Got political Islam? Are politically moderate Muslims really different from radicals?

Dilshod Achilov
University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, USA

Sedat Sen
Harran University, Turkey

Abstract
Is making an explicit distinction between politically moderate devout Muslims and political radicals empirically valid? If yes, in what ways do political moderates differ from political radicals? By systematically examining cross-national Muslim attitudes, this article scrutinizes the distinctiveness of politically moderate and politically radical Islam against the weight of empirical evidence. By drawing from extant theoretical linkages, we conduct a confirmatory factor analysis of cross-national survey data from 13 Muslim-majority states to test the fit of two widely theorized factors—moderate and radical Islamism. The findings suggest that support for politically moderate Islam is distinctively different from support for politically radical Islam. This article makes two key contributions. First, this study introduces a systematic empirical operationalization of Political Islam, and a more nuanced measurement thereof for empirical research. Second, the findings help advance our understanding of the variation in politically divergent religious attitudes in the Islamic world.

Keywords
Islam, Political Islam, Islamism, politically moderate, politically radical, confirmatory factor analysis

Introduction

There are deep disagreements among Muslims around the world about the extent to which Islam should shape social, economic, and political life. Perhaps the most prominent divergence involves how Muslims negotiate support for Political Islam as an ideology, rather than a theology. Political Islam or Islamism is broadly defined as "a form of instrumentalization of Islam by individuals,

Corresponding author:
Dilshod Achilov, Department of Political Science, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, 285 Old Westport Road, Dartmouth, MA 02747, USA.
Email: dachilov@umassd.edu

groups and organizations that pursue political objectives" and "provides political responses to today's societal challenges by imagining a future, the foundations for which rest on re-appropriated, reinvented concepts borrowed from the Islamic traditions" (Denoeux, 2002: 61). Islamism—a term henceforth used interchangeably with the phrase *Political Islam*—is not a monolithic phenomenon, but rather a complex concept with multifaceted dimensions, comprising Muslim political attitudes that vary vastly cross-nationally (Ayoob, 2009; Denoeux, 2002; Schwedler, 2011). However, Political Islam is predominantly operationalized as a one-factor phenomenon using a wide variety of proxy measures in empirical research; examples include measurements based on support for Islamic Caliphate (Collins and Owen, 2012), individual judgments of whether politicians who are not religious are unfit for public office (Ciftci, 2010), or "desire for Shari'a-based laws and for public officials with strong religious beliefs" (Spierings, 2014: 720). While these conceptualizations are useful and empirically valid, such framing (i.e., a single factor via one proxy measure) provides little guidance in understanding the impact of divergent ideological dispositions held by Muslims who often disagree on a wide array of political issues.

By and large, the majority of empirical studies on Political Islam have relied on observations drawn from a single region, and/or one or a few country cases, and have made broad generalizations about how Muslims view Islam's role in politics. Moreover, previous research has mainly analyzed religiosity separately from support toward Islamism. While Islamists—activists and advocates of Political Islam—vary significantly with respect to the norms, goals and tactics they employ to achieve their social and political goals, support among devout Muslims toward various Islamist actors (and their associated Islamist ideologies) is equally diverse (Achilov, 2015; March, 2015; Volpi and Stein, 2015). This leads to another point of contention: the literature has not sufficiently accounted for these ideological variations toward Islamism among religious Muslims. Although the bulk of comparative politics literature has largely juxtaposed the support for Islamism in two broad categories—*moderates* vs. *radicals*—conceptual ambiguity between the two remains (Achilov, 2016; Schwedler, 2011). While some have questioned the validity of differentiating between moderates and radicals (Pipes, 2002; Tibi, 2009), many scholars have emphasized the need for distinguishing divergent political views among devout Muslims (Kurzman 1998; March 2015; Volpi and Stein, 2015). Scholars agree, however, that the validity of various conceptual claims regarding Political Islam must be tested against the weight of empirical evidence (Denoeux, 2002).

In order to address this gap in the literature and to have a more nuanced understanding of how Muslims negotiate the tensions between religion and politics, we systematically examine cross-national Muslim attitudes to test the ideological distinctiveness of support toward Political Islam against the weight of empirical evidence. Specifically, we ask: Is support for Political Islam a single- or multifactor phenomenon? Do all devout Muslims support politically radical Islamism? In other words, is making an explicit distinction between politically moderate devout Muslims and political radicals empirically valid? If yes, how and in what ways do politically moderate religious Muslims differ from those who hold radical views? We engage these questions in three stages. First, by drawing from the extant literature, we construct a two-factor model of Political Islam in two distinct variants: politically moderate and politically radical Islam. Second, we utilize a large volume of survey data (n=53,800) from 13 Muslim-majority countries and conduct a confirmatory factor analyses to test the validity of our proposed conceptual framework. Third, we explore descriptive and associational patterns by controlling for key socio-political conditions. The findings affirm the multifactor nature of Political Islam and lend support for a more nuanced consideration of the politically divergent views of religious Muslims. We do not claim, however, that our conceptualization encapsulates the whole complexity of Islamism. We argue that the utility of these two concepts may reduce the conceptual ambiguity that scholars grapple with in empirical research.

The article proceeds as follows: first, we survey the literature on prevalent conceptualizations and scholarly debates regarding Islamism and present our conceptual model; second, we explain the data, methods, and instrumentation used in the study followed by a discussion of results from confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs); third, we examine descriptive and associational patterns; finally, we discuss the findings and implications.

