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ISLAM, CONFLICT, AND THE STATE

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ABSTRACT

After decades of conflict and instability in the Middle East, if the United States is going to continue to promote democratization, it needs to reassess the predominant factors influencing majority-Muslim states' decisions to go to war. Using negative binomial regressions and logit models, this study examines the competing hypotheses of regime type, regime transition and instability, and connections between Islam and governance. The study finds robust evidence suggesting closer ties between Islam and governance increases state involvement in militarized interstate disputes, and increases the likelihood of those disputes escalating to conflict and war. The instability that accompanies regime transition also makes regimes more likely to engage in interstate conflict. Democracy has no clear relationship with peace or conflict amongst these states.

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INTRODUCTION

From Operation Desert Storm igniting the Gulf War in 1991 to the ‘official’ withdrawal of American troops from Iraq in 2011 marking the end of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the United States of America has been actively engaged in reforming the governance of the Republic of Iraq for decades. Following the eventual overthrow of President Saddam Hussein’s regime, democratic elections were finally held in 2005, presumably marking the dawn of a new era of peace and prosperity. The reign of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, however, was heavily contested and Iraq began to fall into chaos once more, as sectarian violence and suicide bombings mounted. The pronounced favoritism of al-Maliki’s administration for Shi’a majority continuously fueled Sunni indignation, already buoyed by the massacres of Sunni civilians at the hands of Alawite President Bashar al-Assad in the neighboring Syrian Civil War. Inevitably, a radical faction emerged. In the summer of 2014, Da’esh (*al-Dawla al-Islamiya fii al-Iraq wa al-Sham* or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) capitalized on Sunni sentiments of oppression and isolation and began seizing control of territory throughout Western and Central Iraq and Eastern Syria, with the intent of establishing a caliphate.

Now, the Middle East stands once more on the brink of open war, as the un-stemmed growth of this radical Sunni insurgency continues to threaten the citizenry of neighboring secular and religious regimes alike, and fears of another major terrorist attack on the American homeland grow. What went wrong? Despite the best efforts of the United States to promote democracy, with the understanding that it would prevent further conflict, Da’esh endeavors to provoke a ground war to the scale of any recent interstate conflict. Inevitably, this insurgency will be defeated, but what then? Will a more lasting peace be established or will present conditions remain and conflicts continue? If the goal of the United States is to establish stability and peace in Muslim world, we need to re-analyze the central question: why do majority-Muslim states go to war? The sudden rise of the Da’esh insurgency offers three factors to be considered: the durability and bellicosity of Islamic fundamentalism, the continued significance of sectarian tension, and the innate limitations of democratization as a means of promoting peace. In this

paper, I break these factors down into three main concepts: regime type, regime instability, and connections between Islam and governance. I then test these three factors to determine whether or not they affect a government's propensity for conflict and I find evidence that this is indeed the case for regime instability and connections between Islam and governance.

This study proceeds in five parts. Following this introduction, I survey the literature regarding democratic peace theory, regime transition and instability, and my explanatory hypothesis of connections between 'mosque and state' and interstate conflict. Next, I construct and explain my theories regarding the relationships between interstate conflict, regime type, regime instability and connections between 'mosque and state'. I then present the research design, variable operationalization, and the statistical analysis and its results. Based on these findings, I draw conclusions and offer policy suggestions, while noting limitations of this study and potential venues for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Establishing the Limitations of Democratic Peace Theory

Ever since Immanuel Kant first argued in 1795 that without provocation, a majority in a democratic society would never vote in favor of war and concluded a world of republics would be one without aggressors, democratic peace theory has been idealized as the solution to interstate conflict. Empirical support for the theory began most notably with Babst's "A Force For Peace" in 1972 and subsequent analyses have routinely found robust confirmation of armistice among fully democratic dyads (Baliga, Lucca, and Sjöström 2011; Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow, Smith and Silverson 1999; Chan 1984; Maoz and Russett 1993; Small and Singer 1976). But are democracies monadically more inclined to peace than non-democracies? Despite that 'seductive proposition,' Small and Singer argue otherwise, noting that from the Congress of Vienna to 1965, states with elected governments, "did become involved in quite a few wars, and not always as defenseless victims of a dictator's aggression. Governments that are not freely elected have no monopoly on unnecessary and aggressive wars" (1976). The general consensus agrees that there is not a monadic relationship between regime type and interstate conflict (Chan 1984; Quakenbush and Rudy 2009; Weede 1984; 1992) in spite of the efforts of R.J. Rummel arguing in favor of democracies being inherently more peaceful (1983; 1985), or at least decreased conflict severity when a democracy engages a non-democracy (1995). Elected governments certainly go to war, just not with each other.

In light of its solely dyadic nature, the mechanism responsible for democratic peace has been questioned, as well, splitting the literature between normative rationalizations (Maoz and Russett 1993) and institutional explanations, noting that democratic leaders' survival necessitates successful foreign policy through meticulous conflict selection and extensive resource mobilization. In short, democracies are disinclined to engage another democracy, knowing that the other democratic leader will devote every resource at his disposal because his political survival depends upon it (Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow, Smith and Silverson 1999). Accompanying this Machiavellian interpretation, an odder addition to the

literature found evidence of a dyadic dictatorial peace when autocracies are classified as single-party, military, or personalist dictatorships (Peceny, Beer, and Sanchez-Terry 2002). Baliga, Lucca, and Sjöström's game theory model (2011) ultimately agrees, muddling the literature further with the suggestion of a non-monotonic relationship between democracy and peace. Dyads of "limited democracies" or anocracies appear almost solely subject to hawkish bias among their constituencies, which could be ignored by a dictatorship or trumped by dovish majority in a democracy. Despite the non-monadic and non-monotonic nature of democratic peace, the ideal of dovish democracy appealed to neoconservative sensibilities after decades of realism throughout the Cold War. America's 21st century expedition into the Muslim world would be defined not only by the removal of immediate threats, but the establishment of democracy to proactively maintain our national security. As George W. Bush suggested February 26, 2003 in a speech before the American Enterprise Institute, "America's interests in security, and America's belief in liberty, both lead in the same direction: to a free [democratic] and peaceful Iraq." (Guardian News and Media Limited 2003) The stability of democracy, however, is not simply a product of regime type but successful transition and power consolidation, as well.

Instability and Regime Transition

Even if a monadic relationship between democracy and peace existed, the literature on regime transition and power consolidation suggests that peace might not be democratization's immediate result. Maoz (1989) maintains that while a political evolution characterized by slow steady transition and minimal intrastate violence promotes peaceful entrance onto the international stage, revolution instigates conflict noting an increased bellicosity one year, five years, and ten years after regime change. Empirical proponents of diversionary foreign policy (Jung 2014; Mansfield and Snyder 1995; 1997; Nicholls, Huth, and Appel 2010) suggest that the state has a choice between inter- or intrastate conflict during times of instability. Nicholls, Huth, and Appel, (2010) demonstrate that in response to domestic opposition, leaders attempt to rally their support through interstate conflict. Mansfield and Snyder's prominent analysis (1995) paints a similar picture alongside a provocative claim that democratization, specifically,

increases a state's propensity for interstate conflict. Their theory suggests that a time of "political impasse" occurs during democratization in which the new institution is hard-pressed to maintain a functional coalition due to the increase of politically significant groups and consequent surge of diversified interests. This in turn threatens the interests of the still-influential elites of the old regime, already reeling against the political and economic changes occurring. The elite then have every incentive to mobilize their allies against the fledgling government struggling for legitimacy to safeguard their assets. In response, the new regime engages in rash political action to maintain power. Mansfield and Snyder suggest the diversionary foreign policy is among the most common responses, vying for legitimacy through victory abroad.

Mansfield and Snyder's groundbreaking study (1995) utilizes Polity II's composite index as well as three individual components Polity used to score regimes: openness of executive recruitment, executive constraints, and competitiveness of political participation among parties. According to Mansfield and Snyder, collective analysis of factors indicates that states have a greater propensity to become involved in interstate war after democratization and to a lesser extent, autocratization. Thompson and Tucker (1997) however, challenge Mansfield and Snyder's findings (1995) arguing their data supports autocratization as having a greater impact on a state's involvement in interstate conflict. This conclusion in favor of belligerent autocratization is also supported by Enterline (1998) who relies upon on Polity III and militarized interstate disputes from 1816-1992 from the Correlates of War Project. Enterline allows for conflict within in 15 years of regime transition and assesses for regime change based solely on the final regime type, with three potential transitions being autocratic, anocratic, or democratic regime change. Due this technique "anocratic regime change" is arguably oversimplified as it fails to distinguish whether a state partially democratizing or autocratizing, which is essential to Mansfield and Snyder's and Thompson and Tucker's debate. Thompson and Tucker (1997) also ran their own chi square analysis and contingency tables, mirroring Mansfield and Snyder's research design. Their results, however, argue for the null hypothesis, concluding that regime change and war are actually independent of one another.

With the research split over the relationship between regime change, state instability, and interstate conflict, Jung (2014) presents a unique look at target selection among states engaging in diversionary foreign policy. He argues that the desired “rally-round-the-flag” effect in a time of regime instability requires a target state that arouses greed or fear amongst the domestic audience. His analysis concludes that the most frequent targets of diversionary foreign policy are states occupying disputed territory, losing their grip on regional hegemony, and fear-inducing rising powers. The regimes established during Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom could arguably fit all these categories relative to the regional and sub-state actors challenging them following the United States’ withdrawal. Understanding the current state of the Middle East and the greater Muslim world, however, also requires consideration of religion’s role in governance.

