

5-18-2017

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## Egypt's 2011–2012 parliamentary elections: Voting for religious vs. secular democracy?

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### ABSTRACT

10 This study investigates whether individuals' attitudes towards democracy and secular politics have any influence on voting behaviour in Egypt. Based on data from survey conducted immediately after the Egyptian parliamentary elections in January 2012, this study finds that Egyptians' attitudes towards democratic governance were quite negative around the parliamentary elections, yet Egyptians still endorsed democracy as the ideal political system for their country. However, empirical findings suggest that support for democracy has a limited impact on electoral results. On the other hand, the main division in Egyptian society around 15 the first free and fair parliamentary elections was the religious–secular cleavage. As people support secular politics more, they become significantly less likely to vote for Islamist parties. These results illustrate that preferences in regard to the type of the democracy – either a liberal and secular or a religious democracy – were 20 the main determinant of the historic 2012 elections in Egypt.

### Introduction

For close to a decade, scholars have found that the majority of citizens of Middle Eastern countries has a positive attitude towards democratic forms of government (Tessler, 2002a; Tessler & Gao, 2005; Jamal & Tessler, 2008; Ciftci, 2010, 25 2012) and that they are also very religious and favour Islamic forms of government (Jamal, 2006; Jamal & Tessler, 2008; Ciftci, 2012). These studies show that support for a democratic regime and a high degree of religiosity can coexist. Moreover, the majority of citizens in the Middle East favour democracy is not 30 surprising given that previous studies on other post-authoritarian countries – e.g. post-Communist countries – showed that the citizenry had similar pre-dispositions in the early 1990s (Evans & Whitefield, 1995; Miller et al., 1997; Mishler & Rose, 1997; Haerpfer, 2008). However, exactly how these attitudes towards regime type and religion affect the way individuals vote is a question that remains to be answered.

This question has been neglected in the literature due to the absence of prior experience with democratic transitions in the Middle East. Egypt and Tunisia are the only Middle Eastern countries with appropriate electoral context where this question could be investigated. In the light of the Arab Uprisings, it is now possible to consider how best to answer it. The 2011–2012 parliamentary elections held after the removal of Mubarak in Egypt provide an opportunity to understand the factors shaping Egyptian citizens' voting decisions. This election is particularly significant, not only because it was the first relatively free and fair elections held in Egypt, but it afforded Egyptian citizens a chance to express their choice for the future of their country: A conservative and religious democracy under the Muslim Brotherhood government or a liberal democracy under the coalition of secular forces – the Egyptian Bloc and al-Wafd. The Egyptian Parliament was not allowed to complete its main task of appointing a committee that would be in charge of drafting a new constitution due to the Supreme Constitutional Court of Egypt forced parliament dissolved in June 2012. Yet, this does not undermine the importance of the 2011–2012 elections as the only official measure of 'Egyptians' political sentiments regarding the direction of the transition' (Elsayyad & Hanafy, 2014). Another important aspect of these elections is that Egypt has always been one of the most influential countries in the MENA region, and Islamist victory as a result of the elections could have had a significant impact on other countries in the region.

This study presents some interesting results. First of all, according to the results of the original survey, on average, Egyptian people are highly sceptical of democratic governance inasmuch as they do not believe democracies are good at solving economic, social, or political problems. Yet, despite this scepticism, Egyptians still consider democracy to be the ideal political system for their country. Second, the statistical analysis presented herein on party choice suggests that support for democracy does not have a noticeable influence on electoral outcomes. Third, whereas an individual's strong pro-religion attitude does not affect party choice in Egypt, an individual's strong support for secular politics does affect that choice. One way to interpret these results is that the majority of Egyptian citizens agree that democracy should be instituted as the political system in Egypt but that disagreement on the type of the democracy and, therefore, electoral competition is part and parcel of systems of this nature. In other words, people who vote for the Islamist parties may imagine a relatively conservative and religious democracy whereas those who vote for more secular parties want to see a relatively liberal and secular democracy at work in Egypt.

The present study makes several contributions to the literature on the Middle East and elections in transitional democracies. First, it draws on an original election survey conducted for this study on attitudes towards democracy and the role of religion in politics. Second, it is one of the very few studies to date on voting behaviour at the individual level in Egypt in the post-Mubarak era. There are few empirical studies, using aggregated data, focusing on either electoral

processes in the Middle East (Kurzman & Naqvi, 2010; Al-Ississ and Atallah 2015). **AQ2** Finally, the study demonstrates that the secular–religious cleavage has a decisive effect on individual votes, whereas support for democracy and many other demographic factors have a null effect.

First, this article surveys the extent literature on support for democracy and the role of religion in politics in the Middle East. Second, the study scrutinizes the voters' preferences over support for democracy and secular politics in the 2011–2012 Egyptian electoral process. Third, it provides substantive information on the specifics of the original survey data and the statistical analysis. Forth, it discusses the results of the analysis and finally deliberates future areas of research and broader implications of democratization in the Middle East region.

### Support for democracy

Scholars, including Inglehart (2003), Jamal and Tessler (2008) and Diamond (1999), have argued that for a country to successfully transition to a democratic system requires citizens to believe in and commit to the legitimacy of democracy. The commitment to democracy on the part of the elites and institutions that ensure checks and balances in new democracies may fail if the losers in new regimes are nostalgic about the past and political leaders use this to mobilize people against the new order. That is, a democratic system can only be consolidated when the majority believes this form of government to be preferable to any other regime type and when there is no significant support for the previous regime. A vast literature on post-Communist countries is devoted to examining the democratic orientations of citizens of these new democracies to determine whether and under what circumstances the transition to democracy has been followed by consolidation (Evans & Whitefield, 1995; Miller et al., 1997; Mishler & Rose, 1997; Mishler & Rose, 2001; Haerpfer, 2008). All these studies found that a strong sense of nostalgia and dissatisfaction with the performance of political and economic institutions in new democracies results in either military intervention or backlash of elites of the old regime. And, although scholars have developed extensive theories and knowledge pertaining to the level and determinants of support for democracy in post-Communist countries, the effect of support for democracy on electoral choice is a relatively understudied area. A handful of these studies, based on survey research, have shown that those who support reforms for political and economic liberalization are more likely to vote for parties associated with the newly established democratic forces, whereas those who are dissatisfied with new democratic regimes are likely to vote for the previous regime's parties (Mason & Sidorenko-Stephenson, 1997; Powers & Cox, 1997; Miller et al., 1998; WVS, 2000).

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As a region associated where democratic countries are few and far between, the Middle East has only recently gained significant attention from democratization scholars. Motivated by Huntington's *clash of civilizations* thesis, scholars

have designed and implemented surveys in order to determine whether or not Muslims are unfavourable and unsympathetic towards democracy (Tessler, 2002a, 2002b; Jamal & Tessler, 2008; Robbins & Tessler, 2012). In general, findings for citizens' support for democracy in the Middle East have given cause for a sense of cautious optimism. A number of studies have found that support for democracy in most Arab countries is high (Tessler, 2002b; Tessler & Jamal, 2006; Jamal & Tessler, 2008; Tessler et al., 2012; Regt, 2013; Ciftci, 2010). For example, Jamal (2012) reported that on average more than 85 per cent of citizens in the Middle East support democracy. Moreover, it has been shown that strong support for religion in these Middle Eastern countries does not necessarily hinder support for democracy (Tessler, 2002a; Jamal, 2006; Hofmann, 2004; Ciftci, 2012). Al-Braizat (2002) found that Egypt had the highest level of support for democracy among all the Muslim-majority countries in the region. AQ3

In order to determine the relationship between support for democracy along with other factors and party choice during the transition period, an original survey<sup>1</sup> was designed and conducted. The survey was held between 12 and 25 January 2012 immediately after the parliamentary elections in order to measure the extent to which the citizenry supported democracy in the transition process. The first set, which comprised three items, was designed to assess governance in democracies, and respondents were asked to answer by selecting an option ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' on a five-point scale:

- (1) In democracies, the economic system runs poorly.
- (2) Democracies are indecisive and have too much quarrels.
- (3) Democracies are not good at maintaining order.