An enduring debate

Is there a split among devout Muslims between those who support politically "moderate" as opposed to "radical" Islamism? Or do all devout Muslims support only a single form of Political Islam? There are many important similarities and contrasts in the literature in response to these questions. Denoeux (2002) summarizes the views of those who question the validity of the conceptual differentiation between moderate and radical Islamism:

> [O]n issues such as the use of violence, the legitimacy of a democratic order, human rights and pluralism, the moderates' real positions may be at significant variance with their public statements. Moderates may be merely more patient than the radicals, more willing to bide their time. They may share the radicals' basic agenda, while being more pragmatic and realistic regarding their ability to advance such an agenda given the powerful forces they confront. (73)

However, the validity of such claims has yet to be "tested against the weight of the empirical evidence" (Denoeux, 2002: 80). Ignoring the possible multiplicity of ideological dispositions held by religious Muslims obscures the fundamentally contested nature of Muslim identity and the evolving dynamics of Muslim political attitudes (Ayoob, 2009; Roy, 1994; Roy and Boubekeur, 2012). This debate is more pronounced in the large body of literature that scrutinizes Muslim attitudes toward democracy. Critics argue that some Islamist groups may support democracy only as a strategic, and therefore temporary, tool to achieve their ulterior and potentially undemocratic motives once in power. Such a view largely discounts, if not entirely excludes, contemporary "moderate" ideological voices. Wickham (2013) posits that Islamist groups support democracy and the expansion of civil liberties "not for the purpose of deception but out of a realization that such reforms align with their group interests," on the grounds that broader public freedom can eliminate long-standing restrictions on religious freedom, freedom of self-expression and, perhaps more importantly, freedom of assembly (10). Even though some of the early Islamists "initially seized new opportunities for electoral participation not out of a commitment to democracy, but as a means to further their goal of establishing an Islamic state," over time, the experience of political participation and representation among the younger generation of Islamists led to a rejection of the "anti-system" views of the older generation. Consequently, the younger generation of moderate Islamists began to "reinvent themselves as the founders of a moderate Islamist party seeking to assist in the building of a democratic civil society" (Wickham, 2004: 216).[1] In this view, branding Islamists by what they may say tomorrow should not overshadow what they say today. Moderate or not, Nasr (2005) maintains that the future "Muslim democracy" will not rest on "an abstract, carefully thought-out theological and ideological accommodation between Islam and democracy, but rather on a practical synthesis that is emerging in much of the Muslim world in response to the opportunities and demands created by the ballot box" (15).

The type of religiosity also seems to matter. According to Hoffman and Jamal (2014), personal piety rather than a communal practice of religion predicted greater support for democracy in the Arab Middle East. In other words, those who read the Qur'an were "significantly more likely to perceive inequalities in their treatment from the regime" and thus were "more supportive of democracy than

nonreaders" (Hoffman and Jamal, 2014: 603). What is not clear in the literature, however, is how politically divergent views among *religious* Muslims may affect this relationship.

Conceptual overgeneralizations as well as reductionism are two major pitfalls that hamper our understanding of complex concepts such as Political Islam. To avoid these pitfalls, engaging in a painstaking dialogue between theory and evidence is necessary (Goertz, 2006). To this end, this study carefully considers the theoretically grounded concept intensions that are supported by empirical data. We argue that abandoning a conceptual distinction between moderate and radical Islamism might result in obscuring an important empirical reality.

Theoretical propositions of political Islam

The literature is replete with descriptors that characterize varying degrees of popular support for Islam's role in politics. In addition to the ubiquitous characterizations of "moderate" and "radical" Islam, common phrases include "liberal Islam" (Kurzman, 1998), "illiberal Islamism" (Brumberg and Shehata, 2009), "fundamentalist Islam" (Weintraub, 2011), "reformist Islam" (Kar, 2010), "civil Islam" (Hefner, 2000; Gerges 2013), and "political Salafism" (Al-Anani and Malik 2013), among many others. In this study, we distinguish *political ideological divergence* by attaching "politically" as a modifier to "moderate" and "radical" dispositions.

In conceptualizing "moderate" Islam, scholars have predominantly adopted the following concept intensions: the embrace of democratic governance; support for civil liberties; accommodation for both Shari'a and secular law; working within and through legal state institutions; support for an electoral system in which all parties (of any affiliation) have an equal chance to compete; and a more open (non-rigid) and tolerant worldview toward alternative perspectives. More broadly, moderation is generally tied to liberal views of individual rights and democratic notions of tolerance, cooperation, and political pluralism (Schwedler, 2011). For instance, Somer refers to "moderation of political Islam through the embrace of democracy, modernity and liberal global economy" (2007: 1272). According to Nasr (2005), Muslim democrats do not seek to enshrine Islam to politics; rather, they tend to pursue "viable electoral platforms and stable governing coalitions to serve individual and collective interests—Islamic as well as secular—within a democratic arena whose bounds they respect, win or lose" (13). In essence, then, moderation is the "movement from a relatively closed and rigid worldview to one more open and tolerant of alternative perspectives" (Schwedler, 2006: 3).

Contemporary Islamic scholars and thinkers have recognized that Islam, like all religions, comes with certain obligatory "non-negotiable" principles. At the same time, many scholars have also emphasized the existence of vast space in which new interpretations, driven by human critical thinking and creativity, can meaningfully contribute to advancing the Muslim world (Ramadan, 2009). Moderation, in the context of this study, does not refer to an unrestricted exercise or a total flexibility with regard to religious norms or rituals (e.g., *Aqidah*). Rather, moderation regarding Political Islam rests largely on the perception that Islam has many resources to accommodate individual civil liberties, basic human, and political rights, and a fair and just pluralistic society. Moderation rejects the clash between religion and a secular political ideology; on the contrary, it is the belief that Islam and a pluralist political system can coexist (Esposito and Mogahed, 2008; Hamzawi, 2005).

Furthermore, politically moderate views reflect a quest for wider political rights (freedom from dictatorial regimes), a belief in civil liberties (freedom from oppression) and a commitment to social justice (freedom from corruption, discrimination, and the abuse of power). According to Hamzawi (2005: 2), "[u]niversal citizenship, peaceful transfer of power, checks and balances, citizens' participation, neutrality of public authorities in approaching multiple religious and ethnic identities, and tolerance of diversity" are key principles advocated by moderate Islamists. At the

same time, local and regional social and cultural contexts vary substantially in the Muslim world and must be examined accordingly (Ayoob, 2009).

