



## Research Report

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Religious Regimes and Prospects  
for Liberal Politics: Futures of Iran,  
Iraq, and Saudi Arabia

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Futures of Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia**

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## **Abstract**

This paper departs from Huntington's civilizational perspective and considers the nature of the national regime to be one of the most important predictors of the future of cultures in Islamic countries. From the values surveys carried out in Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, this article extrapolates trends in values change among the publics from these countries. Key features of these trends include shifts toward liberal democracy and individualism among Iranians, toward secular politics and nationalism among Iraqis, and away from religiosity and toward support for gender equality among Saudis.

## **CIVILIZATION, CULTURE, IDENTITY, AND CHANGE**

Huntington conceives the world as a congeries of civilizations in contention. “Civilizations,” he says, “are comprehensive, that is, none of their constituent units can be fully understood without reference to the encompassing civilization” (Huntington 1996: 42). He cautions that the test of this paradigm’s “usefulness is not whether it accounts for everything that is happening in global politics. Obviously it does not. The test is whether it proves a more meaningful and useful lens through which to view international developments than any alternative paradigm” (Huntington 1996: 13-14). In keeping with this delimitation, he proposes that “local politics is the politics of ethnicity; global politics is the politics of civilizations” (Huntington 1996: 28).

Nonetheless, Huntington does not remain faithful to the stated constraint of his paradigm, and develops several theses to argue that civilizations explain and predict almost every major event and process that transpire within the civilizational boundaries, including identity formation, political and economic development, and acceptance of or resistance to the Western model. First, civilizations—encompassing ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions—shape identities, and identities in turn influence the patterns of cohesion, disintegration, and conflict (Huntington 1996: 20-21). Second, while conceding that cultures do change and the nature of their impact on politics and economics varies from time to time, he argues that cultural differences among civilizations explain differences in political and economic development. “East Asian economic success has its source in East Asian culture, as do the difficulties East Asian societies have had in achieving stable democratic political systems. Islamic culture explains in large part the failure of democracy to emerge in much of the Muslim world.... The prospects for economic and political development in the Orthodox countries are uncertain; the prospects in the Muslim republics are bleak” (Huntington 1996: 29).

Third, despite having the power to shape human behavior, social institutions, and social processes within a civilization, a culture does not seem to have much power outside its civilization. The failures and successes of the Western culture outside the West is the case in point, in Huntington’s perspective. The West succeeded in dominating the world “not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion... but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence” (Huntington 1996: 51, 310). Power is thus crucial for cultural diffusion between civilizations. Indeed, “culture... follows power” (Huntington 1996: 310). And “if non-Western societies are once again to be shaped by Western culture, it will happen only as a result of the expansion, deployment, and impact of Western power. Imperialism is the necessary logical consequence of universalism” (Huntington 1996: 310). The inverse of this argument is also true for Huntington: with growing power and self-confidence, non-Western societies increasingly express their “own cultural values and reject those ‘imposed’ on them by the West” (Huntington 1996: 28). Thus, “as the world moves out of its Western phase, the ideologies which typified late Western civilization decline, and their place is taken by religions and other culturally based forms of identity and commitment” (Huntington 1996: 54).

To assess the predictive power of these assertions, we analyze data collected in national values surveys conducted in Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. If Huntington is correct, the available data must show that (a) the Islamic culture is increasingly shaping the identity of the publics, (b) support for individualism is waning, and (c) the publics are increasingly in favor of establishing Islamic values.

We also develop and assess an alternative approach to understand and predict values change.

## THE STATE, CULTURE PRODUCTION, AND SOCIAL ISSUES

Huntington does not elaborate how a civilization shapes people's identity and strategy for political and economic development. How do people, for example, select a particular type of identity? Why might religion serve as a basis of their identity at some point in time, while at other times their ethnicity or nationality is dominant? In what ways do secular, egalitarian, and individualistic ideas shape political development? Is this development possible only under Western domination? How does culture shape people's expressions and value orientations? What is the role of political power in mediating the relationship between culture and political values? These questions cannot be properly answered by Huntington civilizational paradigm.

The view of culture proposed by Huntington is too totalistic and simplistic to provide adequate guidelines to predict its future development. The position that the cultural repertoire of values, norms, rituals, symbols, memories, and institutions shapes human behavior, identity, and strategy for economic and political development borders on the obvious. The question is *how* does culture shape these aspects? And the problem that must be confronted in any analysis of cultures-in-action is that the relationships among these cultural elements are not always consistent, and generally change with shifts in social conditions. It is also often the case that only a subset of cultural values, norms, and institutions predominates in society at any given time. For example, economic values and concerns—and hence, economic doctrines—may shape the discursive framework of intellectual leaders, political activists and policy makers, and the expectations of the ordinary public during one period. At another, religious or political values may predominate in addressing sociopolitical issues or resolving social problems.<sup>1</sup> A diversity of economic, political, and religious norms and values may inform people's attitudes toward social issues under a pluralistic democracy, where several distinct and mutually incompatible “comprehensive doctrines”<sup>2</sup> operate side by side with some overlapping consensus. A monolithic cultural condition, on the other hand, is characterized by the domination of a single comprehensive doctrine. Under certain conditions, the majority of the public may consider religion as the basis of their identity, and when these conditions change, they may identify with their ethnicity or nationality. This shift in the basis of identity may prompt a shift in political attitudes, behavior, and conceptions of friends and foes in international politics. People may thus think about

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<sup>1</sup>For example, the leaders of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution sought Iran's problem in political terms, dismantling monarchical absolutism and establishing Constitutionalism as a precondition for Iran's development and prosperity. In the mid twentieth century, the country's intellectuals and political leaders thought that Iran's major problem was the British control of the oil industry. Finally, during the revolutionary movement of 1977-79 that brought the clergy to power, religious categories were the building block of political thought (Moaddel 2005).

<sup>2</sup>John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 37.

issues and perceive and interpret events differently under different historical conditions. People's mode of reasoning about their world is a historical variable.

One way to manage the complexity of culture and predict its future development is to consider cultural change as a form of resolution of significant issues, when intellectual leaders and the public at large decide to abandon the existing societal model in favor of another one. For example, the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-11 intended to resolve the problem of politics; Constitutional law replaced monarchical absolutism. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 was another resolution of the problem of politics. This time the absolutist rule of the clerics was substituted for monarchical power. Thus, the first step for predicting change is to identify the kinds of issues that dominate the public discourse in society. The next is to discern the probable direction of the resolution—in the case of Iran, the parameters might be framed as religious or secular government, Islamic universalism/fundamentalism or territorial nationalism, individualism or collectivism, democracy or patrimonial domination, and gender equality or a hierarchically organized system of gender relations.

A clue to understanding how sociopolitical and cultural issues will be resolved is to consider the dynamic context within which they are discussed and debated among diverse intellectual leaders, activists, and policy makers. In resolving these issues, these individuals invoke the norms available in their culture, borrow ideas from other cultures, or produce new ideas. This context is structured by the distribution of political power and economic resources as well as past historical practices and memories. For example, a society that has a stronger tradition of patrimonialism may more readily accept patrimonial ideas repackaged in a new political arrangement than a society with a weaker experience in this tradition.<sup>3</sup> Alternatively, people's orientations toward significant religious events in their adult life may be a function of whether they were socialized in a secular or religious environment during their impressionable years. However, the pertinent characteristics of this context—being pluralistic or monolithic, the nature of state ideology and the extent of the state's intervention in cultural affairs, and whether the state is national or foreign—constitute the proximate conditions that shape how these issues will be resolved. For example, under an authoritarian state, cultural issues tend toward religious or secular resolution, depending on whether the state has primarily a secularist or a religious orientation, respectively. In this example, state ideology forms a regime of signification<sup>4</sup>—ideas, rituals and symbols, a mode of signification, and institutions—in relation to which oppositional ideas are invoked or produced to resolve the problem of political order.

This model explains the expression of the intellectual leaders of the diverse cultural movements that emerged in the contemporary Middle East. Liberal and secular ideas, for example, have emerged within the context of and in oppositional relations to an alliance between the absolutist monarch and the Islamic religious establishment. Thus, the anti-clerical secularism and

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<sup>3</sup>This fact may explain Iranian readiness to accept theocracy following the overthrow of the monarchy in the revolution movement of 1979. The religious ideology that informed the revolution had remarkable similarities in terms of the image of power hierarchy it projected to the ideology of monarchy (Moaddel 2005).

<sup>4</sup>We are borrowing this concept from Lash and using it in a parallel sense. See Scott Lash, *Sociology of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 4-5.

liberalism of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-11 emerged in response to the absolutism of the monarch (hence, liberalism) and ulama obstructionism (hence, anti-clerical secularism). The rise of anti-British economic nationalism in the 1940s and 1950s occurred in reaction to British control of the Iranian oil industry (Abrahamian 1982; Afary 1996; Moaddel 2005). Likewise, the rise of liberal Arabism among Syrian intellectual leaders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a response to the pan-Islamic despotism of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1908) and the subsequent Turkish nationalism of the Committee of Union and Progress (formed in 1907). Pan Arab nationalism arose in response to the perception that Arab people were commonly mistreated by colonial powers, as evidenced by the imposition of the French mandate on Syria (1920-45) and the British mandate on Iraq (1920-32), and the colonial partitioning of the Arab lands into arbitrary states. In this new nationalist discourse, Syrian and Iraqi political ideologues departed from the liberal views of such Arabists as al-Kawakibi to support the glorification of the Arab people and the subordination of the idea of individual freedom to the idea of self-sacrifice for the cause of national liberation. The British occupation of Egypt in 1882 contributed to the rise of territorial nationalism among Egyptians in the first quarter of the twentieth century (Haim 1962; Cleveland 1971; Wendell 1972; Zeine 1973; Dawn 1973, 1988; Hourani 1983; Khoury 1983, 1987; Khalidi et al 1991; Chartouni-Dubarry 1993; Gershoni and Jankowski 1995; Marsot 1968; Tripp 2000; Dawisha 2003; Moaddel 2005; Moaddel, Tessler, and Inglehart 2008).

