Can Muslims be Democratic?
Empirical Evidence on the Influence of Muslim Religiosity on Support for Democracy

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PhD Dissertation

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Acknowledgment

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to family and friends. Especially, I would like to thank my parents for their infinite love and support throughout my life. My parents have sacrificed a lot to offer my siblings and me the best opportunities in life, including a good education. Without their encouragement and unconditional support, it would not have been possible for me to get an education. To my sisters and brothers, thank you for always being there for me. Finally, yet importantly, I am deeply grateful to my husband. Without your patience, support, and understanding, my PhD process would not have been as smooth and enjoyable. Living with you means more to me than anything else in this world.

Arzoo Rafiqi
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Preface

This summary report presents my PhD dissertation, *Can Muslims be Democratic? Empirical Evidence on the Influence of Muslim Religiosity on Support for Democracy*, carried out at the Department of Political Science, Aarhus University. The report presents the broader theoretical framework, main results, and contributions, and outlines how the individual articles conjointly form a basis for answering the overall research question of the dissertation. More specific and detailed description of the theoretical expectations, methods, and empirical findings can be found in the four self-contained articles accompanying this summary report:

A. Rafiqi, A. (2019). A Clash of Civilizations? Muslims, Christians, and Preferences for Democracy. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 58*(3), 689-706.

B. Rafiqi, A. Religiosity and Democratic Values: Experimentally Disentangling the Effect of Religiosity among Muslims and Christians. *Unpublished manuscript.*

C. Rafiqi, A. What Kind of Democracy? Experimental Evidence on Religiosity and Democratic Preferences among Muslims and Christians. *Unpublished manuscript.*

D. Rafiqi, A. Do They Really Want Democracy? An Experimental Test of Preferences for Democracy among Muslims and Christians. *Unpublished manuscript.*

Chapter 1: Introduction

For several decades and especially since 9/11, there has been much controversy over two critical questions: Do Muslims support democracy? Is their religiosity compatible with democracy and its fundamental values? These questions have been widely discussed not only in the public and political debates but also in the scientific literature (e.g., Statham & Tillie, 2016). On the one hand, theorists like Huntington (1993, 1996a, 1996b) and proponents of his thesis have argued that Islam, unlike Christianity, is at odds with democratic norms. Specifically, they have posited that Muslims' religiosity promotes intellectual conformity, uncritical acceptance of authority, and intolerance of opposing views, which contradicts democratic norms. One of their notable claims is that Muslims, unlike Christians, believe that sovereignty only rests in God, whom they perceive as the ultimate source of political authority, precluding the possibility that political authority may rest with people – a prerequisite for democracy (see, e.g., Huntington, 1996b, p. 31; Lewis, 2010, p. 66). Obviously, in a democracy, political authority cannot rest exclusively with God or religious leaders (Kubicek, 2015). On the other hand, several scholars have argued that no religion is univocally pro- or anti-democratic (Stepan, 2000; Wald & Wilcox, 2006) and point out that Islam and other religions can be compatible with the ideals of democracy (e.g., Esposito & Shahin, 2013; Esposito, Sonn, & Voll, 2016; Esposito & Voll, 1996; Halliday, 1995; Mernissi, 2002).

However, these discussions have mostly focused on theology and religious doctrines, and for the most part, they remain at a theoretical and hypothetical level. Unfortunately, empirical evidence on how Muslim religiosity, compared to Christian religiosity, affects individuals' support for democracy remains scarce. This question is arguably more pertinent to clarify, as individuals' support for democracy is all-important for its success and prosperity (e.g., Diamond & Plattner, 2008; Inglehart, 2000; Shin, 2007, 2015). Likewise, it is very informative to know whether the effect of Muslim religiosity differs from that of Christian religiosity, which is often considered compatible with democratic norms (see, e.g., Fukuyama, 2006; Huntington, 1966a; Lewis, 2010). Most existing empirical studies examine the relationship between Islam and democracy at the societal level (Barro, 1999; Inglehart & Norris, 2002; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Rahman, 2013), while studies at the individual level are scarce (Diamond & Plattner, 2008; Fish, 2011). Indeed, we cannot conclude on individuals' attitudes based on studies at the societal level, as a relationship

existing at one level does not necessarily exist at another level. Such a conclusion implies a risk of ecological fallacy (Hox, 2010).

In recent years, a few attempts have been made to address Muslims' support for democracy. However, they are marked by several limitations such as scanty potential of generalizability and reliance on thin operationalization of religiosity and democratic support. Moreover, most extant attempts are based on observational studies and therefore unable to establish the causal role of religiosity in democratic attitudes, as potential alternative explanations may threaten their internal validity. This is unfortunate from a research perspective because it leaves us with a line of important unanswered questions.

First, we have limited insights on whether Muslims in general and religious and practicing Muslims in particular prefer democracy less than Christians because of their religiosity. There is an important aspect pertaining to this limitation. Although much effort has been made to discuss theoretically the influence of Islamic affiliation on democracy, we still lack generalizable and empirical evidence on whether Muslim religiosity, unlike Christian religiosity, as such discourages individuals' support for democracy. Indeed, many other parameters besides religiosity might affect democratic attitudes (Hayes, 1995; Kotler-Berkowitz, 2001; Saroglou, 2011), and it is essential to consider these parameters before concluding whether they do or do not support democracy because of their religiosity.

Second, we currently do not know whether Muslims, compared to Christians, have genuine preferences for living in a democracy. Several studies document that the notion of democracy has achieved a positive image and legitimacy worldwide, and even non-democrats now express superficial support for it (e.g., Cho, 2015; Dalton, Sin, & Jou, 2007; Dalton & Welzel, 2014; Lagos Cruz-Coke, 2001; Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007; Shin, 2015; Shin & Kim, 2018). From this perspective, the overwhelming popular approbation of democracy may only reflect social desirability rather than genuine preferences. Likewise, it is unexplored whether Muslims, unlike Christians, merely express support for an abstract ideal of democracy or also support fundamental democratic values such as political tolerance and opposition to politically motivated violence (e.g., Canetti et al., 2010; Gibson, 1992, 2006, 2007; Karpov, 1999b, 2002). Indeed, superficial and overt support for democracy is not an essential predictor of genuine support for democracy and its principles. Several studies document that when people express overt support for democracy, they do not necessarily endorse its underlying values and reject authoritarianism (Bratton, Mattes, & Gyimah-Boadi, 2005; Carrión, 2008; Chu, Diamond, Nathan, & Shin, 2010; Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007; Shin, 2015). To offer a more accurate and comprehensive account of democratic support, we must consider whether people also endorse fundamental norms of democracy.

Third, it has rarely been considered whether Muslims and Christians have different conceptions of democracy. It is less fruitful to know whether Muslims, like Christians, support democracy if we do not know how they conceive of democracy, as there exist not just one but many differential notions of democracy ranging from authoritarian to liberal (Cho, 2015; Dalton et al., 2007; Norris, 2011; Ulbricht, 2018; Zagrebina, 2019). Likewise, there are very few empirical studies of how Muslim religiosity, compared to Christian religiosity, affects individuals' preferences for different kinds of democracy. We currently do not know whether, due to their religiosity, Muslims and Christians prefer to live in a liberal or an authoritarian democracy, which differ along several essential dimensions (Diamond, 1999; Linz & Stepan, 1996; Norris, 2011; Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007; Shin, 2015). The present dissertation addresses these limitations in the literature by conducting various empirical analyses of how Muslim religiosity, compared to Christian religiosity, influences individuals' support for and conceptions of democracy. Comparing the effect of these two religiosities contributes to a direct test of the Islam-critical thesis that Muslim religiosity, unlike Christian religiosity, obstructs the development of democracy (see, e.g., Fukuyama, 2006; Huntington, 1966a; Lewis, 2010). Moreover, this comparison puts Muslims' democratic support into a broader perceptive, as Christians, like Muslims, constitute one of the world's most significant religious group that is generally considered highly supportive of democracy. The dissertation seeks to answer the following overall research question:

> *How does Muslim religiosity, compared to Christian religiosity, affect individuals' support for and conception of democracy?*

The answers provided in this report and the four self-contained articles have important implications for our understanding of how Muslim compared to Christian religiosity affects individual democratic thinking.

The summary report proceeds as follows: Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework and derives from it the main theoretical expectations. Chapter 3 describes and discusses the methods and data employed to test the theoretical expectations empirically. Chapter 4 presents findings of the dissertations and discusses how they conjointly answer the overall research question. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the contributions and implications of the findings and concludes with suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2:
Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the dissertation's theoretical framework. The main theoretical arguments build on the Islam-critical theories stressing incompatibility between Muslim religiosity and democracy. I argue that even though these theories are not clearly formulated on the individual level, they have some observable implications at that level, which I focus on in this dissertation. I start by defining democracy and democratic support and religiosity. Subsequently, I derive a set of theoretical expectations about the influence of Muslim religiosity, compared to Christian religiosity, on individuals' support for democracy and their democratic conceptions.

2.1. Democracy and Democratic Support

Democracy is a highly contested notion with many differential conceptions varying from authoritarian to liberal (Cho, 2015; Dalton et al., 2007; Norris, 2011; Ulbricht, 2018; Zagrebina, 2019). Even in the academic literature, there is still no consensus on how to define democracy (Collier & Levitsky, 1997; Ulbricht, 2018). Some political scientists provide minimalist definitions of democracy, while others provide more maximalist and demanding definitions. For example, Schumpeter (1974 [1942]) argues simply that representative democracy means competition for political power through free elections, which is the primary mechanism guaranteeing officials' accountability to citizens. If such a competition exists, it is a democracy, even if only a minority has the right to vote. If such competition is absent, it is an autocracy. This minimalist definition is often expanded with several criteria, such as freedom of expression, association, and assembly (Dahl, 1989) and rule of law (O'Donnell, 2001; 2004). In this dissertation, I adopt the maximalist understanding of liberal democracy as standing in stark contrast to authoritarian religious democracy (see section 2.4).

