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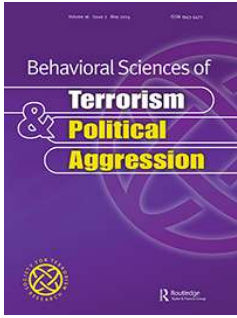
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## Intolerance of non-Muslim political rights and engagement in political violence: a study of public opinion in 11 Arab countries

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# Intolerance of non-Muslim political rights and engagement in political violence: a study of public opinion in 11 Arab countries

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## ABSTRACT

Majority respect for the political rights of minorities is an important value undergirding peace and political stability in societies. This study examines whether intolerance for minority political rights affects the likelihood that an individual has engaged in violent activities for political causes. Using public opinion data from 11 Arab countries, the study finds that Muslim residents who interpret Islam to mandate inferior political rights to their non-Muslims compatriots are more likely to have engaged in political violence in the past three years. Moreover, the effect of attitudes toward non-Muslim political rights on engagement in political violence is unaffected by subject support for Islamic government/rule, attitudes about democracy and Islamic government, interpretation of Shari'a and general intolerance of or bigotry against non-Muslims.

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Majority tolerance of minority political rights – such as the right of ethnic, racial, political and religious minorities to participate in political life on equal terms, engage in political speech, form and join political organizations and hold contrary political views – is a cornerstone of stability within countries.<sup>1</sup> Empirical research shows that countries that exclude minority communities from national politics or where minorities are politically marginalized or suffer from political discrimination are more likely to experience episodes of political violence (Choi & Piazza, 2016; Crenshaw, 1981; Ghatak, 2016; Ghatak et al., 2017; Gleditsch & Polo, 2016; Hansen et al., 2020; Piazza, 2012). Similarly, scholars have determined that civil wars and larger-scale rebellions are frequently motivated by political exclusion of minority ethnic and religious groups (Asal & Phillips, 2016; Gurr, 1994; Regan & Norton, 2005; Wimmer et al., 2009). Research by Cederman et al. (2017) and Gurr (2000) finds that extension of political rights to minorities and accommodation of minority political demands is a key ingredient for resolving conflicts that produce political violence within societies. Political marginalization of minorities disrupts stability and prompts violence by, among other things, fueling a process of severe social polarization. Tilly (2003) explains that political discrimination against minorities erodes the base of moderate public opinion that safeguards and reinforces social peace within afflicted countries.

The end product of discrimination and polarization is increased political extremism, which raises the risk of political violence.

Much of this research, however, is predicated on the assumption that it is the politically-excluded minority population that will be motivated by intolerance and discrimination to engage in political violence (see, for example, Clark, 1984; Cleary, 2000; Crenshaw, 1981; Ghatak et al., 2017; Gurr & Moore, 1997; Murshed & Gates, 2005). The effects of intolerance toward minority political rights on political violence undertaken by the majority population of countries is not as frequently explored in the literature. Moreover, research on the topic has mostly focused on the macro level: examining national or subnational political, economic and social predictors of political violence within countries. Researchers have not generally investigated the link between political intolerance of minority rights and individuals' propensities to engage in political violence themselves.

This study examines whether Muslim individuals living in Muslim-majority countries who oppose extending political rights to non-Muslim minorities are more likely themselves to engage in acts of political violence. Using multi-country data from Arab Barometer, it determines that Muslims who believe that Islam mandates inferior political rights and freedoms for non-Muslims living in Muslim-majority countries are more likely to have participated in violence motivated by politics, suggesting that there is an empirical link between religious intolerance and violent behaviors. Previous research on Muslim public opinion has been limited to investigating the demographic attributes, political, social and religious attitudes, and other qualities of individuals who express support for terrorism as a tactic or who endorse political actors that use violence. This study is the first cross-national empirical study of Muslim publics that specifically examines determinants of individual engagement in political violence. In the next sections, the theoretical argument linking intolerance toward minority political rights with political violence is discussed. Following that, the research design and results are presented.

### **Intolerance of minority political rights and political violence**

There are two theoretical frameworks that illustrate the link between intolerance of minority political rights and political violence. The first is from the political psychology literature and it roots the propensity of an individual to engage in violence in individual personality and behavioral types. Scholars have determined that individuals who do not support extending full political rights to minorities or to members of unpopular social, ethnic, racial, religious or political groups exhibit higher levels of rigidity in their belief systems in comparison with individuals who express tolerance. Such individuals also tend to be more committed to their political positions compared to the tolerant (Gibson, 1998; Peffley et al., 2001; Sniderman et al., 1996). Sullivan et al. (1993) find that individuals who express higher levels of intolerance for the political rights of members of minority or unpopular groups are also more likely than tolerant individuals to engage in political action on behalf of their views. The research in this area envisions action by intolerant individuals to mean engagement in mainstream political activism, such as voting, encouraging others to vote, contacting elected officials, protesting, lobbying and running for political office. However, it is possible to adapt this framework to violent modes of political action such as engagement in incidents of political violence.