Religion and Interstate Conflict

With the global religious resurgence shifting international conflict to ethno-religious issues after the Cold War, understanding the role of religion in interstate conflict has become a top priority among political scholars. Many endeavored to dyadically assess Huntington’s ominous hypothesis, the ‘clash of civilizations,’ (1996) and found little empirical support (Bolks and Stoll 2003; Chiozza 2002; Henderson 1997; 1998; Henderson and Tucker 2001; Russett, Oneal and Cox 2000). Russett, Oneal and Cox (2000) and Henderson and Tucker (2001) find evidence suggesting intra-cultural dyads are actually more likely to engage, suggesting Huntington’s blunt cultural monoliths leave a lot to be desired as a predictor of interstate conflict.

Forgoing the ambiguity of ‘culture,’ other researchers have also focused specifically on religion’s influence on political violence, particularly with respect to terrorism. The general consensus concludes, that religion is not a source of the violence without being coopted by political actors (Henne 2012a; Lynch 2010). As an analogue for religion’s influence on interstate conflict this conclusion suggests that religion is only as politically salient as the extent of its ties with the state (Henne 2012b). As a potential instrument of the state, Pape (2003) and Horowitz (2009) demonstrate that religion has the capacity to be

both mobilized in the pursuit of political interests and to defy political interests. Pape's (2003) statistically significant link between the rise of suicide bombing and the Israeli withdrawals from Lebanon and Gaza represents a real gain in territory and sovereignty through the mobilization of religion, albeit through highly unorthodox means. Horowitz's (2009) qualitative study observing the religious and material motivations behind the Crusades, directly supports religious initiation, escalation, and protraction of conflict, even when political or economic interests no longer provide justification. Horowitz also notes religion's stability in the face of changing socioeconomic conditions, suggesting religion may serve as a dam against domestic instability at the price of interstate volatility.

With respect to the political mobilization of religion and its effects on interstate conflict, reviewing literature harkening back to the Crusades or studying terrorism is a pragmatic rather ideal solution. There is a distinct gap in the literature regarding this topic and Henne's (2012b) analysis of conflict between regimes classified by the extent of their institutional ties to religion is among the first bridges to attempt to span it. Henne classifies states based on the presence of an official state religion, laws based on religious standards, and official favoritism towards the official religion. This classification is split into four groups: religious states, civil religious states, passive secular states, and assertive secular states. The study is organized dyadically and the explanatory variable is ultimately operationalized as six potential dyadic combinations: religious, religious-civil religious, religious-passive secular, religious-assertive secular, civil religious, and civil-secular. His study ultimately concludes that religion does not affect a state's involvement in disputes, but mixed religious and secular dyads are expected to experience escalation and increased conflict severity. Furthermore, Henne's controls for different religions suggest that fully religious dyads are conflict prone as well if a sectarian divide exists.

This review of democratic peace theory and the literature regarding the influence of regime instability and religious doctrine on interstate conflict behavior provides a less than optimistic outlook for the Muslim world and the autocratic Arabian Peninsula, in particular. While fully established democracies choose not to engage one another, there is little evidence to suggest these regimes are monadically any less war-prone than their more autocratic counterparts. Additionally, newly established democracies or

any unstable regimes vying for legitimacy appear motivated to pursue brash, aggressive foreign policy to quell or at least divert internal dissent. The alternative of coopting religion as a source of legitimacy may ultimately embroil regimes in more militarized interstate conflict as the political salience of sectarian religious tension is elevated to the national level. In light of democracy serving as a venue for Islamist regimes and heterozygous dyads' predisposition towards conflict, the literature suggests that democratization may not be the full answer to peace in the Middle East.

THEORY

This study considers and analyzes the potential influence of three factors on majority-Muslim states' unilateral inclination towards conflict: regime type, regime instability and transition, and connections between Islam and governance.

When monadically considering regime type's influence on conflict behavior, I build upon the principal assumption that all leaders seek to remain in power, which requires subduing or conceding to domestic pressure in addition to maintaining national security and interests. The defining factor determining a regime's conflict behavior monadically is audience cost and the ability of citizens to remove a leader from power. Democracies have significantly higher audience cost than autocratic regimes due to the relative ease of removing democratic leaders. Ultimately, audience cost remains salient in any political system and my theory argues that any level of audience cost can both urge and dissuade leaders from engaging in militarized interstate disputes.

The high audience cost experienced by democracies discourages democratic leaders from engaging in militarized interstate disputes the state might lose because the leader will be removed from power as a result. Theoretically, autocratic leaders lack such caution because the leader faces less audience cost and will likely remain in power despite defeat (Baliga, Lucca, and Sjöström 2011). More realistically, autocratic leaders maintain a measure of caution because audience cost persists, issuing from a constituency of political elites that the autocratic ruler relies upon for support. The threat of audience cost, likewise, discourages leaders from issuing threats, implicitly or explicitly, and escalating a militarized interstate dispute. If the leader backs down his credibility comes into question (Fearon 1994) among not only his domestic audience but on the international level, as well. Furthermore, in autocratic systems lacking term limits, a leader's credibility is even more important than that of his democratic counterparts whose terms are naturally restricted, restricting autocratic conflict behavior. The actions of Gamal Abdel Nasser leading up to the Six Day War and its aftermath exemplify these two phenomena. As the conflict escalated in the May of 1967, Nasser was locked into carrying out his overt threats against Israel for fear losing his credibility among other Arab leaders and within Egypt where the Muslim

Brotherhood was vying for power and vehemently calling for Islam's defense. Despite Egypt's embarrassing defeat at the hands of Israel, however, Nasser's credibility remained intact allowing him to maintain control of the country and Egypt's standing in the Arab world. As an autocratic leader, he likewise was not removed from office despite his foreign policy failure.

The threat of military defeat pacifies democratic leaders more frequently than their autocratic counterparts, but the influence of the audience cost associated with escalating a foreign crisis and not following through is less clear as it mandates that a leader either not escalate interstate disputes or simply not back down from the escalation. Thus far autocracies appear more conflict prone, however, audience cost necessitates that democratic leaders respond to hawkish bias among the citizens. When feeling threatened democratic constituencies remove leaders not responding belligerently, urging democratic leaders to consider conflict and potential defeat, rather than facing immediate removal from office. Conversely, autocratic leaders are above the passions of the people and are able to respond more coolly to foreign threats, allowing them a unique opportunity to potentially deescalate an international crisis. Admittedly, these autocratic leaders are also above dovish sentiment among citizens (Baliga, Lucca, and Sjöström 2011).

Collectively, these contradicting patterns rooted in audience cost fail to reveal a clear trend in monadic conflict behavior based on regime type. One could extrapolate from dyadic analyses and suggest that autocracies are more conflict prone, lacking shared democratic affinity, however, evidence of a 'dictatorial peace' challenges this. When autocracies are classified as either personalist, military, or single-party dictatorships, homogenous dyads have been found to more peaceful to one another, and while these findings lack the robustness of the democratic peace (Peceny, Beer, and Sanchez-Terry 2002). their existence prevents any distinct hypothesis of regime type's influence on conflict behavior from being extrapolated. If any hypothesis were to be advanced, I would suggest that democratic regimes are more peaceful due to their codified mechanisms for the removal of leaders. Ultimately however, this study advocates for the null hypothesis given its unique set of cases and offers religious influence on governance as an alternative explanation.

H1: Regime type has no significant impact on majority-Muslim state involvement in disputes, conflict, or war.

It should be acknowledged that religion, if at all salient, naturally influences societies on a personal or local scale, rather than nationally. Establishing official connections between religion and state draws that political salience to the national level, however. This politicization of religion and its influence is readily apparent in the case of Islamic fundamentalism, which is frequently interpreted as complimentary to political systems, if not a political system within itself. This article argues that these extensive ties between ‘mosque and state’ increase majority-Muslim states involvement in militarized interstate disputes and advances three theories justifying this argument.

First, the rigidity of religious fundamentalism may limit the ability of Islamist regimes to compromise. Simply put, once a conflict has been framed in religious terms, how does one compromise with the will of God? Islamic fundamentalism offers an extensive and well established prescription of norms or laws for a people or polity to abide by. Although the ‘gates of *ijtihad*’ may be open allowing for the continued development of jurisprudence to accommodate modern needs, conflict is not a new phenomenon. During the time of the Prophet and the caliphates that followed, laws regarding conflict were established that can be applied today. Consequently, the actions and conflict behavior of Islamist leaders may be constrained by their adherence to religious doctrine. In this instance, the defining factor may be not only the state’s interpretation of Islam, but its constituency’s expectation of adherence to that interpretation.