By contrast, radical Islamism is often conceptualized as the uncompromising pursuit of an Islamic state, ruled by an exclusive and "narrow interpretation of Islamic law [Shari'a]" in which radicals promote "illiberal, authoritarian politics that leaves little room for civil liberties, cultural pluralism, the rights of women and minorities, and democracy" (Nasr, 2005: 16). According to this view, religious radicals typically seek to replace the entire political system and eschew political pluralism (Schwedler, 2011). According to Hafez (2003), they tend to "reject accommodation with the state regime, refuse to participate in its institutions," and may "insist on the necessity of violent revolution or mass mobilization to Islamize society and politics" if necessary (6).

Clark and Schwedler (2003) classify Islamists into "accommodationists" and "non-accommodation-ists" based on their commitment to democratic participation, and distinguish "contextualists" from "legalists" based on how they view the application of Islamic teachings in general.[2] This system of classification draws a clear distinction between moderate and radical Islamists who advocate for democratic participation and cooperation with non-Islamists, on the one hand, and those who reject participation in democratic processes and dismiss any cooperation with non-Islamists, on the other. While contextualists believe the application of Islam must consider contemporary social and political realities, legalists hold that Islamic teachings must be based on literal interpretations of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*.[3] In this categorization, accommodationist Islamists with a contexualist worldview are considered the most liberal or moderate (in terms of supporting democratic processes), while non-accommodationists with a legalist perspective are viewed as the most radical and are seen as defying democratic norms.[4] This classification effectively captures some of the prevalent ideological divergences among Islamists. Similarly, but from a different angle, Volpi and Stein (2015) distinguish between "statist" and "non-statist" variants of Islamism: while "statist Islamism" refers to institutionalized participation in the politics of the nation state (e.g., governance-level political interactions), "non-statist" Political Islam is mainly confined to "local-level organizational, preaching and charitable" activities (282). From this perspective, our conceptualization is framed within the "statist" Islamist level.

The adherents of *Salafiya* (followers of the *Salaf*—the forefathers of early Islam who practiced pure Islam during the Golden Age) are often cited as an example of radical Islamism.[5] Nevertheless, it is also important not to make an overly simplistic link between radicalism and Salafism. Although the majority of Salafis support the puritanical rule of the Shari'a, the extent of that support and the resulting methodology vary from one Salafi network to another.

Radicalism should not be understood as a rigid inflexibility toward Islam or a blind pursuit of the early Islamic life (e.g. *Salafism*). Rather, politically radical Islamism represents the view that Islam is pure and self-sufficient (as revealed by God) and is not compatible with a man-made secular political system. Inherent in this view is the belief that Islam must be protected from humanly driven "harmful" innovations or adulterations (i.e., *bid'a*). Furthermore, radical-leaning Salafis tend more often than moderates to attach unquestioning importance to clerical guidance on political affairs, on the grounds that clerics are "capable of illuminating an unadulterated understanding of Islam" (Wiktorowicz and Kaltner, 2003: 80).

According to Al-Qaradawi (2007), moderation stands at the heart of Islam, whereas radical extremism represents a remoteness from religion in terms of both thought and practice. Remoteness, in this context, means going *excessively* in one or more directions away from the core (i.e., mainstream) teachings of Islam. Citing a general lack of knowledge about Islam as a leading cause of radical extremism, intolerance, and rigid interpretation, Al-Qaradawi (2007) argues that the remedy to prevent youth from embracing radical extremism is to master the methodology of learning Islam. Table 1 summarizes the concept intensions rooted in the literature, for each theorized factor of Political Islam.

Table 1. Concept intensions and data indicator levels for Political Islam.

Factor	Concept intension	Literature conceptualization	Data indicator (survey items)
Politically moderate	Support for political pluralism	Clark and Schwedler, 2003; Esposito and Mogahed, 2008; Hamzawi, 2005; Nasr, 2005; Wickham, 2004	Parliamentary System in which all political parties (left, right, Islamic) can compete [item 1] Men of religion should not have influence on how people vote [item 2] Men of religion should not have influence over government decisions [item 3]
	Support for individual civil and political rights	Deneaux, 2002; Hefner, 2000; Esposito, 1997; Schwedler, 2011; Wickham, 2004	Government and parliament should make laws according to the wishes of the people [item 4]
	Accommodative support for both Shari'a and secular law	Ayoob, 2008; Clark and Schwedler, 2003; Deneaux, 2002; Esposito and Mogahed, 2008	Government and parliament should make laws according to the wishes of people in some areas and implement Shari'a law in others [item 5]
Politically radical	Intolerance toward political pluralism	Hamzawi, 2005; Nasr 2005; Schwedler, 2011; Somer 2007	A system governed by Islamic law in which there are no political parties or elections [item 6]
	Support for exclusive rule of the Shari'a law	Clark and Schwedler, 2003; Denoeux, 2002; Nasr, 2005	Government should implement only the laws of the Shari'a [item 7]
	Superiority of religious identity in political leadership	Wiktorowicz and Kaltner, 2003	Better if more people with strong religiosity held public office [item 8]

What, then, distinguishes politically moderate from politically radical Muslims? Based on our analysis of theoretical literature (Table 1), we conceptualize two distinct forms of Political Islamic ideology—(1) *Politically Moderate* and (2) *Politically Radical*—based on: support for (a) political pluralism, (b) individual civil/political liberties, and (c) the role for Shari'a law.[6] More explicitly, we define these two factors as below.

Politically Moderate (PM) Muslims are conceptualized as those who allocate a greater role for Islam to play in politics while supporting a democratic, pluralist political system—rooted in equal political and civil rights, balance of power, accountability and transparency—in which all political parties can compete in pluralistic society. Political moderates advocate for the inclusive role of the Shari'a; that is, they support government making laws according to the wishes of the people while acknowledging the need for implementing Shari'a in some circumstances.

By contrast, *Politically Radical* (PR) Muslims are conceptualized as those who support a political system with no political parties, except for Islamic political parties, with a significant intolerance toward individual civil and political liberties in which the government implements only the laws of the Shari'a. At the same time, political radicals believe that men of religion (e.g., *Sheikhs*) should exercise decisive influence over government decisions.