Like the notion of democracy, democratic support is a multidimensional phenomenon. While most scholars agree that public support for democracy is essential for democratic development and consolidation because it is an important indicator of the legitimacy of the regime (Diamond & Plattner, 2008; Inglehart, 2000; Meyer, Tope, & Price, 2008; Shin, 2007, 2015), they do not agree on how to examine it. However, there is growing consensus in the literature that democratic support is a family of attitudes that can be differentiated into two broad categories: general overt support and substantive support for

fundamental democratic values (see, e.g., Shin, 2007, 2015). Most existing studies only examine the former category, abstract or overt support for democracy, where people express superficially pro-democratic views (e.g., Bratton, 2003; Inglehart, 2003; Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Tessler & Gao, 2008). Yet, this is not an essential predictor of people's genuine support for democracy and its principles, as several studies document how, when people express overt support for democracy, they do not necessarily endorse its underlying values and reject authoritarianism (Bratton, Mattes, & Gyimah-Boadi, 2005; Carrión, 2008; Chu, Diamond, Nathan, & Shin, 2010; Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007; Shin, 2015). To offer a more accurate and comprehensive account of democratic support, we must also consider the second category of democratic support, implying that people also endorse norms fundamental to democracy such as political tolerance and opposition to politically motivated violence (e.g., Canetti et al., 2010; Gibson, 1992, 2006, 2007; Karpov, 1999b, 2002). Therefore, I examine the effect of Muslim religiosity, compared to Christian religiosity, on both kinds of democratic support, which enables me to clarify whether its effect is consistent on different aspects of democratic attitudes. This also provides an opportunity to clarify whether the two religious groups' support for democracy is superficial or substantial.

However, investigating support for democracy among Muslims and Christians does not tell us what kind of democracy they support. Therefore, I investigate both how Muslim religiosity, compared to Christian religiosity, affects individuals' support for democracy and their support for a certain type of democracy. In doing so, we gain comprehensive knowledge about Muslims' and Christians' support for democracy and about their preferences for liberal or authoritarian religious democracy – the two conceptions of democracies I focus on in this dissertation.

2.2. Religiosity: Belonging, Belief, and Behavior

Before addressing the relationship between Muslim and Christian religiosity and democracy, it is worth defining religiosity, which is the depth of belief, practice, and commitment of an individual who subscribes to a religion's ideas. Indeed, religiosity is linked to religious affiliation, but religious affiliation alone does not mean engaging in active belief, practice, or commitment. Therefore, we may expect religious affiliation to affect political behavior and attitudes through religiosity (e.g., Saroglou, 2011; Smidt, Kellstedt, & Guth, 2009).

While it is possible to think about religiosity as a single dimension, current literature usually considers it a three-dimensional phenomenon: belonging, beliefs, and behavior (Guth, Green, Kellstedt, & Smidt, 1995; Layman & Green,

2006; Smidt et al., 2009). Religious belonging refers to an individual's strength of attachment to a specific religious denomination or group (Smidt et al., 2009: p. 9). Members of the same denomination or religious tradition usually share a sense of belonging and identity due to their shared history, norms pertaining to beliefs and behavior, and common heritage. The second dimension consists of religious beliefs, encompassing the theological component of religiosity. Most religions consist of some fundamental beliefs, ethical codes, and symbols, such as a belief in God and life after death (Smidt et al., 2009: p. 20-23) that individuals might believe in to different extents. The third dimension, religious behavior, consists of the social-collective and practicing element of religiosity. Practicing religiosity includes, for example, praying, reading sacred texts, and attending worship services, typically in a house of worship where adherents practice their faith with fellow believers (Smidt et al., 2009: p. 23-24).

These three dimensions exist both in Muslim and Christian religiosity, but their substance and meaning are obviously not the same in both religiosities. For example, religious beliefs do not mean the same among Muslims as among Christians, since they do not believe in the same religious doctrines and rules. Likewise, Muslims and Christians practice their religiosity – pray and attend worship services – in entirely different ways. Thus, although Muslim and Christian religiosity consists of the same three dimensions, their content and substance are not the same. Accordingly, the two religiosities might have different effects on individuals' democratic support and conception.

2.3. The View that Muslim Religiosity Contrasts Democracy

Recent decades have been marked by a theoretical debate on whether Islam poses an obstacle to democracy and its fundamental values. Several influential observers (e.g., Huntington 1984, 1996a, 1996b, Fukuyama, 1992, 2006; Kedourie, 1994; Lewis, 2010) allege that fundamental democratic norms such as openness, tolerance of divergent views, pluralism and equality are totally at odds with Islam. For example, Fukuyama (1992) states that: "Islam has indeed defeated liberal democracy in many parts of the Islamic world, posing a grave threat to liberal practices even in countries where it has not achieved political power directly" (p. 45). Likewise, Kedourie (1994) paints his critique of Islam with a broad brush:

> the notion of popular sovereignty as the foundation of governmental legitimacy, the idea of representation, of elections, of popular suffrage, of political institutions being regulated by laws laid down by a parliamentary assembly, of

these laws being guarded and upheld by an independent judiciary, the ideas of the secularity of the state, of society being composed of a multitude of self-activating groups and associations—all of these are profoundly alien to the Muslim political tradition (p. 5-6).

Most importantly, Islam is considered anti-democratic because it vests all sovereignty in God, who is perceived as the only source of political authority and whose divine law must be the foundation of governmental legitimacy. Democracy is based on a very different logic, where the political authority rests with people, who are sovereign and accountable to themselves (Kubicek, 2015). In a democracy, political authority cannot rest exclusively with God or religious leaders, and some theorists conclude that Islam, unlike Christianity, precludes the conception of popular sovereignty as the foundation of governmental legitimacy (Huntington, 1996b; Kedourie, 1994; Lewis, 2010). Huntington (1996b) has advanced this thesis by claiming that Muslims, unlike Christians, believe that "God is Caesar" (p. 31), i.e., they perceive God as the ultimate source of political authority. According to Lewis (2010), "For believing Muslims, legitimate authority comes from God alone, and the ruler derives his power not from the people, not from his ancestors, but from God and the holy law" (p. 66).

In short, Huntington (Huntington, 1996a, 1996b), (Fukuyama, 1992, 2006), Kedourie (1994), and Lewis (2010) among others, view Islam, unlike Christianity, as monolithic and antidemocratic, and therefore a hindrance to the development of democratic values among its adherents. This idea fits very well within a longstanding and comprehensive scholarly tradition emphasizing that religiosity is one of the decisive factors in shaping individual political attitudes and behavior (e.g., Adorno et al., 1950; Anderson, 2004; Billings & Scott, 1994; Cladis, 2010; Schwartz & Huismans, 1995; Smidt et al., 2009). The premise of this argument is that religiosity forms individuals' values, beliefs, and behavior through a socialization process. Notably, interaction in religious institutions and exposure to religious doctrines are seen as important elements in this process. Smidt et al. (2009) formulate it as follows: "Through patterns of association and interaction, as well as exposure to varied teachings about the way religion is linked to politics, members of different religious groups exhibit divergent political traits" (p. 9). Thus, since Muslims and Christians are involved in entirely different religious environments and thereby exposed to very different religious doctrines and ways of thinking, their approach to democracy might differ significantly from each other.

The Islam-critical theories, including Huntington's thesis about the incompatibility of Islam with democratic norms, are not clearly formulated at the individual level. However, they certainly have observable implications at

the individual level, which I focus on in this dissertation. The knowledge that religiosity plays a crucial role in shaping individual political attitudes combined with the theoretical reasoning on the negative relationship between Islam and democracy gives rise to expect that Islam, unlike Christianity, makes its adherents more negative towards democracy. This theoretical argument takes us to the first hypothesis:

> **H1:** Muslim religiosity (belonging, belief, and behavior), unlike Christian religiosity, has a negative effect on individuals' democratic attitudes.

2.4. Which Conception? Liberal or Authoritarian Religious Democracy

How does Muslim religiosity, compared to Christian religiosity, affect individuals' conception of democracy? This is, certainly, a relevant question to ask as notions of democracy vary from authoritarian to liberal (Cho, 2015; Dalton et al., 2007; Norris, 2011; Ulbricht, 2018; Zagrebina, 2019). We do not know whether Muslims and Christians prefer to live in a liberal or an authoritarian religious democracy, which are in stark contrast to each other along several dimensions. Liberal democracy embraces the free elections described by Schumpeter (1974 [1942]), Dahl's (1989) elaboration of political rights such as freedom of expression, association, and assembly, and O'Donell's (2001; G. O'Donnell, 2004) rule of law criterion. Specifically, liberal democracy implies the existence of free, fair, and competitive elections, i.e., real competition between at least two parties for the national legislature and the chief executive. This implies that undemocratic groups (e.g., religious leaders) cannot veto political issues. Furthermore, in a liberal democracy, citizens enjoy a number of liberal freedoms safeguarded by the rule of law. Besides suffrage and the right to run for office, citizens have freedom of speech, assembly, and association, which entails freedom to organize parties, interest groups, and social movements. Most importantly, these rights apply to the public at large and not only a subsection of the population. This implies, for example, that women and men, as well as minority and majority members, have equal rights in society (Cho, 2015; Norris, 2011; Shin & Kim, 2018).