Theoretically, greater connections between Islam and governance should allow the state greater control over the dominant interpretation of Islam and hence enjoy greater flexibility of policy. Ostensibly this was the case in Saudi Arabia preceding Operation Desert Shield in 1990, when King Fahd commanded the religious establishment to issue a fatwa supporting the presence of U.S. troops to defend the kingdom against the advances of the Iraqi army and Saddam Hussein after his invasion of Kuwait. This example is a cautionary tale, however. The presence of U.S. troops on Saudi soil incited religious fundamentalists who considered it to be an affront to Islam and began challenging King Fahd’s authority,

questioning his faith and adherence to Wahhabi doctrine. This event, in addition to destabilizing the kingdom and being a catalyst in the formation of al-Qaeda, demonstrates the limitations of politically implementing religious doctrine. These interpretations of Islam are older and more established than the regimes invoking them and consequently, deriving legitimacy from these sources requires strict adherence. Upon formally adopting religious doctrine, the regime has the opportunity to interpret the religion in a manner suited towards running a modern state. Changing that interpretation, later on, however, may require not only the cooption and cooperation of the religious establishment, but the collective agreement of the Muslim constituency within the state, as well.

As the Saudi example demonstrated, Islamist regimes experience higher audience cost, arising from the Muslim constituency holding the state accountable to religious doctrine. This increased audience cost limits an Islamist leader's ability to compromise and deescalate militarized interstate disputes if the conflict in question is justified by religious doctrine. Moreover, the predominant conservative interpretations of Islam adopted in official capacities by states can be used to justify engaging secular and religious regimes alike, feeling threatened by differences in the latter's interpretations of Islam. To clarify conflict is not open-endedly justified by Islamic fundamentalism, but the potential exists for a state to use religion to justify nearly any conflict. Management of international crises, however, is a delicate art, whereas invocation of religion is a blunt instrument lacking the refinement to deescalate such crises without significant domestic backlash.

In addition to audience costs, this rigidity may persist through obstinate leaders who refuse to compromise based on their personal convictions and interpretations of Islam. In these instances, religion cannot be considered through a traditional political lens, such as a source of legitimacy or audience cost. It serves as a confounding factor defying basic motivations of political expediency. Despite risks to national security, religious leaders may be disinclined to deescalate a militarized interstate dispute and seek a peaceful alternative, not out of fear of audience cost, but simply personal belief that the conflict is ordained as proper religious practice. However, these decisions are rarely irrational and obstinate leaders may also be entertaining ulterior motives with this appearance of religious devotion. Ayatollah Ali

Khamanei exemplifies this with his endorsement of militarized conflict with Israel through Iranian support of Hezbollah and Hamas. Iran has no tangible material interest in removing Israel from the map or the establishment of a Palestinian state, just as Israel has nothing practical to gain from a nuclear assault on Tehran. Consequently, Ayatollah Khamanei may simply support the conflict, believing Israel's treatment of Palestinian Muslims to be an affront to Islam. Iran, however, also enjoys considerable influence throughout Arabian Peninsula due to its endorsement of conflict with Israel. In short, strict adherence to religious doctrine even in the face of international crises can be a considerable source of soft power.

The second theory supporting Islamist belligerency suggests that adopting religious doctrine at the state level formally codifies sectarianism, disadvantaging adherents to other religious interpretations within the state, while also acknowledging the existence of a supranational identity above that of nationality. Religious regimes may be obligated by this supranational identity and intervene or engage in militarized interstate disputes on behalf of this identity. Iran exemplifies this with its extra-national support for the Shi'a majority in Iraq and Shi'a minority in Lebanon. Despite cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and national divisions, Iran is willing to engage in interstate disputes to defend or advance this Shi'a constituency. A more nuanced example can be found in this case of Arab support for Afghan jihad against Soviet occupation. Supporting the mujahideen and risking the wrath of the Soviet Union conceivably defied the national interests of many Arab states, who were playing the two super powers against one another. Nevertheless funds poured in from Saudi Arabia, while the rest of the Arab states looked the other way as a number of their citizens left to join the jihad. Iranian support for the Palestinians, particularly Islamist Hamas demonstrates that this supranational religious identity can even transcend traditional understandings of sectarianism. Conventional sectarian tensions remain salient, however, because the establishment of a national religious ideology disadvantages national constituents who don't adhere to that interpretation or an agreeable one. Potentially, this could result in an international crisis initiated by another religious state obligated by its own supranational identity or an interventionist global power, such as the United States seeking to defend the rights of religious minorities.

The implications of codified sectarianism offer a third explanation of increased militarized interstate dispute participation among Islamist regimes to be considered: being targeted. Thus far these theories have offered unilateral attributes increasing Islamist regimes' proclivity for conflict, but ultimately these regimes may simply be more frequent targets of Western aggression. Extrapolation from dyadic study suggests secular regimes are more likely feel threatened by religious states, potentially bringing many of these Islamist regimes into conflict with the American hegemon (Henne 2012). The unilateral nature of this analysis lacks a measure of dispute initiation allowing it to parse out this specific theory, necessitating its consideration when reviewing the data.

Collectively, the rigidity of religious fundamentalism preventing compromise, obligation to supranational religious identity, and foreign challenges arises from sectarianism and religiosity support the hypothesis that connections between 'mosque and state' increase a state's involvement in interstate disputes. Furthermore the closer the ties are between Islam and governance the greater the substantive effect is, increasing the odds of dispute escalation.

H2: Closer ties between Islam and state increase state involvement in militarized interstate disputes and increase the odds of these disputes escalating to conflict and war.

A spurious relationship arising from regime instability could also exist between interstate conflict and Islam and governance. In this instance, an unstable regime struggling to maintain power may attempt to buttress its legitimacy through the cooption of religion. The regime dons the cloth of fundamentalist piety and appeals to favorable *ulama* for support while silencing any others who don't offer their blessing. By coopting religion, a regime not only removes a potential source of dissent with religious institutions typically being the only mechanism to voice grievances in an autocratic society, but the regime can then use those same institutions to quell opposition and promote obedience as piety. Historically, the caliphate and even its secular successors relied upon *ulama* endorsing conservative interpretations of Islam, lauding acquiescence to absolute rule and mollifying the population (Elhadj, 2009). The spurious nature of this relationship arises, however, if the population refuses to be mollified due to severe grievances and regime instability persists despite the religious institutions' support. Mounting unrest authorizes rash action and

the regime may turn to international crisis to quell internal dissent, igniting a militarized interstate dispute as diversionary foreign policy. In this highly specific case, regime instability engenders the administration's religious 'awakening' as well as its newfound belligerency.

This hypothesis of a spurious relationship is limited in scope, however. Quick observation of regimes and religious institutions throughout the Muslim world reveals the relationship between mosque and state often outlives administrations and the instability theoretically responsible for it. Assuming for a moment that instability is solely responsible for conflict and the cooption of religion, both should end with the fall of the associated regime. The link between Islam and governance persists, however, because the *ulama* come to command an authority of their own over the state. Cutting ties would incense the religious establishment, threatening regime stability. The enhanced role of Islam in governance opens the regime to more international disputes and conflicts based upon the previously established theories of the rigidity of religious fundamentalism, sectarianism and obligation to supranational religious identity, and being targeted by threatened secular world powers. With respect to the influence of regime instability, the religious establishment assumes the role of an intermediary, suppressing domestic dissent while increasing state propensity for dispute involvement and escalation abroad. Ultimately, in the post-WWII period the human and infrastructure cost of civil war relative to limited interstate conflict makes coopting and conceding to the religious establishment a rational choice, allowing the current ruling party to remain in power.

To account for this potential role of the *ulama* as mediators between regime instability and interstate conflict, instability and regime change need to be controlled for as factors potentially motivating the creation of a limited diversionary international crisis. The key term in this instance is 'limited.' An unstable state may try to rally the nation around the flag with the creation of a superficial or limited militarized interstate dispute. Escalation to open war would be dangerous for the administration and the state as a whole, given its current weakness based domestic conditions. Consequently regime instability or change is expected to have a negative relationship with regime's escalating to war.

H3: Recent and substantive regime change or instability increases state involvement in disputes and increases the odds of these disputes escalating to conflict.

H4: Recent and substantive regime change or instability decreases state involvement in war.

Continuing with the logic of ‘limiting’ interstate conflict due to domestic weakness, the national material capability of regimes needs to be accounted for. The reasoning behind this simply suggests that regimes don’t readily engage in conflict from a point of perceived material or military vulnerability. Similarly, regimes devoting more resources and personnel to their militaries are more likely to intervene in foreign affairs and be embroiled in an international crisis. Ultimately, the negative reasoning holds more clout. A regime does not engage in conflict simply because it can, but a regime perceiving itself as at a disadvantage seeks to avoid conflict confirming that weakness.

H5: Increased national material capability or military power increases state involvement in militarized interstate disputes, conflicts, and wars.

The final contingency needing to be addressed is the durability and cyclical nature of conflict. Simply put, conflict begets conflict and having been entangled in a militarized interstate dispute in the previous year increases the odds of being involved in another dispute in the current year.

H6: Being involved in a dispute or conflict in the previous year, increases the likelihood of state being involved a dispute of conflict in the current year.

In light of the limitations of determining a regime’s conflict behavior based upon its regime type this study suggests that connections between ‘mosque and state’ may be a better predictor among majority-Muslim states. I theorize that the political implementation of Islamic fundamentalism constrains the ability and willingness of leaders to compromise, while elevating the salience of religious sectarianism. This institutionalized societal discrimination likewise draws unwanted attention from abroad. Domestic instability, however, remains a compelling competing theory, as motivation for the leaders of Muslim states to both coopt the religious establishment for legitimacy and pursue foreign adventurism. Analysis of this central hypothesis requires controlling for this contingency as well as states’ national material capability to engage and the intransience of previous disputes and conflicts.