Indeed, research by Alkhadher and Scull (2019) found that individuals exhibiting rigid personal belief systems were more likely to have engaged in armed political violence as members of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

The second theoretical framework employs the literature on inter-group hostility and competition to explain the link between majority intolerance of minority political rights and engagement in political violence. The relevant research supporting this framework mostly examines inter-group dynamics in the United States, Western Europe and established democracies. However, its conclusions are more widely applicable, and have been used to explain attitudes and behaviors in non-Western and non-democratic contexts as well. Empirical research on right-wing terrorism in the United States – a form of political violence that is almost exclusively conducted by whites, who are members of the majority group – suggests that it is motivated by majority community backlash against traditionally subordinated groups, such as women and racial, religious and sexual minorities, who are gaining social and political power (Nemeth & Hansen, 2021). Rising pluralism and the exercise of equal political and social rights by formerly marginalized groups triggers feelings among the majority that their socially-dominant position is being challenged and is under threat. Majority community political violence is a response to the anxiety associated with loss of dominant status as minority communities exercise more equal rights (Ferber, 1998; Kimmel & Ferber, 2000; Weinberg, 2013). This fuels a competitive backlash among the majority against minority communities, and one manifestation of that backlash is violent extremism (Freilich & Pridemore, 2007; Nice, 1998; Perliger, 2012; Piazza, 2017). LaFree and Bersani (2014) explain that under these conditions, frustrated and enraged members of majority communities use violence to reproduce a sense of dominance and control.

There is ample empirical evidence for this argument. Scholars have found that political violence is more likely to occur in societies where an ethnic majority group is confronting a minority community that is demanding access to resources and political power. In such situations, the majority community comes to view the minority as a threat and incidents of political violence increase (Danzell et al., 2019; Horowitz, 2000; Montalvo & Reynal-Querol, 2005). This finding is consistent with the group threat literature that posits that when social groups are faced with threats, or perceived threats, they tend to more closely identify with in-group members – member of their same ethnic, racial, cultural or religious communities – and become more hostile towards members of outgroups – members of other communities. This produces a condition where political violence is more likely to occur (see Halperin et al., 2009).

## Hypothesis

Both of these theoretical frameworks help to explain engagement in political violence in the context of Muslim societies. Muslim individuals living in Muslim-majority countries who regard political empowerment of non-Muslim minorities as a threat to their dominant status – an opinion that can be expected to be present but not necessarily widespread, as is the case for majorities in Western societies – are more likely to favor an interpretation of Islam that affords non-Muslims inferior political rights compared to Muslims. Such individuals can also be expected to be more likely to regard political violence as a more justifiable behavior – given the aforementioned research linking

intolerance, group threat and group competition with political violence – and to be more likely to have engaged in political violence. The study therefore tests the following hypothesis:

H1. Muslims who are intolerant of religious minority political rights are more likely to have engaged in political violence.

## Methodology

To test this hypothesis, the study uses public opinion data from wave 5 of the Arab Barometer survey.<sup>2</sup> Arab Barometer is a collaborative research effort involving US-based and Arab country-based researchers that produces state-of-the-art survey data on Arab public opinion. All interviews in Arab Barometer are conducted face-to-face on a nationally-representative sample of respondents. This study uses Arab Barometer wave 5, which was fielded in 2018 and 2019 in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen.<sup>3</sup> The study sample is limited to Muslims<sup>4</sup>, given the focus on assessing whether majority community attitudes regarding the political rights of minorities affect propensity to engage in political violence. Arab Barometer wave 5 (hereafter 'AB-5') is most appropriate to use because it is the only wave to ask respondents whether they actually engaged in acts of political violence. Other Arab Barometer waves asked respondents whether they supported or rejected terrorism and political violence as a legitimate or justifiable behavior but refrained from asking whether the respondent had participated in such acts. The sample includes between 8000 and 18,000 respondents, depending on the estimation, due to variability in data availability.

