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Behavioural Approaches to Muslim Politics: The State of the Art

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Abstract

The behavioural approach to Muslim politics in academic literature is a recent development. The approach emerged only in the early twenty-first century, largely as most Muslim-majority nations have been autocracies constraining the freedom of speech required to study political attitudes and behaviour. Many behaviourally driven studies have examined dimensions of Islam as predictors of political attitudes and behaviorr. These include religious affiliation, religiosity, and religious political orientation. While democracy is rare in Muslim majority nations, at the individual level, Muslim religious affiliation and religiosity only partially predict political attitudes and behaviour. Taking an expansive measure of Islamism or Islamic ideology helps us understand this, as it potentially predicts the absence of liberal democracy in Muslim countries. To do this successfully, however, more realistic external validity is required. Scholars still often define and measure Islamism differently, therefore a more standardised measure is required for comparative study.
Keywords: political behaviour, political attitudes, Islam, Islamism, political development, democracy

Introduction

'Muslim politics' is "the invocation of ideas and symbols, which Muslims in different contexts identify as 'Islamic' in support of their organized claims and counterclaims".[1] Muslim politics in Muslim-majority nation-states manifests itself in multiple forms and contexts. Prominent examples include political institutions like Islamic states, Islamic styles of governance, or Islamic political parties; networks such as Islamic civil society or Islamic social movements; issues like *halal*

[1] Eckelman and Piscatori 2004, 4.

food, Islamic finance and banking, *hijab*, and *hudud*.; and the attitudes and behaviour of Muslim individuals, including attitudes toward the political system, democracy, left and right political orientations, voting, protests, and so on.

In the long history of Muslim politics scholarship, three approaches – historical, institutional, and anthropological – have predominated over the behavioural approach. In political science, the latter has been relatively recent intellectual product, marked by the emergence of the psychological school in political studies following World War II[2]. **Campbell et al's** 1960 work *The American Voter* is a shining exemplar from this school. It focuses on voting behaviour or the analysis of individual choices at the ballot box, placing individual citizens at the centre. In a democracy, the common people or mass public determine political outcomes such as the election of legislators and presidents. To understand their choices, the political behaviour approach is a necessity.

Almond and Verba's 1963 work *The Civic Culture*, published three years after *The American Voter*, is another powerful example of the contributions that the behavioural approach in political science can make. The authors discovered the key role played in a democracy by a "civic culture based on communication and persuasion, a culture of consensus and diversity, a culture that [permits] change but [moderates] it".[3] They demonstrate that in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Italy, the presence of a civic culture explained democratic performance.

Both *The American Voter* and *The Civic Culture* have been replicated and elaborated in the study of political behaviour in many nations. They have inspired students of comparative politics to conduct research on elections, political participation and protest, mass system support, democratic support, political tolerance, and the relationship between religion and politics.

The behavioural approach emerged in a specific institutional context: democracies like the United States and Western European countries in the twentieth century. This context—in addition to the recency of its development—has contributed to the extent to which it has been ignored across the globe, including in many Muslim-majority states.[4]

The principal strength of the political behaviour approach is its focus on ordinary individuals as important political actors. There is no better approach to understand and explain political participation, partisan voting, electoral outcomes,

[2] Carmines and Huckfeldt 1996.

[3] Almond and Verba 1963, 8.

[4] Tessler and Jamal 2006.

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political attitudes, and patterns of relationships between various socio-economic and cultural factors and political actions at the individual level. In democratic countries, which require individual political participation and partisan voting, this approach cannot be ignored.