ANALYSIS

The analysis proceeds by first establishing the data being analyzed and the research design before explaining the operationalization of the dependent, independent, and control variables. Tables from the statistical analyses are then displayed and analyzed.

Data and Research Design

The analysis utilizes a state-year format, coding the regime and religious attributes of every state with a majority-Muslim population (as of 2010), between 1946 and 2010, unless the state was created after 1946, in which case the data collection begins with the year of its formal establishment. All militarized interstate disputes recorded in the Correlates of War project's Militarized Interstate Dispute participant-level dataset between 1946 and 2010 are included if at least one of the participants in that dispute is a majority-Muslim state. These disputes are tallied by count variables for each state and each year and are also truncated into an alternate dichotomous operationalization, as well. Based on these measures, the analysis uses negative binomial regressions to assess the explanatory factors' influence on the count variables and logit models to analyze the dichotomous versions as a robustness check against outliers among the count variables. Marginal fixed effects of the negative binomial regressions are also analyzed to evaluate substantive significance of the explanatory variables and the negative binomial regressions are also assessed country fixed and year fixed effects to ensure no national or chronological idiosyncrasies are driving the results.¹

“Table 1: Descriptive Statistics,” on the following page, contains univariate analysis of every variable utilized in the analyses, indicating the number of observations, mean value, standard deviation, maximum and minimum values, and the variable's source if it's from the Correlates of War project or Polity IV.

¹ State-Religious Data gathered by the author, Marginal Fixed Effects Computations, Country Fixed and Year Fixed Negative Binomial Regressions, Robustness tests using Vanhanen's Polyarchy in place of the Polity Index and Logit Models are available upon request from the author. Pertinent results are recorded in the Tables: 2, 3, and 4, and discussed in the accompanying analyses.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std Dev.	Min.	Max.
Dispute Involvement (COW)	2164	.762	1.449	0	27
Conflict Involvement (COW)	2164	.475	1.166	0	26
War Involvement (COW)	2164	.039	.197	0	2
Dispute Involvement Dummy (COW)	2164	.410	.492	0	1
Conflict Involvement Dummy (COW)	2164	.294	.456	0	1
War Involvement Dummy (COW)	2164	.039	.193	0	1
Lagged Dispute Involvement Dummy (COW)	2163	.410	.492	0	1
Lagged Conflict Involvement Dummy (COW)	2163	.294	.456	0	1
Official Religion	2164	.568	.495	0	1
Government Involvement in Religion	2164	6.033	2.617	0	10
Religious Minority Treatment	2164	2.729	1.148	0	5
Role of Sharia	2164	.599	.710	0	2
Composite Islam and Governance Index	2164	10.085	5.580	0	20
Polity Index (PolityIV)	2118	-4.116	5.585	-10	10
Autocratic Regime Type Dummy (Polity IV)	2118	.594	.491	0	1
Closed Anocratic Regime Type Dummy (PolityIV)	2118	.165	.371	0	1
Open Anocratic Regime Type Dummy (PolityIV)	2118	.127	.333	0	1
Democratic Regime Type Dummy (PolityIV)	2118	.114	.318	0	1
Regime Durability (PolityIV)	2135	13.833	15.362	0	84
Regime Change within 5 Years Dummy (PolityIV)	2135	.393	.488	0	1
Lagged Comparative Index of National Capabilities (COW)	1782	2.831	3.783	.013	17.929

Dependent Variables

This analysis utilizes three main dependent variables derived from the Correlates of War project's Militarized Interstate Dispute participant-level dataset (Palmer, D'Orazio, Kenwick, and Lane 2014). These variables are involvement in an interstate dispute, involvement in an interstate dispute escalating to militarized conflict, and involvement in an interstate dispute escalating to war (conflict amounting to 1000+ fatalities). The breakdown of escalation is provided by the MIDB dataset's "Hostility level of dispute" 5-point index. Dispute involvement includes disputes of any hostility level, whereas dispute escalation to conflict only includes disputes ranking a 4 or higher and dispute escalation to war only includes disputes ranking a 5. To reiterate all wars are conflicts, all conflicts are disputes, but not all disputes are conflicts or wars. For the principal analysis these measures are operationalized as count variables, increasing by 1 for each dispute, conflict, or war a state is participating in within a given state-year. These measures are operationalized monadically, that is to say independent of a conflict dyad. Subsequently, one is unable to parse out a specific dispute from the state-year dispute, conflict or war totals unless it happens to be the only dispute, conflict, or war the state participated in within a given year. Conflicts spanning multiple years are counted within each year they occurred, with respect to the final hostility level. A dispute may not have escalated to conflict or war within its first year of existence but it is counted as though it did. These count variables are also truncated down to three simplified dichotomous operationalizations, recorded as a 1 if a state participated in any dispute, conflict, or war and 0 if the state participated in none. These dichotomous variables were implemented to provide a robustness test against any results produced from analysis of the count variables, checking against outliers that might be driving results, such as Iran 1987, which participated in 27 interstate disputes, 26 of which were conflicts and 1 was a war. To put this in perspective, the means of dispute involvement and conflict involvement were .762 and .475 for any given state-year across the dataset. The addition of these dichotomous measures and logit analyses allows for outliers, such as Iran 1987, to be fully considered, while accounting for their potentially drastic influence on the results.

Independent variables

The main explanatory variable of connections between Islam and governance is operationalized through four measures state-religious attributes: the specification of a state religion, government involvement in religion, treatment of religious minorities, and the official role of Islamic jurisprudence or Sharia in society. A composite index of these four attributes was also developed and implemented. These variables were derived from the Religion and State Project (Fox 2011), the Minorities at Risk project, US Department of State International Religious Freedom Reports, and also from my personal coding of various constitutional and encyclopedic sources such as the New York University School of Law's "GlobaLex." The three foremost measures are based upon the coding methodology utilized by the Religion and State project (Fox 2011). The indices are appropriately simplified based on the cases of interest and to allow for the feasible expansion of the analysis back to 1946. The coding of Sharia is based on the Jan Michiel Otto's classification in *Sharia and National Law in Muslim Countries: Tensions and Opportunities for Dutch and EU Foreign Policy* (2008). In addition to operationalization explanation offered in the following section a codebook of the religious variables gathered by the author is included in the appendix.

The presence of a state religion is coded as a simple dichotomous variable indicating a 1 if the state names an official state religion and a 0 if it doesn't. This information was objectively coded back to 1946 through the use of various constitutional sources. While lacking inter-coder reliability prior to 1990 the study, the simple nature of this measure suggests reliability. The inclusion of this variable follows Henne's research design, (2012) which included the universe of cases available to him between 1990 and 2010, rather than just majority-Muslim states, where the presence of an official state religion may prove considerably more significant due to increased variation. In this set of cases the mean value, .568, (Table 1: Descriptive Statistics) indicates less than 60% of cases name an official state religion indicating enough significant variation to warrant inclusion. However, it should be noted that the substantive influence of the variable and its validity may be stemmed, even if it proves statistically significant. Within the Arabian

Peninsula, declaration of state religion is not so much a defining factor of the nature of a regime, but simply recognition of the prominence of Islam within society. The secular regimes of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq would not have enjoyed the mandate to rule without this basic enshrinement of religion. As such, the recognition of an official state religion in these instances is ultimately less effectual on national policies than a Western audience, touting the necessity of divided church and state, might expect. Nevertheless the presence or lack thereof of an official state religion outside of the Arabian Peninsula remains a substantive indicator of religious influence on national policy. This measure's validity with respect to the Arab states remains questionable, and its influence is theorized to be less potent than the other measures of connections between Islam and state.

Government involvement in religion was coded on an eleven-point ordinal index based on Religion and State Project's variable by the same name (Fox 2011). This index assessed the mutual roles of government and religion and their effects upon each other. States were coded on the basis of religion being mandated for all or simply members of the official religion, such as Saudi Arabia and Iran respectively. If this weren't the case, state support for and control over the religious establishment was also examined. Benefits of lack thereof to specific religious establishments were also examined. Ultimately, the index provided a scaling of states from the passionately religious to the civil religious cooperation, passive secular separation of Mosque and state, and finally active secular hostility to religion practiced by communist regimes. Inclusion of this measure was also based on Henne's research design (2012) and the measure's validity is far more attuned to distinguishing Arab republics from Islamic ones. Examining state control over the religious establishment in particular, captures the ironic need of secular regimes attempting to avoid subjugation to Islamists, to embrace a tighter relationship between the religious establishment and the state to do so. Whereas the validity of the measure is well matched to the hypothesis the reliability should be subject to scrutiny. The ordinal index is highly subjective in nature and the information was collected by the author, alone, rather than a team of coders, and lacks any measure of inter-coder reliability. Furthermore, it is not well sourced and results ascertained from models using this measure should be at the very least, taken with a grain of salt.

Treatment of religious minorities was coded on the six-point ordinal index used by Religion and State Project (Fox 2011). The index ranges from the intensely religious, naming all other religions illegal, to state atheism in which all religious affiliations are discriminated against by the state. Less religious states may simply name only a few religious minorities illegal or apply legal restrictions to certain majorities, such as the Confessional System within Lebanon. More secular regimes may embrace only preferential treatment of the majority religion or equality for all religious sects. This measure is a valid proxy operationalization of the theories of politically salient sectarianism and supranational religious obligation. It suffers from the same questions of inter-coder reliability and sources as government involvement in religion, before 1990, however. Luckily, official legislation determining the treatment of religious minorities can be far more objectively analyzed but limitations of reliability should still be considered when reviewing analysis results.