As illustrated in Figure 1, this study systematically examines the ideological divergence in support for Political Islam among religious Muslims. While religiosity is an overarching identity that

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for Ideological Support for Political Islam (ISPI) among devout Muslims.

can often act as a uniting factor in a community (or *Ummah*—Islamic community), pious Muslims often disagree about the role Islam should play in politics. We theorize that there is a continuum between politically moderate and radical Muslim attitudes (see Figure 1). To test this proposition, we utilize structural equation modeling using the survey data items in Table 1 in order to assess whether these two factors (i.e., politically moderate and radical Islam) are empirically distinctive and stand at the two end points of the ideological continuum.[7]

Data and methods

Data and instrumentation

We utilized the Carnegie Middle East Governance and Islam Dataset[8] containing 33 individual-level surveys carried out from 1988 to 2010 in 13 Middle Eastern and Northern African (MENA) countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Yemen.[9] Altogether, a total of 53,834 men and women were surveyed via face-to-face interviews (see Technical Appendix). Given that the study's central focus is on examining the attitudes of religious Muslims, we conceptualize religiosity more broadly by combining both personal and communal indicators of religiosity. Specifically, we aggregate the following questions: (M45) How often do you pray? [very often; often], (M16) How often do you read the Qur'an? [daily/almost daily; several times a week].[10]

Data analysis

To examine the factorial structure of Political Islam, two different models (a one- and a two-factor model) were investigated using CFA. The one-factor model (i.e. Model 1) included eight items; the two-factor (Model 2) model (i.e. politically moderate and radical Islamism) included eight items in which each factor loaded on four items (see all items in Table 1 and Technical Appendix B). Based on item-factor relationship, one-factor model attempts to test whether support for Political Islam is a single-factor phenomenon whereas two-factor model examines the possibility of an empirical distinction between politically moderate and politically radical Islamism. In addition to these two single-level analyses, multilevel CFA (MCFA) models were analyzed, as multilevel design was used to collect data. In multilevel models, Level 2 consisted of the participating Muslim countries and Level 1 consisted of respondents within an agency. Level 1 accounts for individual-level variation (within countries) while Level 2 addresses variation between countries. In addition to these two single-level models, we examined three multilevel models (Models 3, 4, and 5) in this study.

Table 2. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient matrix.

	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8
Item 1	1.000							
Item 2	0.063	1.000						
Item 3	0.035	0.298	1.000					
Item 4	−0.008	0.055	0.040	1.000				
Item 5	−0.049	−0.125	−0.210	−0.075	1.000			
Item 6	−0.044	−0.103	−0.187	0.012	0.222	1.000		
Item 7	0.033	−0.110	−0.193	0.008	0.351	0.170	1.000	
Item 8	−0.064	−0.091	−0.284	−0.015	0.253	0.293	0.244	1.000

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the items.

Items	N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	ICC
Item 1	12,501	2.379	1.072	0.002	−1.300	0.258
Item 2	25,511	2.940	0.924	−0.506	−0.626	0.041
Item 3	19,807	2.586	0.905	0.005	−0.816	0.097
Item 4	25,415	3.454	0.942	−1.415	0.517	0.037
Item 5	13,260	2.129	1.146	0.430	−1.306	0.251
Item 6	25,951	3.329	1.003	−1.118	−0.244	0.304
Item 7	12,166	1.752	0.909	0.875	−0.386	0.145
Item 8	25,941	2.806	0.973	−0.336	−0.906	0.255

Model 3 consisted of one factor at each level (i.e. Level 1 and Level 2) with loadings freely estimated. Similarly, Model 4 consisted of one Level 2 factor and two Level 1 factors. Finally, Model 5 consisted of two factors at each level.

A comparison between these models was made based on relative fit indices (i.e., chi-square) and information criteria indices (e.g. Bayesian information criteria (BIC)) to determine the best fitting model in accordance with the conceptual rationales discussed above. Model-data fit was assessed using a number of fit indices including χ^2 statistics, the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) in order to make a comprehensive comparison. A combination of these indices were used by following recommendations of Hu and Bentler (1999). All confirmatory factor analyses were performed with the maximum likelihood (ML) estimation on the raw data using *Mplus* 7.0 (Muthén and Muthén, 1998–2012) software. As we used ML estimation, data conditions (i.e. normality, multicollinearity, outliers, etc.) required for ML estimation were examined prior to analyses. For identification purposes, the metric of the factors was set by fixing the first factor loadings equal to 1. A correlation matrix for all eight items is presented in Table 2.

Data screening

Prior to conducting CFA estimations, the sample data set was examined for possible violations of assumptions and the presence of any other problems. As noted earlier, all of the items are Likert-scale items with four points ranging from 1 to 4 (see Technical Appendix). Table 3 contains the sample size (*N*), means, standard deviations (*SD*), skewness, and kurtosis of the eight items that

were used in the two CFA models. As shown in Table 3, univariate skewness and kurtosis values appear to be within the acceptable range. Based on additional analyses with an SPSS macro, our data set did not show any multivariate non-normality and multivariate outliers. The sample dataset was also screened for possible multicollinearity and found to have neither bivariate nor multivariate multicollinearity problem.[11] The analyses were conducted in *Mplus* software, which provides an option to handle missing data using the full ML approach (i.e., it uses all data available using full ML).[12]

Results

After finding no potential problems with the data and assumptions of ML estimation, five CFA estimations were conducted to assess the model-data fit of two (i.e., one- and two-factor) proposed factor solutions.[13] Fit statistics for five models are presented in Table 4. As the chi-square test statistic is sensitive to sample sizes, it was statistically significant ($p < .05$), which indicated poor fit for five model solutions.