## Variables

### *Dependent variable*

The dependent or outcome variable of the study is respondent participation in political violence. This variable is derived from a question in AB-5 asking respondents whether they 'used force for a political cause' in the past three years.<sup>5</sup> The response items to this question include 'I have never participated', 'once', and 'more than once'. These are converted into a three-point ordinal scale, scored highest for respondents who indicated they engaged in political violence more than once in the past three years. Reported engagement in political violence is rare in the sample, as evident in the descriptive statistics. Around 92 percent of respondents indicated that they had never participated in violent acts for a political cause. Around 3.8 percent indicated that they had engaged in political violence only once in the past three years. A further 4.2 percent indicated that they had engaged in political violence more than once in the past three years. Overall, around 8 percent of respondents reported having engaged in some level of political violence. However, there is country-level variation in the sample, as illustrated in Table 1.

Reported engagement in political violence either once or multiple times in the past three years is highest among respondents from Sudan, Yemen, Palestine and Algeria. Reported engagement is lowest for respondents from Jordan, Tunisia and Libya. Because of this fairly substantial variation, the study employs a mixed multilevel



**Table 1.** Distribution of dependent and independent variable by country.

Country	No. Subjects	Percentage that agree that Islam requires that in a Muslim country the political rights of non-Muslims should be inferior to those of Muslims	Percentage reporting having engaged in political violence 'once' or 'more than once'.
Algeria	2085	41.7	10.4
Egypt	2043	32.9	6.1
Iraq	2393	22.5	4.6
Jordan	2310	23.6	1.2
Lebanon	1317	21.2	8.7
Libya	1846	36.9	3.1
Morocco	2044	29.1	6.9
Palestine	2208	26.8	11.3
Sudan	1648	51.5	18.9
Tunisia	2190	27.6	1.2
Yemen	2323	70.7	17.8

ordered logistical estimation technique in the analysis where respondents are nested by country. This helps to capture any unobserved, unmodeled country idiosyncrasies that might help to explain why engagement in political violence varies at the national level.

### *Independent Variable*

The main independent variable of the study is derived from an AB-5 question asking whether Islam mandates inferior political rights for non-Muslims residing in Muslim majority countries.<sup>6</sup> This variable is measured on a 4-point ordinal scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'disagree' to 'agree' to 'strongly agree' that Islam dictates that non-Muslims in Muslim countries should be afforded fewer political rights. Again, descriptive statistics show that intolerance towards non-Muslims is not common in the sample. Around 64.8 percent of respondents in the sample either disagreed or strongly disagreed that Islam mandates inferior political rights for non-Muslims. Around 35.1 percent either agreed or strongly agreed that it does.<sup>7</sup> Again, there is some country-level variation in responses, as illustrated in Table 1. Around 70.7 percent of respondents in the sample from Yemen either agreed or strongly agreed that Islam proscribes inferior political rights for non-Muslims in a Muslim society. Around 51.5 percent of Sudanese respondents in the sample concurred. However, tolerance for non-Muslim political rights is higher among respondents from Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine and Tunisia. This diversity in opinion across countries further recommends a mixed multilevel ordered logistical estimation technique in the analysis where respondents are nested by country.

### *Control variables*

The analysis holds constant respondent attitudes about Islamic governance and Shari'a law. Previous scholarship has identified such attitudes as important predictors of support or tolerance for violent extremism in the Muslim World. For example, a host of studies has found that survey respondents in the Muslim World who endorsed Islamic government were more likely to regard the use of political violence to be more acceptable and were more likely to endorse political actors that use political violence and terrorism (Haddad, 2004; Haddad & Khashan, 2002; Tessler & Nachtwey, 1998; Tessler & Robbins, 2007). This finding has not been consistently reproduced, however, as other scholars either failed to find a significant



relationship between respondent advocacy of Islamic government and support for political violence (for example, Cherney & Povey, 2013; Fair et al., 2012; Jo, 2012; Piazza, 2019), or have found a negative relationship indicating that Islamic government supporters were less likely to express toleration for political violence (Fair & Shepherd, 2007). Research by Fair and Savla (2018) and Fair et al. (2017) determined that how respondents interpret Muslim Shari'a law, which is often regarded as the basis for Islamic government by supporters, has a significant effect on Muslim survey respondents' attitudes toward political violence. They find that respondents who interpret Shari'a to mean the implementation of religiously-mandated physical punishments for transgressions (*Hudud*)<sup>8</sup> are more likely to voice support for political violence. However, respondents who interpret Shari'a to mean that the government is required to provide public services and social justice to citizens are less likely to support political violence. Finally, research by Piazza (2021) found that Muslim subjects in Arab countries that regarded Islamic government – measured by the author as rule by Muslim clerical elites and use of Shari'a as the basis for law and public policy – as incompatible with democracy were more likely to voice support for political violence and violent extremist groups like ISIS than 'democratic Islamists' who envision a democracy-compatible Islamic government.