The coding of Sharia is based on the Jan Michiel Otto's classification in *Sharia and National Law in Muslim Countries: Tensions and Opportunities for Dutch and EU Foreign Policy*. Majority-Muslim states are classified as classical sharia systems, mixed systems, or secular systems. In classical systems sharia is dominant source of legislation and Islamic criminal jurisprudence is utilized by the state. Mixed systems acknowledge Sharia in some capacity, typically personal status law and family courts, but state law is otherwise secular. Simply put, Sharia is not the sole source of legislation. Finally secular systems do not acknowledge Islamic jurisprudence in any official state capacity. Given Sharia's strict prescription of norms and laws this operationalization is a valid measure assessing the rigidity of Islamic fundamentalism theory. Coding the role of Sharia is objective but once more lacks inter-coder reliability.

Due to the correlation between these 4 variables resulting in multicollinearity, a composite index was constructed to assess the collective influence of the four state-religious variables. Each variable was equally weighted and the index was set to scale of ranging from 0 to 20 with 0 representing Communist Albania after World War II and 20 representing Saudi Arabia. This index allows for a direct assessment

of the hypothesis of closer ties between Islam and governance increases state involvement in militarized interstate disputes without focusing on any particular one theories advanced by this study, when this theories may be affecting conflict behavior in tandem.

This study also analyzes the competing hypothesis of regime type. This concept is operationalized through of the Polity IV (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2014) dataset's twenty-one point composite index measuring the democratic qualities of each state-year and four dichotomous variables representing a thorough classification of regime type. The "Polity" index ranges between -10 and 10 and the regime classification proceed as follows: autocracies (≤ -6), closed anocracies (≥ -5 and ≤ -1), open anocracies (≥ 0 and ≤ 5), or democracy (≥ 6). While generally considered reliable despite undisclosed sources, the validity of Polity when measuring autocracy needs to be considered. Polity examines regimes on the basis of regulation, competitiveness, and openness of executive recruitment, executive constraints, and the regulation and competitiveness of participation. Collectively, these elements constitute the basic requirements for democracy without accounting for any measure of human rights or political liberties. Autocracy is not understood by Polity as having any definitive characteristics but as simply non-democracy. This understanding is considerably less specified than Linz's four points of authoritarianism (1964), but this operationalization, albeit simple remains valid for the purposes of this analysis. Tatu The "Index of Democracy" from Vanhanen's Polyarchy (2000) is also included to provide a test of robustness against the Polity index. Vanhanen's purely empirical process leaves little room of distinction between autocracies and anocracies, limiting its operationalization to use of the compound index.

Regime change and instability are measured with Polity IV's "Regime Durability" variable and a dichotomous variable derived from it. "Regime Durability" counts the number of years since the most recent regime change, which is defined as a 3 point change on the polity index, or the occurrence of a transitional period characterized by fluctuating regime attributes. Keeping with the logic of Maoz (1989) and the models of Mansfield and Snyder (1995) and Thompson and Tucker, (1997) but simplifying it to suit the purposes of this analysis, the dichotomous variable indicates regime transition or instability

within the last 5 years. Put bluntly, “Regime Durability” is truncated to a 1 whenever it less than or equal to 5 and a 0 when it’s greater.

This operationalization of regime change captures substantive transitions. These transitions are non-directional, indicating neither democratization nor autocratization. The prevailing logic behind this lack of specification is the hypothesis that the instability generated by any regime change makes a state more dispute prone. Furthermore operationalization of directional regime change poses a problem with regard to determining substantively significant regime changes. Polity IV sets a baseline for substantive change with its “Regime Durability” variable measuring changes in a polity score of 3 or more. With this in mind, consider a positive change in regime score, increasing an autocracy receiving a -10 on the polity index to a -7. It’s substantive but this can hardly be called even partial democratization. One can attempt to note democratization only when a regime changes types based on the previously established classification. However, a transition from an autocracy receiving a -6 to a closed anocracy receiving a -5 is not substantive but would qualify as democratization in this instance. Ultimately, the number of dichotomous variables required to fully test regime change, directionally and substantively would likely produce unintelligible, collinear results. Likewise, simply observing the baseline propensities of regime types for dispute involvement and controlling for regime transition, theoretically serves as a proxy measure of this same phenomena.

Control Variables

Controlling for the presence of militarized interstate disputes and conflicts in the previous year is necessary due to the durability of disputes. These controls were operationalized simply as lagged versions of the already established dichotomous measures of dispute and conflict involvement. Given the rarity of instances escalating to war in this dataset, I did not create an indicator of involvement in war in the previous year, opting simply to utilize the lagged indicator of conflict for those models examining escalation to war.

The other variable to be controlled for is state material capability, based on the hypothesis that regimes avoid costly disputes when lacking the material capability required for engaging and defeating another state. This variable is operationalized with the Composite Index of National Capability compiled by the Correlates of War National Material Capabilities Dataset version 4.0 (Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey 1972), which includes measures of military expenditures, military personnel, total population, urban population, energy consumption, and iron and steel production. To balance against states' increasing their military expenditures and conscription during times of conflict, the CINC value is lagged by a year. One could reasonably argue that this isn't enough, given the permanence of conflict or rather disputes lasting more than a year simply having a compounding effect unmitigated by the lag, bringing the issue of causality into question. The inclusion of the lagged dichotomous measure of dispute or conflict involvement, however, should be controlling for any military pressure on civilian leaders to continue or escalate a dispute, as well as the residual effects of conflict in the previous year, such as increased military power. Furthermore, the Composite Index of National Capability dilutes the raw influence of military power with civilian factors such as total and urban populations, which are strained by interstate conflict, ultimately providing a more balanced understanding of state's capability to engage in a militarized interstate dispute. There is a downside to the inclusion of the Composite Index of National Capability because it lacks information for roughly 300 observed state-years due to stricter population requirements than the Polity IV dataset, poor reporting throughout Saharan and Sub-Saharan Africa in general and globally during times of instability. Each series of regressions includes at least model without the index to more fully observe the range of cases. I considered using less nuanced models of state capability such as measures of GDP, but historically this has been a poor predictor of power, particularly among the oil monarchies of the Gulf, namely Saudi Arabia with its surprisingly small population relative to its expanse of territory. Returning to the operationalization, the CINC score is multiplied across the dataset by 1000, for ease of interpretation of marginal effects, creating a nearly eighteen point range rather than a .0179 'point' range. (See Table 1 for further details.)

Statistical Analysis and Results

The following statistical analysis proceeds in three parts, displaying and discussing the results of each series of negative binomial regressions before proceeding to the next series observing a different dependent variable. In order, the three series of regressions analyze involvement in militarized interstate disputes, involvement in militarized interstate disputes escalating to conflict, and involvement in militarized interstate disputes escalating to war.

Each of following tables includes 6 models, individually examining the influence of each state-religious attribute as well as the composite Islam and governance index. The sixth model serves as a robustness test for a particular religious variable of interest in that series of regressions, allowing us to reexamine that variable's influence without the Comparative Index of National Capabilities' inherent constraint on the number of observations.

Within the tables, after the information is displayed for each model, the bottom three rows indicate whether the results were robust with at least 90% confidence after accounting for country fixed and year fixed effects and if the religious variable remained statistically significant in a logit model.

Table 2. Dispute Involvement

	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]
Official Religion	.135† (.075)			.		
Government Involvement in Religion		.038** (.015)				
Religious Minority Treatment			.188*** (.035)		.311*** (.032)	
Role of Sharia				.103* (.046)	.	
Composite Islam and Governance Index						.022** (.007)
Closed Anocratic Regime Type Dummy	-.211* (.103)	-.203* (.103)	-.194† (.101)	-.220* (.102)		-.196† (.103)
Open Anocratic Regime Type Dummy	-.218† (.125)	-.210† (.124)	-.252* (.145)	-.214† (.124)		-.198 (.124)
Democratic Regime Type Dummy	-.178 (.116)	-.123 (.119)	-.214* (.109)	-.174 (.114)		-.109 (.117)
Polity Index					.002 (.006)	
Lagged Dispute Involvement Dummy	1.460*** (.077)	1.45*** (.077)	1.417*** (.077)	1.45*** (.078)	1.615*** (.072)	1.439*** (.078)
Regime Instability (Instability within 5 Years)	.191* (.076)	.191*** (.076)	.202** (.075)	.175* (.076)	.163* (.069)	.189* (.075)
Lagged Comparative Index of National Capabilities	.090*** (.008)	.088*** (.008)	.074*** (.008)	.088*** (.008)		.085*** (.008)
Constant	-1.579*** (.089)	-1.73*** (.120)	-1.972*** (.119)	-1.547*** (.078)	-2.272*** (.119)	-1.720*** (.103)
Wald χ^2	632.320***	635.780***	658.140***	633.980***	701.820***	639.92***
Log Likelihood	-1820.335	-1818.601	-1807.4243	-1819.502	-2135.424	-1816.535
N	1738	1738	1738	1738	2088	1738
Pseudo R ²	.148	.149	.154	.148	.141	.150
Country Fixed Effects	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Year Fixed Effects	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Religious Variable	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Significant in Logit Model

Negative Binomial Regressions

Marginal Fixed Effects examined for each model

*** p ≤ .000 ** p ≤ .01 * p ≤ .05 † p ≤ .1

In the first series of negative binomial regressions, every state-religious variable had a statistically significant increase on state involvement in militarized interstate disputes with 95% confidence, except for the presence of an official state religion, which achieved a statistically significant increase with only 90% confidence. These results were robust across the logit models as well. Likewise, every state-religious variable remained significant when accounting for country-fixed and state fixed effects, except for official state religion which actually reversed direction in the country-fixed version of Model 1.