As touched upon above, the authoritarian conception of democracy differs from liberal democracy according to several characteristics. The most distinctive difference between the two forms of government is that free and competitive elections or the civil and political rights of the people safeguarded by the rule of law are not of paramount importance or do not exist at all in authori-

tarian democracies. Additionally, in an authoritarian democracy, non-democratic entities such as religious leaders or the military usually have a veto on political issues, whereas in a liberal democracy, undemocratic players cannot achieve this kind of influence in society (Diamond, 1999; Linz & Stepan, 1996; Norris, 2011; Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007; Shin, 2015). The authoritarian understanding of democracy is, therefore, illiberal. According to Fareed Zakaria (1997, 2003), who introduced the concept of "illiberal democracy," Pakistan and Iran are examples of authoritarian or illiberal democracies where elections are held regularly, but citizens' political and civil rights are severely restricted. At the same time, they are political regimes where the military and religious authorities play a crucial role in the political sphere (Zakaria 1997).

Accordingly, the term "authoritarian religious democracy" refers to a regime that is to some extent based on democratic principles such as elections and suffrage but allows illiberal religious influence on the constitution and laws at the expense of fundamental democratic principles, such as not giving power to actors unaccountable to the electorate. Thus, in an authoritarian religious democracy, religion is the primary source of law, and religious leaders or parties have a predominant or exclusive role in politics.

However, it is empirically unclear whether Muslims and Christians prefer to live in a liberal or an authoritarian religious democracy due to their religiosity. Yet according to the view of Muslim religiosity held by Huntington (1996a, 1996b), Fukuyama (1992, 2006), and, Lewis (2010) among others, one would expect that Muslim religiosity, unlike Christian religiosity, inclines individuals to prefer authoritarian religious regimes to liberal democracy. This is due to their perception of Muslim religiosity, unlike Christian religiosity, as a fundamentally authoritarian and monolithic belief system that is hostile to democratic principles and norms. This gives rise to the following two hypotheses:

H2a: Muslim religiosity, unlike Christian religiosity, has a negative effect on individuals' preferences for liberal democracy.

H2b: Muslim religiosity, unlike Christian religiosity, has a positive effect on individuals' preferences for authoritarian religious democracy.

2.5. Support for Democracy Because of Social Desirability?

The next question is whether Muslims and Christians have genuine preferences for living in a democracy or an authoritarian religious regime. Several studies document that the notion of democracy has achieved a positive image

and legitimacy worldwide and that even non-democrats now embrace it (e.g., Cho, 2015; Dalton et al., 2007; Dalton & Welzel, 2014; Lagos Cruz-Coke, 2001; Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007; Shin, 2015; Shin & Kim, 2018). From this perspective, many individuals do only express pro-democratic opinions due to social desirability, not because they have genuine preferences for democracy.

Social desirability bias means that individuals give dishonest answers to conform to societal norms by, for example, claiming they support democracy because doing otherwise would violate social rules and make them appear as anti-democrats. Tourangeau, Rips, and Rasinski (2000, p. 257) formulate it as follows: "this notion of sensitive questions presupposes that respondents believe there are defining desirable attitudes and behaviors, and that they are concerned enough about these norms to distort their answers to avoid presenting themselves in an unfavorable light". A comprehensive literature shows that people often shade their answers on sensitive questions to respond in a socially valuable way, for instance, hide their real attitudes towards racism, anti-Semitism and immigration restrictions due to social desirability (e.g., An, 2015; Brooke, 2017; Janus, 2010; Kuklinski, Cobb, & Gilens, 1997; Kuklinski, Sniderman, et al., 1997).

Indeed, questions about the endorsement of democracy are sensitive, and social norms prescribe being supportive of democracy rather than non-democratic regimes (e.g., Cho, 2015; Dalton et al., 2007; Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007; Shin, 2015; Shin & Kim, 2018). This emphasis on the power of social expectations combined with, for example, Huntington's (1996a, 1996b) and Lewis'(2010) thoughts on the incompatibility of Muslim religiosity, unlike Christian religiosity, with democracy gives rise to the following expectation:

H3: Unlike Christians, Muslims prefer an authoritarian religious regime over democracy when they are free from responding in a socially desirable way.

Chapter 3:
Research Design and Data

In this chapter, I describe the research strategies and data sources used in the dissertation and discuss their advantages and limitations. First, I provide an overview of the different datasets and the test cases used to examine the dissertation's theoretical expectations. Second, I discuss the internal and external validity of the studies applied in this dissertation. I primarily use experimental studies with high internal validity that, however, have often been criticized for suffering from low external validity. I outline a set of strategies I have employed to address this issue. Finally, I discuss how Muslim and Christian religiosity are experimentally manipulated in this dissertation.

3.1. Data Applied in the Dissertation

To test the theoretical expectations, the dissertation draws on five different datasets (see overview and description in Table 1). Some of the datasets are based on nationally presentative samples, while others are based on convenience or approximately representative samples. Most of the datasets were collected using web-surveys.

In Article A, I used cross-national survey data from World Value Survey 6 comprising samples from 56 countries from different continents, which are some of the most comprehensive and representative data available in this research field. While the data applied in Article A are from an observational study, the data used in the other articles are based on experimental studies carried out in Denmark and the United States. Article B investigates the effect of religiosity on support for democratic values among Muslims and Christians. I utilized data from an advanced priming experiment in which the three dimensions of religiosity are primed among Muslims and Christians using questions about religiosity as treatments. To test whether the empirical findings hold across different religious settings, the experimental data were collected both in Denmark and in the United States. Likewise, the data applied in Article C are from a priming experiment in which the treatment is asking Muslims and Christians about different aspects of their religiosity before questioning them about their conceptions of democracy. Article D examines whether Muslims and Christians really prefer democracy to an authoritarian religious regime. The analyses in this article draw on data from a list experiment in which the respondents are guaranteed strict anonymity that allows them to answer

questions free of social desirability. The data are based on a nationally representative sample from Denmark and an approximately representative sample from the United States.

Table 1. Overview of Data Sets in the Dissertation

No.	Applied in	Design	Data/sample	Collection period
1	Article A	Cross-national survey data from World Value Survey 6	Representative sample from 56 countries from different continents (N = 52,326 Muslims and Christians)	2010-2014
2	Article B	Priming experiment (question order)	Convenience sample of Danish high school students (N = 940 Muslims and Christians)	January 2019
3	Article B	Priming experiment (question order)	Approximately representative sample of American Muslims and Christians based on quota sampling on age, gender, education, and region. The sample is recruited through Turkprime Panels (N = 1,119 Muslims and Christians)	April 2019
4	Article C and D	Priming experiment (question order) and list experiment	Approximately representative sample of American Muslims and Christians based on quota sampling on age, gender, education, and region. The sample is recruited through Turkprime Panels (N = 1,249 Muslims and Christians)	November-December 2019
5	Article D	List experiment	Nationally representative sample of Danish Muslims and Christians (N = 1,415). The data are collected in collaboration with the Danish Ministry of Immigration and Integration. The sample is recruited through Statistics Denmark (the authority in nation-wide statistics)	January-February 2019

3.2. Internal and External Validity of the Studies

This dissertation addresses the causal effect of Muslim and Christian religiosity on individuals' conception of and support for democracy. To this end, I have mainly applied experimental data, which is arguably the most reliable way to establish the causal role of religiosity in democratic thinking as it ensures high internal validity (e.g., Shariff, Willard, Andersen, & Norenzayan, 2016). To elaborate, the experimental approach is characterized by random assignment of respondents to different experimental conditions on the independent variable, and afterwards, the potential effect on the dependent variable is identified (Joshua David & Jörn-Steffen, 2015; Stock & Watson, 2019). For example, in Article B, Muslims and Christians are randomly assigned to

the control condition or the treatment conditions in which the individuals are exposed to religious stimuli. Subsequently, the level of support for democratic values is measured both in the control condition and in the treatment conditions, and the causal effect of religious stimuli is identified as the difference between the control and treatment conditions. The underlying assumption is that random assignment of individuals to experimental conditions implies that all systematic differences between the groups of individuals in the control condition and treatment conditions are leveled out as the number of individuals increases (Joshua David & Jörn-Steffen, 2015; Stock & Watson, 2019). In this way, the experimental design can rule out the possibility that an association between religiosity and democratic support arises from other factors such as personality traits, demographic background, and political orientation (e.g., Hayes, 1995; Kotler-Berkowitz, 2001; Saroglou, 2011). Likewise, the experimental design handles the issue of reverse causality, as the assignment of people to different treatment conditions occurs randomly and thereby independently of their values on the dependent variable. In all my experimental studies, I made a randomization check confirming that there are no significant differences between the treatment and control groups regarding essential background parameters, such as gender, age and education.

In brief, the experimental design is unmatched in its ability to handle selection bias including endogeneity that allows me to draw causal conclusions about the influence of Muslim and Christian religiosity on individuals' democratic support. Certainly, employing an experimental approach in the present dissertation extends the literature, as most of the existing attempts to address the impact of religiosity are based on observational studies, rendering them unable to establish the causal role of religiosity in democratic attitudes, as potential alternative explanations may threaten their internal validity.

However, the experimental design also has some disadvantages. Most importantly, it has often been criticized for suffering from low external validity, which refers to the extent to which the empirical findings hold over variation in settings, participants, treatments, and outcomes (Mutz, 2011; Stock & Watson, 2019). In other words, how generalizable are the empirical findings? This is an essential consideration in my research design, as some of my experiments are based on samples that are approximately representative and collected in the Western context. Consequently, I have employed several strategies to increase the external validity of this dissertation.