Likewise, contemporary Islamic fundamentalism has also emerged in response to the secularist ideology and policies of the intrusive state. The Egyptian liberal nationalist state of the 1920s and 1930s, the Nasserite pan Arab nationalist state, the socialist oriented states in Algeria and Syria, and the pro-Western state of the Pahlavis in Iran all commonly followed a secularist ideology that considered religion inimical to progress. In all these countries, nationalist ideologues and policy makers did not confine their activities to the realm of politics. They narrowed the cultural and social spheres of religious institutions; they rewrote history to fit their nationalist conception of the past and to overlook the Islamic period, glorifying pre-Islamic kingship and ancient history; they reformed the educational institutions to undermine the influence of religion, imposed feminism from above, and attacked religion and religious rituals in terms of Western standards (Moaddel 2002, 2005).

## **PROJECTING VALUES CHANGE IN IRAN, IRAQ, AND SAUDI ARABIA**

As evidenced in the examples above, the diverse resolutions of sociopolitical issues by the intellectual leaders in the Middle Eastern countries are related to the nature of the ideological targets they encountered. The absolutist states, religious obstructionism, foreign occupation, and secularist ideology of the authoritarian state gave rise to ideological resolutions in the forms of constitutionalism, anti-clerical secularism, nationalism, and religious fundamentalism, respectively.

A similar dynamic may also explain and predict variation in value orientations and political attitudes among the public at large. Under state authoritarianism, trends in values change are also related in an oppositional manner to the ideology of the state and its policies. Using this model, we develop several propositions to explain such trends among Iranians, Iraqis, and Saudis and to project the future development of values in these countries. In the cases of Iran and Saudi Arabia, the claims

to, and the consequences of, Islamicity by the regime offer clues about the process of values change in both countries. These claims provided the justification for both regimes to impose a monolithic religious order on society from above, and to create the institutional structures to support this order—the institution of clerical absolutism in Iran and clerical domination in Saudi Arabia, a system of gender inequality, and the promotion of religious identity. In the case of Iraq, values change is structured in oppositional relations to foreign occupation, on the one hand, and the rise of religious parties, on the other. We thus propose:

1. In Iran, we predict growing support for individualism, democracy and gender equality, and for national identity in contradistinction to religious identity.
2. In Saudi Arabia, we predict a decline in the significance of religious norms and religiosity and an increase in favorable attitudes toward gender equality,
3. In Iraq, we predict increasing support for national identity and secular politics.

## **SURVEY DATA**

The Iranian data are from two values surveys conducted by researchers from the University of Tehran, Iran. The first used a nationally representative sample of 2,532 adults and was carried out in fall 2000, and the second used a nationally representative sample of 2,667 adults and was carried out in summer 2005. The interviews, which required approximately one hour on average to complete, were conducted face-to-face in respondents' residences. Importantly, they were conducted by experienced Iranian personnel. The 2000 sample includes all provinces in Iran except Sistan va Baluchistan and Kurdistan; the 2005 sample covers all the provinces.

The Iraqi data are from several surveys carried out in the country in December 2004, April 2006, October 2006, March 2007, and July 2007. The December 2004 and April 2006 surveys were comprehensive values surveys funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation. The other surveys were sponsored by the Effects Assessment Group connected to multinational forces in Iraq. This group included about ten questions from our NSF-sponsored surveys in their October 2006, March 2007, and July 2007 surveys and generously shared not only the responses to these ten questions and demographics from these surveys, but also the entire data sets from the April and October 2006 surveys. These interviews were also conducted face-to-face in respondents' residences by experienced Iraqi personnel. All Iraqi surveys were conducted by the Independent Institute for Administrative and Civil Society Studies, an Iraqi research firm.

The Saudi data are from two surveys. One is a comprehensive national values survey carried out in the country in 2003. This survey used a nationally representative sample of 1,526 respondents, of which 1,026 were Saudi citizens and 500 were foreign residents. The other was a youth survey carried out in 2005 using a representative sample of 954 young adults (age 18-25) from three cities – Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam-Khobar – and their rural surroundings. Both Saudi surveys used face-to-face interviews in the respondents' residences, and were carried out by the Saudi branch of the Pan Arab Research Center.

## VALUES CHANGE AMONG IRANIANS

To assess the change in the value orientations of Iranians, we consider and measure attitudes toward types of individualism and national identity.

### Individualism

The recognition of the autonomy of the individual is a principle feature of modernity. This recognition for Mill (1998 [1869]: xv) is a reflection of the level of cultural development, where “individuality—which is to say, that form of life in which persons realize their peculiar natures in autonomously chosen activities—is the single most important ingredient in human well-being.” Individualism is considered a major trait in Western cultural tradition. “Again and again,” says Huntington (1996: 72), both Westerners and non-Westerners point to individualism as the central distinguishing mark of the West.”

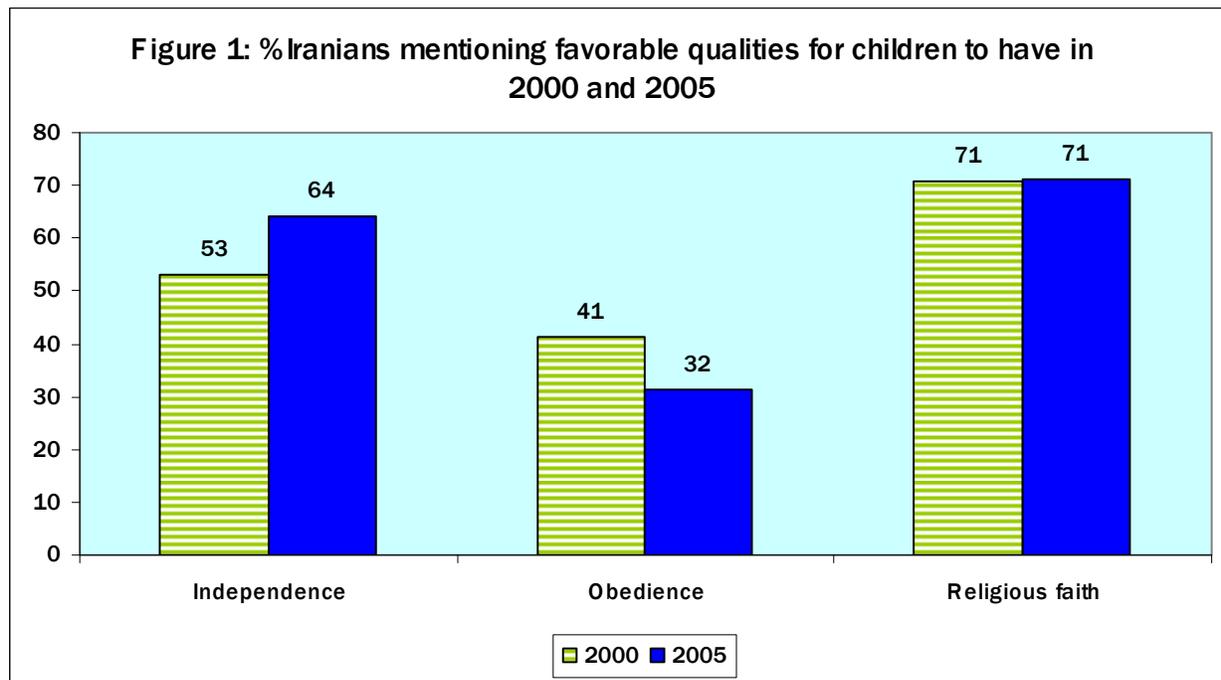
Individualism has political, economic, and social dimensions. In politics, it means equality of all political voices, or favorable attitudes toward democracy and gender equality. Economic individualism supports the value of hard work and belief in the work-reward nexus, promotes private ownership of businesses, and stresses individual responsibility over governmental responsibility in providing for personal well-being. Social individualism assumes individual choice predominates in social matters, such as decisions around marriage and child-rearing.

Here, we focus on measures of social and economic individualism, and in the following section we discuss political individualism by focusing on democracy and gender equality.

An important manifestation of value change toward individualism would be a change in attitudes toward favorable qualities for children and the basis for marriage. To measure these changes, the respondents were asked:

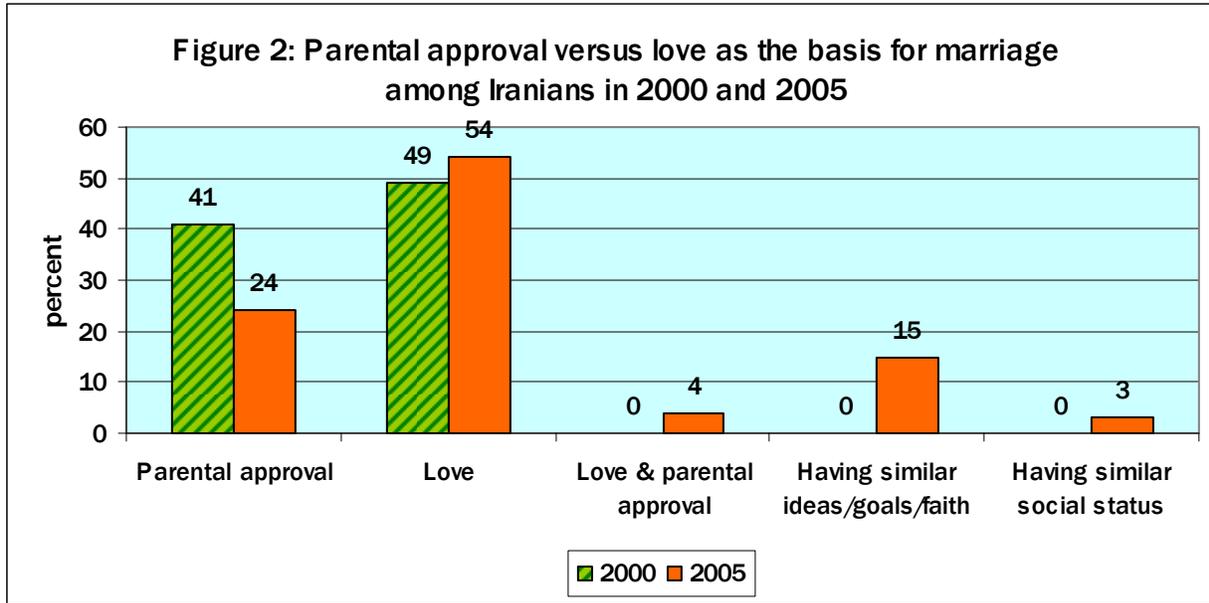
- I. *Here is a list of qualities that children can be encouraged to learn at home. Which, if any, do you consider to be especially important?*
  1. *Independence*
  2. *Religious faith*
  3. *Obedience*
- II. *In your view, what is the basis for marriage: parental approval or love?*

Figure 1 shows the change in Iranian attitudes toward favorable qualities for children between the 2000 and 2005 surveys. The percentage of respondents who considered independence a favorable quality increased from 53% to 64%, while those who mentioned obedience decreased from 41% to 32% between the two surveys. These changes are statistically significant, indicating a trend toward individual autonomy. Iranian attitudes toward religious faith as a favorable quality for children, however, did not change between 2000 and 2005.



