995. The first one assesses the influence of support for Islamist parties on Palestinian opinions on the issue of the Caliphate, the second assesses the influence of religiosity on that same variable, and finally the third one includes all the variables of interest for Palestine. The results of these models are contained in Table 6; all three models showcase a positive correlation between the two independent variables and opinions on the issue of the Caliphate in Palestine with a certainty of 99 per cent.
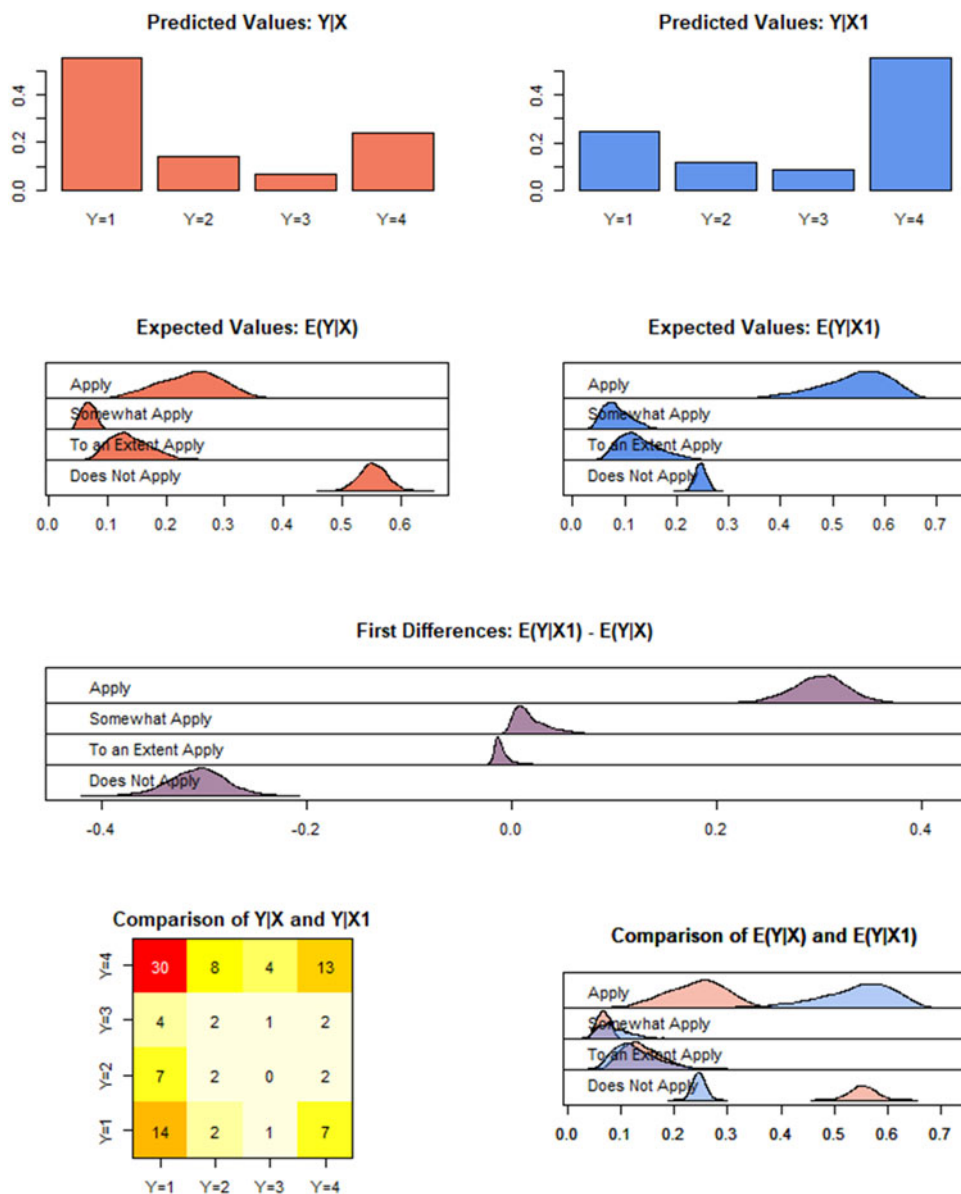
Figure 6. Impact of religiosity (X = never pray, X1 = pray several times a day) on attitudes toward establishing a Caliphate in Palestine (Y = 1 Does Not Support, Y = 2 To an Extent Support, Y = 3 Somewhat Support, Y = 4 Support).