Because of these previous findings, attitudes toward Islamic government and Shari'a may confound the relationship between respondents' beliefs about the status of political rights of non-Muslim minorities and engagement in political violence. For example, respondents who endorse Islamic government, who interpret Shari'a to be physically punitive or who support a non-democratic form of Islamic government might be both more likely to believe that non-Muslims living in Islamic societies should not be afforded equal political rights and to have engaged in political violence. To address this issue, seven control variables are included in the analysis.

To measure endorsement of Islamic government, the study includes a dichotomous indicator coded 1 for respondents who 'support' or 'strongly support' clerical rule<sup>9</sup> and who believe that the laws of the country should 'mostly based' or 'entirely based' on Shari'a.<sup>10</sup> Around 23.1 percent of respondents in the sample support Islamic government, so defined. To measure whether a supporter of Islamic government is a 'democratic' or 'nondemocratic Islamist,' meaning that they do or do not see Islamic government as compatible with democratic rule, a set of dichotomous variables coded 1 for respondents who either favor democratic Islamic government, favor non-democratic Islamic government, favor secular democratic government or who favor secular, non-democratic government are included. These variables are operationalized using the support of Islamic government measure explained previously as well as a measure derived from a question in AB-5 that asks respondents about whether they believe that 'Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government'.<sup>11</sup> Around 11.3 percent of respondents in the sample are 'democratic Islamists' in that they believe that Islamic government is compatible with democracy. Nearly the same amount, around 11.4 percent are 'non-democratic Islamists' who believe Islamic government and democracy are not compatible. 46.4 percent of respondents are secular democrats who reject Islamic government but endorse democracy while around 30.9 percent are secular authoritarians who reject both Islamic government and democracy. Finally, to measure interpretation of Shari'a, the study includes two dichotomous variables using a question from AB-5 that asks respondents about which aspects of 'shari'a government' is the most essential.<sup>12</sup> The first of these Shari'a

interpretation variables is coded 1 for respondents who said that '[provision of] basic services such as health facilities, schools, garbage collection and road maintenance' is the most essential aspect. The second is coded 1 for respondents who said that, 'a government that uses physical punishments' is most essential. In the sample, around 31.5 percent of respondents identified Shari'a with government provision of public and social services while around 13.1 identified Shari'a with the application of physical punishment for transgression of laws.

General attitudes toward non-Muslims and toward members of different Islamic sects may also be confounders. Therefore, in some of the estimations respondent tolerance for religious minorities and for Muslims from other sects are controlled for. To do this, the study employs an element of the Bogardus Social Distance Scale (see Wark & Galliher, 2007) that is commonly used to assess survey respondent's level of prejudice and intolerance toward outgroups (as an example of an application, see Smith & Dempsey, 1983): whether or not the respondent would like to have neighbors from a certain group. The study adapts two questions from AB-5 asking whether respondents would not like to have 'people of a different religion' and 'people of a different sect of Islam' as neighbors.<sup>13</sup> Responses to these questions are measured on a five-point ordinal scale that is inverted so that a score of 5 indicates that the respondent strongly object to the idea of having members of a different religion or sect of Islam as a neighbor. Around 34.8 percent of respondents reported that they would dislike or strongly dislike having non-Muslims as neighbors. Around 30.6 percent of respondents reported that they would dislike or strongly dislike having Muslims from other sects (e.g. Sunni; Shi'i) as neighbors.

In all models a set of basic demographic and behavioral controls are also included. These include the age of the respondent,<sup>14</sup> respondent gender,<sup>15</sup> income status,<sup>16</sup> employment status,<sup>17</sup> education level,<sup>18</sup> their level of religiosity measured by their daily observance of *Salat* (Muslim prayers)<sup>19</sup> and whether or not they identify as a member of the Sunni majority sect of Islam.<sup>20</sup> In the sample, the median age for respondents was 35 years old. Around 50.02 percent of respondents were male. 49.3 percent reported their household income as below the national median. Around 13.1 percent of respondents reported being unemployed. The median respondent reported having completed their secondary education. Around 11.2 percent of respondents reported having had no formal education while around 24.9 percent reported having completed a college or graduate-level degree. 81.1 percent of respondents reported praying at least several times per week, while 52.4 percent reported that they kept all of the five daily Muslim prayers. Only around 6.4 percent reported never praying. In the sample, around 49 percent of respondents identified as Sunni Muslims, while around 7.5 percent identified as Shi'i. It is important to note, however, that another 29.1 percent of respondents identified as Muslim but did not specifically identify a sect, simply indicating that they were 'just a Muslim'. Moreover, the AB-5 allowed respondents to identify with specific schools of Islamic jurisprudence as their sect, such as Hanbali, Shafi'i, etc. Around 5.5 percent of respondents selected their specific Islamic sect – all of which generally are understood to fall under the category of Sunni Islam – rather than specifically identifying as Sunni. Finally, around 4.7 percent of respondents identified as Muslim but either refused to specify a sect or stated that they did not know which sect they belonged to.