Attitudes toward the basis for marriage may constitute an even stronger indication of the extent of public support for individualism. As shown in Figure 2, 41% of the respondents in the 2000 survey believed that parental approval was the basis for marriage, while this value dropped to 24% in 2005. The percentage of the respondents who mentioned love as the basis for marriage, on the other hand, increased from 49% to 54% between the two surveys. In the 2005 survey, some respondents volunteered their own views on marriage instead of choosing between love and parental approval. These included “both love and parental approval” (4%), “having similar ideas/goals/faith” (15%), and “having similar social backgrounds” (3%). Again, among these responses, the largest group (15%) referred to factors that are related to individuality—“having similar ideas/goals/faith”—and to personal choice in the selection of a spouse. If we add this group to those who considered love as the basis for marriage, we may conclude that 69% of the respondents considered individual attributes—love or having similar ideas/goal/faith—as the most important criteria in selecting spouse. The steep drop in support for parental approval over the survey period, coupled with the sharp rise in support for individual choice, suggest that Iranians may be approaching their own “Romeo and Juliet revolution.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>The expression of “Romeo and Juliet revolution” is used in recognition of the freedom of the individual to choose a spouse was part of the humanism movement in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth century that gave priority to individual choice over religious dogma and tradition (Deutsch 1981).



Economic individualism is measured by three indicator variables as outlined below: attitudes toward private versus government’s ownership of businesses and industry, attitudes toward individual versus governmental responsibility, and attitudes toward merit pay.

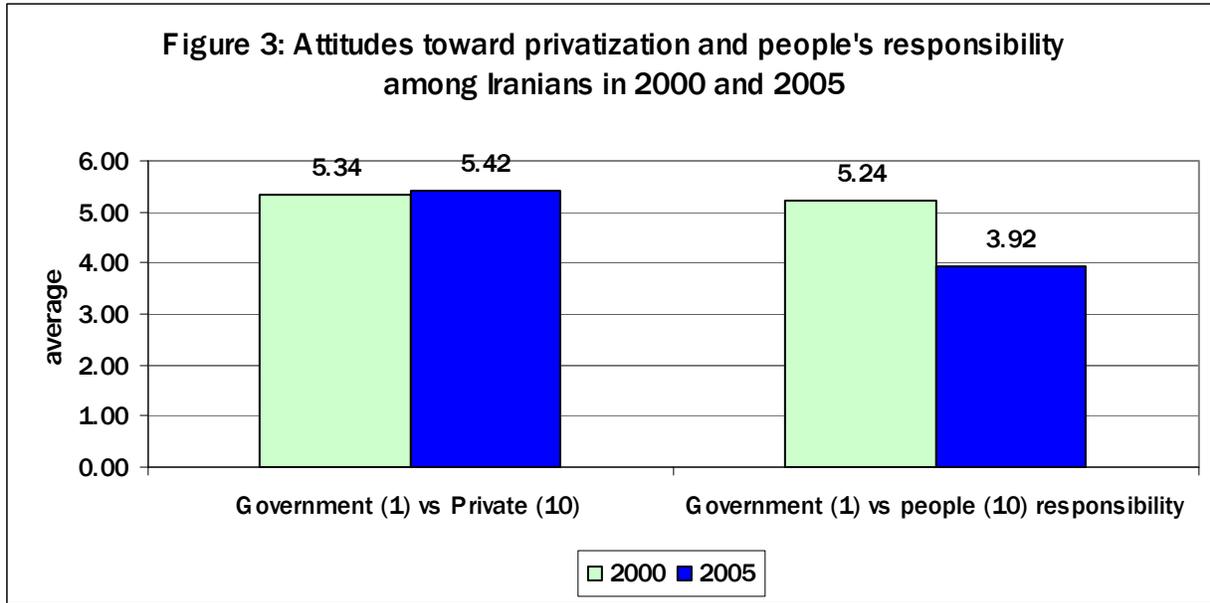
III. *How would you place your views on this scale? “1” means you agree completely with the statement on the left; “10” means you agree completely with the statement on the right; and if your views fall somewhere in between, you can choose any number in between.*

1. *Government ownership of business and industry should be increased (1) versus private ownership of business and industry should be increased (10). (Privatization)*
2. *The government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for (1) versus people should take the responsibility to provide for themselves (10). (Individual responsibility)*

IV. *Imagine two secretaries, of the same age, doing practically the same job. One finds out that the other earns considerably more than she does. The better paid secretary, however, is quicker, more efficient and more reliable at her job. In your opinion, is it fair or not fair that one secretary is paid more than the other? (Merit pay)*

1. *Fair*
2. *Not fair*

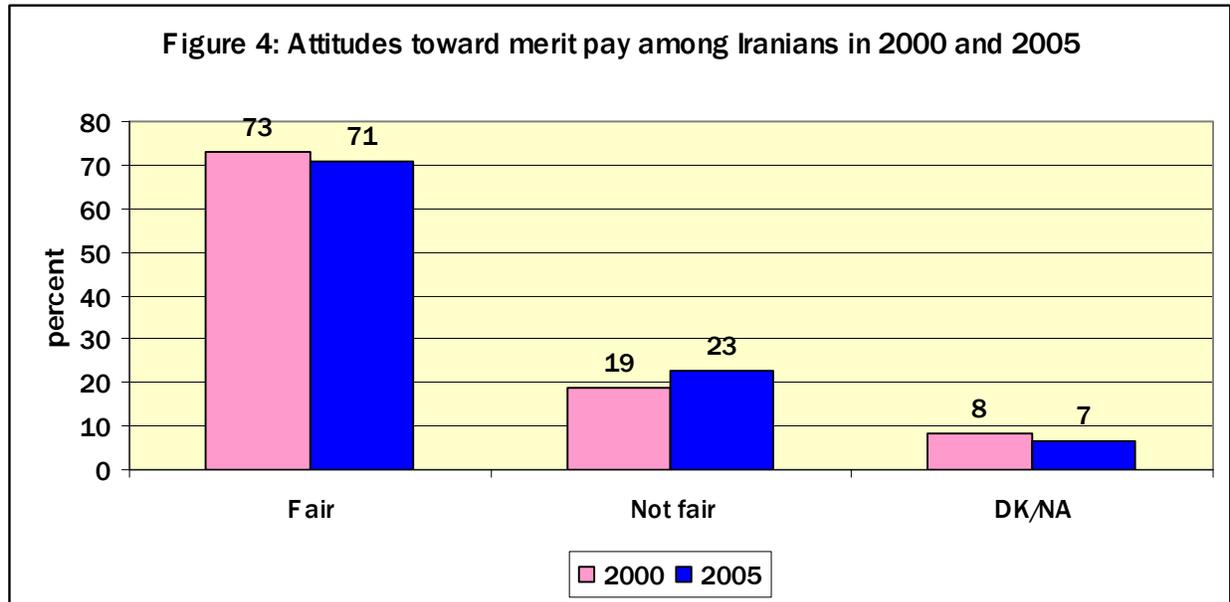
Figure 3 summarizes the changes in attitudes toward privatization and individual responsibility between the 2000 and 2005 surveys. Iranian attitudes toward privatization increased negligibly in this period (from 5.34 to 5.42), while their attitudes toward individual versus governmental responsibility declined significantly (from 5.24 to 3.92). The latter change in particular may indicate a decline in support for economic individualism among Iranians.



The correlation coefficient between privatization and individual responsibility is significant and positive:  $r=.274$  for the 2000 survey and  $r=.091$  for the 2005. That is, the more favorable attitudes the respondents had toward privatization, the stronger is their support for the view that people should take responsibility to provide for themselves. Because these two factors are positively correlated, although the correlation coefficients are relatively weak (particularly in the 2005 data), we may argue that they have a degree of validity in measuring economic individualism. Nonetheless, one may argue that given the country's specific conditions, the stress on government responsibility may be in fact associated with favorable attitudes toward individualism. That is, given the situation that the Islamic government has extensive ownership of businesses and industry, a rise in the expectation that the government should do more for its people may reflect a growing sense of individual rights to the fruits of these enterprises. This contrasts to Western countries, where an expansion in government-sponsored social welfare would mean higher taxation. Thus, people may support economic individualism, at least in part, to avoid higher taxes.

A better measure of economic individualism would be the commitment to merit as the basis for the distribution of reward in society and the belief that people ought to work hard to provide for themselves (Feldman and Zaller 1992: 272, note 3; Free and Cantril 1968). Figure 4 summarizes attitudes toward merit pay. The percentage of respondents who indicated that it is fair for the more efficient secretary to receive a higher wage declined from 73% to 71% and the percentage of those who said that it is unfair went up from 19% to 23%. Although small, these changes are statistically significant.

On the whole, we may thus conclude that while Iranians have displayed a sizable shift toward social individualism, economically, they have become less individualistic.