I compute the out-of-sample predicted probabilities of opinions on the issue of the Caliphate in Palestine in 1995 for each of the two main independent variables – religiosity and influence of Islamist elites – in order to assess the substantive relationships at hand. Figures 6 and 7 show these results per value of the two independent variables; the first predict a strong influence of personal religious behavior on both negative and positive opinions on the establishment of a Caliphate, while the last predict a strong influence of Islamist elites on positive attitudes toward the Caliphate.

Figure 6 shows that personal religious behavior is a determinant of both negative and positive attitudes toward the Caliphate. It predicts that Palestinians who pray very often (several times a day) are 55 per cent likely to support the establishment of an Islamic Caliph state, and 25 per cent likely to deny support for its establishment. On the other hand, Palestinians who
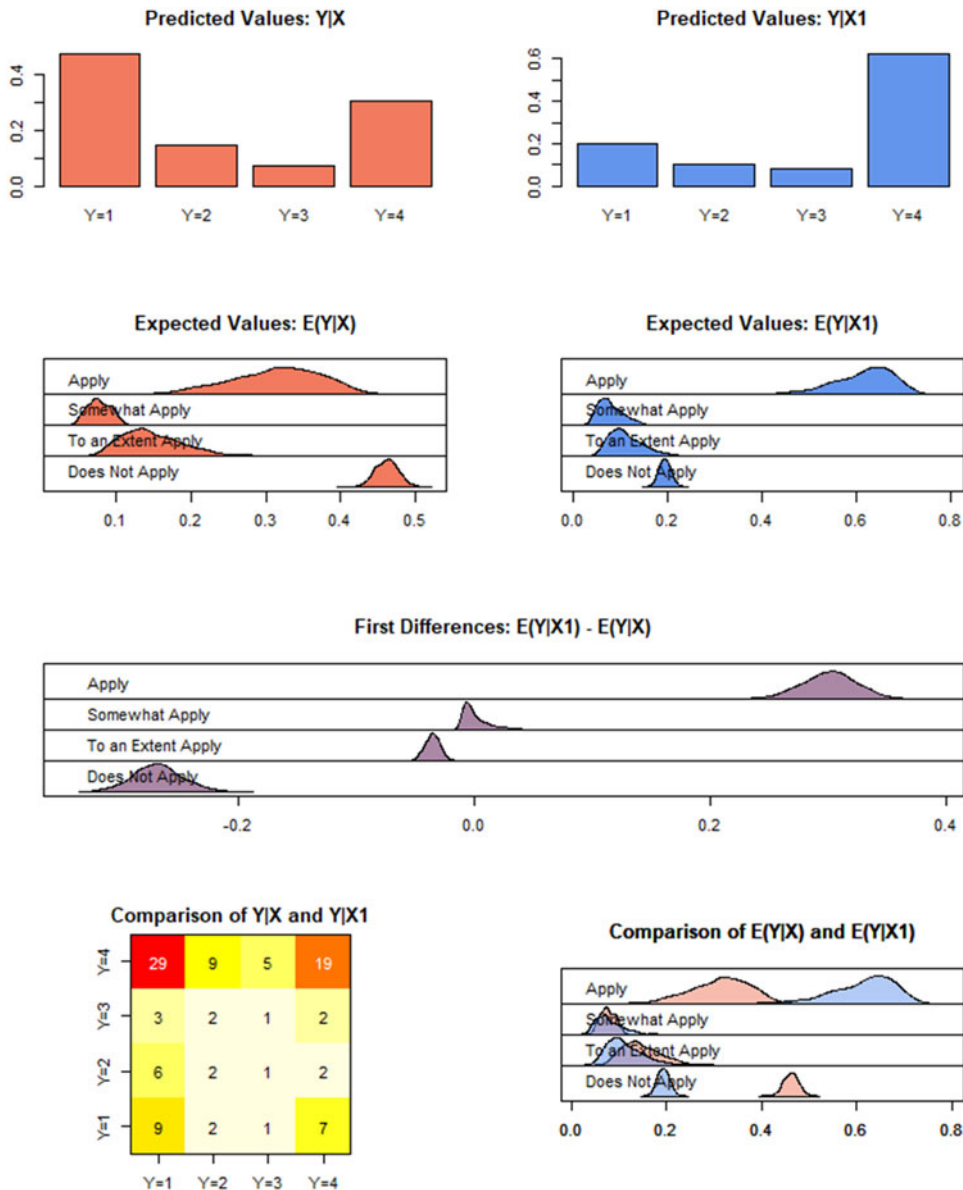
Figure 7. The influence of support for local Islamist movements (X = No Support, X1 = Support) on attitudes toward establishing a Caliphate in Palestine (Y = 1 Does Not Support, Y = 2 To an Extent Support, Y = 3 Somewhat Support, Y = 4 Support).