The second set comprised only one item intended to get at the extent to which the respondents supported the view that democracy is the ideal political system:

- (1) Democracies may have problems, but they are better than any other system.

The responses, as presented in Table 1, suggest that the majority of Egypt's citizens continued to regard democracy as the ideal political system although a very high percentage of the respondents reported being disappointed with the economic instability and political chaos experienced in Egypt dating from the January 25 Revolution. Seventy-two per cent of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that democracies are not good at running an economy or maintaining order, and 65 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that democracies are not good at decision-making processes. On the other hand, only 14 per cent rejected the statement that democracy is the ideal political system compared to alternatives.<sup>2</sup> These descriptive numbers show that despite having significant misgivings Egyptians, on average, overwhelmingly preferred a democratic regime over the alternatives despite widespread dissatisfaction with the Constitution, the timing of the elections and the electoral rules.

**Table 1.** Support for democratic governance/democracy as ideal regime in Egypt.

	Democracies are not good at			Democracy is a better political system (%)
	Economy (%)	Decision-making (%)	Maintaining order (%)	
Strongly disagree	5	6	4	5
Disagree	10	12	10	9
Partly agree	13	16	14	23
Agree	36	33	37	34
Strongly agree	36	32	35	29
N	905	907	900	904

After the Arab Uprisings, anxiety about instability and economic problems discouraged people from putting their entire trust in democratic governance.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, a detailed and insightful consideration of the experiences of the people who were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements presented about democracy can offer some other hints related to the decline of support for democratic governance in Egypt after the uprisings. On the other hand, Robbins (2015) argues that Arab Uprisings did not have a negative influence on citizens' attitudes towards democracy. He compared the results of the second and third waves of Arab Barometer and showed that there has been a modest change in terms of Egyptians' attitudes towards democracy. While, on average, 26 per cent of survey respondents were agreeing that democracy is bad for the economy, ineffective in maintaining the order, indecisive and citizens are unprepared for democracy in 2010–2011, this percentage went up to 27 per cent in the third wave in 2013. Regardless of the level of support for democracy at different periods and different empirical data, it is important to investigate the significance of citizens' attitudes towards democracy and their possible impact on the voting decision they made in the first and only democratic elections they had in 2011 and 2012.

### Support for religious versus secular politics

The secular–religious cleavage has long been a feature of Middle Eastern politics, and Egyptian politics are no exception. Nevertheless, this cleavage was less visible in the public sphere during the Mubarak era because of the oppressive tools of the regime. There was constant pressure on the Muslim Brotherhood, considered as the most organized and popular Islamist group in Egypt. Throughout the period immediately following the successful revolutionary movement in Egypt, a number of politicized and revolutionary groups became more active and visible, thus bringing a new focus to the secular–religious cleavage in society. At the beginning of the uprisings, revolutionary secular and Islamist groups had organized protests together; however, cooperation of this nature slowly gave way to competition over whether the new political system would be a secular or

religious one. Due to this increasing competition between the groups, multiple protests in favour of both sides of the debate have taken place in the streets of Egypt's cities, which may have the consequence of impeding or even reversing popular opinion in favour of establishing a democratic system of governance, as discussed in the previous section.

It is reasonable to argue that any study on democratization in the Middle East that does not examine the relationship between religion and the state and attitudes towards that relationship is necessarily incomplete. On this point, numerous scholars have taken the view that religion and democracy in the Middle East are fundamentally at odds. For example, Huntington (1993), Lewis (1997) and Kedourie (2013) have all argued that the coalescence of Islam and politics constitutes the main reason for the lack of democracy in the Arab world. However, other scholars have challenged this claim. Stepan (2011) and Linz and Stepan (1996), raise the important point that none of the major theories of democratization posit secularism as an essential condition for democratization. Stepan (2000) argues that democratization does not require secularism. Instead, in his view, the consolidation of democracy in Muslim-majority societies requires only what he refers to as 'twin toleration' – a minimum degree of mutual tolerance between political institutions and religious authorities. The most important aspect of Stepan's argument, however, is his claim that the required minimum tolerance level depends on the extent to which the most of the citizens want religious doctrines to be incorporated into the constitution of the new system. Nonetheless, the debate over the role of religion in a political regime goes to the heart of the discussion of democracy in the Middle East (Ardic, 2012), and the evidence suggests that support for the inclusion of religious values and norms into politics is higher in the Middle East than it is in other regions in the world (Tessler & Gao, 2005; Ciftci, 2012).

Studies conducted before the Arab Uprisings suggest that there is a high degree of support for the role of Islam in politics in the Middle East. Citing the Gallup World Poll of 2007, Esposito (2008) argues that Muslims want to see a religious form of democracy – a democracy that allows for the incorporation of Islamic teachings into the political system. The same survey found that 66 per cent of Egyptians wanted Sharia as the only source of legislation (Esposito, 2008: 8). Regt (2013) explored what democracy means to the people of the region and found that a great deal of support for granting religious leaders a role in making laws in a democratic regime. Tessler (2011) suggests that neither the relationship between religion and politics nor a high degree of support for the influence of religion on politics act as an impediment to the citizenry's development of a positive attitude towards democracy.

5 In the aftermath of the fall of the Mubarak regime, the growing concern that Islamists would dominate governance as an electoral outcome in the new democratic era intensified the discord between Islamist and secular forces based on a number of factors. First, the debate about religious minority rights,

women's rights and other salient issues became very hot in the pre-election period as political parties announced their platforms and ran their campaigns. Even though the Islamist parties, especially the FJP, softened their claims and policy promises before the elections, a large segment of Egyptian society was concerned that an FJP and al-Nour government would fail to deliver on promises pertaining to such matters as protecting the rights of women and members of minority groups. These kinds of fears possibly divided Egyptian society further on the role of Islam in new Egypt. Second, in contrast with the pre-revolution era, the demand for Sharia was no longer an abstract one, and the question now became whether people wanted the Muslim Brotherhood's (MB) or the Salafis' version of Islam, or a more secular version of the religion. In order to determine the extent of the popular support for religious versus secular politics during Egypt's transition period, I turn to the public-opinion data.

Table 2 presents the degree of support for secular politics during the transition process in Egypt. The respondents were presented with several items regarding the role of religion in politics. Three items were adapted from the WVS for the sake of comparison and because they are widely used and accepted in the literature. The respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements using the same five-point scale outlined earlier.

- (1) Religion and government should be separate.
- (2) Religious officials and leaders should not influence how people vote in elections.
- (3) Religious officials and leaders should not influence government decisions.

In regard to the first item, 44 per cent of people wanted a separation of religion and government, whereas 41 per cent did not want this. Similar divisions are apparent in regard to the other two items. Respondents' opinions on the influence of religious officials and leaders in elections were split evenly: 43 per cent agreed that religious actors should not influence how people vote, and another 43 per cent disagreed. Likewise, 53 per cent opposed the idea that

**Table 2.** Support for secularism in Egypt.

	Separation of religion and politics (%)	Involvement of religious leaders	
		In electoral choices (%)	In Government (%)
Strongly disagree	29	18	16
Disagree	12	15	15
Partly agree	15	14	16
Agree	15	21	24
Strongly agree	29	32	29
<i>N</i>	958	945	940

religious leaders should influence government decisions, whereas 31 per cent thought that religious leaders should have such influence.