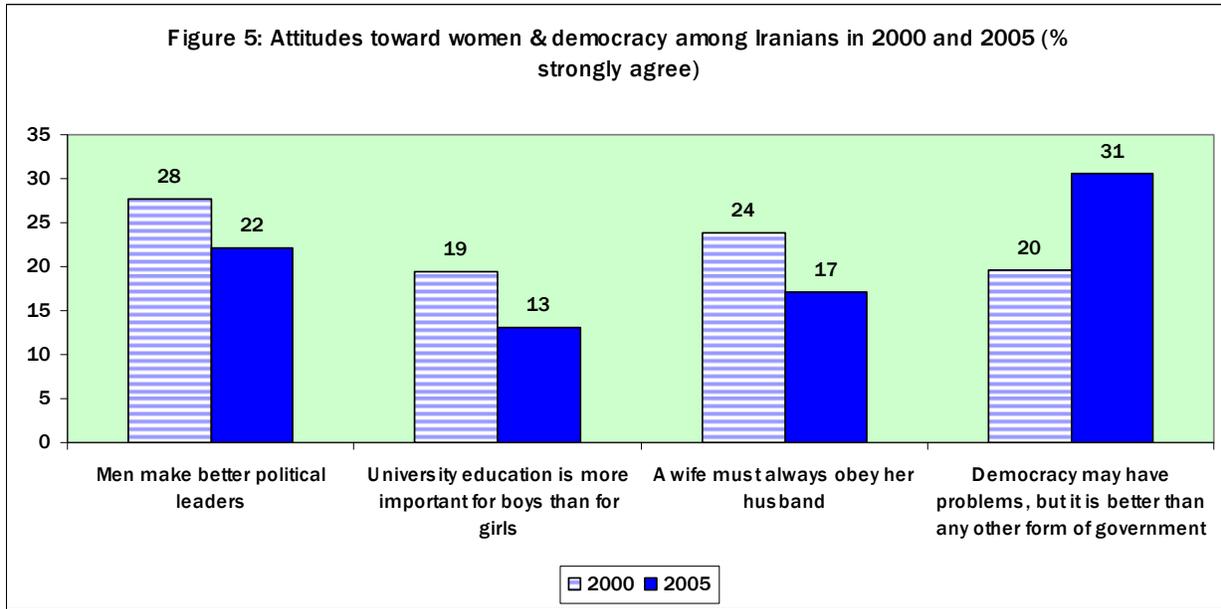
### Gender Relations and Democracy

The change in attitudes toward political individualism and liberal politics may be measured in terms of attitudes toward democracy and gender equality. Iranians were asked:

IV. For each of the following statements, can you tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with each. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree?

1. On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do.
2. A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl.
3. A wife must always obey her husband.
4. Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government

Figure 5 shows the change in the respondents' attitudes toward these issues between 2000 and 2005. Significant declines occurred in the proportion of Iranians that strongly agreed with the following statements: "men make better political leaders," (from 28% in 2000 to 22% in 2005); "university education is more important for boys than it is for girls," (19% to 13%); and "a wife must always obey her husband" (24% to 17%). In addition, the percentage of the respondents who strongly agreed that "democracy may have problems, but it is a better form of government" increased from 20% in 2000 to 31% in 2005. These changes evidence remarkable shifts in attitudes toward liberal democracy and gender equality between the two surveys.



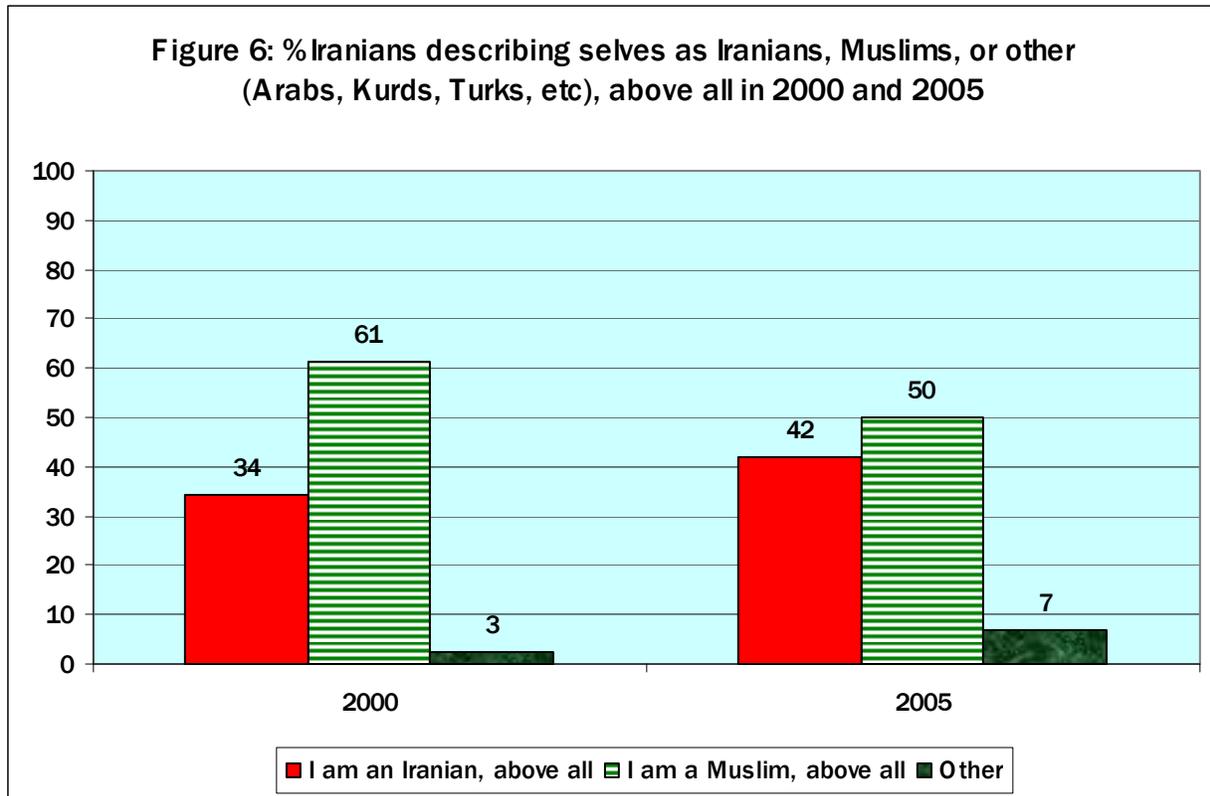
### National Identity

Another key component of political values is how people identify themselves – in particular, whether they base their identity on religion, ethnicity, or nationality. The change in the basis of identity may imply a shift in people’s political attitudes toward the government and their perception of international and regional politics. To measure this change, Iranians were asked:

IV. “Which of the following best describes you?”

1. I am a Muslim, above all.
2. I am an Iranian, above all.
3. Other (I am an Arab, Kurd, Turk, etc., above all)

Figure 6 shows the change in the respondents’ conception of identity between 2000 and 2005. The percentage of respondents that identified themselves as “Iranian, above all” increased from 34% to 42%, and the percentage that selected “Muslim, above all” declined from 61% to 50%. These changes may imply that religion plays a less important role in shaping Iranian political attitudes, while secular factors related to Iran as a nation are gaining in significance and shaping Iranians’ orientation toward outsiders.



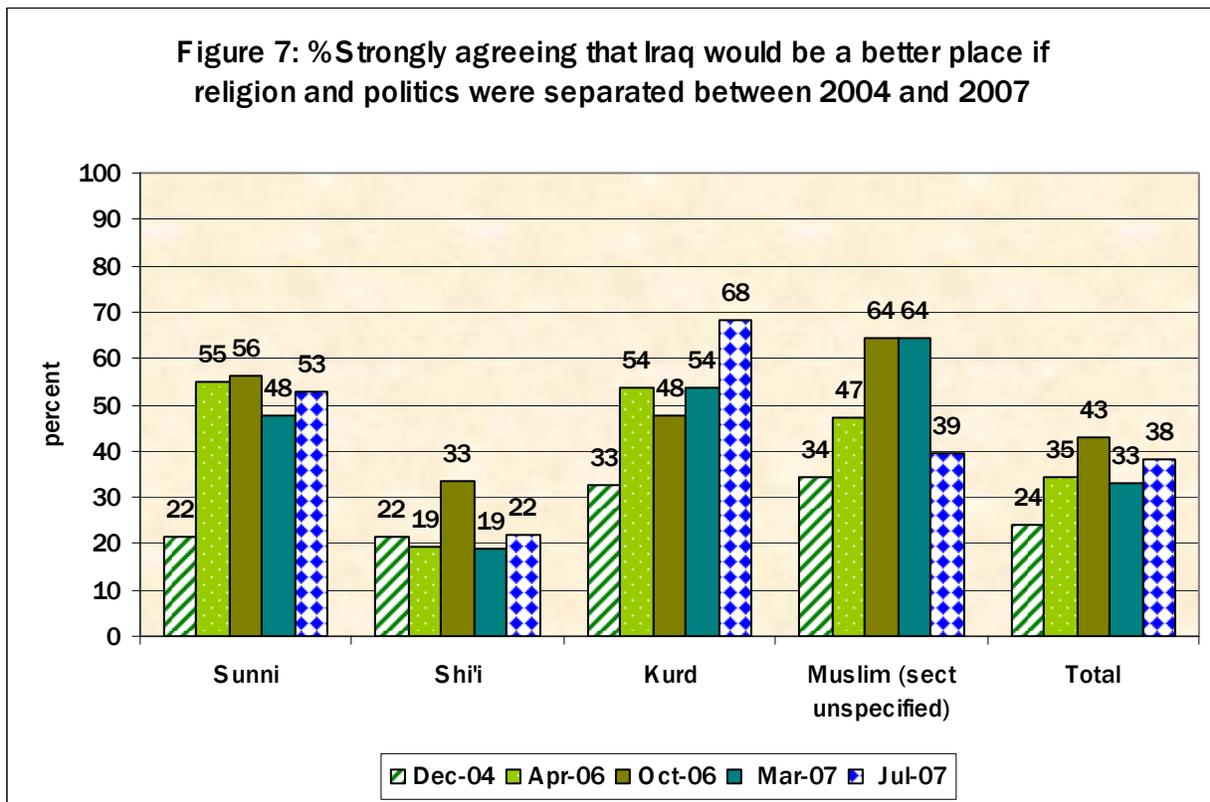
Despite Iran's religious authoritarian regime, these data indicate that Iranian political values have changed during the past several years in favor of social individualism, democracy, gender equality, and national identity. This trend was not reflected, however, in economic terms, as Iranians placed greater emphasis on the government's responsibility to provide for them and were less supportive of merit pay in 2005 than in 2000.