The study also controls for country-level variables. To hold constant the political regime type and status of democratic rule in the country of residence of the respondent,

it includes the Freedom House index of access to political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House, 2021).<sup>21</sup> To hold constant the level of economic development in the country, the study uses national gross domestic product per capita (World Bank, 2021). Finally, to control political violence in the wider environment, a measure of the count of terrorist incidents occurring within the country is also included (Global Terrorism Database, 2019). All of these indicators were calculated as national averages or totals, in the case of terrorist events, for the period 2016–2019, which spans the years during which the AB-5 survey was administered. The Freedom House Political Rights and Civil Liberties index is measured on a scale of 0–100, where zero indicates a country that does not afford citizens either political rights or civil liberties to 100, indicating a country that strongly supports rights and liberties. In the sample, the Freedom House index ranges from 8 (Sudan) to 70 (for Tunisia) with a median score of 31 (Iraq). Gross domestic product per capita ranges in the sample between US \$623.87 (for Sudan) and US \$8,024.80 (for Lebanon) with a median value of US \$3,438.79 (Tunisia). The national count of terrorist attacks for 2016–2019 ranges from 1 attack, in Morocco, to 7949, in Iraq.<sup>22</sup> It is particularly important to control for terrorism given that several of the countries in the sample experienced significant domestic violent unrest during the survey period which could affect respondent attitudes and reporting of engagement in political violence.

Descriptive statistics for all variables used in the study are summarized in Table 2.

## Results

The results of the analysis are summarized in Table 3. They provide consistent support for the hypothesis of the study. Respondents who believe that non-Muslims living as religious minorities in Muslims countries should be afforded fewer or inferior rights to Muslims are significantly more likely to have engaged in previous political violence.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics.

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Engaged in Political Violence	23,355	0.1219011	0.4373946	0	2
Political Rights of non-Muslims Inferior to Muslims	22,329	2.209593	0.9206493	1	4
Age	23,585	38.02251	14.73501	17	110
Male	23,655	0.5001902	0.5000105	0	1
Below Median Income	21,043	0.4930381	0.4999634	0	1
Unemployed	23,647	0.1308834	0.3372799	0	1
Education Level	23,622	3.890356	1.733285	1	7
Pray Daily	23,435	5.067335	1.393295	1	6
Sunni	22,747	0.4886359	0.4998818	0	1
Country Freedom House Score	23,655	30.52395	17.26021	8	70
Country GDP per capita	23,655	3894.448	2151.339	623.87	8024.8
Country Number of Terrorist Attacks 2016–2019	23,655	1338.389	2379.119	1	7949
Favor Islamic Government	21,535	0.23088	0.4214056	0	1
Favor Democratic Islamic Government	20,557	0.1128083	0.316366	0	1
Favor Non-Democratic Islamic Government	20,557	0.1138298	0.3176122	0	1
Favor Secular Government	20,557	0.4641241	0.4987234	0	1
Favor Secular Non-Democratic Government	20,557	0.3092377	0.4621906	0	1
Shari'a Gov. Means: Provides Basic Services	10,863	0.3156587	0.4647991	0	1
Shari'a Gov. Means: Uses Physical Punishments	10,863	0.1305348	0.3369064	0	1
Don't Want Neighbors of Different Religion	23,401	3.275843	0.9845914	1	5
Don't Want Neighbors of Different Islamic Sect	23,270	3.101547	1.059189	0	5