First, I have done my utmost to collect representative samples of Muslims and Christians for my experimental studies. Despite the efforts, it is challenging, if not impossible, to collect fully representative samples of religious groups, as most public registers do not include information about individual

religious affiliation. Second, I have replicated most of my studies in other studies, which generally strengthens the generalizability of the empirical findings. For example, Article D conducts a list experiment in the United States, and the results were then replicated with another experiment embedded in a nationally representative sample from Denmark. The third important concern is whether the empirical findings that are obtained are tied to a specific religious context or whether they hold across diverse settings. To clarify this question, two of my experimental studies are carried out both in Denmark and the United States. Denmark is a highly secularized society, while the US has a very high overall level of religiosity, and religion plays a vital role in political and public life (Berger, Davie, & Fokas, 2008; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Wilkins-Laflamme, 2016). Both countries are stable democracies and at the same time represent a wide variance in religious contexts, which makes them relevant cases for examining the robustness of the effect of religiosity on democratic thinking. However, both Denmark and the United States constitute Christian-majority contexts, which makes it difficult to generalize the empirical findings to Muslim-majority countries with confidence. To address this problem, I have employed observational survey data, including several Muslim-majority countries as well as Christian-majority countries. Thus, by combining the experimental and observational survey data, I have generally sought to strengthen the external validity of the dissertation. Fourth, external validity is not just a matter of identifying the empirical findings across different persons and settings similar to those in real life; it is also a matter of whether the results hold across different variables that measure exactly what we are interested in investigating. To address this issue, I have applied different measurements of support for democracy to capture the various aspects of democratic attitudes existing in real life.

For example, in Article B, I have examined the impact of Muslim and Christian religiosity on the conventional measurement of support for democracy (Inglehart, 2003; Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Tessler & Gao, 2008) and other fundamental democratic norms such as political tolerance and opposition to politically motivated violence (Acevedo & Chaudhary, 2015a; Dalton, 2004; Gibson, 1992; Karpov, 1999; Shin, 2015). In doing so, I can also clarify whether the effect of religiosity is consistent on different aspects of democratic support and thereby address the robustness of the proposed effect of religiosity. Finally, external validity is also a matter of whether the empirical results hold beyond the experimental settings. Put differently, if a study has low ecological validity, then we should also be concerned about its external validity. For example, when individuals are placed in a laboratory or unfamiliar research setting that is somewhat artificial and therefore differs from the real-life situation in which they normally form their attitudes, then there is a risk

that the empirical results do not hold in real life. The reason is that the treatment effects might become contaminated in such unreal settings (Mutz, 2011; Stock & Watson, 2019). I therefore conducted all the experimental studies as web surveys that enabled the individuals to answer the questionnaires in their usual and natural surroundings, which accordingly strengthens the assumption that the treatment effects also occur in real life and not only in a particular laboratory setting. Indeed, this improves the ecological validity and thereby the external validity of the survey experiments.

Overall, given my interest in drawing causal conclusions, I prioritize employing a survey-experimental design that ensures high internal validity. However, the experimental design generally suffers from low external validity. Therefore, I have employed several strategies to increase it by replicating the results in various religious contexts, combining experimental and observational survey data, and using different measures of democratic support.

3.3. Experimental Manipulation of Religiosity

Articles B and C examine the effect of Muslim and Christian religiosity on individuals' support for democratic values and their conception of democracy. In both articles, I have manipulated religiosity experimentally to examine its effect. The following section briefly introduces the survey-experimental design used in these articles. For a detailed description of the survey experiments, I refer to the individual articles.

In both studies, I have utilized the priming technique, which is useful when experimentally manipulating the different dimensions of religiosity, religious belonging, religious belief, and religious behavior (Aveyard, 2014; Djupe & Calfano, 2013; Ginges, Hansen, & Norenzayan, 2009; Johnson, Rowatt, & LaBouff, 2010; Shariff et al., 2016). The priming framework involves exposing an individual to certain cues in order to increase the cognitive accessibility of related objects in his/her memory so that they are automatically used during subsequent political thinking. This means that the underlying psychological mechanism of priming is that thoughts and considerations that have been activated recently are more likely to be employed automatically in the thinking and decision-making that follow (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Taylor & Fiske, 1978; Valentino, Hutchings, & White, 2002). More specifically, I have applied the priming method wherein participants are asked a series of questions about their religiosity to evoke their religious thinking (e.g., Ginges et al., 2009; K. Schumann, McGregor, Nash, & Ross, 2014). This well-known method employing the effect of question order long ago proved to be an effective instrument for priming because questions that are asked first ac-

tivate certain thoughts and considerations that can alter the response to sub-sequent questions (H. Schumann & Presser, 1996; Schwarz, 1999; Shariff et al., 2016). I utilized this priming approach, as it is arguably the most reliable method to expose both Muslims and Christians to the same religious stimuli, which is essential to examine whether their religiosity has distinguishable effects on their democratic thinking when all other differences are kept constant.

To elaborate, I attempted to prime the three dimensions of religiosity by using the question-order method, where all participants were randomly assigned to one of four versions of the questionnaire. Thus, I followed a 1×4 design in which the three treatment groups were exposed to three different kinds of religious stimuli via questions about aspects of their religiosity, whereas the control group was not exposed to any religious stimuli before answering questions about their conception of democracy. The first condition constitutes the control group, and therefore the respondents were only asked about their support for democratic values or conception of democracy and not about their religiosity to avoid exposing them to any religious stimuli. In the second, third, and fourth conditions, the respondents were asked questions regarding their religious belonging, religious belief, or religious behavior, respectively, before being asked about their democratic support. For example, the participants in the belonging group were asked how strong an attachment they feel to their religion. Furthermore, all participants in each treatment group were asked to write briefly about how they celebrated the most recent religious feast, such as 'Eid or Christmas, with an emphasis on the religious elements of their celebration.[1]

Consistent with past research (Aveyard, 2014; Ginges et al., 2009; Shariff et al., 2016), I found in both articles that the priming of religiosity indeed worked among the treatment groups. The manipulation of the three dimensions of religiosity renders religious thinking more salient. Specifically, the manipulation checks reveal that religiosity is significantly more salient in the three treatment groups than in the control group, which was not exposed to any religious stimuli. This applies both to Muslims and Christians in Denmark and in the United States (see Figure 1A-F in Article B and Figure A in Article C). Additionally, the empirical findings show that the mean salience-level of religiosity is almost identical across the two studies, which confirms that the priming technique was effective in manipulating religious thinking in both religious groups regardless of when and where the data were collected.

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[1] See the online Appendix for Paper B and C (Figure 1A) for exact wordings of all questions and the order in which they are presented to each treatment group.

Chapter 4:
Empirical Findings

This chapter aims to answer the overall research question: How does Muslim religiosity, compared to Christian religiosity, affect individuals' support for and conception of democracy? The chapter follows the theoretical expectation developed in the theory chapter. I first present the findings showing how Muslim religiosity, compared to Christian religiosity, affects individuals' support for democracy. Second, I present an analysis of how Muslim religiosity, compared to Christian religiosity, influences individuals' conception of democracy. Finally, I show an analysis of whether Muslims and Christians have genuine preferences for democracy over an authoritarian religious regime when they answer free from social desirability bias.

4.1. Muslim Religiosity Is Not a Hindrance to Democratic Support (H1)

The first expectation in the dissertation is that Muslims are less supportive of democracy than Christians because of their religiosity. This expectation is tested empirically in Article A and B, where I compare Muslims' and Christians' support for democracy. This comparison contributes to a direct test of the Islam-critical thesis that Muslim religiosity, unlike Christian religiosity, acts as a hindrance to democracy (see, e.g., Huntington, 1966a, 1996b; Lewis, 2010). Moreover, it puts Muslims' democratic support into a broader perceptive, as Christians, like Muslims, constitute one of the world's most significant religious group that is generally considered very supportive of democracy.

Article A focuses on whether Muslims in general and religious and practicing Muslims in particular prefer democracy less than Christians. Based on some of the most comprehensive and representative survey data in the field, the empirical analyses reveal that there is no difference between Muslims and Christians with respect to their preference for democracy (see Table 1 in Article A). The next question is whether Muslims with firm religious beliefs and those who practice their religiosity have the same preferences for democracy as devout and practicing Christians. An important argument is that if Muslim religiosity were hostile to democracy, we would most likely find no evidence of religious and practicing Muslims supporting it. The answer to this question appears from the following two figures.

First, Figure 1 shows that the two religious groups do not differ significantly in their level of preference for democracy across the full range of religious belief, indicating that neither very religious nor nonreligious Muslims hold less favorable views of democracy than Christians.

Figure 1: The Marginal Difference between Muslims and Christians Regarding Their Preference for Democracy, Conditional on the Intensity of Religious Belief
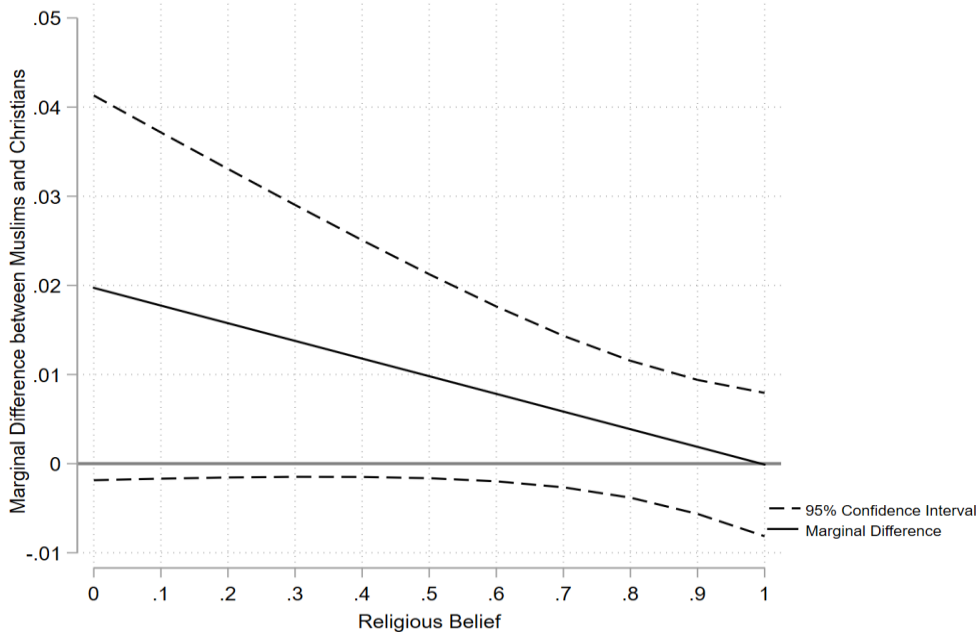
NOTE: The solid black line shows the marginal difference between Muslims and Christians regarding their preference for democracy, conditional on religious belief. The dashed lines represent 95% confidence intervals. Reprint from Article A.