## 5 **Voters' preferences over support for democracy and secular politics**

Studies using the WVS, the Arab Barometer and other polls show that support for democracy in the Middle East is high among those who support Sharia (Tessler, 2002b; Ciftci, 2012). As discussed, most Egyptians agreed that democracy is the best political system, but the nature of democracy they want to see in Egypt is still unknown. A recent study shows that Egyptians are more likely to support a religious democracy than a secular one (Ciftci, 2012). Moreover, differences in Islamist parties' discourses regarding democracy during the Mubarak era and reflecting in the campaigns for the 2011–2012 elections also indicate that a citizen's support for democracy may not hinder him/her from voting for an Islamist party (Al-Anani, 2012). Even though the positions of the Islamist parties, i.e., the FJP and al-Nour, on the place of religion in the Constitution and political system of the 'new Egypt' during the campaign were almost identical, there were variations among the positions of three of the other main parties, i.e., al-Wafd, al-Wasat and the Egyptian Bloc. Al-Wasat adopted a middle ground by defending Islamic laws 'in a manner consistent with the values of a liberal democratic system.'<sup>4</sup> The Egyptian Bloc was the most supportive of a secular constitution, followed by al-Wafd.

A close look at the parties' programmes and electoral campaigns provides empirical evidence for the theoretical expectations regarding the impact of support for democracy and secularization on voting choices. During the electoral campaign, there were two Islamist coalitions. The first was the Democratic Alliance, which was dominated by the FJP, but also included some small liberal and Nasserist parties. During the campaign, the members of the Alliance professed their commitment to democratic procedures and advocated for reducing poverty and increasing spending for the poor, and they abandoned Mubarak-era slogans such as 'Islam is the Solution' (Al-Anani, 2012). In addition, the FJP selected a Coptic Christian, Rafiq Habib, as its third in command and negotiated with non-Islamist parties to establish a coalition. In doing so, the party hoped to signal to domestic and international audiences that it did not have a secret religious agenda. Nevertheless, many liberals and secularists remained sceptical of the Islamist parties' stance on the rights and representation of women and religious minorities (Al-Anani, 2012). They referred to the MB's frequent use of Islamic references to appeal to the electorate and claimed that the FJP's reinvention of itself was purely cosmetic in nature. The prevailing belief was that the party's agenda remained focused on shaping society in accordance with Islamic law (Masoud, 2014).

The second Islamist coalition is the Salafi alliance, which was led by the al-Nour Party and included a Salafi party, Al-Asala and another small Islamist party. Before and during the January 25 Revolution, the Salafist movement consisted of poorly organized groups led mostly by preachers who wanted to propagate their doctrines. As Gauvain (2010) has argued, Salafis in Egypt shunned politics as religiously prohibited (haram) and focused instead on purifying society in line with Quran and Sunnah. Their political approach towards religion enabled them to enlarge their sphere of influence, as Mubarak condoned their activities as a counterbalance against the political Islam of the MB (Chalcraft, 2014). As the anti-Mubarak demonstrations unfolded, these groups took a firm position against the removal of Mubarak, arguing that believers, even if they are only nominally Muslim, should obey the ruler in order to avoid chaos (Al-Anani & Malik, 2013). After Mubarak's downfall, when the decision to hold an election was taken, however, these groups decided to participate in the elections out of "necessity", despite their initial opposition to democracy, which they considered un-Islamic. Al-Anani and Malik (2013) note that the Salafi parties claimed that one of the major reasons they had to change their position was that they wanted to ensure that Egypt's Islamic identity could be protected against liberals and secularists.

An offspring of the MB, the moderate Islamist party, Al-Wasat was founded in 2002 as a result of disagreements within the MB between its relatively young and educated members on the one hand, and its older members on the other. Al-Wasat distanced itself from the MB and developed a new party program that embraced a 'civilizational' concept of Islam, which is more inclusive towards women and Copts than more established versions of Islam are (Stacher, 2002; Wickham, 2004). Its founders include Copts and former members of the MB. AQ7

The non-Islamist parties were not in serious contention in the elections. Among these parties, the most visible were al-Wafd, which is Egypt's oldest liberal political party, and the Egyptian Bloc, an electoral alliance of the Free Egyptians, the Egyptian Social Democratic Party, and Tagammu. Promoting a vision of a 'new Egypt' (Hassan, 2013), the Egyptian Bloc campaigned vehemently against the Islamist bloc, as did the smaller Leftist parties. Further, the Egyptian Bloc opposed the attempts of the Islamist parties to make Sharia a source of legislation and Islam the official religion of the state (Al-Anani, 2012; Hassan, 2013).

In sum, it is difficult to have clear and flat expectations on the relationship between support for democracy and voting patterns in 2011–2012 Egyptian elections. All of the supporters of political parties running in the elections could be expected to support democracy as an ideal regime to a certain extent. This support might get smaller among Al-Nour supporters compared to FJP supporters, especially considering the claim that Salafi party considered the elections as an instrument in order to impose its Islamist regime in the country. It is difficult to argue that support for democracy would change the likelihood

of voting for the rest of the relevant parties in the system, i.e., the FJP, al-Wasat, al-Wafd and the Egyptian Bloc. Given that the MB moderated its position on a number of issues, including the rights of women and members of minority groups, and given that public support for democracy and Sharia may overlap to some extent, the expectation is that the correlation between being in favour of democracy and the likelihood of voting for a non-Islamist party to be weakened somewhat. Regarding secular politics, those who did not want religious authorities were expected to have a high level of involvement in politics voted for non-Islamist parties.

## Survey & analysis

The survey<sup>5</sup> was conducted in Egypt between 12 January and 25 January 2012, with a sample of adults over the age of eighteen. Stratified random sampling was employed in order to capture minority religious groups who are heavily concentrated in several governorates and cities. The survey was run by GENAR, a major public opinion research company in Turkey, in collaboration with their local partner in Egypt. The pilot study was conducted about one month before the survey was launched. The sample was derived from Cairo, Alexandria, Giza, Qalyubia, Asyut, Gharbia, Qena, al Sharqia, Dakahlia, Faiyum, Beheira, Minya and Monufia, i.e., the governorates where most of Egypt's citizens live. Then, each governorate was divided into urban and rural areas. Later, cities, towns and villages from urban and rural areas in each governorate were chosen. However, villages in distant rural areas were excluded because of the cost, time and difficulty involved in travelling to them. The sample, therefore, does not represent the most rural citizens. Afterward, using stratified random sampling was used and households and individuals in those areas by age and gender quotas were selected. In case there was no response, the pollster moved to the next household, which was randomly chosen. The interviewees with 18 years and above in households were chosen with the most recent birthday. Even though the sample size was 1100, 'no response' and 'do not know' observations reduced the sample size to 664 and 643 in two main multivariate analyses, respectively.<sup>6</sup>

## Dependent variable

In order to capture the party choice, the respondents were asked which political party they had voted for in the last election. Not surprisingly, the majority of the respondents claimed that they had voted for the FJP, al-Nour, al-Wafd, the Egyptian Bloc, or al-Wasat. Although other political parties were also referenced, only those cited by at least 2 percent of the respondents are included. It should also be noted that a significant number of respondents either had not voted or did not want to respond to this question. Regarding these features of the survey, the statistical analysis is estimated by excluding those who had not

voted, given that the study's focus is determining the popular base of political parties in the system. The substantial results of the statistical analysis do not change when non-voters are included in the analysis. The FJP voters constitute the base category in the analysis.