The behavioural approach is an indispensable tool for systematically understanding people's political acts and attitudes. This is because its data come from scientifically-conducted public opinion surveys, allowing one to make realistic inferences about those acts and attitudes. For the behavioural approach to be successfully used in a Muslim country, the researcher must have access to individual Muslims. This access is best ensured in a democracy. Unfortunately, democracy was a rare political phenomenon in the Muslim world when the approach was introduced in the 1950s and 1960s.[5] Only at the end of the twentieth century did the political behaviour approach start to attract more scholars of Muslim politics, and in the last two decades, the number of political behaviour-driven studies has grown rapidly (Cammett and Kendall 2021; Tessler and Jamal 2006)

In Southeast Asia, the political behaviour approach was introduced earlier than in the Middle East. In the late 1960s, still in the same decade as *The American Voter* and *The Civic Culture*, a handful of researchers explicitly utilised the approach in their studies. In 1972, Kessler addressed the issue of Islam and political behaviour among Malaysian Muslims, while Jackson's 1980 publication, conducting a public opinion survey in the late 1960s, studied the extent to which Islamic ideology and religiosity explained Muslim support for Islamic rebellion in Indonesia.

Gaffar's *The Javanese Voter*, published in 1962, is a seminal example of the political behaviour approach applied to Muslim politics, in which the type of Muslim religiosity was found significant to explain voting behaviour among ethnic Javanese Indonesians in an autocratic regime. Almost at the same time, Mallarangeng's 1997 work 'Contextual Analysis of Indonesian Electoral Behavior' studied Indonesian voters at the aggregate level, also finding that religion significantly explained voting behaviour.

With the end of authoritarianism and the wave of reform beginning in 1998, freedom of speech and assembly were reestablished in Indonesia for the first time since 1959. A democratic election was held in 1999, presenting unique social, political, and institutional conditions that opened a window of opportunity for studying the political attitudes and behaviour of individual Muslims. Political behaviour-driven works started to appear in the early 2000s.[6]

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[5] Tessler and Jamal 2006; Tessler, Palmer, Farah, and Ibrahim 1988; Harik 1988.

[6] Mujani 2003; Mujani and Liddle 2004; Liddle and Mujani 2007.

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Entering Indonesia's second democratic decade, this scholarship has grown remarkably, with more diverse topics examined. Research now not only explores the relationship between religion and voting,[7] but also between Islam and democracy,[8] political tolerance,[9] and religion and public policy.[10]

In the Middle East, meanwhile, the political behaviour approach was introduced only at the end of the twentieth century. It has, however, developed rapidly since that time, including the publication of articles in mainstream political science journals such as *The American Political Science Review*, *The British Journal of Political Science*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *World Politics*, and *Comparative Politics*.[11]

Tessler pioneered the behavioural study of Muslim politics in the Middle East.[12] In these publications, the terms 'Muslim religion', 'religiosity', and 'religious and Islamic political orientations' are core concepts used to explain political phenomena, including democratic support, attitudes towards international conflict, and social capital.

Current public opinion research in many regions of the world has benefited Muslim political studies. This includes the Arab Barometer, the Asian Barometer (which includes two South East Asian countries – Indonesia and Malaysia – with majority Muslim populations), and the South Asian Barometer (including two major Muslim nations, Pakistan and Bangladesh). The African Barometer also includes Muslim populations. Globally, while the World Values Survey has made a major contribution to our knowledge of Muslim political attitudes and behaviour, as have key works with global scopes, such as Norris and Inglehart's *Sacred and Secular* and Fish's *Are Muslims Distinctive?*, both from 2011.

In the political behaviour approach, the term 'Muslim' has multiple definitions: religious affiliation (Muslim versus non-Muslim), religiosity (intensity of religious beliefs and practices), and religious or Islamic political orientations. How do these religious factors explain political attitudes and behaviour?

This essay is a review of the state of Muslim politics in political behaviour studies, assessing the extent to which the relationships between Islamic factors and political attitudes and behaviour have been explored.

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[7] Liddle and Mujani 2007; Pepinsky, Liddle and Mujani 2012; Mujani, Liddle, and Ambardi 2018.

[8] Mujani and Liddle 2009; Pepinsky, Liddle, and Mujani 2018; Fossati 2022.

[9] Menchik 2016; Mujani 2018.

[10] Kuipers, Mujani, and Pepinsky 2021.

[11] Cammet and Kendall 2021.

[12] Tessler 1998, 2002a, 2002b, 2003, 2004, 2005; Jamal and Tessler 2008; Jamal 2006, 2009; Hoffman and Jamal 2014.