**Table 3.** Results.

	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Political Rights of non-Muslims Inferior to Muslims	0.205*** (0.032)	0.185*** (0.033)	0.189*** (0.033)	0.204*** (0.048)	0.195*** (0.032)
Favor Islamic Government		0.256*** (0.065)		0.400*** (0.094)	
Favor Democratic Islamic Gov.			0.108 (0.095)		
Favor Non-Democratic Islamic Gov.			0.248** (0.088)		
Favor Secular Democratic Gov.			−0.166* (0.070)		
Favor Secular Non-Democratic Gov.			Ref.		
		Category			
Shari'a Gov. Means: Provides Basic Services				−0.104 (0.097)	
Shari'a Gov. Means: Uses Physical Punishments				0.016 (0.117)	
Don't Want Neighbors of Different Religion					0.027 (0.032)
Don't Want Neighbors of Different Islamic Sect					0.046 (0.030)
Age	−0.008*** (0.002)	−0.008*** (0.002)	−0.007** (0.002)	−0.010** (0.003)	−0.008*** (0.002)
Gender (Male = 1)	0.778*** (0.059)	0.761*** (0.061)	0.757*** (0.062)	0.675*** (0.089)	0.782*** (0.060)
Below Median Income	0.071 (0.059)	0.068 (0.060)	0.070 (0.061)	0.114 (0.088)	0.078 (0.059)
Unemployed	0.008 (0.079)	0.027 (0.081)	0.008 (0.082)	−0.029 (0.119)	0.006 (0.080)
Education Level	0.031* (0.018)	0.029 (0.018)	0.032* (0.018)	0.048* (0.026)	0.033* (0.018)
Pray Daily	−0.159*** (0.021)	−0.176*** (0.021)	−0.173*** (0.022)	−0.204*** (0.032)	−0.162*** (0.021)
Sunni	−0.516*** (0.063)	−0.554*** (0.065)	−0.547*** (0.066)	−0.505*** (0.096)	−0.525*** (0.064)
Country-Level Variables:					
Country Freedom House Score	−0.033* (0.013)	−0.032* (0.013)	−0.032* (0.013)	−0.039** (0.015)	−0.032* (0.013)
Country GDP per capita	−0.000 (0.000)	−0.000 (0.000)	−0.000 (0.000)	−0.000 (0.000)	−0.000 (0.000)
Country No. Terrorist Attacks 2016–2019	−0.000 (0.000)	−0.000 (0.000)	−0.000 (0.000)	−0.000 (0.000)	−0.000 (0.000)
Obs.	18,959	17,888	17,258	8,433	18,768
Wald $\chi^2$	418.28***	415.72***	409.50***	208.58***	416.78***

Note: All models are mixed multilevel ordered logistical estimations, subjects nested by country.

Surveyed countries included: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen.  
Y = During past three years, subject has used force or violence for a political cause (never, once, more than once).

\* $p \leq .1$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .000$ ; Constant cutpoints not reported to preserve space.

In model 1, the results of the simple, baseline estimation are presented. In it, intolerance of non-Muslim political rights is a significant, positive predictor of the likelihood that a respondent has engaged in political violence. In models 2 through 5, control

variables for respondents' attitudes toward Islamic government and interpretation of Shari'a are added. The addition of these controls does not substantively change the results. Model 2 controls for whether or not the respondent favors Islamic government. In this estimation, believing that non-Muslims living in Muslim countries should be afforded inferior political rights is a significant and positive predictor of engagement in political violence. The same is true in model 3, where attitudes about whether Islamic government is compatible or incompatible with democracy – democratic versus nondemocratic supporters of Islamic government – are included as controls. When interpretation of Shari'a – whether it primarily mandates that government should provide social services to citizens or administer physical punishment or Hudud sanctions – is added as is the case in model 4, respondents who believe that non-Muslims should be afforded fewer political rights than Muslims in Muslim countries continue to be significant and positive. Finally, in model 5, the main results are reproduced when intolerance or bigotry toward non-Muslims, and Muslims from different sects, are controlled for.