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### *Independent variables*

The first set of main explanatory variables measures support for democracy. As support for democracy has at least two aspects, it is conceptualized as 'attitudes toward how well democracy performs' and 'attitudes toward democracy as the ideal political system,' which is a prevalent approach in the literature (Ciftci, 2010). Three items were used, as discussed in the Support for Democracy section. The factor analysis suggests that these three items are loaded onto one underlying factor, which is referred to as 'support for democratic governance.' After the initial analysis, each variable was recoded from 0 to 4 with 4 indicating the highest level of support for democracy, and then they were added up to create the index. The variable ranges from 0 to 12. The Cronbach's alpha score is 0.83.

The second conceptualization of support for democracy is based on citizens' normative judgments about democracy as a political system. In order to capture the respondents' attitudes, they were asked to respond to an item about whether democracy is the ideal political system.

As discussed, there is a significant cleavage in Egyptian society based on the role of religion in politics. The variable used to measure support for secularization is also an index composed of three items. The factor analysis determined that a single factor underlies the responses to these three items. Based on the results of the alpha reliability test, it is possible to become more confident that the new variables were sufficiently variable (Cronbach's alpha = 0.80). The variable was recoded, now ranging from 0 to 12, with 12 indicating the highest level of support for secularization. The expectation is that people who have secular attitudes are more likely to vote for non-Islamist parties, i.e., the Egyptian Bloc, al-Wafd and, to a lesser extent, al-Wasat, than for the FJP.

The last set of main independent variables indicates individual piety, which is measured as self-perceived religiosity. The respondents were asked to assess their religiosity as low, medium, or high. As with the secularization variable, the expectation is that Muslim respondents who see themselves as highly religious tended to vote for Islamist parties. A recent study on individuals' party preferences found that religiosity does not have any impact on vote choice (Masoud, 2013). The inclusion of the religiosity variable does not change the substantive interpretation of the main explanatory variables. However, it did significantly reduce the overall sample. Therefore, the multivariate imputation technique was used for the religiosity variable.<sup>7</sup>

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In the economic voting literature, it has been argued that people's perception of the economic situation significantly influences the way they vote. In a context where the previous regime party (National Democratic Party) and its successor did not compete in the elections, evaluations of the previous government's economic performance or retrospective voting do not tell us much. Because of their emphasis on social justice, Islamist parties can be expected to do well among those who have either have a negative view of the national economy or who have experienced some economic hardship within the household. Further, Islamist parties usually have well-established networks of economic assistance, which essentially develop into a form of clientalism – or even vote-buying in some instances. This might lead to greater electoral support among poor citizens (Harik, 1996; Delibas, 2015; Woltering, 2002). Generally speaking, a poor economy is a robust indicator of support for Islamist parties, especially among people of low socioeconomic status, as Masoud (2014) found Islamists are more successful in convincing the electorate of their ability to redistribute wealth. This does not mean that Islamist parties do not receive support from those in the middle and upper classes. In fact, some researchers have found that people from these socioeconomic classes are the main source of popular support for Islamist parties (Waltz, 1986; Woltering, 2002; Pellicer & Wegner, 2014).

In order to capture the respondents' views on the economic situation of their households and country, the survey included two direct questions. The first involved the household: 'Compared to the last 12 months, how has your household economy changed?' The second question was 'How do you assess today's national economy compared to 12 months ago?' The response rate for both questions was low; therefore, 'better' and 'almost the same' were recoded as 0 and 'worse' as 1.

Public employees who have stable but low-paid jobs may have distinct party preferences. For example, whenever demonstrations erupted in Egypt under Mubarak, the regime increased public employees' salaries significantly, which suggest that the regime considered dissatisfaction on the part of such employees to be a significant threat to its rule. In response, some Islamist groups, mainly the MB, undertook the redistribution responsibilities of the state in some regions. This step that may have created anxiety among public employees about the possibility of losing their status should the Islamists win the elections and redistribute wealth to citizens of lower socioeconomic status, who were expected to be the Islamists' chief source of support.

Egypt has a significant Coptic population, and although it is impossible to offer an exact figure for its size, estimates range from 10 to 16 per cent (Tadros, 2013). Fourteen percent identified themselves as Coptic and they voted for non-Islamist parties for several reasons. First, they were targeted by radical Islamist groups, which resulted in a number of deaths. Second, even though the FJP repeatedly announced during the campaign that Copts would be treated as equal citizens, this message did not alleviate the Christian minority's concerns.<sup>8</sup>

Copts and those of other Christian denominations were coded as 1; otherwise respondents were coded as 0.

The 2011–2012 parliamentary elections in Egypt were unique given that Egyptian citizens not only voted for a party to govern them but for the configuration of the country's parliament. In this election, Egyptians chose among models of political governance and state–religion relations. Some of the governments in the Middle East region marketed their version of political Islam to the Egyptian citizenry (Ciftci & Tezcur, 2015). In order to measure the extent to which Egyptians support some of the models promoted by other countries, the survey included an item asking them to indicate whether they agreed that Egypt should adopt the American, Turkish, or Saudi Arabian model.

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## Results

A multinomial logit analysis was run, holding the FJP as the base category, in order to predict individual vote choice. In the analysis, MNL was preferable to its more complex probit alternative because voters have a fixed, stable pool of alternatives in elections and the IIA property is neither restrictive nor relevant (Dow & Endersby, 2004).

Table 3 presents the results of the multivariate statistical analysis. There are two models to test for the effect of support for democracy and support for secularization on vote choice in Egypt. The first model specification includes only two of the main explanatory variables. In this model, one of the intentions is to show the effect of citizens' attitudes towards democratic performance and democracy as an ideal political system on their party preferences. Table 3 indicates the results of this model, but it is not easy to interpret these results by looking at the table. Therefore, the results are interpreted by calculating the marginal effect predictions for each individual's party choice.

The base category is vote choice for the FJP. Other choices are al-Nour, al-Wasat, al-Wafd and the Egyptian Bloc. Interestingly, two measures for support for democracy differ in terms of their effects on the probability of voting for a given party. The expectation was that the extent to which the respondents indicated support for democracy would not vary significantly on the basis of the party, whether Islamist or non-Islamist, for which they voted. The coefficients suggest that there is no statistically significant difference between voting for the FJP or al-Nour, which means that support for democracy does not exert any significant influence over the choice between the two largest Islamist parties.

In regard to a pairwise comparison of secular parties with the probability of voting for the FJP, the reverse relationship between the two measures pertaining to support for democracy is still present. Neither of the support for the democracy variables is statistically significant for al-Wasat, the variables differ significantly between the respondents who voted for al-Wafd and those who voted for the Egyptian Bloc. The probability of voting for al-Wafd compared to the

**Table 3.** Multinomial logit results: party choice of Egyptians in 2011–2012 elections.

Main variables					
<i>Attitudes towards</i>					
	Al-Nour	Al-Wasat	Al-Wafd	Egyptian Bloc	
5	Performance of democracy	-0.007	-0.116	-0.101*	-0.141**
		0.042	0.084	0.062	0.065
	Democracy as ideal system	-0.037	0.222	0.572***	0.523***
		0.12	0.217	0.183	0.176
<i>Control variables</i>					
	U.S. as a Model	-0.098	0.237*	0.197**	0.510**
		0.01	0.164	0.118	0.111
10	Turkey as a Model	-0.613***	-0.084	-0.017	-0.338***
		0.115	0.219	0.164	0.136
	Saudi Arabia as a model	-0.046	-0.067	-0.097	-0.749***
		0.101	0.169	0.131	0.131
	Christians	-0.361	1.886**	2.333***	3.491***
		1.254	1.055	0.859	0.789
	Household economy	0.754***	-0.425	0.834**	0.024
		0.28	0.501	0.371	0.331
15	National economy	-0.452	-0.491	-0.876**	0.007
		0.347	0.511	0.408	0.407
	Female	-0.092	-0.002	0.476	1.633***
		0.287	0.48	0.356	0.34
	Age	0.003	-0.021	0.008	0.006
		0.011	0.022	0.014	0.013
	Education	-0.117	-0.022	0.598***	-0.309***
		0.096	0.197	0.196	0.122
	Public employee	0.349	-0.048	-1.616***	-0.181
		0.359	0.629	0.66	0.44
20	Unemployed	0.305	0.488	-0.449	0.555
		0.408	0.642	0.54	0.496
	Constant	2.712**	-1.175	-6.316***	-0.165
		1.083	2	1.723	1.321
	<i>N</i>	625	625	625	625

Notes: Standard errors are below coefficient estimates. Results are calculated based on 1000 imputed datasets using STATA (\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ ,  $p < 0.1$ ). The base category for the model is the FJP.

probability of voting for the FJP increased by 2.8 per cent for one-unit increase in attitudes towards democracy as the ideal political system. The increase in the probability of voting for the Egyptian Bloc is 2.9 per cent for each unit change when all other exogenous factors are set to their means or modes.