As mentioned above, we first examined the fit of single-level models with one- and two-factor solutions (i.e., Model 1 and Model 2) in order to test whether support for Political Islam is a single or multifactor phenomenon. A one-factor model with paths from the latent construct to all eight survey items was tested first. The chi-square value for the single-level, one-factor CFA model, $\chi^2(20) = 1840.08$, $p < .001$, indicated a significant lack of fit. In addition, other fit indices suggested that the one-factor model showed poor fit with RMSEA = .050 (90% CI = .048, .051), CFI = .838, TLI = .773, SRMR = .047. An alternative single-level two-factor CFA model (Model 2) was also considered. This model showed better fit than Model 1. Chi-square value was found to be significant ($\chi^2(19) = 842.845$, $p < .001$). Given that a two-factor model fits significantly better than a one-factor model, the evidence lends support for a multifactor structure of support for Political Islam. In other words, the findings challenge the notion that Muslim attitudes toward Political Islam are uniform and thus there is no need to distinguish moderate views from radical ones.

As shown in Table 4, fit indices suggested that the two-factor model showed good fit (RMSEA = .034 (90% CI = .032, .036), CFI = .927, TLI = .892, SRMR = .034). Compared with the single-level one-factor model, the single-level two-factor model showed better fit to the data based on the values in Table 4. The chi-square difference test between these two models also showed that the single-level two-factor model is a statistically significant improvement over the single-level one-factor model ($\chi^2 (1) = 997.24$, $p < .001$). The evidence lends strong support for viewing Muslim attitudes toward Islamism as divergent dispositions that can vary in a political ideological spectrum, although not exclusively, in which two end-points of divergent views can be distinguished (e.g., politically "moderate" and "radical"). Given that the two-factor measure appears more empirically grounded than a single-factor conceptualization, support for politically moderate Islam is significantly different from support for politically radical Islam.

For robustness, given that our dataset has a multilevel structure (respondents nested within countries), we also examined three multilevel alternatives of Model 1 and Model 2. Prior to conducting the multilevel CFA models, an intraclass correlation (ICC) value was calculated to examine the variability between and within countries on each item. The ICCs for each of the observed items ranged from .037 (Item 4) to .304 (Item 6), suggesting that there was sufficient between-agency variability to warrant multilevel analysis (see Table 3).

Accordingly, we tested three two-level CFA models (Model 3, Model 4, and Model 5) using the same dataset. Fit statistics for these three multilevel CFAs are also presented in Table 4. Results of Model 3 indicated poor fit ($\chi^2(40) = 363.038$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .015, CFI = .774, TLI = .684, SRMR = .043 for within-level and 0.236 for between-level). As shown in Table 4,

Table 4. Fit indices for five models.

	Single-level CFAs		Multilevel CFAs		
	Model 1: One Factor at Level 1	Model 2: 2 Factor at Level 1	Model 3: 1 Factor at Level 1 and 1 Factor at Level 2	Model 4: 2 Factors at Level 1 and 1 Factor at Level 2	Model 5: 2 Factors at Level 1 and 2 Factors at Level 2
χ^2	1840.087	842.845	363.038	171.548	169.7
Df	20	19	40	39	38
RMSEA	0.050	0.034	0.015	0.010	0.010
CFI	0.838	0.927	0.774	0.907	0.908
TLI	0.773	0.892	0.684	0.867	0.864
SRMR-within	0.047	0.034	0.043	0.031	0.031
SRMR-between	—	—	0.236	0.236	0.216
BIC	437354.8	436368.1	423574.2	422895.696	422876.846

fit indices suggested that Model 4 showed good fit ($\chi^2(39) = 171.548$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .010, CFI = .907, TLI = .867, SRMR = .031 for within-level and 0.236 for between-level). Lastly, results of Model 5 showed good fit for the data, with $\chi^2(39) = 169.70$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .010, CFI = .908, TLI = .864, SRMR = .031 for within-level and .216 for between-level. Based on these multiple fit indices, Model 4 and Model 5 showed good fits, in addition to the good fit of Model 2 presented above. Overall, the fits of one-factor models (Model 1 and Model 3) were not good, and both of these models had poorer fit indices than any of the two-factor models (see Table 4). To determine the best model among the non-nested two-factor models (Model 1, Model 4, and Model 5), an information criteria index, the BIC, was calculated (see last row of Table 4). According to the BIC index, Model 5 was found to be the best model with the smallest BIC value (422876.846).

Given that Model 5, with two between-level factors and two within-level factors (i.e. politically moderate and politically radical Islam), had the best fit for the data set in this study, the parameter estimates of Model 5 were examined. Table 5 displays the unstandardized factor loadings and residual variances for Model 5. Interfactor correlations were -.020 ($p > .001$) between political moderates and political radicals at Level 1 and -.027 ($p > .05$) at Level 2.

Unstandardized factor pattern coefficients in the two-factor model ranged from 0.684 to 10.967 at Level 1, whereas the unstandardized coefficients ranged from 0.648 to 2.841 at Level 2. All of the Level 1 and level 2 unstandardized coefficients were statistically significant ($p < .01$) except for Item 2 and Item 3 at Level 1. With the exception of Item 3 (Level 1), most of the standardized factor pattern coefficients were moderate in magnitude. The fourth and last columns of the two-level, two-factor model results contain the residual variances for within- and between-level parts of Model 5, separately.

Results showed that a two-factor (two-level) model that considers political moderates (Factor 1) and political radicals (Factor 2) fits significantly better than a one-factor model. Thus, the results of the multilevel confirmatory factor analysis show that the two-level, two-factor model has structural validity for our survey. In terms of the signs of coefficients, each loading is in line with theoretical propositions; further, each data indicator strongly supports each concept intention and is mostly statistically significant ($p < .01$).[14] In short, these findings underline the proposition that support for politically moderate and politically radical Islam is not similarly grounded. This suggests that Muslim attitudes toward Political Islam are not uniform; rather, those who hold politically moderate views are significantly different from those who do not. In other words, the findings

Table 5. Unstandardized parameter estimates and standard errors for the two-level two-factor model.