### VALUES CHANGE AMONG IRAQIS

To assess the changes in Iraqi political values, we focus on and measure three variables: attitudes toward secular politics, attitudes toward major Iraqi religious and secular parties, and types of identity.

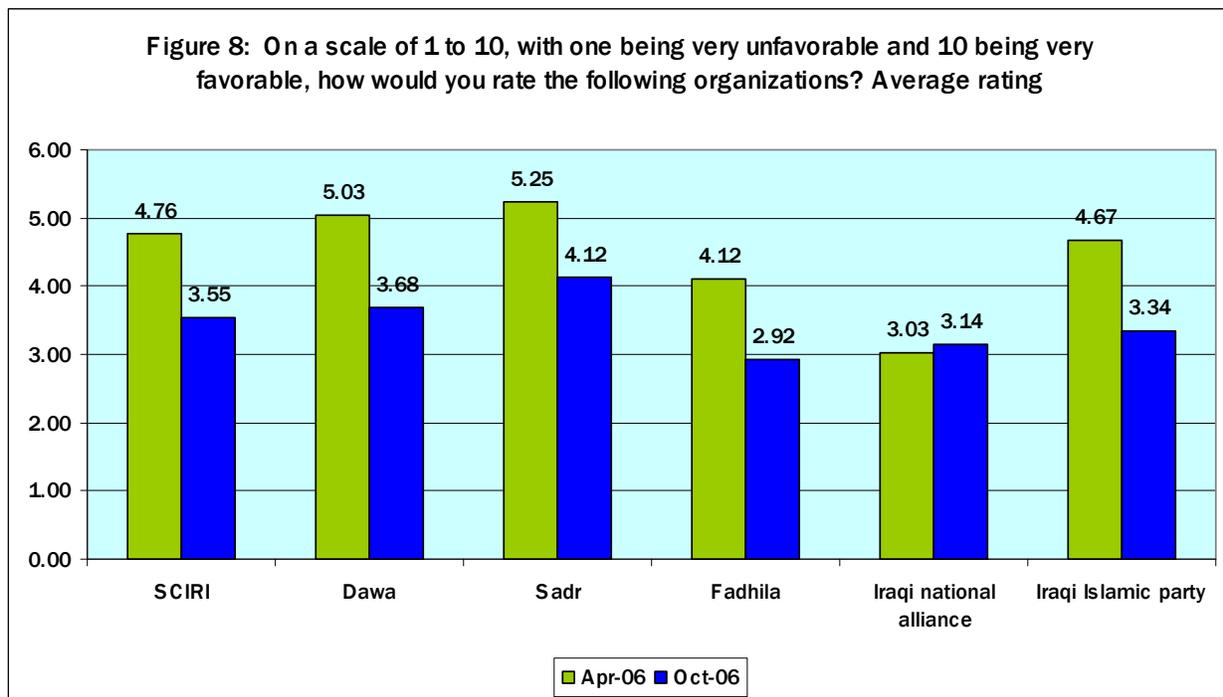
- I. *Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that Iraq would be a better place if religion and politics were separated.*
- II. *On a scale of 1 to 10, with one being very unfavorable and 10 being very favorable, how would you rate the following political parties? Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, Dawa, Sadr, Fadhila, Iraqi national alliance, Iraqi Islamic party.*
- III. *Which of these best describes you?*
  1. *I am an Iraqi, above all.*
  2. *I am a Muslim, above all.*
  3. *I am a Kurd, above all.*
  4. *Other*

Figure 7 shows the changes in Iraqi attitudes toward secular politics. In terms of the first item, only 24% of Iraqis strongly agreed that Iraq would be a better place if religion and politics were separated in December 2004, compared to 35% in April 2006, 43% in October 2006, 33% in March 2007, and 38% in July 2007. Support for secular politics varied among the three groups, with the Sunnis, Kurds, and Muslims (those who did not wish to be identified as either Sunnis or Shi'is) displaying a much stronger preference for separating religion and politics than the Shi'is. (The Shi'is appear to be under a considerable influence of religious political parties, many of which have ties with the Islamic regime in Iran.)



Another way to assess the trend in support for secular politics during this period is to consider changes in the popularity of religious parties in Iraq. Figure 8 shows the average of the respondents' favorability ratings for all religious political parties. The SCIRI (Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution of Iraq), Dawa, Sadr, and Fadhila are Shi'i political parties. The Iraqi Islamic party is a Sunni political party, and the Iraqi national alliance is a secular party. As this table shows, the popularity of all religious parties significantly declined between April and October 2006, while the popularity of the secular Iraqi national alliance slightly increased. Despite declines in favorability among religious parties, however, they were still more popular in October 2006 (except for Fadhila) than the secular Iraqi national alliance.

Nonetheless, given the trend toward secular politics evidenced in these data as well as the context in which this trend is occurring – namely, the potential for a divisive role of the religious parties in Shi'i-Sunni relations and the inability of the Shi'i majority to lead the country – we may expect either a change in the political platform of these parties toward Islamic reformism or a rise in the popularity of secular parties.



Another indication of the change in the Iraqi political attitudes toward secular politics can be seen in how Iraqis choose to self-identify. In December 2004, only 23% Iraqis described themselves as “Iraqi above all”, a value that increased to 28% in April 2006, 54% in March 2007, and 59% in July 2007. This remarkable shift in the conception of identity among Iraqis lends credence to the view that foreign occupation provokes nationalist awareness among the subjugated public.

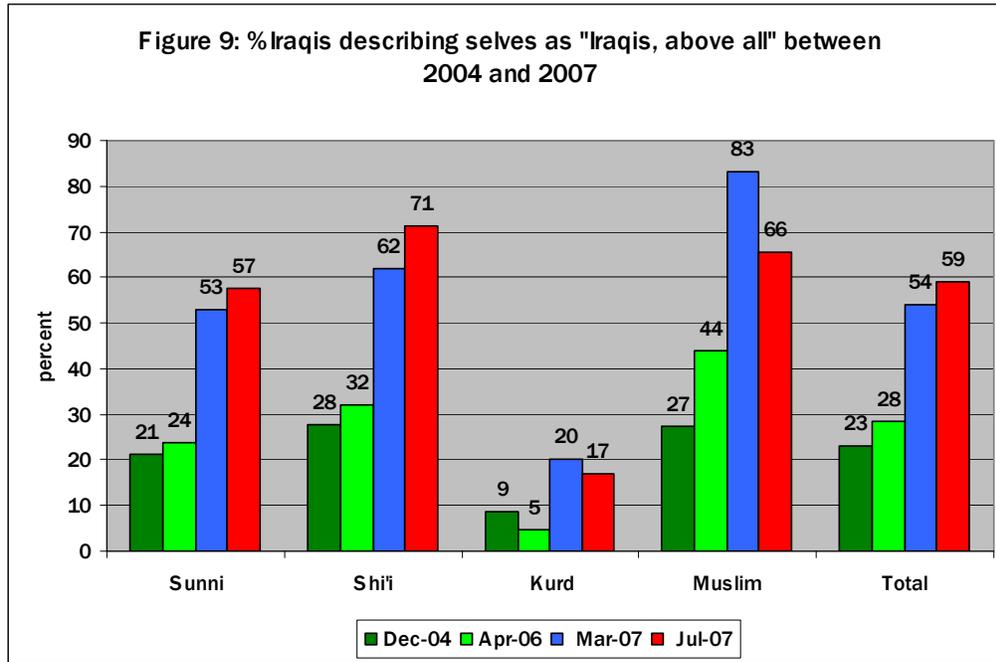
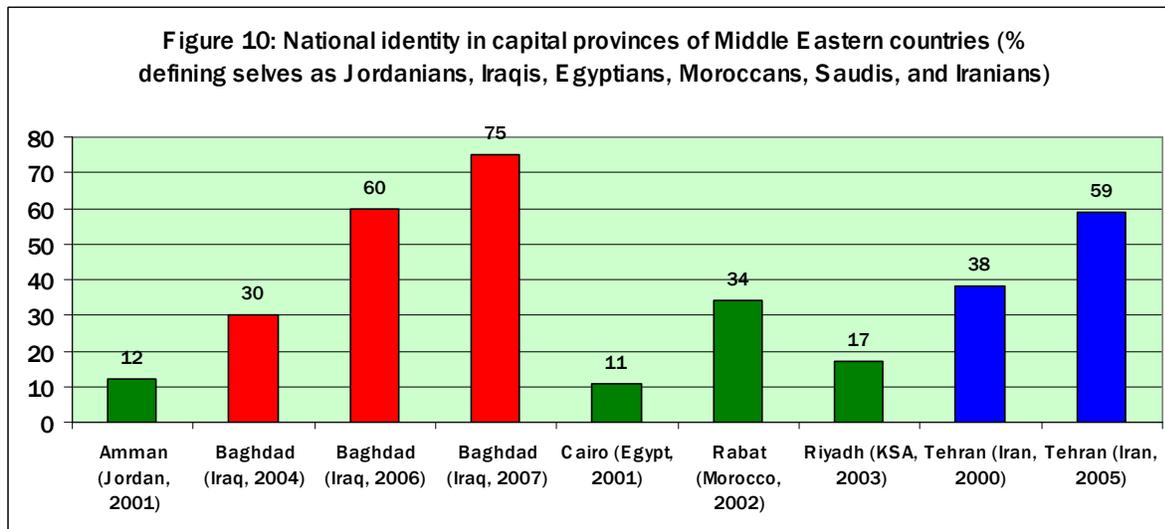


Figure 10 displays variations in nation-based self-identification across capital provinces of several Middle Eastern countries. In Baghdad province, those who described themselves as “Iraqi, above all” increased from 30% in 2004, to 60% in 2006, and then to 75% in 2007. In Tehran, Iran, the proportion jumped from 38% in 2000 to 59% in 2005. Related percentages for those who self-identified by nationality in other cities (in 2001) were: 11% for Cairo, Egypt; 12% for Amman, Jordan; 34% for Rabat, Morocco; and (in 2003) 17% for Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.