In the second model, all the main explanatory variables were included. The results of the second model are presented in Table 4. According to this model, the base probability of voting for the FJP is 45.15 per cent when all exogenous factors are held at their mean or modal values. This probability decreased 2.8 per cent on average for each unit increase in support for secularization. The probability of voting for al-Nour decreased 2.2 per cent on average as support for secular politics increased. Again, in line with the theoretical expectations, the probability of voting for the secular parties compared to for the FJP was consistently higher for respondents who reported a high level of support for secularization compared with those who reported a low a moderate level of support. A one-unit increase in support for secularization reflects a 1.1 percent and

**Table 4.** Multinomial logit results: party choice of Egyptians in 2011–2012 Elections.

Main variables					
<i>Attitudes towards</i>					
	Al-Nour	Al-Wasat	Al-Wafd	Egyptian Bloc	
5	Performance of democracy	-0.003	-0.047	-0.005	-0.038
		0.044	0.093	0.073	0.078
	Democracy as ideal system	0.038	0.099	0.367**	0.186
10		0.132	0.241	0.196	0.199
	Support for Secularization	-0.041	0.298***	0.475***	0.594***
		0.046	0.088	0.075	0.079
15	Religiosity	-0.471*	0.009	-0.443	-0.489
		0.289	0.73	0.621	0.602
	<i>Control variables</i>				
20	U.S. as a model	-0.074	0.189	0.099	0.392***
		0.105	0.179	0.134	0.133
	Turkey as a model	-0.519***	0.092	-0.085	-0.428***
25		0.113	0.263	0.19	0.17
	Saudi Arabia as a model	-0.01	0.097	0.035	-0.596***
		0.106	0.241	0.147	0.15
30	Christians	-0.209	1.890**	2.328***	3.528***
		1.262	1.078	0.898	0.848
	Household economy	-0.477**	0.36	-0.495*	0.055
35		0.235	0.414	0.339	0.327
	National economy	0.361	-0.038	0.532*	-0.023
		0.281	0.462	0.348	0.391
40	Female	-0.242	0.118	0.391	1.734***
		0.301	0.513	0.4	0.405
	Age	-0.002	-0.021	0	-0.004
45		0.011	0.024	0.016	0.016
	Education	-0.163*	-0.042	0.618***	-0.312**
		0.101	0.206	0.212	0.145
50	Public employee	0.322	-0.466	-1.367**	0.335
		0.386	0.828	0.706	0.528
	Unemployed	0.26	0.733	-0.276	0.767
55		0.422	0.686	0.616	0.606
	Constant	3.628***	-4.311*	-7.972***	-2.123
		1.313	2.873	2.398	2.037
55	N	607	607	607	607

Notes: Standard errors are below coefficient estimates. Results are calculated based on 1000 imputed datasets using STATA (\*\*\*)  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ ). The base category for the model is the FJP.

1.6 per cent increase in the probability of voting for al-Wafd and the Egyptian Bloc, respectively.

In order to interpret these estimated percentages more intuitively, marginal effect graphs, based on the second (full) model, were constructed. Figure 1 suggests that attitudes towards democratic governance did not have a substantial effect on the probability of voting for a given party. Although these attitudes did have some substantive effect in the first model, the effect disappeared when the individual religiosity and support for secularization variables were included in the model. These results are not surprising, as most of the respondents had a negative view of the performance of democracy.

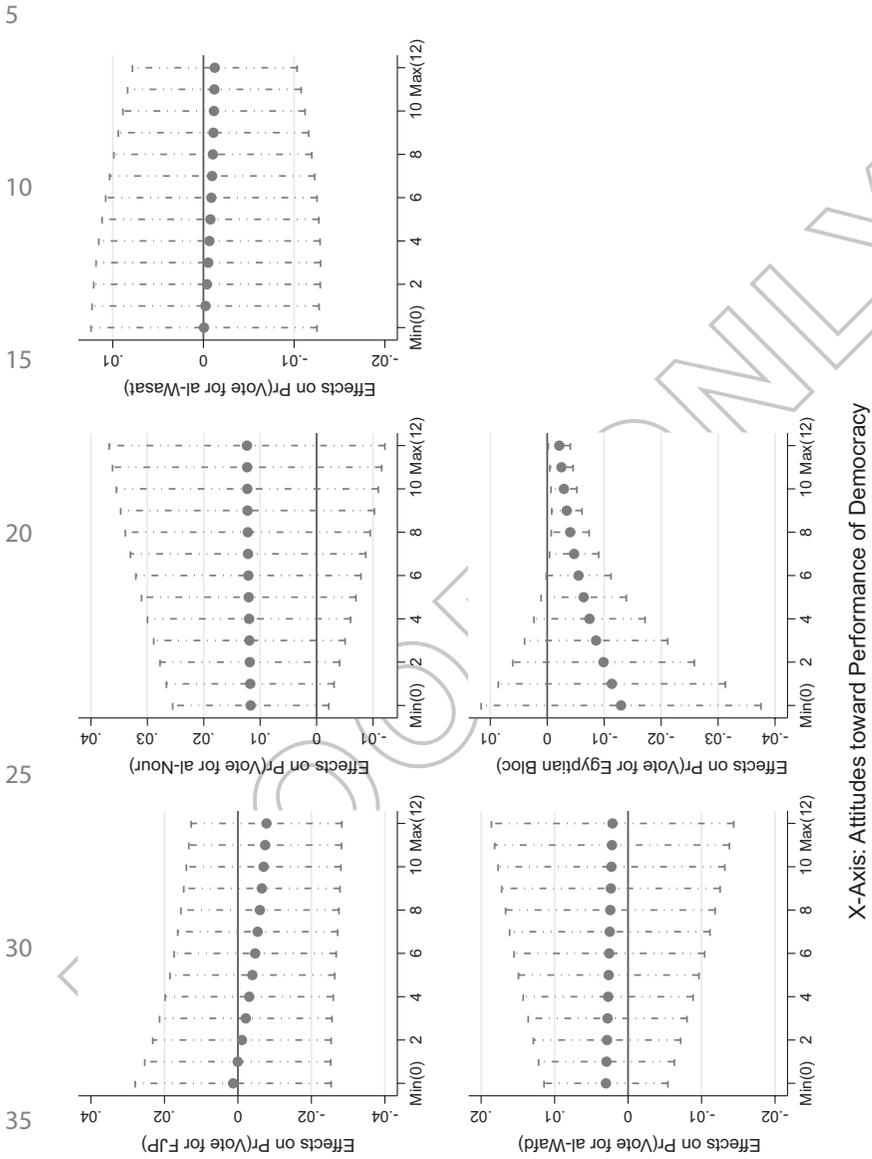
When the conditional marginal effect of attitudes towards democracy as an ideal political system is considered, a different pattern can be discerned.