Items	Within-level			Between-level		
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Residual variance	Factor 1	Factor 2	Residual variance
	λ_1	λ_2		λ_1	λ_2	
Item 1	1.00 (—)		1.036	1.000 (—)		0.311 (0.018)
Item 2	5.084 (2.825)		0.706	0.791 (0.191)		0.020 (0.007)
Item 3	10.967 (0.823)		0.258	2.841 (0.198)		−0.077 (0.012)
Item 4	0.823 (0.458)		0.851	0.125 (0.021)		0.030 (0.014)
Item 5		1.000 (—)	0.821		1.000 (—)	0.144 (0.072)
Item 6		0.684 (0.073)	0.665		1.424 (0.029)	−0.002 (0.016)
Item 7		0.733 (0.044)	0.576		0.648 (0.075)	0.030 (0.011)
Item 8		0.884 (0.106)	0.534		0.788 (0.205)	0.144 (0.053)

Note. Standard errors are in parentheses.

affirm the notion that "it would be a mistake to see" Political Islam "as a single movement or ideology" (March, 2015: 2).

Descriptive and associational patterns

In what ways do political moderates differ from political radicals? In order to situate the findings in a more nuanced context, this section descriptively examines the associational patterns between ideologically distinct support for Islamism and social variables, including gender, age, class, education, social capital, and attitudes toward religious tolerance in the Muslim world. Figure 2 reports the percentages of political moderates and political radicals based on the sample 13 Muslim-majority countries. Accordingly, in the context of those who hold a clear ideological view (after dropping "not clear position" category), 75% of religious Muslims appear to support politically moderate Islam, while 25% show support for politically radical Islam. Put otherwise, the ratio between support for politically moderate and radical Islam was 3:1; that is, religious Muslims were three times more likely to hold politically moderate views than radical orientations.

In terms of age, politically radical Muslims appear to be slightly younger than moderates. Approximately 21% of politically moderates and 26% of politically radicals are under the age of 24 (range 18–24). Although the mean age difference is not large, the distinction is statistically significant (per one-way ANOVA, $p < .01$). Next, the gender parity suggests that political views among men and women are similar, but with some notable distinctions. Generally, Muslim women appear more likely than men to support politically moderate Islam, even after controlling for other social variables (e.g., class, education, political activism).

Furthermore, the higher levels of education, social class, associational social capital, and engagement in political activism also correlate with increased support for moderate views.[15] Examining these social indicators, we can infer that politically moderate Muslims tend to have higher educational credentials and are more active in civil society. Moreover, the impact of education, particularly among college graduates, stands out. This resonates well with Al-Qadarawi's (2007) assessment that situates the lack of education as a leading cause for extremism and intolerance.

Political activism is another point of divergence among religious Muslims: general interest in political affairs, participation in elections and collective political action are notably higher among
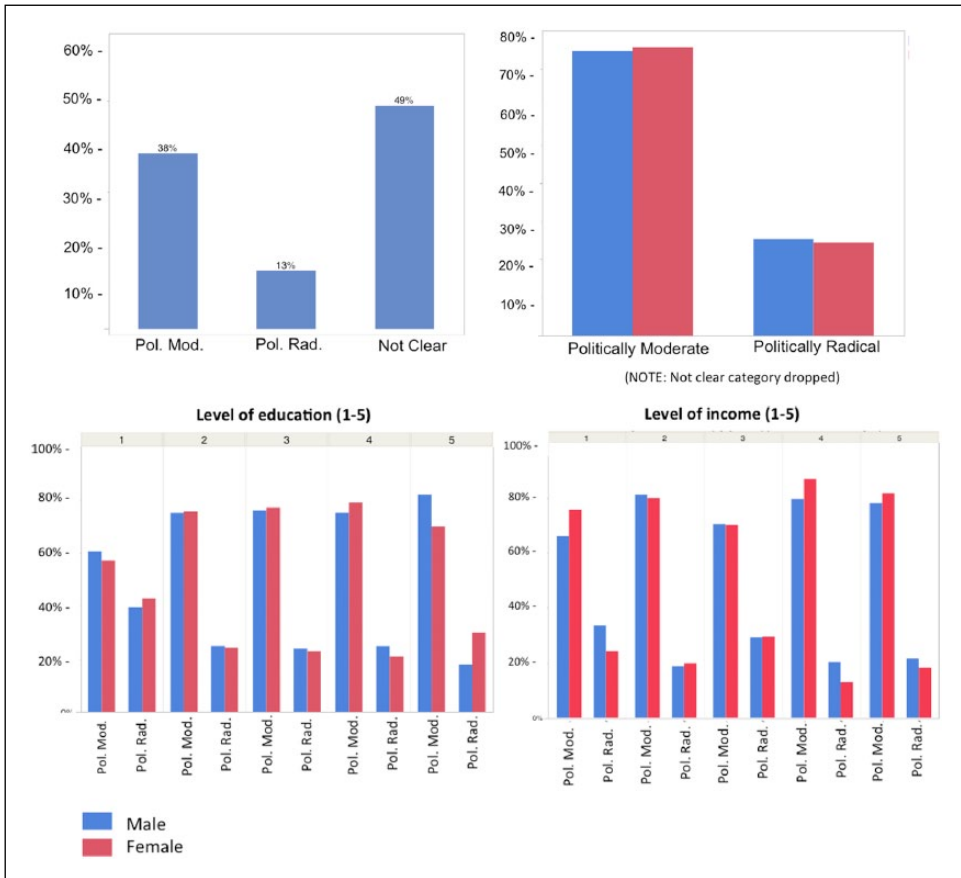
Figure 2. Distribution of support for Political Islam among religious Muslims (%).

politically moderate Muslims. This pattern lends partial support for inclusion-moderation explanations that contend that moderation occurs in settings in which advocates of Islamism are included in the political process. Of no less importance is the role of social networking (associational social capital), which suggests that moderates are more socially connected and are more active in local organizations or formal groups that foster a sense of community and collective claim making. This in part supports resource mobilization theory, which asserts that individuals with more available resources, such as higher levels of education, income, and social capital, are more likely to support pro-democratic collective activism (Achilov, 2013, 2016). Engagement in formal organizations is particularly revealing given that those who work in close cooperation within a social group are better positioned to learn from one another.