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Religious Affiliation

In the behavioural approach, a Muslim is defined according to self-identification with a religion: one is either a Muslim or a non-Muslim (a non-believer). The relevance of this identity is assessed mainly by looking at Muslims relative to other religious believers such as Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, and so on, as well as to non-believers. Students of political behaviour investigate whether there are any significant differences between Muslims and others across a number of political attitudes, including loyalty to the nation state, regime support, assessment of regime performance, political trust, evaluation of government performance, political party identification, political interest, political tolerance or political discrimination, electoral participation, political protest or action, partisan choice, social inequality, interpersonal trust, and civic engagement, such as membership in social groups or organisations.

Norris and Inglehart's *Sacred and Secular* is one of the best examples of the behavioural approach to the analysis of religion and politics.[13] The authors explore how Islam as a religious affiliation explains particular political values, including democratic support and religious political leadership. Their book tests the oft-quoted claim of Huntington and many other political scientists that Islam is inimical to democracy.

Sacred and Secular's measures of democratic support are approval of having a democratic political system; belief that democracy is a better political system; belief that democracy is not indecisive; disapproval of having experts, not government, make decisions; and disapproval of having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections. Norris and Inglehart define religious leadership as support for the ideas that "politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office" and that "it would be better for [this country] if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office".[14]

Norris and Inglehart found that Muslims do not differ from non-Muslims in their attitudes toward democracy .[15] There is, however, a significant difference in their support for religious leadership in public office, especially in regard to the two statements mentioned in the above paragraph. Being a Muslim increases the likelihood of wanting for religious persons to hold public office.[16]

Is this support for religious leadership inimical to democracy? The answer appears to be yes. If democracy requires that public officials be neutral in their

[13] Norris and Inglehart 2004.
[14] Ibid, 143.
[15] Ibid, 145.
[16] Ibid, 147.

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behaviour toward religious groups, it can be concluded that Muslims will discourage democracy.

A more extensive study of the relationship between Muslims and various socio-political attitudes including democratic support is Fish's *Are Muslims Distinctive?*. In his research, Fish explores the extent to which Muslims are distinctive from non-Muslims in their religiosity and their attitudes toward the relationship between religion and politics and toward social and political issues such as social capital, tolerance, equality, religious leadership, and democratic support. Fish's measures of personal religiosity include the importance of God, self-claims of piety, and attendance at religious services.[17] He found that Muslims globally are more religious than non-Muslims, but that Muslims and Christians do not differ significantly in their personal religiosity.[18]

Social capital is widely believed to be important in making democracy work. Are Muslims different in this respect? Does the presence of Muslims reduce the amount of social capital in a society? Fish's measures include membership in religious, humanitarian, sporting, art, and environmental organizations, along with labour unions, political parties, and professional associations. He finds that being a Muslim, relative to being a non-Muslim, does not have a significant relationship with social capital.[19] However, being a Muslim does predict significantly and negatively influence tolerance of homosexuality; being a Muslim also increases the probability of rejecting abortion.[20]

Fish also examines the issue of social inequality, defined as gender and social class-based inequality. The measures are: agreement that "university education is more important for a boy than for a girl", that "when jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to a job than women", and that "on the whole, men make better political leaders than women do". In terms of these measures, being a Muslim makes for a significant difference in attitudes, increasing gender-based inequality. On the other hand, being a Muslim is more positive in terms of social class equality as defined by the Gini index for individual countries. Fish found that in Muslim-majority countries, the Gini index is significantly lower, meaning more equality in terms of income.[21]

Fish does not answer systematically why these differences occur in his study. He speculates that gender-based inequality is shaped by a long history of negative

[17] Fish 2011, 23.
[18] Ibid, 45.
[19] Ibid, 85.
[20] Ibid, 68 and 92.
[21] Ibid, 228.