Figure 2 suggests that the marginal effect remained below zero for Islamist parties, whereas it is positive and slightly significant for secular parties. The respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that democracy is the best political system were more likely to support non-Islamist parties than Islamist parties. Overall, the FJP and al-Nour in regard to obtaining votes from both those who were sceptical of democracy and those who supported it.

Figure 3 presents the conditional marginal effects for support for secularization, which clearly reveal that the pattern is quite different from that for support for democracy. Moving from the minimum support for secularization to its mean shows a significant drop in its effect on the probability of voting for the Islamist parties, the FJP and al-Nour. The trend changes towards higher scores of support for secularization (after nine for the FJP and after eight for al-Nour), when the marginal effect of support for secularization increases. Exactly the same trend is observable for the secular parties as well, and the main reason for this trend is the effect of other control variables and the distribution of the respondents in support of secularization. The positive effect of support for secularization is statistically significant. For the first half of the support scores, there is a statistically significant positive effect on the probability of voting for al-Wasat and al-Wafd. For the second half of the support scores, however, higher support for secularization reduces the likelihood of having voted for these two parties. It is interesting that those with the highest secularization score were less likely to vote for al-Wafd. Figure 4 also suggests that people with higher secularization scores were more likely to vote for the Egyptian Bloc, except for the highest score of secularization for which the marginal effect is not statistically significant.

The findings suggest that secular parties appeal to respondents with moderate and high attitudes towards secularization. Islamist parties, in contrast, received support from respondents with a low inclination towards secularization. However, as Tessler and Gao (2005) have pointed out, it should also be considered that it is possible to support democracy at a high level and yet support secularization at a low level, and likewise it is possible to support democracy at a low level and yet support secularization as a high level. Those who prefer Islamic democracy may differ in their party preferences, as may those who prefer secular authoritarianism. Figures 4 and 5 demonstrate these possibilities, using two "attitudes toward democracy" variables. Figure 5 shows that support for democratic governance is not moderated by support for secularization; the confidence intervals of marginal effects, including zero for all parties, clearly suggest this interpretation. Medium and high support for democracy as the ideal political system and for secularization correlated with decreased support for the FJP. The effect for secular parties is positive, but again the impact is not statistically significant.

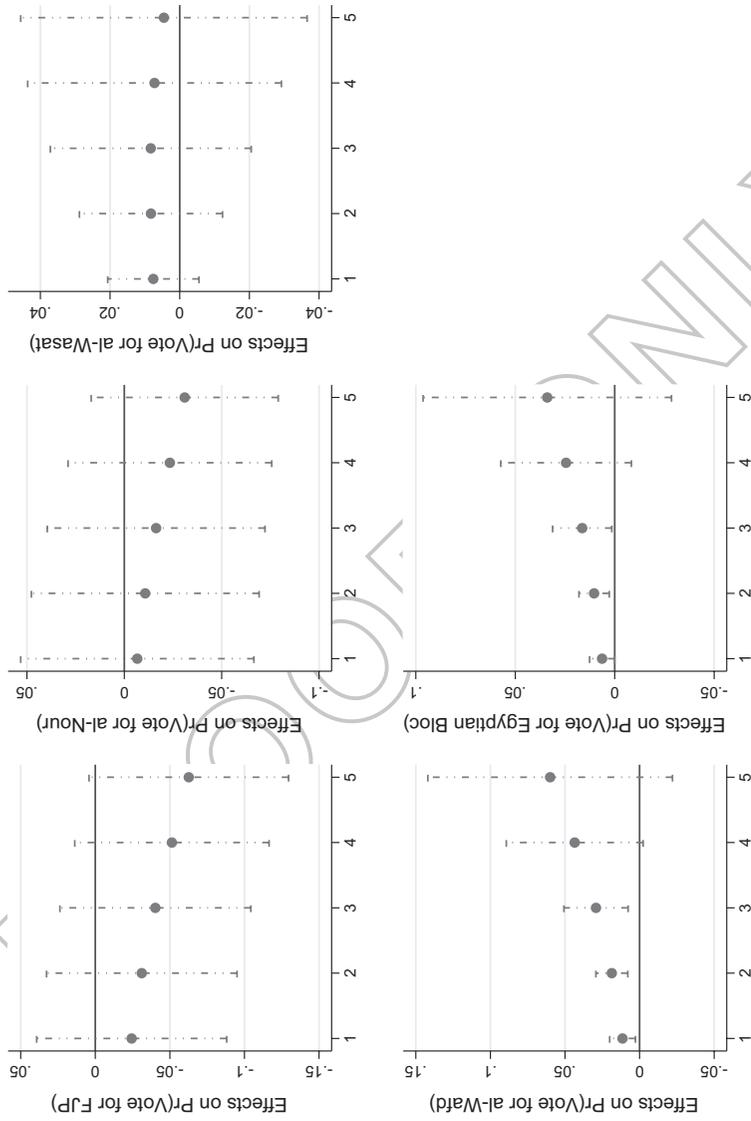
In terms of economic voting, the results for both household and national economic retrospective considerations are not significant, except voting for the Salafis. Egyptians who had negative perceptions about the economic conditions



X-Axis: Attitudes toward Performance of Democracy

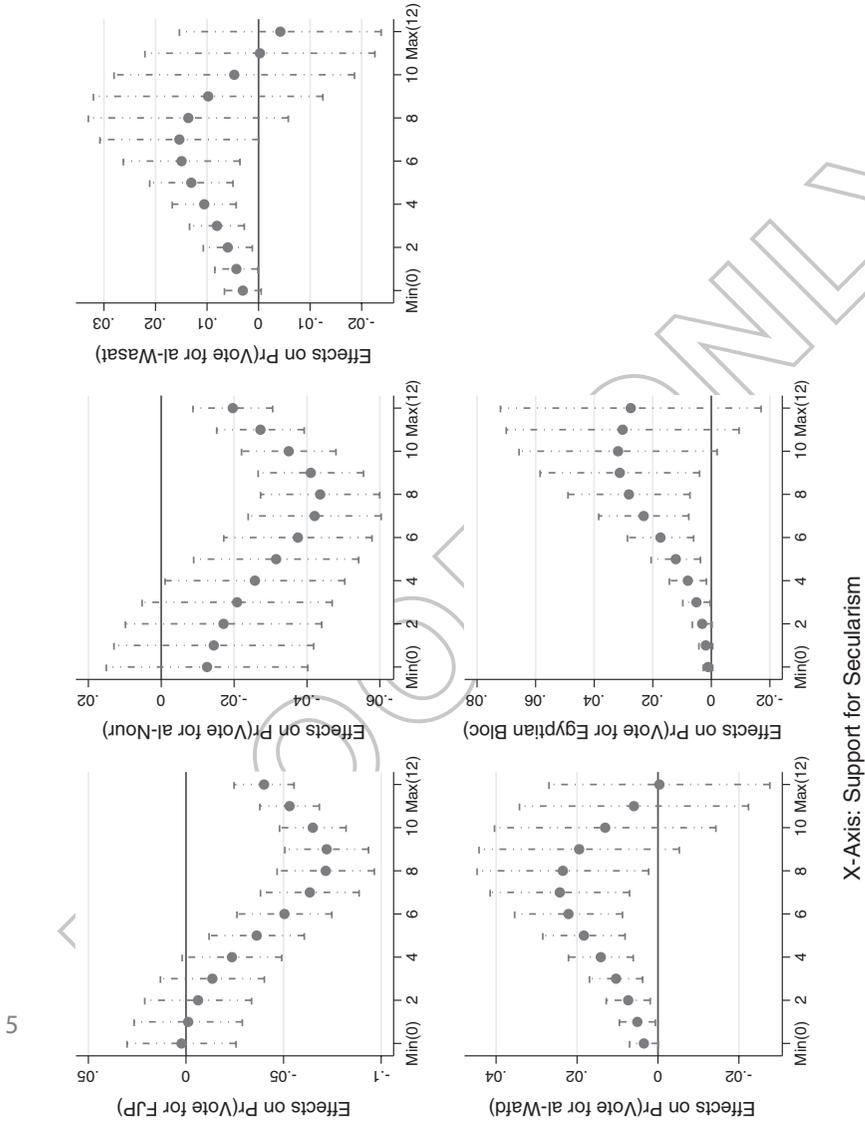
Figure 1. AQ16

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X-Axis: Attitudes toward Democracy as an Ideal Regime (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Partly Agree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Figure 2.