With the exception of the presence of an official state religion, these results provide strong statistical support for the central hypothesis that increased connections between Islam and state increase state involvement in militarized disputes. Fixed marginal effects computations, holding the rest of the factors in their models constant, indicate that these state-religious variables are also substantively significant.

The role of Sharia maintains the weakest cumulative coefficient with a regime being 10% more likely to engage in a dispute with each marginal increase along the ordinal index, culminating in classical Sharia system being only 22% more likely to be involved in a dispute than a secular system. Marginal increases along the government involvement in religion index comparatively increase the likelihood of dispute involvement by only 4%, but this suggests that states that mandate religion for every citizen are 46% percent more likely to be involved in interstate disputes than states espousing atheism. Religious minority treatment is indisputably the strongest predictor of majority-Muslim states' involvement in militarized interstate disputes, statistically and substantively. For each marginal increase along the index, the likelihood of dispute involvement increases by 21%, which cumulatively suggests that an Islamist regime that declares all other religious sects illegal is 112% more likely to experience an interstate dispute each year than one maintaining equal rights for all religions and 156% more likely than an active secular regime persecuting all religious adherents. In the fifth model, which drops the Comparative Index of National Capabilities and expands the number of observations by approximately 300, the substantive coefficient for religious minority treatment borders upon the extreme, with regimes scoring highest on the

index being 15.24x as likely to experience an interstate dispute as a regime scoring lowest on the index. Collectively, these results suggest that the theory of sectarianism and supranational religious obligation (and potentially the theory of Islamist regime being targeted because of their minority treatment) is a better explanation of the influence of religious fundamentalism on dispute participation than the theory of decisional rigidity.

The composite index of Islam and governance provides a balanced view. Regimes scoring highest on the index are 57% more likely to engage in a militarized interstate dispute than those scoring lowest on the index. Ultimately, the index and the statistically significant variables provide strong statistical and substantive support for the central hypothesis: stronger connections between Islam and state increase a majority-Muslim states' involvement in interstate disputes.

As hypothesized, these results provide very little empirical support for unilateral pacification by democratization or majority-Muslim democracies being significantly less likely to engage in interstate disputes than autocracies. Four of the five models truncating the Polity index into dichotomous variables fail to suggest that there is a statistically significant difference between democracies' and autocracies' involvement in interstate disputes. Model 3, which chiefly examines the impact of religious minority treatment, does suggest with 95% confidence that democracies are less inclined to engage in interstate disputes than autocracies. A quick survey of the coefficients, however, suggests that open autocracies are actually expected to be even more peaceful than democracies. This trend is supported across all five models using the dichotomous measures of regime type. The sixth model, which utilizes the raw Polity index, fails to suggest that a state's regime type has any statistically or substantively significant effect on its involvement in interstate disputes.² Collectively, these results favor the null hypothesis suggesting regime type is a poor predictor of majority-Muslim states' interstate dispute involvement.

² Results consistent when Vanhanen's Polyarchy Index is used in place of the Polity Index and the model includes the dichotomous measure of regime instability operationalized via Polity IV and the Correlates of War's National Material Capability Index.

Regime instability was statistically significant with at least 95% confidence across all six models. The average substantive influence suggests that an unstable regime is 20% more likely than a stable regime to engage in an interstate dispute. This coefficient suggests that regime instability is a more immediate predictor of dispute involvement than marginal changes along the state-religious indices besides religious minority treatment. Conversely, the state-religious variables have a greater overall effect; a regime advocating for separation of the state and religious establishment but plagued with instability is still less likely to be entangled in an interstate dispute than a stable regime mandating religion for all of its citizens.

Involvement in an interstate dispute in the previous year was statistically significant in every model with more than 99.99% confidence and considerable average substantive influence suggesting a regime embroiled in an interstate dispute in previous year was on average 336% more likely than a regime that experienced peace in the previous year to be involved in an interstate dispute in the current year. This coefficient speaks to the durability of interstate dispute involvement, noting not only the potential longevity of an individual dispute, but the reciprocal nature of disputes. Engaging in an interstate dispute in the previous year is ultimately the most dominant immediate predictor of dispute involvement in the current year, suggesting that regimes, seeking to avoid further conflict, need to remain weary even after a dispute has been ‘settled.’

In the five models it was included in, the comparative index of national material capabilities was shown to be statistically significant with more than 99.99% confidence. For each marginal increase along the nearly 18 -point index, a regime is, on average, 8.6% more likely to engage in an interstate dispute. Capability doesn’t engender conflict, but regimes are far more inclined to compromise and settle interstate disputes when that capability is lacking.

Table 3. Dispute Escalation to Conflict

	[7]	[8]	[9]	[10]	[11]	[12]
Official Religion	.074 (.092)					
Government Involvement in Religion		.036† (.019)				
Religious Minority Treatment			.173*** (.045)			
Role of Sharia				.109† (.056)	.229*** (.052)	
Composite Islam and Governance Index						.019* (.008)
Closed Anocratic Regime Type Dummy	-.263* (.127)	-.255* (.127)	-.223† (.126)	-.268* (.127)		-.247† (.127)
Open Anocratic Regime Type Dummy	-.220 (.155)	-.197 (.154)	-.236 (.152)	-.196 (.155)		-.187 (.155)
Democratic Regime Type Dummy	-.269† (.144)	-.194 (.147)	-.284* (.135)	-.230 (.141)		-.189 (.145)
Polity Index					.002 (.008)	
Lagged Conflict Involvement Dummy	1.870*** (.093)	1.86*** (.093)	1.82*** (.093)	1.86*** (.093)	2.096*** (.085)	1.855*** (.093)
Regime Instability (Instability within 5 Years)	.321*** (.092)	.320*** (.092)	.326*** (.091)	.306** (.092)	.177* (.084)	.318** (.092)
Lagged Comparative Index of National Capabilities	.085*** (.010)	.082*** (.010)	.071*** (.010)	.082*** (.010)		.080*** (.010)
Constant	-2.145*** (.107)	-2.32*** (.148)	-2.547*** (.151)	-2.156*** (.095)	-2.115*** (.090)	-2.296***
Wald χ^2	627.290***	630.450***	641.830***	630.39***	662.030***	631.910***
Log Likelihood	-1317.846	-1316.262	-1310.5728	-1316.300	-1555.202	-1315.536
n	1738	1738	1738	1738	2088	1738
Pseudo R ²	.192	.193	.197	.193	.176	.194
Country Fixed Effects		yes	no	no	yes	no
Year Fixed Effects	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Religious Variable	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes

 Negative Binomial Regressions

Marginal Fixed Effects examined for each model

*** p ≤ .000 ** p ≤ .01 * p ≤ .05 † p ≤ .1

Empirical support for connections between Islam and governance increasing state involvement in interstate conflicts is admittedly weaker than dispute participation regardless of escalation. Models 9, 10, and 12 contain statistically significant state-religious variables, but these results are not robust when the regressions are controlled for country fixed effects, suggesting some national idiosyncrasies are driving the results. Model 8 encounters a similar issue, with the significance of government involvement in religion remaining robust when controlled for country-fixed effects but not through the logit model. Without being able to determine which national attribute is driving these results, the substantive effect of religious minority treatment, the role of Sharia, and the composite index of Islam and governance on state involvement in conflict should still be considered.

A marginal increase along the religious minority treatment index increases a regime's likelihood to be involved in an interstate conflict by 18%. This slightly lower coefficient suggests that while regimes may be picking disputes based on supranational religious obligations, they are less likely to militarily commit to defending their fellow religious adherents. This arguably follows the pattern of Iranian support for Shi'a communities, preferring to arm the communities themselves against Sunni oppression rather than directly intervene militarily. An increased role of Sharia in legislation is slightly more politically salient with respect to regime involvement in conflict than interstate disputes. A classical Sharia system is 11% more likely to be involved in conflict than a mixed system and 24% more likely than a secular system. Definitively, a marginal increase along the composite index of state religious variables produces only a 2% increase in regime conflict involvement. However, this suggests that a majority-Muslim state scoring lowest on this index is 48% less likely to be drawn into a militarized conflict than one scoring highest. These results collectively support the central hypothesis with respect to conflict involvement as well.

Model 11 demonstrates an issue with the operationalization of the control variable for national material capability that may be reducing the statistical and substantive significance of the state-religious variables. Missing data require the analyses to drop approximately 300 observations when the

comparative index for national material capabilities is included. These missing data aren't random; it consists largely of cases from sub-Saharan Africa, which are both less religious and less conflict prone, and years of instability when information could not be recorded. With the inclusion of these observations, dropping any measure of national material capability from the model increases both the statistical and substantive significance of the role of Sharia. Model 11 suggests that classical Sharia systems are 25% more likely to be involved in conflict than mixed systems and 58% more than secular systems. Having dropped a measure of state capacity, this could simply imply that regimes adopting Sharia as their dominant source of legislation are also more powerful actors in foreign affairs. Relative to sub-Saharan Africa, this would be true of oil monarchies and the Islamic republic along the gulf. It also suggests, however, that these sub-Saharan African secular regimes are more peaceful than their devout neighbors in the northeast. Without imputing the missing data, this confounding factor must be accounted for when considering the influence of state-religious attributes.