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Islamic traditions. On why there is a positive relationship between Muslims and social class-based equality, he argues that Islamic tradition and doctrines about alms-giving, such as *zakat*, *sadakah*, and *wakaf*, support social equality, and therefore social class based-inequality is significantly lower in Muslim-majority countries.[22]

In the twenty-first century, democracy remains a rare phenomenon in Muslim societies. Does this reflect Muslim attitudes toward democracy? Do Muslims not support democracy? At the political system level, Fish found that Muslim-majority nations do not support democracy in which democracy is very much defined by, among others, the degree of political openness. However, at the invididual level, he found that Muslims attitude toward democracy is no different with non-Muslim people. So, it means that lack of democracy in Muslim countries are not caused by Muslims or Islam, but by other factors, such as warfare, poverty.

Since Fish was mainly concerned with whether Muslims are distinctive in their political attitudes, he did not address the extent to which religiosity and religious political orientations predict political attitudes and political behaviour. Fortunately, other academics address these issues in their studies on the Middle East, North Africa, and Indonesia.[23] These authors define being Muslim as religious affiliation or belonging, and found that being Muslim is not strongly related to democratic support.

Religiosity

Tessler defines religiosity as a self-claim of personal piety, the intensity of religious practice, a tendency to consult religious authorities when making important decisions, and a habit of reading religious books.[24] Tessler addresses the issue of the relationship between Islam and democracy. His definition of democracy at the individual level is one's attitude toward democracy or democratic support. The measures are different for different countries. In Palestine, they are: "1) Greater accountability of the government is very important. 2) Freedom of the press without government censorship is very important. 3) Fair and regular elections are very important. 4) The existence of an elected parliament representing all political trends is very important.[25]

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[22] Ibid, 220-227.

[23] See: Tessler 2002a, 2002b; Mujani and Liddle 2004; Liddle and Mujani 2007; Mujani, Liddle, and Ambardi 2018; Pepinsky, Liddle and Mujani 2018; and Fossati 2019, 2022.

[24] Tessler 2002a, 350-352.

[25] Tessler 2002a, 350.

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Meanwhile, Tessler's measures for Egypt are: "1) Parliamentary government is the preferred political system. 2) Prefers liberal democracy to Arab nationalism, socialism, and Islamic government. 3) Prefers a competitive political system along the U.S. or European model. 4) Disagrees that western values are leading to the moral erosion of our society. Very important to have open parliamentary elections in a country like ours".[26] In Morocco, they are: "1) Openness to diverse political ideas is an important criterion for national leadership (ranks first or second on a list that includes experience, a sense of justice, integrity, and human sensitivity). 2) The development of democratic institutions is a high priority for government (ranks first or second on a list that includes economic well-being, civil peace, and preservation of traditional values)".[27]

Tessler found that the relationship between religiosity and attitudes toward democracy vary by country. In Egypt and Palestine, religiosity has significantly negative relationships with democratic support, while in Morocco and Algeria, the relationships are not significant.[28] The pattern is different among men and women in Egypt, Palestine, and Algeria: among men, Muslim religiosity does not matter for democracy, but among women, Muslim religiosity does matter, but negatively.[29]

Tessler suggests that Muslim males do not have a negative relationship with democratic support because they are more exposed to public life and more sources of information, not just religious sources. They are more open to different or multiple groups of people in terms of their interests and identities, which are more accommodated by democracy. They are therefore not negative toward democracy. This finding indicates that the negative impact of female Muslim religiosity on democracy is shaped by women's limited public exposure.

An insignificant relationship between religiosity and democratic support has also been found in Indonesia.[30] Their measures of personal religiosity are the self-claim of piety, the importance of religion when making life decisions, and the intensity of ritual or religious practices. In addition, for Indonesian Muslims, Muslim religiosity has been defined anthropologically into three types: *santri* (orthodox or pious Muslims), *abangan* (heterodox or animism-driven Muslims), and *priyayi* (heterodox or Hindu mysticism-driven Muslims).[31]

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[26] Ibid, 350.
[27] Ibid, 351.
[28] Ibid, 345-347.
[29] Ibid, 348.
[30] Mujani and Liddle 2004; Mujani, Liddle, and Ambardi 2018; Pepinsky, Liddle, and Mujani 2018.
[31] Geertz 1960.