never pray are predicted to support the establishment of an Islamic Caliph state less than 25 per cent of the time and they are predicted to deny support for its establishment 55 per cent of the time – the trend is almost completely reversed. It also shows a very stark first difference in expected values between individuals who pray very often – represented by E(Y|X1) and individuals who do not pray (E(Y|X)) – while the comparison in expected values of individuals who do not pray and individuals who pray very often is also very distinct.

Finally, Figure 7 shows that Palestinians influenced by Islamist elites are considerably more likely to have a positive attitude on the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate than to deny support for it. Indeed, it predicts that there is a more than 60 per cent chance that Palestinians who support Islamist political parties support the establishment of an Islamist Caliph state, and only 20 per cent chance that they oppose it. The relationship is different when Palestinians are not

influenced by Islamist elites – they are much less likely to support it and much more likely oppose it, but the predictions are not as drastic as when Palestinians are influenced by Islamist elites. Indeed, there is a 45 per cent chance that Palestinians who do not support Islamist political parties also do not oppose the establishment of a Caliphate, and there are only a little more than 30 per cent chance that these Palestinians support it. At the same time, Palestinians who only support Islamist political parties to an extent are 15 per cent likely to deny support for the establishment of an Islamic Caliph state and 10 per cent likely to support it.

Moreover, Figure 7 shows that expected values for Palestinians who support Islamist parties, represented by $E(Y|X1)$, are above 40 per cent and all the way to more than 70 per cent (with the majority being at roughly 65 per cent) in favor of the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate. The expected value for these individuals to take another stance toward the Caliphate is less than 30 per cent overall. Such drastic positions can be contrasted to the expected values for Palestinians who do not support Islamist parties, represented by $E(Y|X)$ – the relationship with a particular opinion on the Caliphate is looser, as can be seen by the wider bell curves. These results show that Palestinians influenced by Islamist elites are much more determined to take a positive attitude toward the Caliphate than individuals not influenced by Islamist elites are determined to take a negative attitude toward this issue. It shows that pressures from Islamist elites are more likely to be causal in a specific direction than the absence of pressures from Islamist elites.

Conclusion

What are the determinants of public opinion on the issue of the Caliphate in the Arab world? In this article, I addressed the influence of elites, religiosity and socioeconomic conditions as determinants of public opinion on the issue of the Caliphate in the Arab world. My empirical results have mainly confirmed the two hypotheses which I advanced – the central hypothesis along with the three additional, case-specific hypotheses. To recapitulate, I found, through the use of Binary Logistic Regression Models and Ordinal Logistic Regression Models, that elites matter in determining attitudes towards the Caliphate in countries of the Arab world where a strong Islamist party exists and the society is more bounded, like Palestine and Egypt. I also argued that religiosity and social conditions are much more central in societies of the Arab world where elites are weak and society is freer, such as Kuwait. I did so using the cases of Egypt, Palestine and Kuwait at two different points in time – 1988 and 1995 – and using data little explored in the past.