Likewise, Figure 2 shows that practicing Muslims are no less inclined to prefer democracy than practicing Christian. However, non-practicing Muslims prefer democracy more than non-practicing Christians do. Thus, Article A provides the first empirical evidence that challenges the claim that Muslim religiosity is anti-democratic and prevents Muslims from endorsing democracy. Article B also does not provide any supporting evidence for this claim.
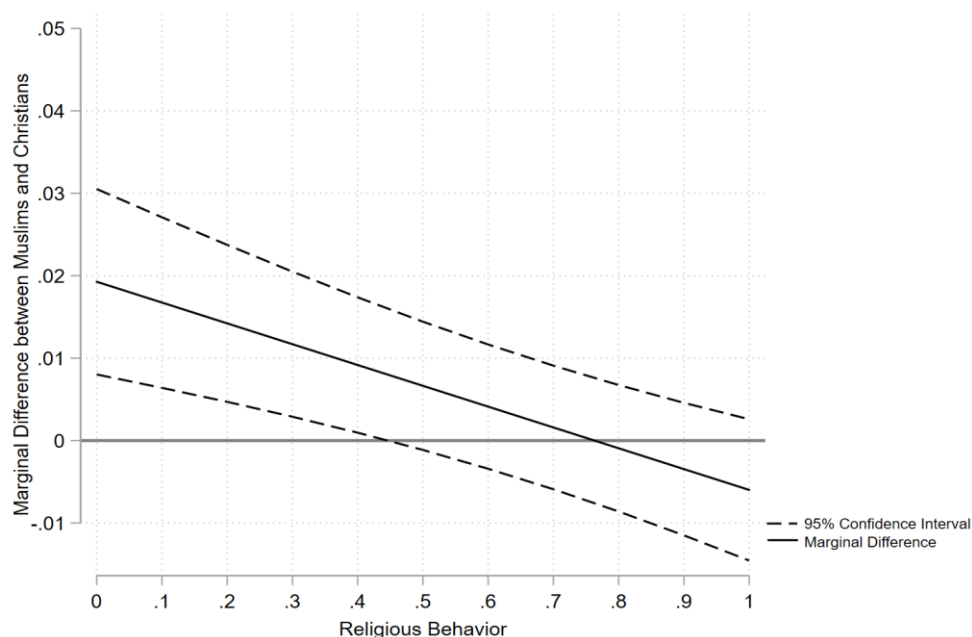
Figure 2: The Marginal Difference between Muslims and Christians Regarding Their Preference for Democracy, Conditional on the Intensity of Religious Behavior

NOTE: The solid black line shows the marginal difference between Muslims and Christians regarding their preference for democracy, conditional on religious behavior. The dashed lines represent 95% confidence intervals. Reprint from Article A.

Specifically, Article B is based on two priming experiments that examine the causal effect of Muslim and Christian religiosity on general support for democracy and two fundamental democratic norms: political tolerance and opposition to politically motivated violence. The empirical results demonstrate that none of the three dimensions of religiosity – belonging, beliefs, and behavior – has a causal impact on democratic values (see Figure 2A-F in Article B). Additionally, the empirical results reveal that all estimated coefficients are close to zero, suggesting that even if some of the results were statistically significant, they had not been substantially effective. Likewise, the results show no consistent pattern in the effects of religiosity – neither across democratic values nor across the two religious contexts. Most importantly, the analyses displayed in Figure 3A-F reveal that the effect of religiosity is uniform across the two religious groups, suggesting that Muslim religiosity does not exert a more negative influence on democratic attitudes than Christian religiosity. These findings are replicated in Denmark, a highly secularized society, and in the US, where religion plays a prominent role in political and public life, which indicates that the results are robust.

Figure 3A-F. The Difference between Muslims and Christians Regarding the Effect of Religious Belonging, Belief and Behavior on General Support for Democracy, Political Tolerance, and Opposition to Politically Motivated Violence, by Country
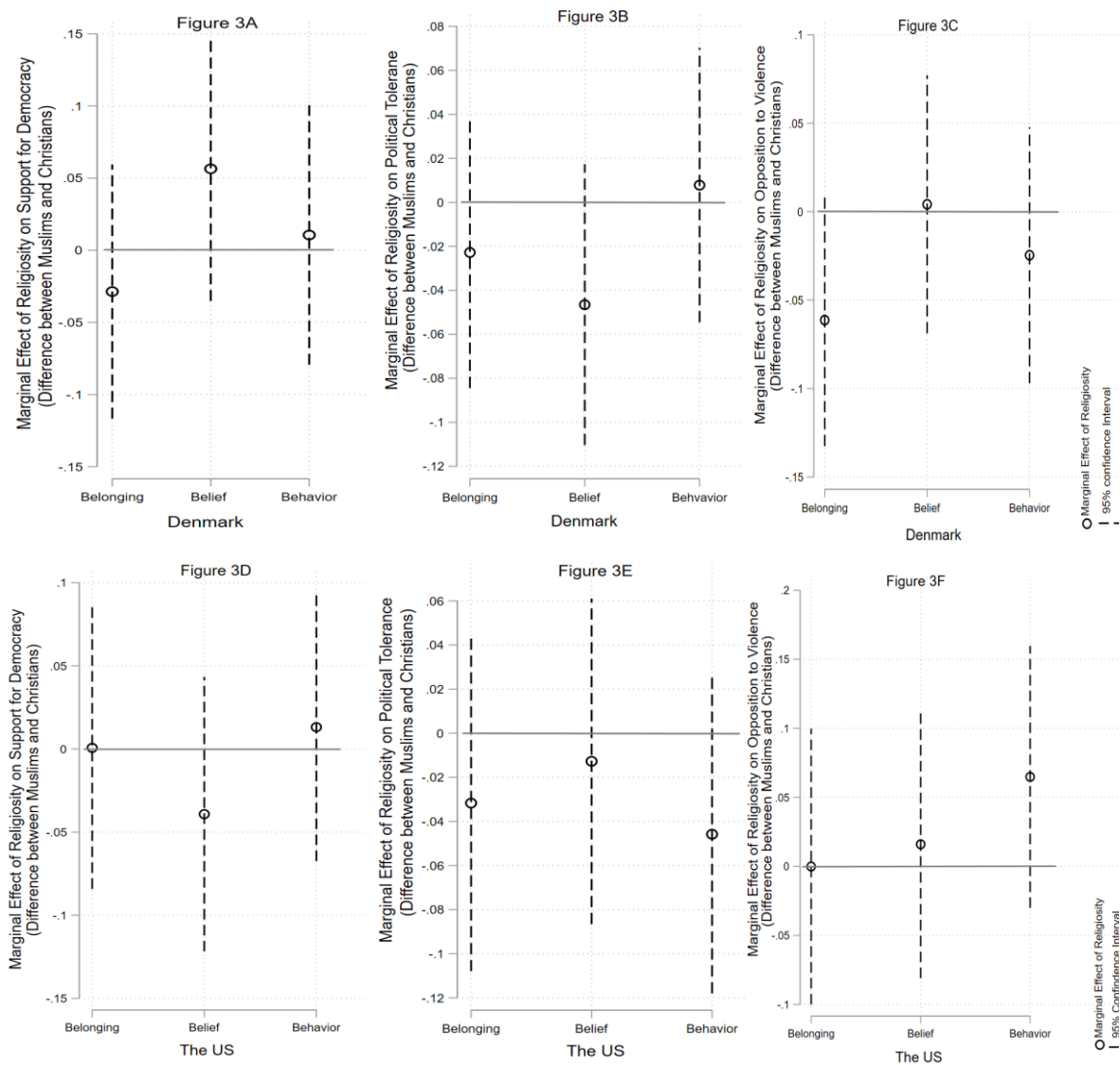
NOTE: The dots represent the differences between Muslims and Christians regarding the effect of primed religious belonging, religious belief and religious behavior. The reference category is the experimental condition where the respondents have not primed any dimension of their religiosity. The black dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Reprint from Article B.

In sum, regardless of whether the empirical findings are based on a comprehensive observational study or a survey-experiment, including various measurements of democratic support, they do not support H1. Accordingly, Article A and B contribute to the existing literature by providing empirical insights into the influence of Muslim and Christian religiosity on democratic attitudes, as most previous studies only deal with this issue at the theoretical level.

4.2. Muslim Religiosity Does Not Encourage Authoritarian Religious Democracy rather than Liberal Democracy (H2a-b)

The second line of findings concerns the effects of Muslim and Christian religiosity on individuals' preferences for living in a liberal democracy or an authoritarian religious democracy. The theoretical expectation is that Muslim religiosity, unlike Christian religiosity, encourages individuals to prefer authoritarian religious regimes rather than liberal democracy. Based on a priming experiment among Muslims and Christians in United States, Article C tests this expectation. The findings are presented in Figures 4 and 5.