Once more there is not consistent empirical support for majority-Muslim democracies being less conflict prone than autocracies,³ suggesting connections between Islam and governance are better long-term predictors of conflict behavior than regime type. Ironically, this series of regressions did find a consistent, statistically significant relationship suggesting closed anocracies are regularly more peaceful than autocracies whereas democracies are not.

The short-term or immediate predictors of conflict involvement: regime instability, conflict in the previous year, and national material capabilities were all statistically significant across each model they were included in. Regime instability is an increasingly salient factor among regimes participating in disputes escalating to conflict with unstable regimes being approximately 34% (37% dropping Model 11) more likely to engage in interstate conflict than stable regimes. Involvement in interstate conflict in the previous year, however, remains the predominant immediate predictor of conflict, increasing a state's likelihood of involvement by an average of 570% (541% dropping Model 11). Marginal increases along

³ Results consistent when Vanhanen's Polyarchy Index is used in place of the Polity Index and the model includes the dichotomous measure of regime instability operationalized via Polity IV and the Correlates of War's National Material Capability Index.

the Composite Index of National Capabilities were slightly less substantive throughout the second series of regressions, increasing a state's propensity for conflict by only 8.3%. When compared to average coefficient from the first series of regressions, this decrease may indicate an interaction occurring between regime instability and national capability. Based on regime instability's increased salience among these models, regimes faced with domestic instability appear to be willing to risk limited interstate conflict despite lacking national capability. This does not suggest that national capacity to engage in interstate conflict is not a significant factor. Regime instability is simply, a stronger and more dynamic predictor, being subject to change far more frequently than the relatively static values that compose the national capabilities index such as population and energy consumption.

Table 4. Dispute Escalation to War

	[13]	[14]	[15]	[16]	[17]	[18]
Official Religion	.706* (.289)			.		
Government Involvement in Religion		.165** (.058)				
Religious Minority Treatment			.364** (.138)			
Role of Sharia				.176 (.144)		
Composite Islam and Governance Index					.053* (.025)	.075** (.027)
Closed Anocratic Regime Type Dummy	-.842† (.480)	-.842† (.481)	-.807† (.482)			
Open Anocratic Regime Type Dummy	-.138 (.458)	-.093 (.457)	-.265 (.455)			
Democratic Regime Type Dummy	-.053 (.381)	.128 (.381)	-.337 (.362)			
Polity Index				-.025 (.023)	.008 (.025)	.027 (.022)
Regime Durability					.014** (.027)	.016** (.006)
Lagged Conflict Involvement Dummy	2.362*** (.337)	2.381*** (.335)	2.299*** (.335)	2.38*** (.337)	2.342*** (.337)	2.564*** (.314)
Regime Instability (Instability within 5 Years)	-.255 (.272)	-.254 (.273)	-.208 (.273)	-.375 (.263)		
Lagged Comparative Index of National Capabilities	.088** (.027)	.075** (.026)	.066* (.028)	.094*** (.026)	.071** (.027)	
Constant	-5.205*** (.390)	-5.823*** (.522)	-5.721*** (.527)	-5.078*** (.353)	-5.667*** (.402)	-5.805*** (.396)
Wald χ^2	136.190***	138.760***	137.080***	127.900***	137.740***	146.72***
Log Likelihood	-252.692	-251.406	-252.247	-256.840	-251.917	-281.237
N	1738	1738	1738	1738	1738	2088
Pseudo R ²	.212	.216	.214	.199	.214	.207
Country Fixed Effects	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes
Year Fixed Effects	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes
Religious Variable	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes
Significant in Logit Model						

Negative Binomial Regressions

Marginal Fixed Effects examined for each model

*** p ≤ .000 ** p ≤ .01 * p ≤ .05 † p ≤ .1

The third series of negative binomial regressions examining interstate dispute escalating to war finds stronger empirical support for the central hypothesis than the previous, suggesting connections between Islam and governance are better predictors of interstate wars than interstate disputes escalating only to conflict. Proper interpretation of these coefficients requires an understanding of the rarity of war. In this dataset it occurs among less than 4% of the state-years analyzed and only 12 of the 46 states observed were participants. Subsequently, this rarity appears to have an inflationary effect on the coefficients. For example, the data suggest that regimes naming a state religion are 103% more likely to engage in war than those that don't. The same effect can be spotted as well in the cases of government involvement in religion and religious minority treatment. Marginal increases along the government in religion index increases a regime's likelihood to be involved in a war by 16%, which cumulatively suggests an intensely religious regime scoring highest on the index is 422% more likely than those scoring lowest. Comparing the fixed marginal effects of the religious minority treatment index yields similar results. Religious regimes declaring every other religion illegal are 516% more likely to be involved in war than atheist regimes. This inflation isn't erroneous, however; war is simply so rare that any factors increasing its occurrence appear to have extraordinary influence. The index provides a slightly more balanced view aggregating these influential factors with the remarkably insignificant role played by Sharia. Based on Model 17, states scoring highest on the index are 187% more likely to be involved in war than those scoring lowest. Model 18 places the same substantive coefficient closer to 351% increase, reiterating the interaction between state-religious variables and the exchange between sub-Saharan observations and the Composite Index of National Capabilities. Apparent inflation aside, a distinct, statistical and substantive relationship exists between Islam and governance and state involvement in disputes escalating to war.

Inclusion of the Polity index in the final three models sealed the fate of democratization not having a monotonic relationship with peace, as this series of regressions failed to statistically discriminate

between the majority-Muslim autocracies' and democracies' respective inclinations for war.⁴ Closed anocracies, however, were found to be approximately 75% less likely to be embroiled in war than autocracies.

Conflict involvement and national material capabilities were statistically significant and substantive immediate causes of state involvement in war, once more. Regime instability, however, did not have a statistically significant relationship with regimes escalating disputes to warfare. This partially disagrees with the fourth hypothesis which suggested regime instability would reverse direction because unstable regimes would avoid war. These results suggest that regimes are essentially torn between trying to limit conflict during a period of national weakness and using the threat of foreign belligerents as a source of legitimacy, suppressing that instability.

Polity IV's measure of regime durability was included in the final two models and found to be statistically significant with a substantive coefficient of a regime being actually 2% more likely to engage in a war with each year it doesn't experience regime transition or instability. The most plausible theory explaining this outcome suggests that established regimes, not fighting for legitimacy on the domestic front, are more likely to be engaged and potentially entangled in foreign affairs.

Despite operational limitations, this analysis finds robust evidence supporting the central hypothesis that closer ties between 'mosque and state' increases state involvement in militarized interstate disputes and the likelihood of those disputes escalated to armed conflict and war. Monadically, democracy appears to no significant relationship with peace. While this observation may actually be a product of the subjective bias inherent to the Polity project rather than the actual conduct of the regimes, consistent results from the robustness checks using Vanhanen's Polyarchy would suggest otherwise (Casper and Tufis 2003). The logic behind domestic volatility being a strong predictor of disputes and

⁴ Results consistent when Vanhanen's Polyarchy Index is used in place of the Polity Index and the model includes the dichotomous measure of regime instability operationalized via Polity IV and the Correlates of War's National Material Capability Index.

conflicts but a potential deterrent to war, as well as a motivating force, stands based on the empirical analysis. Having controlled for each state's material capability, the cyclical nature of conflict renewing itself and time and country drive effects, these analyses provide a model to consider the conflict behavior of majority-Muslim states based on their relationship between Islam and governance and regime stability.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study provide robust support for a monadic relationship between interstate conflict and closer connections between Islam and governance among majority-Muslim states. Religious regimes are predisposed to be involved in militarized interstate disputes and those disputes are more likely to escalate to conflict and war. Furthermore, the influence of religion on interstate conflict varies depending on the mechanism of its application. The analyses suggest that religious favoritism and discrimination against religious minorities is the predominant state-religious factor proliferating interstate conflict. Increased government involvement in religion also had a routinely significant increase in interstate dispute involvement and escalation. Implementation of Islamic jurisprudence, however, is less consistently a factor and naming an official state religion is comparatively benign, except in the rare case of war, when its influence is inflated relative to said rarity.

With respect to democratization, this study finds no evidence of a monadic relationship between democracy and peace. Democratic regimes are statistically neither more nor less inclined to conflict than autocracies. Interestingly, closed autocracies were consistently the most peaceful regime type throughout the models. This is most likely indicative of a balance struck by these regimes, which maintain just enough repression to quell internal dissent and eliminate the need for diversionary foreign adventurism, while simultaneously evading the negative international attention and foreign intervention that accompanies excessive domestic repression. Collectively, closed autocracies were also the least materially capable among the states examined, which serves a prominent natural barrier against engaging in militarized interstate conflict.