## PROSPECTS FOR VALUES CHANGE IN SAUDI ARABIA

Our position is that the religious authoritarianism of the Iranian regime and the domination of Iraqi politics by sectarian religious parties are key factors in explaining the trend toward liberal democracy among Iranians and secular politics among Iraqis, respectively. We draw from this interpretation to project values trends among the Saudi public.

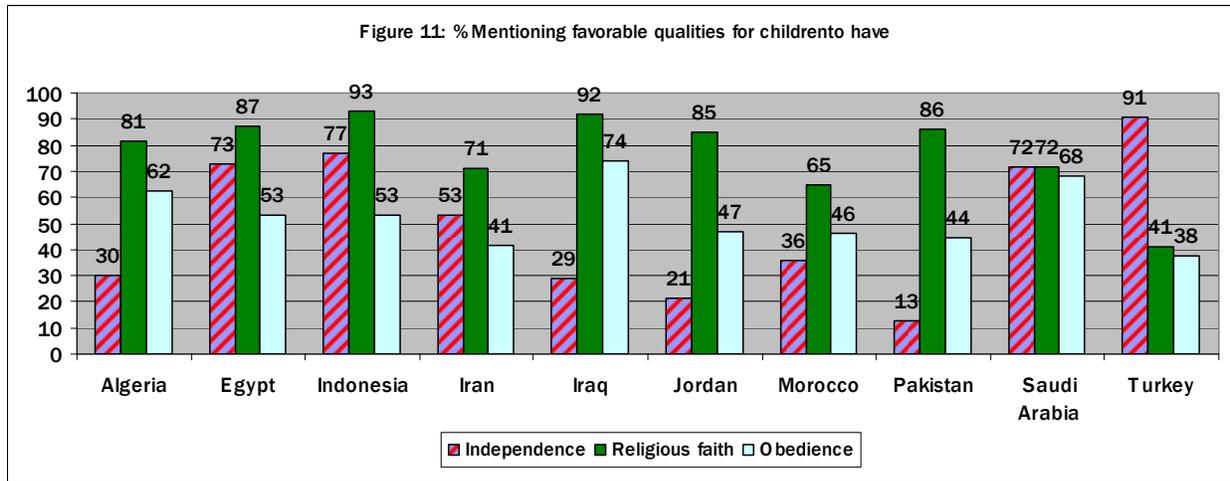
Insofar as the relationship between religion and regime is concerned, Iran and Saudi Arabia are similar in one important aspect: in both societies, a monolithic religious discourse has been imposed from above, and religious vice-squads vigorously enforce the official shari'a rules of conduct. To predict values trends in Saudi Arabia, we advance two levels of comparisons. First, we compare Saudi religiosity and individualistic values with those in Iran and other Islamic countries to assess the extent to which the monolithic religious structures in Iran and Saudi Arabia have shaped the religiosity of the public. Second, we compare the youth portion of the 2003 Saudi survey with the 2005 Saudi youth survey in terms of attitudes toward the basis for marriage, democracy, and gender equality to establish some sense of how values might be changing over time in Saudi Arabia.

Table 1 compares mosque attendance among ten Islamic countries. As shown, Iranians and Saudis, who live under religious regimes, attended mosques less often than the citizens of other Islamic countries. The mean mosque attendance for Iran (1.86) or Saudi Arabia (1.85) is lower than it is for Iraq (1.87), Pakistan (3.15), Turkey (1.87), Indonesia, (2.71), Egypt (2.09), Morocco (2.24), Jordan (2.20), and Algeria (2.23).

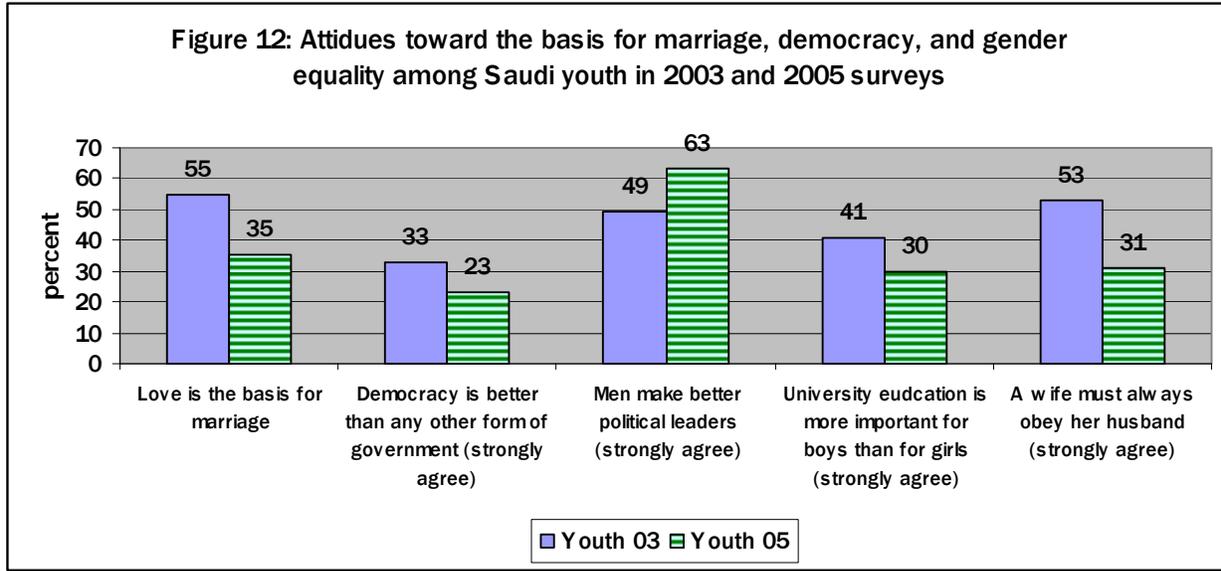
Table 1: Mosque attendance (percent)	Pakistan	Turkey	Saudi Arabia	Indonesia	Egypt	Morocco	Iran	Jordan	Algeria	Iraq
1. Once a year or less or on special holy days	9	63	56	25	55	52	54	53	50	64
2. Once a month	17	2	16	11	3	3	19	2	3	3
3. Once a week	24	20	15	34	20	12	15	15	21	15
4. More than once a week	50	15	12	31	22	32	12	29	26	18
Total	2,000	3,327	1026	1,000	3,000	2,262	2,442	1,221	1,237	2,298
Mean	3.15	1.87	<b>1.85</b>	2.71	2.09	2.24	<b>1.86</b>	2.20	2.23	1.87
SD	1.00	1.19	1.09	1.15	1.28	1.37	1.07	1.34	1.30	1.22
State Religiosity	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1

In terms of placing high importance on religious faith as a quality for children, Saudis are comparable to Iranians, and give this quality less emphasis (72% and 71%, respectively) than do respondents from Algeria (81%), Egypt (87%), Indonesia (93%), Iraq (92%), Jordan (85%), and Pakistan (86%). Only respondents in Morocco (65%) and Turkey (41%) rate religious faith for children lower. The rate of selecting independence as an important quality for children is much higher among Saudis (72%) than it is among Algerians (31%), Iranians (53%), Iraqis (29%), Jordanians (21%), Moroccans (36%), and Pakistanis (13%), but it is lower than among Egyptians (73%), Indonesians (77%), and Turkish (91%). However, a higher percentage of Saudis (68%) select obedience as an important quality for children than do respondents from any other of these Islamic countries except for Iraqis (Figure 11). Apparently, Saudis adhere to values that clash—

giving high importance to both the individualistic value of independence and the patrimonial value of obedience. Such contradictory attitudes may reflect a state of values transition in Saudi society, where the respondents have not quite sorted out their firm positions on the value of independence versus obedience. But in the future, we believe that smaller proportions of Saudis will place high importance on obedience as a quality to encourage in children, while similar (or even higher) percentages will continue to value independence in children.



Analyses of data from the 2003 values survey (youth sample) and the 2005 youth survey may provide more insights into trends in values among Saudis. As shown in Figure 12, the attitudes of the Saudi youth grew less supportive of individualism and equality between 2003 and 2005. During this period, the proportion of these youths who considered love as the basis for marriage declined from 55% to 35%. Favorable attitudes toward democracy also declined, with those who strongly agree that “democracy may have problems, but it is a better than any other form of government” dropping from 33% in 2003 to 23% in 2005. During the same period, those who strongly agreed that “men make better political leaders than women do” increased from 49% to 63%. On the other hand, on women’s right to education and wife obedience, these youth became more favorable toward gender equality. That is, the percentage of those who strongly agreed that “university education is more important for boys than for girls” declined from 41% to 30% between the two surveys, and those who strongly agreed that “a wife must always obey her husband” also declined from 53% to 31%.



Since, among the populations surveyed, Saudis have the lowest average mosque attendance and a relatively low rate of reporting religious faith as a highly important quality for children, we posit that a decline in religiosity will be a component of future values trends in Saudi Arabia. And even given the recent downward trends among Saudi youth in attitudes toward social individualism and democracy, we believe that a key area of change in Saudi society will be an increase in favorable attitudes toward gender equality, particularly in the family.

**CONCLUSION**

Findings from the values surveys in Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia provide evidence of different patterns of values change in each of these countries over recent years. In Iran, we saw a shift toward social individualism, liberal democracy, gender equality, and nationalism. A trend away from economic individualism was also noted among Iranians between 2000 and 2005, with an increasing fraction agreeing that the state should take more responsibility for meeting citizens’ needs. For Iraq, the trend was toward secular political values and recognition of national identity in the post-Saddam period. In the case of Saudi Arabia, we saw a trend away from religiosity and a rise in favorable attitudes toward gender equality.

In interpreting these trends, we argue that the nature of the dominant regime is a key predictor of any changes in values. Because both Iranian and Saudi regimes are authoritarian, trends in people’s religious and political values are shaped in oppositional relations to the ideology of these regimes—clerical absolutism in Iran and the monopolization of religion by the Wahhabi cleric in Saudi Arabia. Our findings provided evidence of this process: a low level of mosque attendance in Iran and Saudi Arabia compared to other Islamic countries. The trend in the Iraqi political values also reflects this ideological opposition to the dominant regime—here, foreign occupation and religious parties. We believe the undesirability of both foreign rule and sectarian religious parties has spurred a growing sense of national identity and support for secular politics in Iraq.