First, contrary to the theoretical expectations, the empirical results displayed in Figure 4 illustrate that none of the three dimensions of Muslim religiosity affect individuals' preference for living in a liberal democracy. Likewise, the results reveal that Muslim religiosity does not affect preferences for an authoritarian religious democracy. Thus, Muslim religiosity does not incline individuals to prefer liberal democracy or authoritarian religious democracy, which rejects H2a-b. Second, Christian religiosity does not affect preferences for liberal democracy; instead, it has a positive impact on preferences for authoritarian religious democracy, indicating that when Christians have their religiosity primed, they have a greater desire to live in a democracy with considerable authoritarian religious characteristics. Interestingly, these results stand in contrast to what was theoretically expected in H2a-b.

Figure 4. The Effect of Priming Religious Belonging, Beliefs, and Behavior on Preference for Liberal Democracy and Authoritarian Religious Democracy, by Religious Groups

NOTE: The dots represent the effect of primed religious belonging, religious belief, and religious behavior. The reference category is the experimental condition where the respondents were not primed on any dimension of their religiosity. The black dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Reprint from Article C.
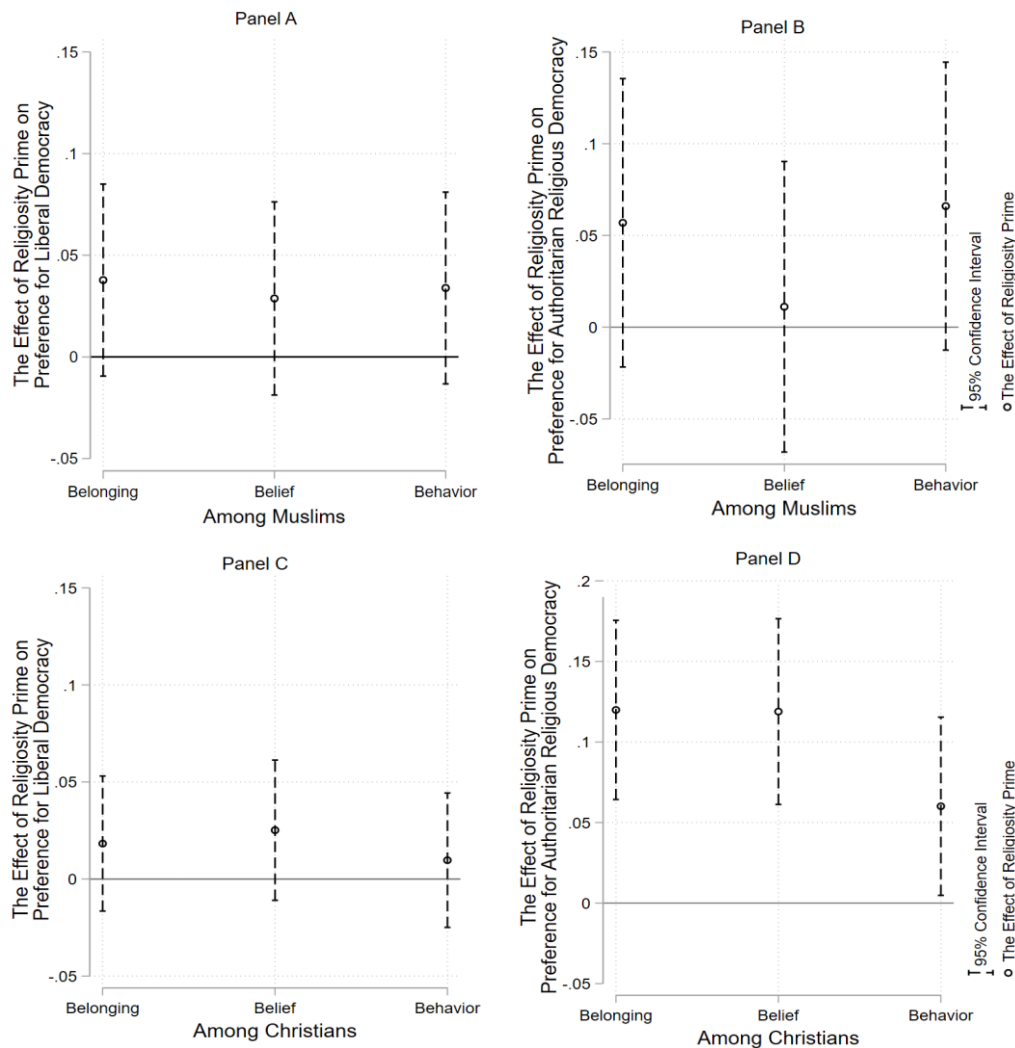
Importantly, these results are replicated when I use a different measurement of regime preferences where the respondents have to make tradeoffs between the two kinds of democracies. In other words, the individuals are asked to choose between essential characteristics of liberal democracy and authoritarian religious democracy so that they cannot prioritize both kinds of democracy equally. This is a useful measurement, as it does not allow individuals to express preferences for liberal democracy and actually have authoritarian propensities (Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007; Shin, 2007, 2015). Specifically, the analysis displayed in Figure 5 shows that none of the three dimensions of Muslim

religiosity have an effect on prioritizing liberal democracy compared to an authoritarian religious democracy when using the alternative measure of the dependent variable. However, Christian religiosity has a negative impact on prioritizing liberal democratic attributes compared to authoritarian religious ones, which also rejects the theoretical expectations.

Figure 5. The Effect of Priming Religious Belonging, Beliefs, and Behavior on Preference for Liberal Democracy rather than Authoritarian Religious Democracy, by Religious Groups
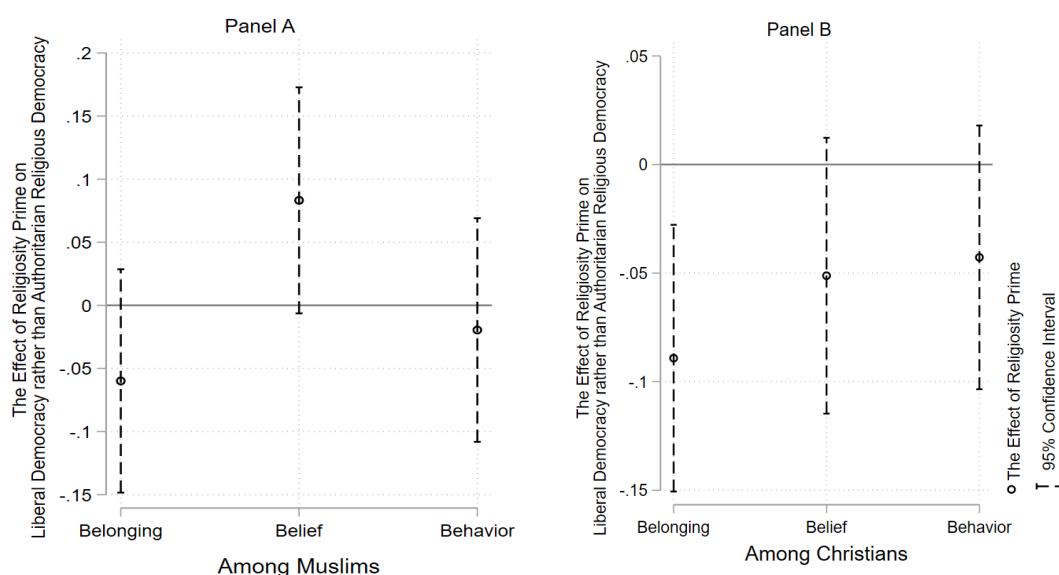

NOTE: The dots represent the effect of primed religious belonging, religious belief and religious behavior. The reference category is the experimental condition where the respondents have not primed any dimension of their religiosity. The black dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Reprint from Article C.

Overall, the empirical results disconfirm the theoretical expectations about the influence of Muslim and Christian religiosity on preference for liberal and authoritarian religious democracy. Muslim religiosity does not affect either preference for liberal democracy or for authoritarian religious democracy, which also applies when the individuals are asked to choose between the two kinds of democracies. In contrast to the theoretical expectations, Christian religiosity does not affect preference for liberal democracy; instead, it has a positive effect on preference for authoritarian religious democracy. I have conducted additional analyses to test whether there is a statistically significant difference between the effect of Muslim and Christian religiosity on individuals' preferences for the two types of democracy. These analyses confirm the pattern shown in Figure 4 and 5 that there is no statistically significant difference between Muslim and Christian religiosity regarding their effect on preferences for liberal democracy. Likewise, these analyses suggest that there is a statically significant difference between the religiosities regarding their effect

on preferences for authoritarian religious democracy. The effect of Muslim religiosity is significantly smaller and negative than the effect of Christian religiosity (see Figure 2A and 3A in the online Appendix for Article C). This disconfirms the claim that Muslim religiosity, unlike Christian religiosity, promotes religious authoritarianism rather than liberal democracy.

4.3. Muslims Support Democracy and Not Because of Social Desirability (H3)

The third expectation in the dissertation is that Muslims, unlike Christians, only express support for democracy because of social desirability, meaning that they do not have genuine preferences for living in a democracy. Based on, for example, Huntington's (1996b) and Lewis'(2010) thoughts on the incompatibility of Muslim religiosity with democracy, Muslims are expected to prefer an authoritarian religious regime when they do not feel compelled to respond in a socially acceptable way. This expectation is examined in Article D. The study draws on a list experiment that guarantees the respondents strict anonymity so that they can express their attitudes free from social desirability. The results (see Table 2) show that Muslims and Christians in Denmark do not prefer an authoritarian religious regime to democracy, even when their attitudes are examined unobtrusively. However, a considerable part of the American Christians have a genuine preference for religious authoritarianism over democracy when they do not feel compelled to respond in a socially acceptable way. This does not apply to the same extent to American Muslims. This difference between the two nationalities' preference for religious authoritarianism over democracy is most likely a reflection of Denmark and the US being two different religious contexts. As mentioned, Denmark is a highly secularized society, while the US is a society where religion plays a vital role in political and public life (Berger et al., 2008; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Wilkins-Laflamme, 2016).