Considering gender dynamics, Muslim women who are active in civil society through participation in various formal groups or organizations are significantly more likely to hold moderate Islamist views compared with women who are less active. Compared with men, support for politically moderate Islam is also notably higher among women who actively engage in civil society organizations. Consistent with previous research, these findings highlight the centrality of the new emerging socio-political discourse, which has enabled Muslim women to organize for change, freedom, and equality (Nouraie-Simone, 2014) (Figure 3).
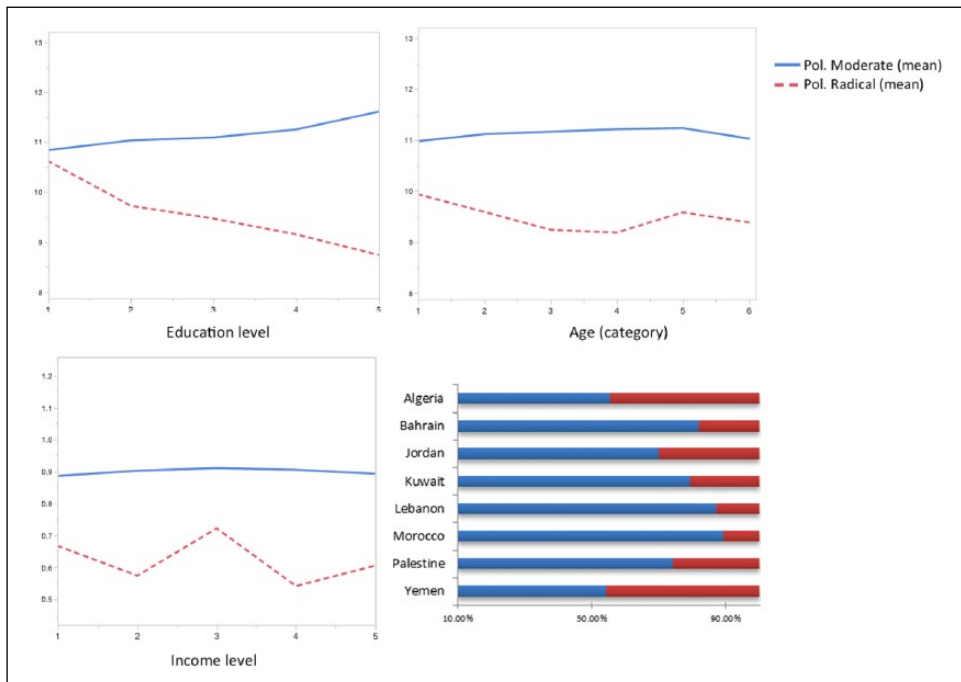
**Figure 3.** Social indicators of support for Political Islam.

Figure 4(b) captures the temporal change from 2001 (i.e. 1988–2001) to 2010 (i.e. 2002–2010). During this period, as the evidence suggests, the mean support for politically moderate Islam increased while the mean support for politically radical Islam remained virtually unchanged. The gender disparity is striking. While support for politically radical Islam has decreased among women, politically radical views increased among men in the same period (Figure 4(c)). Overall, support for politically moderate Islam, however, increased among both men and women. This finding opens a window for future research to further investigate the gender-related variation in support for Political Islam.

Attitudes toward religious tolerance also reveal distinctive patterns (Figure 4(a)). Religious tolerance was measured by the degree of importance religious Muslims attach to the following statement: *Islam requires that in a Muslim country the political rights of non-Muslims should be inferior to those of Muslims.* Politically moderate Muslims show a considerably higher degree of religious tolerance toward non-Muslims than political radicals.

Nevertheless, future research should further explore all the abovementioned associations by accounting for other confounding factors, in part of constructing a causal mechanism that can help explain why Muslims incline to support one ideology over the other. It is equally central to further identify important underlying causal factors that drive why devout Muslims adopt more moderate or radical ideological support for Islamism.

Discussion

The evidence reaffirms the multifactor nature of Political Islam and lends support for a more nuanced consideration of the politically divergent views of religious Muslims. Specifically, the
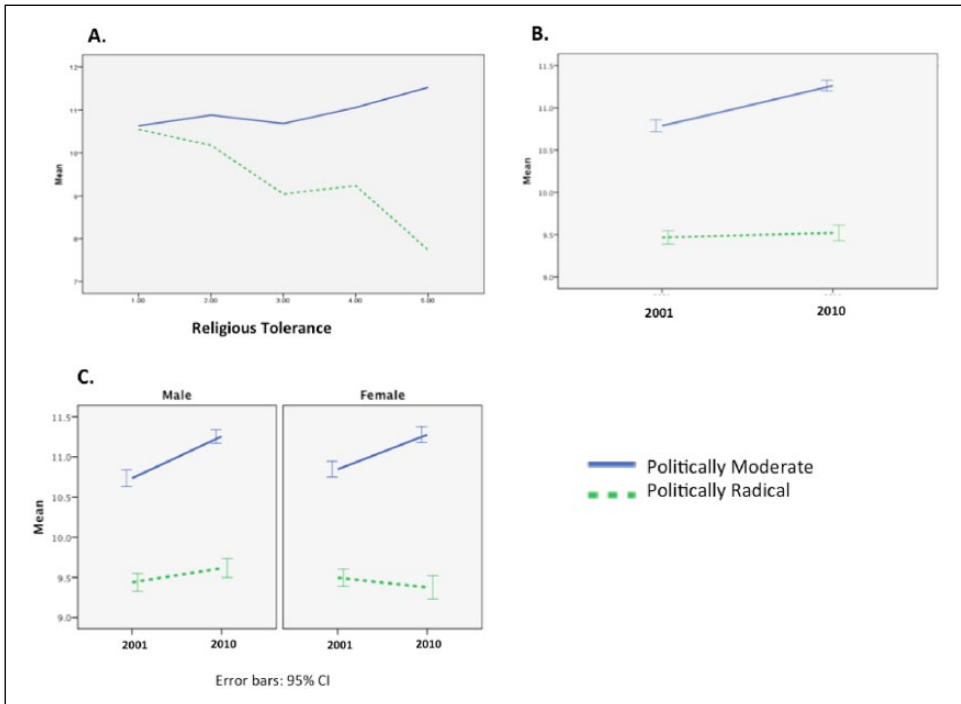
Figure 4. Religious tolerance, gender, and temporal change in support for Political Islam.