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In addition to the intensity of religious practice, Pepinsky, Liddle, and Mujani[32] and Mujani, Liddle, and Ambardi[33] follow the anthropological typology to measure Muslim religiosity at the individual level. Their measures of democracy are democratic preference, disapproval of single party systems, and government without free and fair elections.[34] Their findings differ sharply from the anthropological interpretations popular among students of Indonesian politics from the democratic 1950s through the authoritarian Suharto-led New Order era of 1966-1998. The anthropological interpretation is that pious Mulims are believed to have particular political views based on Islamic doctrines. These views have long been the backbone of Islamic parties, who themselves aspire to an Islamic state or at least an Islamic law-based nation-state, beliefs which blatantly contradict the ideas of the modern state and democracy.

Since the 1970s, the anthropological interpretation of Muslim religiosity and its association with politics in Indonesia has been questioned by anthropologists themselves.[35] Heterodox Muslims used to be associated with 'nationalist' or 'secular' political parties such as the Indonesian Nationalist Party, the Indonesian Communist Party, the Indonesian Socialist Party, and many other small nationalist parties which constituted a parliamentary majority in the 1950s. If there were heterodox Muslims in the 1950s, in this view, they are thought to have become pious during the New Order period, following The banning of the Communist Party and the restriction of the nationalist parties. This change is believed in turn to have had a significant impact on Muslim religiosity. Since then, Indonesian Muslims have, as a whole, become more homogeneously pious. Pious Muslims are currently found in most of the nine parties in parliament, especially in Golkar, the predominantly secular party leftover from the New Order. Research indicates that religiosity does not matter in party politics in general,[36] though it does matter if party economic platforms are the same or similar.[37]

Muslim religiosity has also been tested to the extent to which it explains preference for Islamic financial products and global engagement among Indonesian Muslims. In fact, religiously does not influence preference for Islamic financial products.[38] Globally, the emergence of Islamic finance is an expression of

[32] Pepinsky, Liddle, and Mujani 2018.
[33] Mujani, Liddle, and Ambardi 2018.
[34] Ibid, 16-17.
[35] Beatty 1999; Hefner 1985; Woodward 1989.
[36] Pepinsky, Liddle, and Mujani 2012, 2018; Mujani, Liddle, and Ambardi 2018.
[37] Pepinsky, Liddle, and Mujani 2012, 2018.
[38] Pepinsky, Liddle, and Mujani 2018, 115.

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identity in reaction against global modernization and capitalism, rather than the direct influence of religiosity.[39]

Global engagement is measured by perception of the extent to which Indonesia's relations with various countries in the world are important.[40] These countries are grouped according to their cultural ties: Muslim, Southeast Asian, East Asian, and Western. The study found that piety does matter to global engagement. The more pious an Indonesian Muslim, the more engaged they are with the the world.[41] Interestingly, Indonesian Muslim engagement with the world is not exclusive to the Muslim world; Indonesian Muslims are engaged with other countries regardless of their cultures and religions.[42]

In political behaviour studies, religiosity is believed important in explaining voting behaviour. This proposition is still understudied in the politics of Muslim-majority countries, with Indonesia probably an exception. Indonesian politics are believed to have been shaped by the historical struggle between 'Islamic' and 'nationalist' politics over whether the state should be based on Islamic ideology or multi-religious nationalism. As a result of this struggle, religiosity among Muslims themselves was believed to shape their political attitudes and behaviour in Indonesia.

As mentioned previously, Geertz's anthropological interpretation of Islam and politics in Java has influenced how students of Indonesian politics study political behaviour, as religiosity is considered a crucial factor. Gaffar's *The Javanese Voter* revealed in 1992 the significance of Muslim piety for Muslim voters. This study has weak external validity, however, as research was restricted to only one village in Java. However, when Gaffar's measures of Muslim piety were tested on a national population in 1999 and 2004, researchers discovered that the power of Muslim religiosity to influence Muslim voting behaviour was very limited when controlling for relevant factors such as leadership quality and party identification.[43]

Retesting of Liddle and Mujani's 2007 results in subsequent electoral studies (2009 and 2014) also found only a weak effect of religiosity on voting behaviour in each election.[44] This finding is consistent with the fact that Islamic parties and pious presidential candidates have never won in Indonesian national elections.