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Figure 3.

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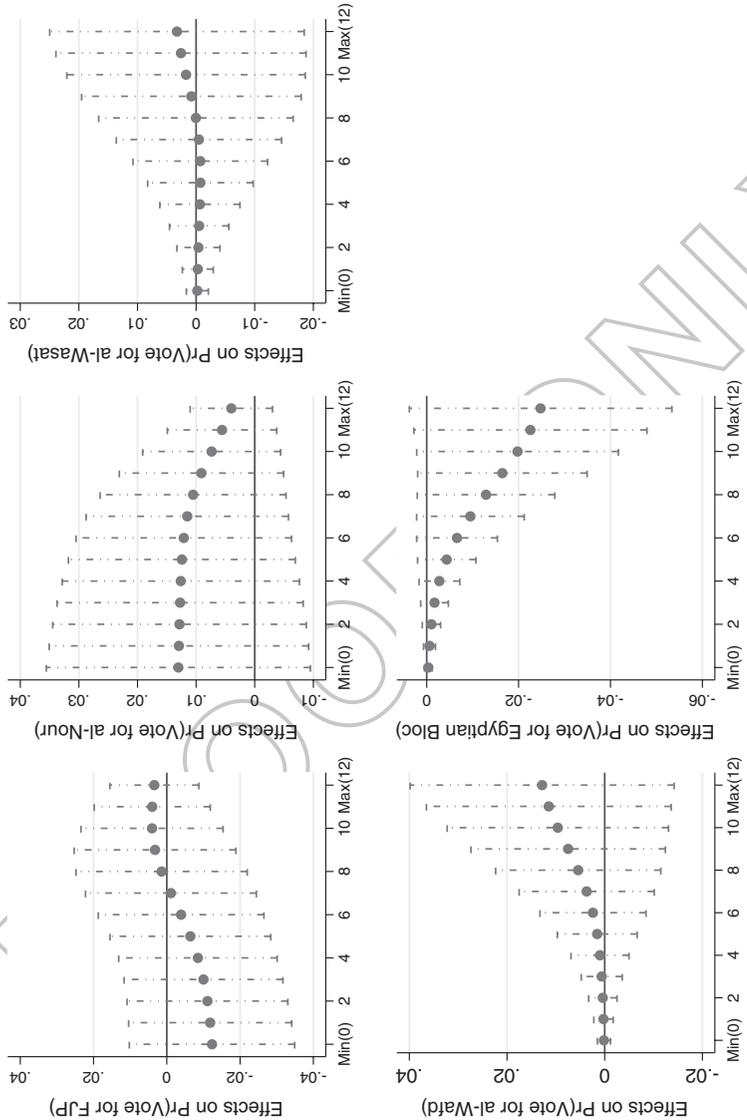
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x-Axis: Support for Secularism

Figure 4.

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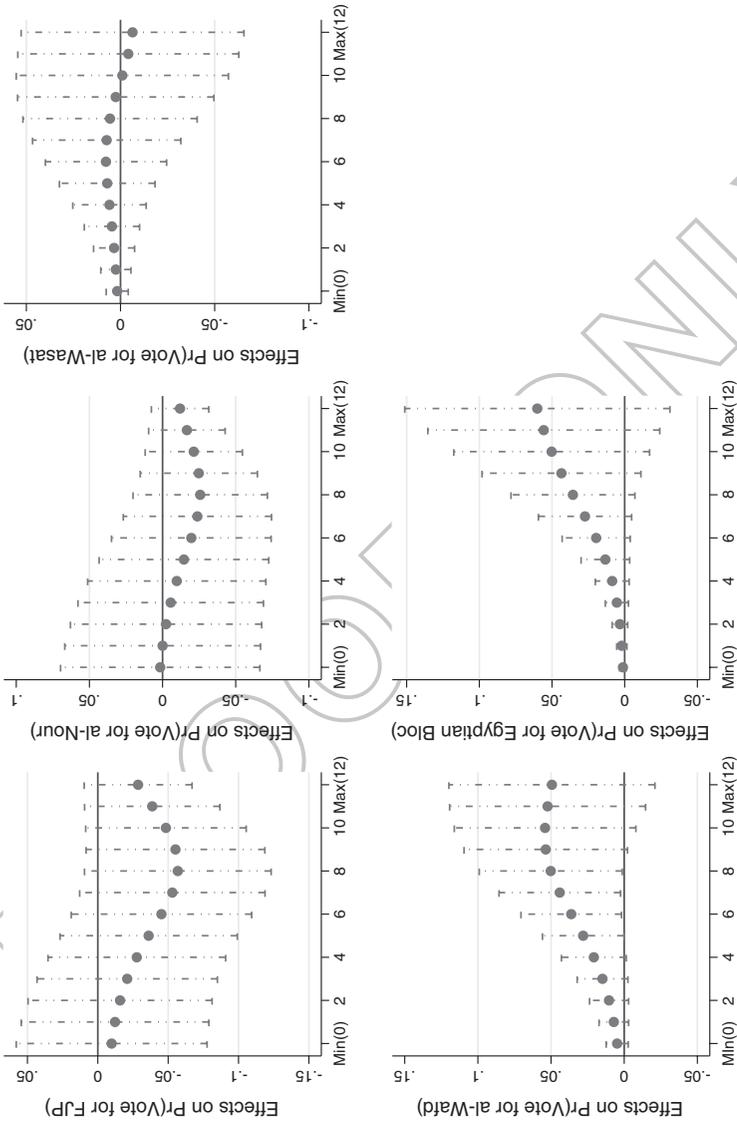
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X-Axis: Support for Secularism

Figure 5.

in their households were less likely to vote for Al-Nour compared to the FJP. In other words, supporters of the MB movement were the ones who had more positive evaluations of household economy in the last 12 months. Other than this specific result, though, retrospective voting was not in effect in Egyptian elections. This result is in congruence with the literature. For instance, Swank and Eisinga (1999) empirically show that voting patterns in multi-party systems with proportional representation are not influenced by economic factors. Moreover, voting patterns in transition democracies in Eastern Europe show that voters tend to vote prospectively rather than retrospectively regarding their expected future best interests (Fidrmuc, 2000a, 2000b).

Gender difference only plays a role in voting for the Egyptian Bloc, the broadest secular coalition, compared to voting for the FJP. Being a woman can increase the probability of voting for the Egyptian Bloc by 15 per cent, relative to voting for the FJP. It is also not a surprise to see that there is a negative relationship between being a woman and supporting the Salafi political movement even though this relationship is not statistically significant. It has been a well-known fact that Salafis had extremely conservative views on women's participation in public life (Brown, 2013).

While age is not statistically significant in any of the models of vote choice, as educational level increased, the respondents were less likely to vote for the Egyptian Bloc, but more likely to vote for al-Wafd, compared to voting for the FJP. The finding for the Egyptian Bloc is surprising, and it may be due to several factors. First, the MB's support base has changed to include relatively more educated people over time. Second, the underrepresentation of people with a low level of education, especially in rural areas, in the sample may have influenced this result.