From our discussions of the correlates of values change in a non-Western context, we may conclude that Huntington's civilizational paradigm is too essentialist to allow or account for shifts toward Western-like cultural values in these areas. Nothing inherent to Iranian, Iraqi, or Saudi cultural traditions prevents their intellectual leaders and publics at large from supporting social arrangements based in political equality and individualism. In fact, we posit that the shifts we found—Iranians' rising interest in liberal democracy, Iraqis' increasing devotion to nationalism over religious sectarianism, and the Saudis' low mosque attendance and growing support for gender equality—all reflect the significance of social processes in shaping values change and, in turn, the significance of historically specific conditions in shaping social processes. In fact, historical conjunctures may function as counter cultural-liberators, transcending cultural constraints and bringing into relief a new historical pattern.

The connection between social processes and values change is established, we believe, through the resolution of sociopolitical issues in response to immediate ideological targets. In the countries surveyed, these targets may take the forms of governmental regimes, religious institutions, social policies, foreign occupation, or other monolithic social forces. And resolutions may shift values along a number of scales—toward religious or secular government, Islamic universalism/fundamentalism or territorial nationalism, individualism or collectivism, democracy or patrimonial domination, and gender equality or a gendered social hierarchy. The nature of a civilization – its cultural traditions and historical practices, norms, and distributions of power – may support the resolution of the issues in a particular direction. Nonetheless, as history has shown, cultural traditions have not constrained the forms of sociopolitical arrangements adopted as resolutions to ideological targets. The crucial factors that determine values change are the target, in opposition to which social norms are invoked or new values are produced, and the location of this target within the sociopolitical space of the social formation, which shapes the angle from which the target is viewed, interpreted, and criticized.

Iranian intellectual leaders in the early twentieth century, despite their country's much lower level of industrial and commercial development compared to that of Egypt and Turkey in the same period, managed to launch a successful Constitutional Revolution. In this effort, the nature of their ideological target—ulama obstructionism and monarchical absolutism—prompted them to resolve the country's political problem in an oppositional (a constitutional) direction. Today, Iranians are facing a similar target—the obstructionism of clerical absolutism brought about by the revolution of 1979, and our data suggest they are moving in a similar oppositional direction, in this case toward liberal democracy.

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## **Abstract**

This paper departs from Huntington's civilizational perspective and considers the nature of the national regime to be one of the most important predictors of the future of cultures in Islamic countries. From the values surveys carried out in Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, this article extrapolates trends in values change among the publics from these countries. Key features of these trends include shifts toward liberal democracy and individualism among Iranians, toward secular politics and nationalism among Iraqis, and away from religiosity and toward support for gender equality among Saudis.

## **CIVILIZATION, CULTURE, IDENTITY, AND CHANGE**

Huntington conceives the world as a congeries of civilizations in contention. “Civilizations,” he says, “are comprehensive, that is, none of their constituent units can be fully understood without reference to the encompassing civilization” (Huntington 1996: 42). He cautions that the test of this paradigm’s “usefulness is not whether it accounts for everything that is happening in global politics. Obviously it does not. The test is whether it proves a more meaningful and useful lens through which to view international developments than any alternative paradigm” (Huntington 1996: 13-14). In keeping with this delimitation, he proposes that “local politics is the politics of ethnicity; global politics is the politics of civilizations” (Huntington 1996: 28).

Nonetheless, Huntington does not remain faithful to the stated constraint of his paradigm, and develops several theses to argue that civilizations explain and predict almost every major event and process that transpire within the civilizational boundaries, including identity formation, political and economic development, and acceptance of or resistance to the Western model. First, civilizations—encompassing ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions—shape identities, and identities in turn influence the patterns of cohesion, disintegration, and conflict (Huntington 1996: 20-21). Second, while conceding that cultures do change and the nature of their impact on politics and economics varies from time to time, he argues that cultural differences among civilizations explain differences in political and economic development. “East Asian economic success has its source in East Asian culture, as do the difficulties East Asian societies have had in achieving stable democratic political systems. Islamic culture explains in large part the failure of democracy to emerge in much of the Muslim world.... The prospects for economic and political development in the Orthodox countries are uncertain; the prospects in the Muslim republics are bleak” (Huntington 1996: 29).

Third, despite having the power to shape human behavior, social institutions, and social processes within a civilization, a culture does not seem to have much power outside its civilization. The failures and successes of the Western culture outside the West is the case in point, in Huntington’s perspective. The West succeeded in dominating the world “not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion... but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence” (Huntington 1996: 51, 310). Power is thus crucial for cultural diffusion between civilizations. Indeed, “culture... follows power” (Huntington 1996: 310). And “if non-Western societies are once again to be shaped by Western culture, it will happen only as a result of the expansion, deployment, and impact of Western power. Imperialism is the necessary logical consequence of universalism” (Huntington 1996: 310). The inverse of this argument is also true for Huntington: with growing power and self-confidence, non-Western societies increasingly express their “own cultural values and reject those ‘imposed’ on them by the West” (Huntington 1996: 28). Thus, “as the world moves out of its Western phase, the ideologies which typified late Western civilization decline, and their place is taken by religions and other culturally based forms of identity and commitment” (Huntington 1996: 54).

To assess the predictive power of these assertions, we analyze data collected in national values surveys conducted in Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. If Huntington is correct, the available data must show that (a) the Islamic culture is increasingly shaping the identity of the publics, (b) support for individualism is waning, and (c) the publics are increasingly in favor of establishing Islamic values.

We also develop and assess an alternative approach to understand and predict values change.

## THE STATE, CULTURE PRODUCTION, AND SOCIAL ISSUES

Huntington does not elaborate how a civilization shapes people's identity and strategy for political and economic development. How do people, for example, select a particular type of identity? Why might religion serve as a basis of their identity at some point in time, while at other times their ethnicity or nationality is dominant? In what ways do secular, egalitarian, and individualistic ideas shape political development? Is this development possible only under Western domination? How does culture shape people's expressions and value orientations? What is the role of political power in mediating the relationship between culture and political values? These questions cannot be properly answered by Huntington's civilizational paradigm.

The view of culture proposed by Huntington is too totalistic and simplistic to provide adequate guidelines to predict its future development. The position that the cultural repertoire of values, norms, rituals, symbols, memories, and institutions shapes human behavior, identity, and strategy for economic and political development borders on the obvious. The question is *how* does culture shape these aspects? And the problem that must be confronted in any analysis of cultures-in-action is that the relationships among these cultural elements are not always consistent, and generally change with shifts in social conditions. It is also often the case that only a subset of cultural values, norms, and institutions predominates in society at any given time. For example, economic values and concerns—and hence, economic doctrines—may shape the discursive framework of intellectual leaders, political activists and policy makers, and the expectations of the ordinary public during one period. At another, religious or political values may predominate in addressing sociopolitical issues or resolving social problems.<sup>1</sup> A diversity of economic, political, and religious norms and values may inform people's attitudes toward social issues under a pluralistic democracy, where several distinct and mutually incompatible "comprehensive doctrines"<sup>2</sup> operate side by side with some overlapping consensus. A monolithic cultural condition, on the other hand, is characterized by the domination of a single comprehensive doctrine. Under certain conditions, the majority of the public may consider religion as the basis of their identity, and when these conditions change, they may identify with their ethnicity or nationality. This shift in the basis of identity may prompt a shift in political attitudes, behavior, and conceptions of friends and foes in international politics. People may thus think about

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<sup>1</sup>For example, the leaders of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution sought Iran's problem in political terms, dismantling monarchical absolutism and establishing Constitutionalism as a precondition for Iran's development and prosperity. In the mid twentieth century, the country's intellectuals and political leaders thought that Iran's major problem was the British control of the oil industry. Finally, during the revolutionary movement of 1977-79 that brought the clergy to power, religious categories were the building block of political thought (Moaddel 2005).

<sup>2</sup>John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 37.

issues and perceive and interpret events differently under different historical conditions. People's mode of reasoning about their world is a historical variable.

One way to manage the complexity of culture and predict its future development is to consider cultural change as a form of resolution of significant issues, when intellectual leaders and the public at large decide to abandon the existing societal model in favor of another one. For example, the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-11 intended to resolve the problem of politics; Constitutional law replaced monarchical absolutism. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 was another resolution of the problem of politics. This time the absolutist rule of the clerics was substituted for monarchical power. Thus, the first step for predicting change is to identify the kinds of issues that dominate the public discourse in society. The next is to discern the probable direction of the resolution—in the case of Iran, the parameters might be framed as religious or secular government, Islamic universalism/fundamentalism or territorial nationalism, individualism or collectivism, democracy or patrimonial domination, and gender equality or a hierarchically organized system of gender relations.

A clue to understanding how sociopolitical and cultural issues will be resolved is to consider the dynamic context within which they are discussed and debated among diverse intellectual leaders, activists, and policy makers. In resolving these issues, these individuals invoke the norms available in their culture, borrow ideas from other cultures, or produce new ideas. This context is structured by the distribution of political power and economic resources as well as past historical practices and memories. For example, a society that has a stronger tradition of patrimonialism may more readily accept patrimonial ideas repackaged in a new political arrangement than a society with a weaker experience in this tradition.<sup>3</sup> Alternatively, people's orientations toward significant religious events in their adult life may be a function of whether they were socialized in a secular or religious environment during their impressionable years. However, the pertinent characteristics of this context—being pluralistic or monolithic, the nature of state ideology and the extent of the state's intervention in cultural affairs, and whether the state is national or foreign—constitute the proximate conditions that shape how these issues will be resolved. For example, under an authoritarian state, cultural issues tend toward religious or secular resolution, depending on whether the state has primarily a secularist or a religious orientation, respectively. In this example, state ideology forms a regime of signification<sup>4</sup>—ideas, rituals and symbols, a mode of signification, and institutions—in relation to which oppositional ideas are invoked or produced to resolve the problem of political order.