In this final section of the article, I address the issue of reverse causality and omitted confounding variables, and I then interpret the significance of my results for the literature. Reverse causality should not be an issue in my case, as one cannot expect attitudes toward the Caliphate to have a logical influence either on support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or on age and prayer frequency in Kuwait, or on support for Hamas and prayer frequency in Palestine. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood had already dropped the goal of establishing a Caliphate by 1988 and positive attitudes toward the Caliphate would at most be part of an ideological component that lead Egyptians to look back at their Islamic heritage in a search for a political future in the Arab world. In Kuwait, opinions on the Caliphate cannot logically lead to being younger or to praying more frequently, and it is similarly unlikely that Palestinians support Hamas (which also doesn't advocate the establishment of a Caliph state) or pray more often because they have positive opinions on the Islamic Caliphate.

On the other hand, omitted confounding variables or unobservable variables are always a potential issue that emerges from the natural limitations that come with any type of data, whether quantitative or qualitative, and which one ought to simply acknowledge. I have therefore shown that statistical analysis does generally support the hypotheses and causal mechanisms that I outlined, but I cannot argue that such relationships are necessarily present in all cases around the world, and in all observations through time. It would indeed have been ideal

to possess many more observations throughout time and countries on public opinion on the issue of the Caliphate in the Islamic world, but the data is limited to the three country cases that have been analyzed here and the two timeframes that have been addressed.

I can only make a limited case for generalization of my findings around the Arab world and can at best point towards specific directions that future survey researches ought to take. Future surveys in the Arab world should ask more questions about the Caliphate in the future. Coupled with the same variables I use here, namely religiosity, socioeconomic conditions, and support for specific types of elites, these surveys may help us isolate patterns of attitudes toward the Caliphate based on country level features such as the two suggested here, namely strength of Islamist parties and freedom of political society. It may be so that where Islamist parties are strong and/or there is less freedom, attitudes towards a Caliphate would be caused on a larger scale by Islamist elites more than anything else. Alternatively, it could be that when such elites are weak, and the political society is free, socioeconomic conditions and religiosity would also be more relevant on a larger scale. In other words, country level indicators may help shed some more light on the issue of the Caliphate if only surveys asked about such attitudes more often, in a variety of countries.

Yet I argue that my findings contain considerable insights for the literatures on the dissemination of ideas in societies. Indeed, my findings support the theory that elites are key to the diffusion of ideas and suggest that elites might be even more key to such dynamics when the ideas themselves are controversial and the society is more bounded. Here, my findings may even hint at aspects of the 'participation-moderation' theory:[76] in societies where Islamists are freer to sit in parliament, like Kuwait, the mass public is less prone to be influenced by potentially harmful sociopolitical entrepreneurs who always pose the risk of stirring them in wrongful ways regarding the Islamic Caliphate. Such findings also shed light on why some Muslims around the world turn to ISIS in the failed states of Syria and Iraq in the 2010s and may also shed light on why strong far right parties are able to attract distressed Americans and Europeans disillusioned with the multicultural or socialist set up of ideas in their societies.

My findings also shed light on the need to better understand the roles of religiosity and socioeconomic conditions as determinants of political ideas. The cases of Palestine and Kuwait were especially telling, where behavior regarding practiced religion and generational attitudes played an important role. Future research may also seek to investigate the connection between increased religiosity and a rise of Islamist attitudes toward the political system in countries of the Arab world. Many have outlined the rise of religiosity in the world in the second half of the twentieth century,[77] but their connection to religious political attitudes, often sensible – like the one explored in this article – might be more intricate than it seems. In this endeavor, the large-scale analysis of a great number of observations may shed additional light on the already interesting findings of the large qualitative literature on the resurgence of religion in politics.[78] Finally, the role played by generational dynamics has been emphasized when discussing liberalization in the West, but the case of Kuwait does suggest that it may play an important role also in revivalist behaviors in the non-Western world.

Acknowledgments

Disclosure statement

Notes

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