results indicate that a two-factor model explains the structure of Political Islam significantly better than a single-factor model. That is, the findings challenge the notion that Muslim attitudes toward Political Islam are uniform. Substantively, moderate views of Islam's role in politics are nested within support for political pluralism, a belief in individual civil liberties and accommodation for both Shari'a and secular laws. By contrast, politically radical views are shaped by support for the exclusive rule of Shari'a, intolerance for democratic pluralism and a belief in the superiority of clerics in governance decisions. We also find that support for politically moderate Islam, compared with radical views, is associated with higher levels of education, social class, associational social capital, and engagement in political activism. At the same time, we suggest the need for further future empirical scrutiny for a possible lurking variant that may lie between politically radical and politically moderate Islamism.

We have claimed that a two-factor conceptualization of Political Islam (also framing and measuring it as *Ideological Support for Political Islam* – ISPI) is instrumental in elucidating, controlling for, and comparing the effects of politically divergent views at the individual level of analysis. We do not claim, however, that the concept intensions (and associated survey items) utilized in this study are deterministic. Nor do we claim that our conceptualization encapsulates the entire complexity of Islamism. Rather, we suggest that Islamism is a continuously evolving concept that is sensitive to volatile social and political shifts. The complexity of support for Political Islam needs to be understood in a wider context that accounts for regional variations and in the light of multiple causally complex combinations of competing conditions, as well as other confounding factors.

Finally, we have sought to demonstrate that religiosity is a very broad social concept that encompasses politically divergent views. When used as a single factor via one proxy measure, the

conceptual framing of Political Islam masks an important variation in politically divergent attitudes among religious Muslims. This study has therefore sought to highlight the need to move beyond mere "religiosity" or a single-factor "Political Islam" variable and to account for ideological variation in Islamism among religious individuals. Doing so may yield more nuanced insights in empirical studies of Islam and politics.

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Funding

Notes

1. Wickham cautions that Islamist movements cannot be described as simply "for" or "against" democracy, "any more than they can be characterized as 'moderate' or 'extremist.'" She highlights the fact that the evolution of Islamist groups, the Muslim Brotherhood in particular, has not occurred in a linear and unidimensional fashion. Rather, "such groups have traced a path marked by profound inconsistencies and contradictions" that are driven by "complex motivations" that cannot be encompassed by a single causal factor (2013: 2).
2. Clark and Schwedler (2003: 297) present their conceptualization of Islamists in a 2x2 table.
3. *Qur'an* is the main source of Islam. *Sunnah* refers to practices and sayings of the Prophet.
4. Clark and Schwedler (2003: 296) refer to accommodationists/contextualists as "moderates" and non-accommodationists/legalists as "hardliners."
5. It is important not to make a simplistic link between radicalism and the early followers of Islam (e.g. *Salafis*). Political and theological frameworks vary vastly from one *Salafi* network to another (see, for instance, Al-Anani and Malik, 2013; Lauzière, 2010).
6. In line with Wickham (2013) and Schwedler (2011), we concur that these conceptualizations are subject to continuous change and susceptible to volatile social and political shifts.
7. CFA (Confirmatory Factor Anlaysis) technique has been proposed to test the multidimensionality of a theoretical construct or validity of a measurement by identifying latent factors that account for the variation among a set of observed variables. To learn more about our proposed conceptual model, visit www.islamicbarometer.org
8. The Carnegie Middle East Governance and Islam Dataset is available through the ICPSR repository: www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/32302.
9. The Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) dataset is available at: www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/32302.
10. For some countries, the actual survey question on daily prayers varies (e.g. How many times do you perform daily prayers?). For robustness, we included the Qur'an reading in addition to a more general praying factor to the extent possible. While "reading the Qur'an" refers to the individual-level piety, the survey questions about the frequency of prayers do not specify whether or not the focus is on a communal (in a Mosque/Masjid) or individual prayer.
11. As Bandalos and Finney (2010) noted, skewness and kurtosis values that are greater than |2| may indicate the violation of normality. If the data show univariate non-normality, then multivariate non-normality is said to exist. However, univariate normality may not always guarantee multivariate normality. Thus, multivariate normality of the sample data was examined using an SPSS macro written by DeCarlo (1997). Based on the results of the macro, our data set did not show any multivariate skewness or kurtosis. In addition, this macro produces critical values for the Mahalanobis distance measure of multivariate outliers. The sample dataset was also screened for possible multicollinearity. The absolute values of

bivariate correlations ranged from .008 to .351. In addition, the variance inflation values for each item were examined and found to be around 1.0, suggesting that neither bivariate nor multivariate multicollinearity was present.

12. This ML procedure is known to produce better estimates than other missing data approaches (Duncan et al., 1998).

13. While the one-factor models tested the fit of a single measure Political Islam (i.e. politically moderates are not that different from politically radicals), the two-factor models tested the fit of two variants of support for Political Islam (i.e. politically moderates are different from politically radicals).

14. The factor analyses showed that there are two discriminative (as supported by the interfactor orrelation: -.020) factors: politically moderate and politically radical Islamism.

15. Running a multivariate regression model, we find that college education, associational social capital, and political activism positively predict the propensity toward having politically Islamic moderate views, holding other variables at constant (i.e. gender and social class).

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Author Biographies

Dilshod Achilov is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth. His research focuses on the dynamics of contentious politics, Political Islam, and comparative democratization in the Middle East and Central Asia. His recent work has appeared in *Social Science Quarterly, Democratization, Journal of Civil Society, Problems of Post Communism*, *Asia Policy*, and other international peer-reviewed journals.

Sedat Sen is Assistant Professor at Harran University, Sanliurfa, Turkey. His research interests focus on quantitative methods, applied statistics, and psychometrics. His recent publications appeared in *Applied Psychological Measurement* and *Psychology of Creativity Aesthetics and the Arts* journals.