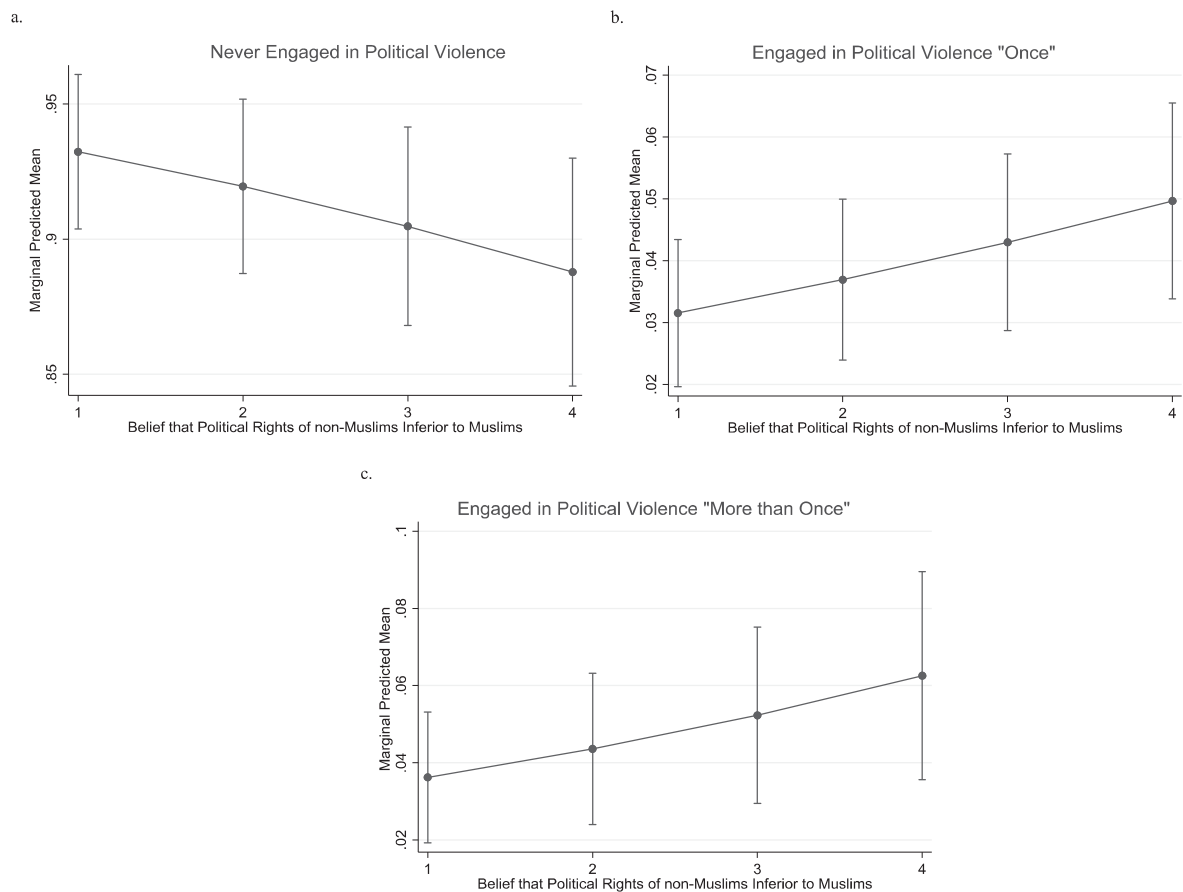
Across the models, several of the other control variables are also significant. Male respondents are more likely to report that they have engaged in political violence in the past three years as are more educated respondents, though for the latter the coefficient does not reach conventional criteria for statistical significance. In contrast, respondents who are older, pray more frequently, are Sunni Muslims and reside in more politically liberal countries that score higher on the Freedom House political rights and civil liberties index are less likely to have engaged in political violence. Other controls, such as income, employment status, GDP per capita of country of residence and the number of terrorist attacks occurring in the country, are not significant.

Figures 1(a–c). provide more information about the substantive impact of the belief that non-Muslims should have an inferior political status on propensity to engage in political violence. In these figures, the marginal effects of increasing agreement with the statement that Islam mandates that non-Muslims have inferior political rights within Muslim countries on engagement in political violence are graphed to produce marginal predicted mean probabilities that the respondent never engaged in political violence, engaged once in the past three years or engaged more than once in political violence in the past three years. The marginal effects presented in these figures are calculated using the baseline estimation, with all controls in that estimation, summarized in model 1 in Table 3.

Figure 1(a) plots the probability that a respondent will have never engaged in political violence. Respondents who strongly disagree that non-Muslims should have inferior political rights in Muslim countries had a probability of 93.2 of never having engaged in political violence. Respondents who were in more agreement with denying non-Muslims political rights had a lower probability of never engaging in political violence, as illustrated by the downward slope of the plot. Respondents who strongly agreed that non-Muslims should have fewer political rights had a probability of 88.7 of having never engaged in political violence. This indicates that in comparison with respondents who are highly tolerant of non-Muslim political rights (the 'strongly disagree' respondents), those that are highly intolerant ('strongly agree') are about 5 percent less likely *not* to have engaged in political violence.

Figures 1(b,c) plot the probability that a respondent will have engaged at least once or more than once in political violence in the past three years. Both of these plots indicate an





**Figure 1.** Respondent tolerance/intolerance for political rights of non-Muslims and reported engagement in political violence in the past 3 years.

upward (positive) slope, demonstrating that respondents who believe that non-Muslims should be given inferior political rights in Muslim countries are more likely to have engaged in political violence once, or multiple times. Respondents who strongly disagree that non-Muslims should have an inferior political status had a probability of 3.1 and 3.6 of having engaged in political violence either once or more than once respectively. However, respondents who strongly agreed had probabilities of 4.9 – indicating a 57.5 percent greater likelihood of having engaged in one act of political violence in the past three years – and 6.3 – indicating a 72.6 percent greater likelihood of having engaged in political violence on more than one occasion in the past three years.