In conclusion, the empirical evidence rejects the theoretical speculation that Muslims, unlike Christians, have genuine preferences for an authoritarian religious regime and are hiding this due to social desirability (H3). Muslims living in Denmark and United States do not prefer religious authoritarianism to democracy, and they do not appear to be hiding their anti-democratic attitudes.

Table 2. Estimated Mean Level of Preference for Authoritarian Religious Regime over Democracy among Muslims and Christians, by Country

	Denmark					The US				
	Control (without sensitive item)		Treatment (with sensitive item)		Difference		Control (without sensitive item)		Treatment (with sensitive item)		Difference
General	1.629	(0.829)	1.631	(0.955)	0.002 ns		1.947	(0.962)	2.163	(1.189)	0.215***
Muslims	1.585	(0.873)	1.596	(0.941)	0.011 ns		2.106	(1.077)	2.255	(1.281)	0.149 ns
Christians	1.665	(0.799)	1.660	(0.960)	0.005 ns		1.831	(0.850)	2.095	(1.128)	0.265***

NOTE: Entries are means; standard deviations are in parentheses.
***; **; *: $p < 0,001$; 0, 01; 0, 05; (two-tailed t-test). Reprint from Article D.

Chapter 5:
Conclusion and Discussion

By examining the influence of Muslim and Christian religiosity on democratic attitudes, this dissertation generates a line of empirical and methodological contributions, which I will elaborate on in this concluding chapter. Likewise, I discuss the implications of the empirical findings and their limitations, and I outline some directions for future research.

5.1. Answering the Research Question: Empirical Contributions

In the aftermath of 9/11 and a worldwide resurgence in Islamic fundamentalism, the debate over whether Muslim religiosity is a threat to democratic values has intensified. Ordinary people, policy-makers, and scholars have increasingly questioned whether Muslims endorse democracy and its values (Eskelinen & Verkuyten, 2018; Statham & Tillie, 2016). Interestingly, although the incompatibility of Muslim religiosity with democracy has been discussed for decades (Fukuyama, 1992, 2006; Huntington, 1996a, 1996b; Kedourie, 1994; Lewis, 2010), we still have minimal empirical knowledge of how Muslims' religiosity affects their support for democracy, as empirical studies remain in short supply (Diamond & Plattner, 2008; Fish, 2011). Indeed, most extant research on the theological incompatibility between Islam and democracy provides some essential knowledge. Still, it is at least equally relevant to know which role Muslim religiosity plays in individuals' democratic thinking, as theory and reality do not always converge. Therefore, it is of great importance to disentangle empirically how Muslim religiosity affects individuals' support for democracy and their democratic conception. This dissertation aimed to fill this lacuna by comparing the effect of Muslim and Christian religiosity and conduct a direct test of the Islam-critical thesis that Islam, unlike Christianity, acts as a hindrance to democracy (see, e.g., Fukuyama, 2006; Huntington, 1966a; Lewis, 2010). Moreover, this comparison would put Muslims' democratic support into a broader perceptive, as Christians, like Muslims, constitute one of the world's most significant religious groups. Utilizing various methods and research designs in different religious contexts, the dissertation contributes to the existing literature by delivering empirical evidence on the effect of Muslim and Christian religiosity.

Concretely, the dissertation demonstrates that neither Muslim nor Christian religiosity affect support for democratic values. In addition, the empirical

analyses reveal that Muslims in general and religious and practicing Muslims in particular prefer democracy to the same extent as Christians. I reach the same conclusion regardless of the religious context in which the analyses are conducted and how support for democracy is measured. This emphasizes that these findings are robust, and they challenge the view of Muslim religiosity as a hindrance to the development of democratic orientations. The dissertation also provides novel evidence on how Muslim and Christian religiosity affect individuals' conceptions of democracy. The theoretical expectation was that Muslim religiosity, unlike Christian religiosity, would incline individuals to prefer authoritarian religious democracy to liberal democracy because the norms of liberal democracy go against particular rules and regulations laid down in Islam. However, the empirical findings do not lend support to this expectation. They show that Muslim religiosity does not incline individuals to prefer liberal democracy or an authoritarian religious democracy. In comparison, Christian religiosity has a positive effect on preferences for authoritarian religious democracy. Finally, the dissertation delivers an empirical contribution by showing that Muslims do not have genuine preferences for an authoritarian religious regime, and they do not appear to be hiding their antidemocratic attitudes because of social desirability. Hence, these empirical findings conjointly reject the claim that Muslims do not support democracy because their religiosity is hostile to democratic values.

Importantly, some of the empirical findings occur across the different studies that are based on various research designs, samples, and measurements, indicating that they are robust and consistent. First, Article B shows that neither Muslim nor Christian religiosity affect core liberal democratic values even when the different dimensions of religiosity are highly salient. Interestingly, I reach the same conclusion in article C, which examines the impact of Muslim and Christian religiosity on a liberal conception of democracy, suggesting that no matter how liberal democratic attitudes are measured, the two religiosities do not affect them. Second, the studies in both Article C and D reveal that Muslims do not prefer an authoritarian religious regime to liberal democracy but that Christian religiosity induces preferences for an authoritarian religious regime. Thus, some patterns emerge across the different studies that combined contribute to answering the main research question persuasively.

As touched upon above, the analyses conducted in the United States consistently reveal that Christian religiosity exerts a positive influence on individuals' preferences for an authoritarian regime[1], which is quite surprising in light of the theoretical expectations based on the Islam-critical theories (see,

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[1] See Article C and D.

e.g., Fukuyama, 2006; Huntington, 1966a; Lewis, 2010). However, this empirical finding is in line with several studies (e.g., Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz & Huismans, 1995; Schwartz & Sagie, 2000) from Western countries and, in particular, from the United States that have long found that religiosity[2] is associated with authoritarian values. Based on studies of human values, Schwartz and colleagues (Schwartz, 2003; Schwartz & Huismans, 1995; Schwartz & Sagie, 2000) conclude that religiosity is positively associated with values like conservatism, conformity, and transcendence. In contrast, democratic principles are found to relate negatively to these values because they promote the existing social order and acceptance of the authoritarian ideas and customs provided by religion. Yet, Article D's empirical results also demonstrate that Christians in Denmark do not have genuine preferences for an authoritarian regime over democracy. This might indicate that different religious contexts have different influences on Christians' preferences for a certain type of regime. However, this issue is outside the scope of the present dissertation; therefore, it is less able to provide a well-founded explanation. Indeed, the influence of Christian religiosity in different religious settings is an interesting issue and calls for further research.

5.2. Methodological Contributions

In addition to its empirical contribution exploring the influence of Muslim religiosity, compared to Christian religiosity, on democratic attitudes, the dissertation makes other methodological contributions that are worth mentioning. First, while most previous research is based on observational studies, this dissertation applies mainly an experimental design among both Muslims and Christians. It is the most reliable approach to establishing the causal role of religiosity in democratic thinking as it ensures a high internal validity (e.g., Shariff et al., 2016). Observational studies do not have the same ability to handle selection bias, including endogeneity, as studies with experimental design because they cannot rule out that an association between religiosity and democratic support arises from other factors such as personality traits, demographic background, and political orientation (e.g., Hayes, 1995; Kotler-Berkowitz, 2001; Saroglou, 2011). However, observational studies – especially those based on representative cross-national samples – have their benefits, for example, high external validity. Therefore, I also employ observational survey data, including representative samples from several Muslim-majority and Christian-majority countries, which, combined with the experimental studies, strengthen the external validity of this dissertation.

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[2] These studies mainly measure religiosity as religious beliefs.

Second, unlike previous research, which typically focuses on one aspect of religiosity or intermingles its different aspects, this dissertation takes into account that religiosity is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon with different dimensions. In line with the leading scholars in the field, I consider it a three-dimensional phenomenon: belonging, beliefs, and behavior (Guth et al., 1995; Layman & Green, 2006; Leege & Lyman, 1993; Smidt et al., 2009). The dissertation shows whether the different dimensions have differential consequences for democratic attitudes and thereby offers a comprehensive understanding of the influence Muslim religiosity, compared to Christian religiosity, might have on democratic views.

Third, to identify whether the effect of religiosity is consistent on different aspects of democratic support, the dissertation does not merely investigate general support for democracy but also fundamental democratic norms such as political tolerance and opposition to politically motivated violence (Acevedo & Chaudhary, 2015; Dalton, 2004; Gibson, 2006; Karpov, 1999a; Shin, 2015). Moreover, to mitigate the problem of individuals merely expressing superficial support for democracy while actually having authoritarian propensities (Norris, 2011; Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007; Shin, 2015), this dissertation has applied more demanding and sophisticated measures, asking individuals to rank their preferences for democracy or an authoritarian regime. In this way, the dissertation clarifies whether Muslims and Christians consistently prefer democracy to an authoritarian regime.