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[39] Ibid, 122.

[40] Ibid, 138.

[41] Ibid, 147.

[42] Ibid, 149.

[43] Liddle and Mujani 2007.

[44] Mujani, Liddle, and Ambardi 2018.

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At the same time, scholars have noted that a majority of Indonesian Muslims claim to be religious and regularly practice their ritual obligations, such as fasting during = *ramadhan* and the required five daily prayers. More Muslim women are wearing Islamic clothing such as the *hijab*, and the availability of prayer rooms in public offices and malls has grown over the last 30 years. These seemingly discordant facts themselves suggest that much remains to be explored about Muslim politics in Indonesia.

Religious Political Orientations

Muslim religiosity is probably not the best measure to uncover the nature of Muslim politics, as it is too simple to reveal the impact of religion on political attitudes and behaviour. It is perhaps more realistic to use Islamic political orientations as concepts for explaining Muslim political attitudes and behaviour.

Norris and Inglehart[45] and Fish[46] explore religious political orientations. Orientations are measured first, by the extent to which citizens agree that religious leaders should not influence how people vote; second, by the extent to which citizens agree that it would be better for a country if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office; and third, the extent to which citizens agree that politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office.

On the three attitudes, Fish found that, relative to non-Muslims, Muslims are more likely to agree that religious leaders should influence how people vote; that it would be better for the country if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office; and that politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office. However, these religious political orientations do not vary significantly from the views of Christians.[47] In other words, Muslims are not unique or distinctive in their religious political orientations.

Fish did not explore the extent to which religious political orientations explain such political attitudes as democratic support, tolerance, and social inequality, or political behaviours such as openness at the nation-state level. Tessler addressed some of these issues, using different measures in different Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries.[48] In Palestine, his measures are 1) Men of religion should have a leading role in politics; 2) Islam is the sole faith by which Palestinians can obtain their rights; 3) Supports Islamic political parties; 4) Supports the establishment of an Islamic caliphate; 5) Religion should guide political and

[45] Norris and Inglehart 2004.
[46] Fish 2011.
[47] Fish 2011, 63.
[48] Tessler 2002a.

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administrative affairs; 6) Religion should guide economic and commercial affairs; and 7) Our country should always be guided by Islamic law and values.[49] In other MENA countries, the measures are "Men of religion should not influence how people vote in elections; it would be better if more religious people held public office; men of religion should influence decisions of government; religion is a private matter and should be separated from sociopolitical life; laws should be made in accordance with the will of the people; laws should be made in accordance with the Shari'a; and democracy and Islam are incompatible".[50]

Tessler, Jamal, and Robbins treat these items as measures of democratic culture only. They found that support for democracy does not necessarily weaken support for political Islam, and people in MENA countries disagree with the idea that Islam is incompatible with democracy. They agree that laws should be made in accordance with ***shari'ah*** but also in accordance with the popular will.[51] These opinions may not be contradictory. After all, democracy can be understood as the will of the people, and the will of the people can be simultaneously in accordance with ***shari'ah***. This pattern indicates that, in the view of many MENA country citizens, democracy should not be secular nor should politics be separated from religion.[52]

Tessler, Jamal, and Robbins also explore other relevant political attitudes, including openness to diverse political ideas, racial tolerance, and equal job opportunities for women.[53] They test the extent to which takers of pro and con positions on political Islam are differ in their attitudes, finding only modest differences.[54] Both pros and cons are in general tolerant and support gender-based job opportunity equality, but do not support diverse ideas. Their propositions are basically descriptive. Tessler offers a more analytical explanation of the relationship between religious political orientations on the one hand and democratic support on the other. He finds that religious political orientations do not matter for democratic support in Palestine and Egypt. On the other hand, they do matter in Morocco and Algeria, where political orientations are measured as guidance in economic life rather than in politics and government administration.[55] These attitudes significantly decrease democratic support in Morocco and Algeria.