This paper also finds strong support for the hypothesis that regime instability increases the likelihood of militarized interstate disputes and the likelihood of those disputes escalating to armed conflict. The pursuit of diversionary foreign policy and the threat of regional challengers seeking to capitalize on domestic volatility are persistent realities for fledgling governments still vying for legitimacy and power consolidation. For a leader attempting to remain in office despite domestic

grievances and challengers, its rational to engage in foreign adventurism, pick a fight, and divert internal dissent and aggression abroad. Regime instability, however, does not open-endedly justify belligerency. While internal volatility may encourage brash political action, the innate weakness that accompanies it inhibits the level of conflict leaders are willing to commit to. Regime instability is not a significant predictor of conflicts escalating to war as a result of the contradictory effects of domestic instability. Leaders seek to limit interstate dispute during times of internal volatility when full mobilization of the nation's resources isn't possible.

The first limitations of this study I'll discuss are largely technical. Collection of the state-religious data lacked of inter-coder reliability and transparent sourcing. As a single undergraduate student I simply lack the resources to prepare a dataset, more professionally. Furthermore, having simplified and built upon the Religion and State Project (Fox 2011) there is no dataset in existence (to the best of my knowledge) to compare my observations against and serve as a robustness check. Ideally, future studies will have access to more reliable and reputable data. While on the topic of data reliability, in the future these regressions could ideally be run with imputed data filling the gaps in the national material capability index. These analyses do not represent the universe of majority-Muslim states due to missing data from sub-Saharan Africa, where Islam is considerably less potent and regimes are less prone to interstate conflict to the scale of the Arabian Peninsula. The coefficients of the state-religious variables are likely being reduced by this less than random hole in the data.

Shifting to theoretical limitations, considering disputes monadically is simply flat. It allows for none of the typical controls against historic rivalries, territorial disputes, or intra-dyad trade. As my notion of nationalized sectarianism and supranational religious obligation might suggest I was often grasping, theoretically, at dyadic effects, which were undeniably affecting the analyses, but remained unmeasurable due to my unit of analysis. Ultimately, this study offers a solid but blunt result: majority-Muslim states with closer ties between 'mosque and state' are more inclined to be involved in militarized interstate disputes. The exact cause of this remains a matter of debate, whether these regimes are inherently more

aggressive or simply more likely to be targeted by secular or religious-sectarian aggressors. Naturally the next step would be to observe these factors dyadically to build a more complete model of international affairs in the Muslim World. I would argue, however, that drawing any truly meaningful results from such an endeavor would require a more nuanced coding scheme than utilized within this analysis. This assessment of religiosity doesn't take into account the idiosyncrasies that persist within politically motivated interpretations of Islam. Dyadically, it is simple to note the Sunni-Shi'a divide and differentiate Iran and Saudi Arabia, but distinguishing the state-religious connections of Saudi Arabia from those of the introductory example, Da'esh, is far more complex. Certainly, Da'esh is not an acknowledged state in the international system, but it arguably behaves as one given the size of territory it occupies and its 'population.' Differentiating the relatively peaceful behavior of Saudi Arabia towards the West from the violent rhetoric of Da'esh, based upon the politicization of Islamic fundamentalism, requires a clear distinction between conservative and radical Salafism, which may not in fact be that clear. Meaningful dyadic analysis will need to take this into account.

Based upon these findings, democratization alone is not the answer to peace. I do not deny that effective and meaningful democracy could be an ideal solution to overcome intrastate barriers to peace, such as discrimination against religious minorities or leaders' disinclination to compromise. Democracy, however, can take many forms and the potential for tyranny by the majority to suppress minority dissent is a very real possibility. The current state of Iraq, subjugated to a radical insurgency, exemplifies the potential for the wounds of inadequate democracy to fester and become infected. Promoting democracy abroad is not an immediate solution to peace or security for the United States. It requires continued custodianship, serving as both an exemplar of proper democratic practice and minority consideration and a foundation for a new regime lacking legitimacy. Indeed, extreme caution needs to be exercised when handling regime change. While consolidated democracies may be stable and subsequently more peaceful, transitioning regimes are neither. Their need for legitimacy makes cooption of the religious establishment or diversionary foreign policy seductive alternatives. These sources of legitimacy, however, will

ultimately undermine the regime, making it more prone to interstate conflict in the long run. State building requires a long-term investment and continued effort that may not be worth the present cost.

If state building is to be attempted, however, actively promoting secular governance over Islamic fundamentalism appears to be the best strategy to establish a more lasting peace in the Muslim world. While more moderate Islamists, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, may be firmly entrenched within Muslim societies and capable of organizing and securing power, their legitimacy remains temporary at best as Egypt demonstrated during the brief reign of Mohamed Morsi. An illiberal regime's treatment of religious minorities may incite domestic instability authorizing diversionary foreign policy or foreign intervention, if the regime itself it doesn't collapse. Likewise, the rigidity of religious doctrine appears to constrain both Islamist leaders' ability and willingness to compromise, making such states volatile domestically and internationally.

Suppressing the political implementation of Islamic fundamentalism may appear to be a blunt measure with respect to our conservative allies in the Gulf, but when one considers the financial and rhetorical support for Salafist extremism that pours out of Saudi Arabia, the response may be warranted. As alluded to previously, the source of the enmity between Saudi Arabia and Da'esh is not ideological diversity but similarity, competing for control over a greater Sunni constituency. The barbaric Sharia-inspired punishments utilized by the radical Salafist insurgency occupying Iraq hardly deviate from the precedent set by the more conservative Salafist regime in the south. While the monarchy of Saudi Arabia may be opposed to Da'esh, the extremists' doctrine was arguably born and cultivated in the Kingdom's austere religious environment. Taking a step forward in promoting liberal secularism and religious equality in the region, may require a less lenient look at the policies of our religious and admittedly, less than tolerant allies.

The solution of total democratization of the Muslim world, defined by an unnatural societal suppression of Islam mirroring the policies of Ataturk in the early 20th century, may not prove to be

viable, however. As the steady Islamist shift in Turkey has demonstrated, the durability of Islamic fundamentalism threatens to render any such attempts at complete suppression, futile. A more nuanced solution specifies the targeted suppression of illiberal interpretations of Islam that fail to respect pluralism and minority rights. Islam is not inherently incompatible with liberalism or democracy by any means and based on the continued salience of religious minority treatment in predicting interstate conflict, one could imagine a liberal Islamic democracy or “Shuracracy” (Hoffman 2001) to behave more peacefully than its conservative, autocratic counterparts. The prevailing political implemented interpretations of Islam, however, capitalize on the religion as a source of support for blind obedience to authoritarian rule (Elhadj 2009). Effecting the rise of this theorized liberal Islam requires suppression of such regimes including the United States’ religious allies along the Gulf. Liberalization of the Muslim world, however, is an abstract and long term investment towards peace. In the short term, a more concrete and viable solution requires reconsidering the fractures and fault lines of the Middle East with respect to national boundaries. Redrawing the map would most likely disagree with the concentrations of natural resources citizens have grown accustomed to benefitting from, but establishing meaningful regional autonomy (and effective division of said resources) grounded along religious divisions may be the first step forwards in limiting sectarianism, domestic volatility, and interstate conflict.

APPENDIX A: STATE-RELIGIOUS VARIABLES CODEBOOK

Official State Religion

1 – The state names an official state religion.

0 – The state doesn't name an official state religion.

Government Involvement in Religion

10 – Religious State 1: Religion mandatory for all.

9 – Religious State 2: Religion mandatory for members of official religion.

8 – State Controlled Religion, Positive Attitude: The state both supports a religion and substantially controls its institutions but has a positive attitude toward this religion.

7 – Active State Religion: State actively supports religion but the religion is not mandatory and the state does not dominate the official religion's institutions.

6 – Tiered Preferences: one religion is clearly preferred by state, receiving the most benefits, there exists one or more tiers of religions which receive less benefits than the preferred religion but more than some other religions.

5 – Cooperation: The state falls short of endorsing a particular religion but certain religions benefit from state support more than others. (Such support can be monetary or legal)

4 – Supportive: The state supports all religions more or less equally.

3 – Accommodation: Official separation of church and state and the state has a benevolent or neutral attitude toward religion in general.

2 – Separationist: Official separation of Church and state and the state is slightly hostile toward religion. This includes efforts to remove expression of religion by private citizens from the public sphere.

1 – State Controlled Religion, Negative Attitude: The state controls all religious institutions and discourages religious expression outside of those institutions. This is part of the state's policy of maintaining social control or keeping religion in check rather than due to ideological support for religion.

0 – Specific Hostility: Hostility and overt persecution of religion where state ideology specifically singles out religion in general or religion is in some other way uniquely singled out for persecution.

Religious Minority Treatment

5 – All other religions are illegal.

4 – Some religious minorities are illegal (the state only recognizes certain religions) and/or religious minorities face major societal discrimination or violence.

3 – Religious minorities face some legal restrictions and/or minor societal discrimination (discriminatory hiring practices, housing, etc.)

2 – Religious minorities face practical restrictions and/or the majority religion receives preferential treatment.

1 – Religious minorities and the majority receive equal treatment from the state.

0 – The state espouses and enforces atheism (such as occupied Afghanistan or Communist Albania) and consequently any form of religion occupies a ‘minority’ status and is discriminated against by the state.

Role of Sharia

2 - Sharia jurisprudence is enshrined as state law and serves as both criminal law and the basis for all legislation.

1 – Sharia jurisprudence applies only in matters personal status and state law is otherwise secular. State law may provide for separate personal status courts for each religion. State law may also be a mixture of Sharia and other modes of law (customary, civil, etc.). Ultimately Sharia is not the sole source of legislation.

0 – Sharia jurisprudence is not acknowledged in any official capacity by the state.

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