In terms of employment status of survey respondents, the unemployment did not play a significant role in choosing any political party to support, and this result is consistent with previous results in the literature (Elsayyad & Hanafy, 2014: 124). Being a public employee did not have a significant effect on voting either, except in regard to voting for al-Wafd. The probability of voting for al-Wafd compared to voting for the FJP was lower for respondents who were public employees. The expectation was that seeing a positive relationship between voting for secular parties and serving in the public sector; however, this was not the case. One possible reason for this result is that public employers' low wages relative to private sector in spite of high job security (Said, 2012). The uprisings and fall of Mubarak's authoritarian regimes might have created the conditions for public workers to demonstrate their discontent with public policy and therefore let them support Islamists.

Coptic Christians are the largest Christian denomination in Egypt and they have been targeted by the Islamists during Mubarak's authoritarian regime. The FJP have made some efforts to signal both Copts and international community that Christians will be treated equally if a government controlled by the Muslim

Brotherhood came to power following the elections. However, the results show that these electoral campaign efforts have not paid off for the FJP. A recent study finds that minorities in the Middle East differ in their support for democracy or authoritarianism, which means that minorities who perceive threat for their status are less likely to support democratization process in transition periods (Belge & Karakoç, 2015). Copts' support for secular parties relative to the FJP can be interpreted as a reaction against Islamists who have been perceived as a general threat towards their identity. And in the lack of representation of old regime forces in 2011–2012 elections, Copts aligned with secular political parties against Islamists.

The last group of control variables were designed to test whether being sympathetic towards the political model of another country affects voting decision, or not. In countries experiencing a democratic transition, political elites are seeking successful models to adopt in designing their own political system. One reason for this might be that emulating another country's or movement's model can provide a way to manage governing for elites with limited experience in regard to ruling. Additionally, a decision to adopt a model can be employed as both a domestic and international signaling mechanism. At the domestic level, elites can use the model country to convince citizens that they are sophisticated enough to pick reputable building blocks in governing the country. What is more also, new elites require to develop good relationships with foreign countries, and typically those countries are Western democracies that are providing foreign aid. As a result, by promoting a model that fulfills Western criteria for democracy and secularism, elites can expect to draw on Western support in transitioning to democratic governance.

While the results for model country discussion do not indicate any significant effect on voting for Al-Wasat and Al-Wafd, consideration of Turkey as a model for Egypt decreased the likelihood to vote both for Al-Nour and the Egyptian Bloc relative to voting for the FJP. The same negative relationship still holds for the Egyptian Bloc voters in regard to attitude towards Saudi Arabia as a model country for Egypt. Respondents who had a positive attitude towards the US as a model were more likely to vote for the Egyptian Bloc. However, this tendency did not affect individuals' decisions to vote for other parties, compared to voting for the FJP.

It is not surprising to see that Egyptians were not allured by any of these possible models, especially if Egypt's role in modern history of the Middle East is considered. Egypt, under the leadership of Nasser, has been the most influential country in the region, at least until the heavy loss in the Arab–Israeli War of 1967. The narrative that Egypt is the predominant force in the Arab world has shaped the Egyptian national identity and this is why Egyptians have not evaluated another country, whether it is Turkey, Saudi Arabia, or the US, as a model in a positive manner.

## Conclusion

5 The failure of the democratic transition associated with the Arab Uprisings fostered scepticism regarding the likelihood of democracy in the Middle East. However, this is not the first time that a democratic uprising has failed and yet paved the way for a democratic system to succeed over time. For example, the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, the Prague Spring in 1968, and Poland's Solidarity in 1981 not only fostered a spirit of democracy among the publics concerned, they also eroded the legitimacy of the repressive regimes they challenged (Stepan & Linz, 2013). The original survey conducted in Egypt during the transition period shows a similar pattern regarding public support for democracy. Egyptian citizens strongly and widely view democracy as the ideal political system; however, the same is not true of their views regarding democracy's performance. Overall, on that count, support for democracy – both in terms of governance and as an ideal system – did not have a marked influence on vote choice.

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20 The present research shows that attitude towards the role of religion in politics, but not towards personal religiosity, had a significant impact on voting choices. This research also echoes an important observation noted in previous studies: Egyptian society is quite different from Western societies in terms of the impact of individual religiosity on voters' preferences. In Europe, being more religious increases the likelihood of voting for Christian democrats (Van der Brug et al., 2009; Raymond, 2011). According to the survey, Egyptian society is characterized by a high level of religiosity such that the extent to which people are religious does not vary much between supporters of Islamist parties and supporters of secular parties. On the other hand, the results of the election show that three Islamist parties – the FJP, al-Nour and al-Wasat – received more than 74 per cent of the votes, which may be a reflection of the high degree of religiosity among Egypt's citizenry in general.

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40 Voters' degree of support for secularization, however, is a major factor affecting their electoral choice. In particular, support for secular politics reduced support for the Salafi Bloc, which attracted voters who expressed the least support for secularization. Support for secularization also had a significant, though less marked, negative effect on support for the FJP. Moderately secular voters were more likely to vote for al-Wasat, al-Wafd and the Egyptian Bloc than for any of the other parties, whereas highly secular voters were less likely to vote for al-Wafd and more likely to vote for the Egyptian Bloc. These results suggest that secularization does, in fact, exert an independent and significant effect on electoral choice. However, in examining the interactional effect of secular and democratic attitudes, the study does not find any statistical impact on vote choice. This suggests that although voters might be classified as supporters of liberal democracy, Islamic democracy, secular authoritarianism, or Islamic theocracy (Tessler & Gao, 2005), the impact of

5 this classification on vote choice on the Egyptian parliamentary elections was weak. Support for public secularization was a major factor affecting vote choice in Egypt's 2011–2012 parliamentary elections, but support for democracy was not.

10 One curious question is how these empirical results based on the original public opinion data would reflect and generalize to other countries in the MENA region, where Islamist parties enjoyed electoral victories, such as in Tunisia and Morocco. While it is difficult to make generalizations without having an empirical foundation, the divide over the role of Islam in politics is one of the most salient electoral issues in other countries in the region as well. This divide can be traced in the party systems of these countries, where political parties have been categorized as either Islamist or secular rather than rightist versus leftist ones. Due to the military coup and the backslide of the authoritarian regime in Egypt, it is even more important to organize further research in other countries in the region in order to see the variation in terms of the attitudes and perceptions of the role of Islam in politics and their effect on voting behaviour.

## Notes

- 20 1. The survey is as an outcome of a collaborative work and this information will be disclosed upon publication.
2. However, those who strongly agreed that democracy is the ideal system, the 60 per cent in the fourth round of the WVS is much higher than the 29 per cent reported in the present survey (Tessler & Gao, 2005).
- 25 3. The fourth round of the WVS conducted in Egypt in 2000 shows that between 64 and 70 per cent of Egyptians had a positive view of governance in democracies at that time – a figure that declined to around 15 per cent in the survey results reported herein. See Robbins (2015) for a different view based on the Arab Barometer.
- 30 4. For more details: *Guide to Egypt's Transition* by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace – <http://www.aucegypt.edu/gapp/cairoreview/pages/articleDetails.aspx?aid=100>
- 35 5. Additional information on the survey can be found in two recent studies: Köse et al. (2016) and Karakoç et al. (2016).
6. The reported frequencies in the survey are not weighted. The decision has made after running statistical analysis with weighted frequencies and seen that the results were the same with the analysis run by unweighted frequencies.
- 40 7. Given that the religiosity variable is nominal, STATA's relevant imputation command is adopted.
8. 'Egypt Copts react to Islamist electoral win.' by Yasmine Fathi. Ahramonline (Sunday 4 December 2011).

## Disclosure statement

45 No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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