Fourth, while extant research has measured overt democratic support obtrusively with a high of risk social desirability bias, this dissertation has employed a list experiment, in which respondents are guaranteed complete anonymity that allows them to give honest responses without fear of social sanction (Ahlquist, 2018; Aronow, Coppock, Crawford, & Green, 2015; Blair & Imai, 2012; Gilens, 2002; Glynn, 2013). Using the list experiment, I have investigated whether Muslims and Christians have genuine preferences for democracy over an authoritarian religious regime. This is an important issue, as a substantial literature has documented that survey respondents often give dishonest answers to sensitive questions to conform with societal norms and to not be embarrassed by their responses (e.g., An, 2015; Brooke, 2017; Janus, 2010; Kalinin, 2016; Kane, Craig, & Wald, 2004; Kuklinski, Cobb, et al., 1997; Kuklinski, Sniderman, et al., 1997).

5.3. Limitation and Directions for Future Research

As argued above, the dissertation makes several important empirical and methodical contributions to the literature. However, it is not without limitations.

In the following, I will discuss these and make suggestions for how future research can approach them.

A first limitation concerns the generalizability of the results. I have conducted all my experimental studies in Denmark and the United States, which differ significantly in terms of the societal level of religiosity and the role of religion in the public and political spheres (Berger et al., 2008; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Wilkins-Laflamme, 2016). However, both countries are old Western democracies, and both constitute Christian-majority contexts, which means that the empirical findings cannot be generalized confidently to non-democratic settings and to settings where Christianity is not the dominant religion. Muslims and Christians who do not live in Western countries may differ on some parameters that may affect their democratic preferences. In Chapter 3, I mentioned some of the steps taken to address this limitation. Future research should seek to address this limitation further by examining the effect of religiosity on support for democracy in societies where the democratic norms and rules are not as well established and rooted as they are in Denmark and the US. This will help clarify whether the empirical findings of the present dissertation are universally applicable. In addition, future studies can address limitation by conducting follow-up surveys in Muslim-majority countries where Muslims do not constitute a minority population as they do in Western countries.

A second limitation is that the dissertation examines the effect of religiosity among Muslims and Christians in general because the Islam-critical theories upon which the dissertation's main theoretical argument builds speak about Islam and Christianity in general and not about specific congregations or sects (see, e.g., Fukuyama, 2006; Huntington, 1966a; Lewis, 2010). However, Muslims as well as Christians are heterogeneous groups with somewhat different beliefs and practices. Therefore, future studies can advantageously focus on people from various Islamic and Christian denominations or sects to provide a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of the role religiosity might play in democratic thinking.

A third limitation concerns the conceptions of democracy. The dissertation has examined the effect of Muslim religiosity, compared to Christian religiosity, on preferences for liberal democracy and authoritarian religious democracy, but there are several conceptions of democracy besides these two, which constitute the extremes of the various forms of democracy (Cho, 2015; Dalton et al., 2007; Norris, 2011; Ulbricht, 2018; Zagrebina, 2019). Hence, a promising avenue for future research is to focus on other conceptions of democracy and thereby obtain even more sophisticated knowledge about Muslims and Christians' conceptions of democracy.

Finally, the aim of this dissertation has been to provide comprehensive evidence on how Muslim religiosity, compared to Christian religiosity, affects democratic attitudes. Yet, we still lack knowledge about how Muslim religiosity influences individuals' democratic behavior, such as participating actively in democratic elections. Examining this question has been outside the scope of this dissertation. However, it would be an obvious next step for future studies to focus on Muslims' democratic behavior, which would deliver essential knowledge of whether they merely have pro-democratic attitudes or they also support democracy in terms of action.

5.4. Overall Implications

To conclude, the empirical findings of this dissertation speak to the ongoing discussion in academic and public debates in most Western societies about whether Muslims' religiosity, which, unlike Christian religiosity, is considered anti-democratic, prevents them from supporting democracy (Eskelinen & Verkuyten, 2018; Statham & Tillie, 2016). The dissertation revises this view by showing that Muslim religiosity does not affect individuals' support for democracy. Muslims tend to evaluate democracy at least as favorably as Christians do, and Muslims' religiosity does not incline them to prefer an authoritarian religious regime to liberal democracy. These results are robust across a variety of contexts, research designs, samples and measurements, and thus make a convincing case that Muslim religiosity does not act as a hindrance to individuals' democratic preferences. Indeed, this is an optimistic and important conclusion, as clarification of whether Muslims endorse democracy is essential to gaining a better understanding of the prospects of how Muslims can be integrated into Western liberal democracies, which is one of the main prerequisites for them to live in peace and harmony with the majority population. Moreover, in most Western countries, Muslims make up a significant minority group, which makes it even more crucial that they, like the majority population, support the bearing democratic institutions to remain stable and well-functioning (Acevedo & Chaudhary, 2015b; Banfi, Gianni, & Giugni, 2016; Dana, Barreto, & Oskooii, 2011).

Likewise, the findings provide a positive indication of the prospects for democratization and democratic consolidation in the Muslim world where Muslim religiosity is traditionally considered one of the main reason for the democratic deficit (Barro, 1999; Diamond, 2010; Huntington, 1996a; Lewis, 2010). However, the empirical evidence demonstrates that Muslims' religiosity does not prevent them from having democratic preferences, which is all-important as democracy is attained not simply through institutional changes; its success and prosperity also depend on the democratic beliefs and behavior of ordinary

citizens (e.g., Diamond & Plattner, 2008; Inglehart, 2000; Linz & Stepan, 1996; Shin, 2007, 2015). Therefore, all things being equal, there is a higher chance that democracy may arise in Muslim-dominated countries when a majority of the population prefers democratic governance to an authoritarian regime. Indeed, this dissertation cannot deliver an exact and direct answer to the question of whether democracy can be attained in the Muslim world, but it may provide a pointer to this.

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Summary

The purpose of this dissertation is to answer a much disputed and unexplored question: How does Muslim religiosity, compared to Christian religiosity, affect individuals' democratic preferences? Interestingly, although the question whether Muslim religiosity is compatible with democracy and its values has been discussed for decades in academic and public debates, our empirical knowledge about this issue is still scarce. Existing literature has mostly focused on issues of theology and religious doctrines. I argue that it is ultimately an empirical question whether Muslim religiosity is hindering individuals from supporting democracy, and therefore empirical studies might offer a more reliable and conclusive answer to this question than mere theoretical argumentations. The dissertation addresses these limitations in empirical analyses of how Muslim religiosity, compared to Christian religiosity, influences individuals' support for and conception of democracy. The analyses are based on rich sources of experimental and observational survey data from different religious contexts.

The empirical analyses demonstrate that Muslim and Christian religiosity alike do not affect support for democratic values. In addition, they reveal that Muslims in general and religious and practicing Muslims in particular prefer democracy to the same extent as their Christian counterparts. These findings challenge the view of Muslim religiosity as a hindrance to the development of democratic orientations. Furthermore, the empirical findings reject the theoretical expectation that Muslim religiosity, unlike Christian religiosity, would incline individuals to prefer authoritarian religious democracy to liberal democracy. However, Christian religiosity does have a positive effect on preferences for authoritarian religious democracy. Finally, the dissertation shows that Muslims do not have genuine preferences for an authoritarian religious regime, and they do not appear to be hiding their antidemocratic attitudes because of social desirability. Overall, the empirical evidence convincingly rejects the claim that Muslims do not support democracy because their religiosity is hostile to democratic values. The dissertation consists of this summary report and four self-contained articles.

Dansk resumé

Formålet med denne afhandling er at besvare et meget omdiskuteret og uudforsket spørgsmål: Hvordan påvirker muslimsk religiøsitet sammenlignet med kristen religiøsitet individers demokratiske præferencer? Selvom spørgsmålet, om muslimsk religiøsitet er forenelig med demokrati og dets værdier, er blevet diskuteret i årtier både i den akademiske og i den offentlige debat, har vi stadigvæk begrænset empirisk viden om det. Den eksisterende litteratur har hovedsageligt fokuseret på teologiske emner og religiøse doktriner. Jeg argumenterer for, at det i sidste ende er et empirisk spørgsmål, hvorvidt muslimsk religiøsitet forhindrer individer i at støtte demokrati, og derfor kan empiriske studier give et mere pålideligt og konkret svar end teoretiske argumenter. Nærværende afhandling har således til formål at adressere disse begrænsninger via empiriske analyser af, hvordan muslimsk religiøsitet sammenlignet med kristen religiøsitet påvirker individers støtte til og opfattelse af demokrati. Afhandlingens analyser er baseret på en rig samling af både eksperimentelle og observatoriske spørgeskemadata fra forskellige religiøse kontekster.

De empiriske analyser viser, at hverken muslimsk eller kristen religiøsitet påvirker støtten til demokratiske værdier. Derudover afslører de empiriske analyser, at muslimer generelt og især religiøse og praktiserende muslimer foretrækker demokrati i samme omfang som deres kristne modstykker. Disse fund udfordrer synet på muslimsk religiøsitet som en hindring for udviklingen af demokratiske overbevisninger, og de udfordrer den teoretiske forventning om, at muslimsk religiøsitet, i modsætning til kristen religiøsitet, tilskynder individer til at foretrække autoritært religiøst demokrati frem for et liberalt demokrati. De viser, at muslimsk religiøsitet ikke fremmer individers præferencer for et liberalt demokrati eller for et autoritært religiøst demokrati. Tværtimod har den kristne religiøsitet en positiv effekt på individers præferencer for et autoritært religiøst demokrati. Endelig viser afhandlingen empirisk, at muslimer ikke har præferencer for et autoritært religiøst regime, og at de virker ikke til at skjule deres antidemokratiske holdninger. Overordnet set afviser de empiriske fund på en overbevisende måde påstanden om, at muslimer ikke støtter demokrati, fordi deres religiøsitet strider imod demokratiske værdier. Den samlede afhandling består af sammenfatningen her og fire selvstændige forskningsartikler.