## Conclusion

These findings reinforce the central premise of the study presented in the introduction. Political inclusion and tolerance of religious minority political rights are key to maintaining socio-political peace within religious diverse societies. The study finds that Muslims who do not believe that non-Muslims should be afforded equal political rights within Muslim-majority societies are more likely to have engaged in political violence than those who believe in granting minorities political equality. This finding persists when other beliefs, such as support for Islamic government or particular interpretations of Muslim Shari'a, are controlled for.

These results contribute to the literatures mentioned earlier in the paper. The findings identify individual-level attitudes that may help to explain why countries containing politically-marginalized minority groups are more prone to political violence and civil conflict. The study provides further support for the role played by intolerance and group threat models that predict contentious political behaviors. Finally, the results add to the burgeoning literature seeking to identify the attitudinal roots of political violence in Muslim societies and goes beyond by examining factors that explain why individuals may engage in, rather than simply endorse, violence.

Future research might examine whether majority attitudes toward minority rights in other arenas – cultural rights, economic rights, etc. – also predict engagement in political violence. Furthermore, while the study identifies intolerance toward minority political rights as a predictor of engagement in political violence, future research might investigate the predictors of intolerance itself.

## Notes

1. There is an extensive social science literature on political tolerance. Sullivan and Transue (1999) provide a comprehensive overview of this literature.
2. Codebook and data for Arab Barometer Wave V can be found online at: <https://www.arabbarometer.org/survey-data/data-downloads/>. The author downloaded the data on 6/1/2021.
3. Note, wave 5 also surveyed residents of Kuwait but did not include questions about respondent participation in political violence due to its sensitive nature. Therefore, Kuwaiti respondents are excluded from the analysis.
4. Around 6.8 percent of all respondents to Arab Barometer wave 5 identified themselves as non-Muslims. Limiting my analysis to only Muslim respondents resulted in the exclusion of 1,725 out of 25,380 total respondents.
5. Question 502.4. 'Here is a set of activities that citizens may take part in. During the past three years did you [use] force or violence for a political cause.'
6. Question 607.2. 'Today as in the past, Muslim scholars and jurist sometimes disagree about the appropriate interpretations of Islam in response to present-day issues. For each of the following statements, please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the interpretation of Islam that is presented:' 'Islam requires that in a Muslim country, the political rights of non-Muslim[s] should be inferior to those of Muslims.'
7. Strongly disagree (24.1%); disagree (40.6%); agree (25.2%); strongly agree (9.9%).
8. It is important to note that there is considerable disagreement about the religious legitimacy or Qur'anic basis of traditional Hudud practices among Muslim scholars, and among Muslim individuals, as evident in responses to the AB-5 survey.
9. Question 606.2. '[C]ountry is better off if religious people hold public positions in the state.'
10. Question 605. 'From your point of view, should the laws of the country be ... entirely based on the sharia / mostly based on sharia.'
11. Question 516A. 'Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion: Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government.'
12. Question 605b. 'Which of these four aspects do you think [is] the most essential aspect of shari'a government?: A government that provides basic services such as health facilities, schools, garbage collection, road maintenance. A government that uses physical punishments [stoning, cutting off hands, whipping, hudoud in Islam] to make sure that people obey the law.'
13. Question 602.1 and 602.4a. 'For each of the following types of people, please tell me how much you would like having people from this group as your neighbors: People of a



different religion; People of a different sect of Islam.' Responses: strongly like, like, neither dislike nor like, dislike, strongly dislike.

14. Question 1001 and 1001gcc. 'In what year were you born?' To construct this variable I subtracted the year of the survey from the birth year of the respondent.
15. Question 1002. Gender. Coded 1 for males.
16. Question 1015. 'Is your net household income less than or greater than [median national income in local currency]?'
17. Question 1005. 'Are you unemployed or looking for work.' Note, this excludes respondents who are students, retired, homemakers or self-employed.
18. Question 1003. 'What is your highest level of education?' Responses: No formal education; elementary; preparatory/basic; secondary; mid-level diploma/professional or technical; B.A.; M.A. and above.'
19. Question 609a. 'How often do you pray?' Responses: never; at least once a month; once a week; several times a week; once a day; five times a day.'
20. Question 1012a. 'What is your religious denomination?'
21. Note that I opted to use Freedom House data for the political regime type indicator because it includes data for Palestine/the Palestinian Territories. Other commonly-used indicators of regime type, such as Polity IV, do not.
22. By country, the number of terrorist attacks experience for the period 2016–2019 was: Algeria (30); Egypt (718); Iraq (7949); Jordan (25); Lebanon (79); Libya (850); Morocco (1); Palestine, including both Occupied Territories and Israel (668); Sudan (347); Tunisia (51); Yemen (2716).

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Notes on contributor

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