[49] Ibid, 2002a: 50-52.
[50] Tessler, Jamal, and Robbins 2012.
[51] Ibid, 96.
[52] Ibid, 98.
[53] Ibid, 98.
[54] Ibid, 99.
[55] Tessler 2002a, 345-348.

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A different conclusion is proposed by Fossati for Indonesia.[56] He found that being an Islamist– defined as a Muslim with Islamic political orientations – has a significant and negative relationship with liberal democracy. An Islamist believes that "[t]he government should prioritise Islam over other religions, Islamic religious leaders should play a very important role in politics, Indonesian regions should be allowed to implement Sharia [sic] law at the local level, Sharia [sic] law should be implemented throughout Indonesia, blasphemy against Islam should be punished more severely, when voting in elections, it is very important to choose a Muslim leader, [and] Islam should become Indonesia's only official religion".[57]

Islamist political attitudes decrease significantly support for liberal democracy in regard to the statements that democracy is the best form of government for Indonesia; democracy can solve Indonesia's problems; if Indonesia has to choose between democracy and development, democracy is more important; and Indonesia does not need a strong leader who does not need to bother with elections and parliament.[58] Further, religious political orientation may be understood as the extent to which the role of Islam in politics is important.[59] This helps to explain politicians' party membership and voters' partisan choices: the more Islamic politics-oriented a politician or voter is, the more likely they are to be a member of or vote for an Islamic party (p. 9).

Beyond voting behaviour, the study of Muslim politics is potentially significant for explaining religiously based contentious participation, including support for acts of terrorism. The more oriented toward religious politics people are, the more they are presumed to support terrorism. Tessler and Robbins, however, showed this propositionto be false.[60] Islamic political orientation is not the cause of terrorist attacks; rather, attitudes toward domestic government performance and US foreign policies provide strong explanations. This finding is similar to the case of support for an Islamic rebellion movement in West Java, where Islamism was not an important factor.[61]

Conclusion

Insofar as the actions of individual Muslims, or aggregates of Muslims, are important as political inputs, processes, and outputs, the political behaviour

[56] Fossati 2009.
[57] Ibid, 125.
[58] Ibid, 135-136.
[59] Fossati, Aspinall, Muhtadi, and Warburton 2020.
[60] Tessler and Robbins 2007, 322.
[61] Jackson 1980.

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approach is a valuable tool for understanding Muslim politics. If individual political attitudes such as support for an Islamic state and the role of Islamic law in public life, and political behaviour such as voting for a particular party or candidate, characterise a society, the political behaviour approach will reveal much about Muslim politics that we do not currently understand.

Since World War II, the political behaviour approach has shaped how we study political phenomena and has become increasingly valuable. Compared to historical, anthropological, and institutional approaches, the behavioural approach is a more recent development, not only in the Muslim world but also in the West. In the Muslim world, scholars have been constrained in studying political behaviour by the fact that democracy, or specifically the individual freedom of speech required to observe political attitudes and behaviour, remains rare. Only in the last two decades has the approach been applied meaningfully to the study of Muslim politics, although some problems of external validity remain.

The literature to date indicates that being Muslim, relative to being non-Muslim, does not matter for important political attitudes such as democratic support, support for Islamic based contentious political acts, and global engagement. Muslim religiosity does not consistently explain political attitudes and behaviour. However, there is some evidence that Islamic ideology, Islamism, or Islamic political orientations explain important voting behaviour and attitudes to liberal democracy.

Muslim politics should be understood more as Islamic political orientation or Islamism, which potentially predict political attitudes and political behaviour. The existing literature remains far from conclusive, especially as measures of Islamism and Islamic political orientation are often different from one researcher to another. This difference constitutes a serious problem for comparative studies and deserves more attention by researchers.

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