This model explains the expression of the intellectual leaders of the diverse cultural movements that emerged in the contemporary Middle East. Liberal and secular ideas, for example, have emerged within the context of and in oppositional relations to an alliance between the absolutist monarch and the Islamic religious establishment. Thus, the anti-clerical secularism and

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<sup>3</sup>This fact may explain Iranian readiness to accept theocracy following the overthrow of the monarchy in the revolution movement of 1979. The religious ideology that informed the revolution had remarkable similarities in terms of the image of power hierarchy it projected to the ideology of monarchy (Moaddel 2005).

<sup>4</sup>We are borrowing this concept from Lash and using it in a parallel sense. See Scott Lash, *Sociology of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 4-5.

liberalism of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-11 emerged in response to the absolutism of the monarch (hence, liberalism) and ulama obstructionism (hence, anti-clerical secularism). The rise of anti-British economic nationalism in the 1940s and 1950s occurred in reaction to British control of the Iranian oil industry (Abrahamian 1982; Afary 1996; Moaddel 2005). Likewise, the rise of liberal Arabism among Syrian intellectual leaders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a response to the pan-Islamic despotism of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1908) and the subsequent Turkish nationalism of the Committee of Union and Progress (formed in 1907). Pan Arab nationalism arose in response to the perception that Arab people were commonly mistreated by colonial powers, as evidenced by the imposition of the French mandate on Syria (1920-45) and the British mandate on Iraq (1920-32), and the colonial partitioning of the Arab lands into arbitrary states. In this new nationalist discourse, Syrian and Iraqi political ideologues departed from the liberal views of such Arabists as al-Kawakibi to support the glorification of the Arab people and the subordination of the idea of individual freedom to the idea of self-sacrifice for the cause of national liberation. The British occupation of Egypt in 1882 contributed to the rise of territorial nationalism among Egyptians in the first quarter of the twentieth century (Haim 1962; Cleveland 1971; Wendell 1972; Zeine 1973; Dawn 1973, 1988; Hourani 1983; Khoury 1983, 1987; Khalidi et al 1991; Chartouni-Dubarry 1993; Gershoni and Jankowski 1995; Marsot 1968; Tripp 2000; Dawisha 2003; Moaddel 2005; Moaddel, Tessler, and Inglehart 2008).

Likewise, contemporary Islamic fundamentalism has also emerged in response to the secularist ideology and policies of the intrusive state. The Egyptian liberal nationalist state of the 1920s and 1930s, the Nasserite pan Arab nationalist state, the socialist oriented states in Algeria and Syria, and the pro-Western state of the Pahlavis in Iran all commonly followed a secularist ideology that considered religion inimical to progress. In all these countries, nationalist ideologues and policy makers did not confine their activities to the realm of politics. They narrowed the cultural and social spheres of religious institutions; they rewrote history to fit their nationalist conception of the past and to overlook the Islamic period, glorifying pre-Islamic kingship and ancient history; they reformed the educational institutions to undermine the influence of religion, imposed feminism from above, and attacked religion and religious rituals in terms of Western standards (Moaddel 2002, 2005).

## **PROJECTING VALUES CHANGE IN IRAN, IRAQ, AND SAUDI ARABIA**

As evidenced in the examples above, the diverse resolutions of sociopolitical issues by the intellectual leaders in the Middle Eastern countries are related to the nature of the ideological targets they encountered. The absolutist states, religious obstructionism, foreign occupation, and secularist ideology of the authoritarian state gave rise to ideological resolutions in the forms of constitutionalism, anti-clerical secularism, nationalism, and religious fundamentalism, respectively.

A similar dynamic may also explain and predict variation in value orientations and political attitudes among the public at large. Under state authoritarianism, trends in values change are also related in an oppositional manner to the ideology of the state and its policies. Using this model, we develop several propositions to explain such trends among Iranians, Iraqis, and Saudis and to project the future development of values in these countries. In the cases of Iran and Saudi Arabia, the claims

to, and the consequences of, Islamicity by the regime offer clues about the process of values change in both countries. These claims provided the justification for both regimes to impose a monolithic religious order on society from above, and to create the institutional structures to support this order—the institution of clerical absolutism in Iran and clerical domination in Saudi Arabia, a system of gender inequality, and the promotion of religious identity. In the case of Iraq, values change is structured in oppositional relations to foreign occupation, on the one hand, and the rise of religious parties, on the other. We thus propose:

1. In Iran, we predict growing support for individualism, democracy and gender equality, and for national identity in contradistinction to religious identity.
2. In Saudi Arabia, we predict a decline in the significance of religious norms and religiosity and an increase in favorable attitudes toward gender equality,
3. In Iraq, we predict increasing support for national identity and secular politics.

## **SURVEY DATA**

The Iranian data are from two values surveys conducted by researchers from the University of Tehran, Iran. The first used a nationally representative sample of 2,532 adults and was carried out in fall 2000, and the second used a nationally representative sample of 2,667 adults and was carried out in summer 2005. The interviews, which required approximately one hour on average to complete, were conducted face-to-face in respondents' residences. Importantly, they were conducted by experienced Iranian personnel. The 2000 sample includes all provinces in Iran except Sistan va Baluchistan and Kurdistan; the 2005 sample covers all the provinces.

The Iraqi data are from several surveys carried out in the country in December 2004, April 2006, October 2006, March 2007, and July 2007. The December 2004 and April 2006 surveys were comprehensive values surveys funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation. The other surveys were sponsored by the Effects Assessment Group connected to multinational forces in Iraq. This group included about ten questions from our NSF-sponsored surveys in their October 2006, March 2007, and July 2007 surveys and generously shared not only the responses to these ten questions and demographics from these surveys, but also the entire data sets from the April and October 2006 surveys. These interviews were also conducted face-to-face in respondents' residences by experienced Iraqi personnel. All Iraqi surveys were conducted by the Independent Institute for Administrative and Civil Society Studies, an Iraqi research firm.

The Saudi data are from two surveys. One is a comprehensive national values survey carried out in the country in 2003. This survey used a nationally representative sample of 1,526 respondents, of which 1,026 were Saudi citizens and 500 were foreign residents. The other was a youth survey carried out in 2005 using a representative sample of 954 young adults (age 18-25) from three cities – Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam-Khobar – and their rural surroundings. Both Saudi surveys used face-to-face interviews in the respondents' residences, and were carried out by the Saudi branch of the Pan Arab Research Center.

## VALUES CHANGE AMONG IRANIANS

To assess the change in the value orientations of Iranians, we consider and measure attitudes toward types of individualism and national identity.

### Individualism

The recognition of the autonomy of the individual is a principle feature of modernity. This recognition for Mill (1998 [1869]: xv) is a reflection of the level of cultural development, where “individuality—which is to say, that form of life in which persons realize their peculiar natures in autonomously chosen activities—is the single most important ingredient in human well-being.” Individualism is considered a major trait in Western cultural tradition. “Again and again,” says Huntington (1996: 72), both Westerners and non-Westerners point to individualism as the central distinguishing mark of the West.”

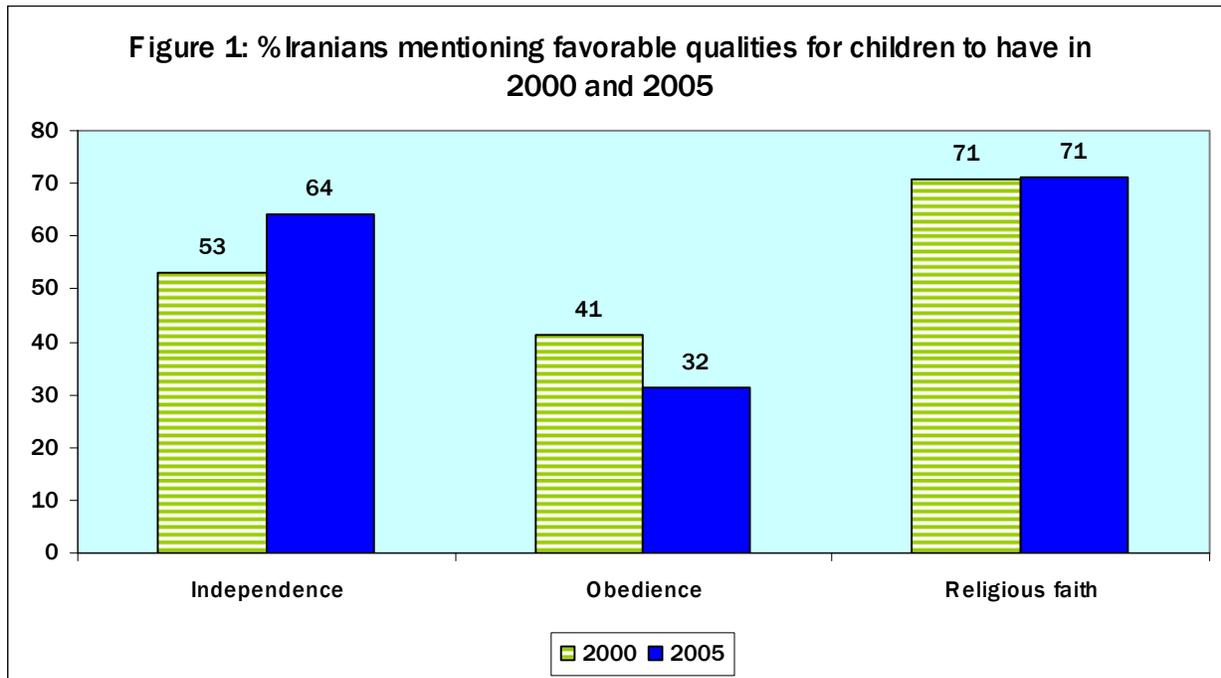
Individualism has political, economic, and social dimensions. In politics, it means equality of all political voices, or favorable attitudes toward democracy and gender equality. Economic individualism supports the value of hard work and belief in the work-reward nexus, promotes private ownership of businesses, and stresses individual responsibility over governmental responsibility in providing for personal well-being. Social individualism assumes individual choice predominates in social matters, such as decisions around marriage and child-rearing.

Here, we focus on measures of social and economic individualism, and in the following section we discuss political individualism by focusing on democracy and gender equality.

An important manifestation of value change toward individualism would be a change in attitudes toward favorable qualities for children and the basis for marriage. To measure these changes, the respondents were asked:

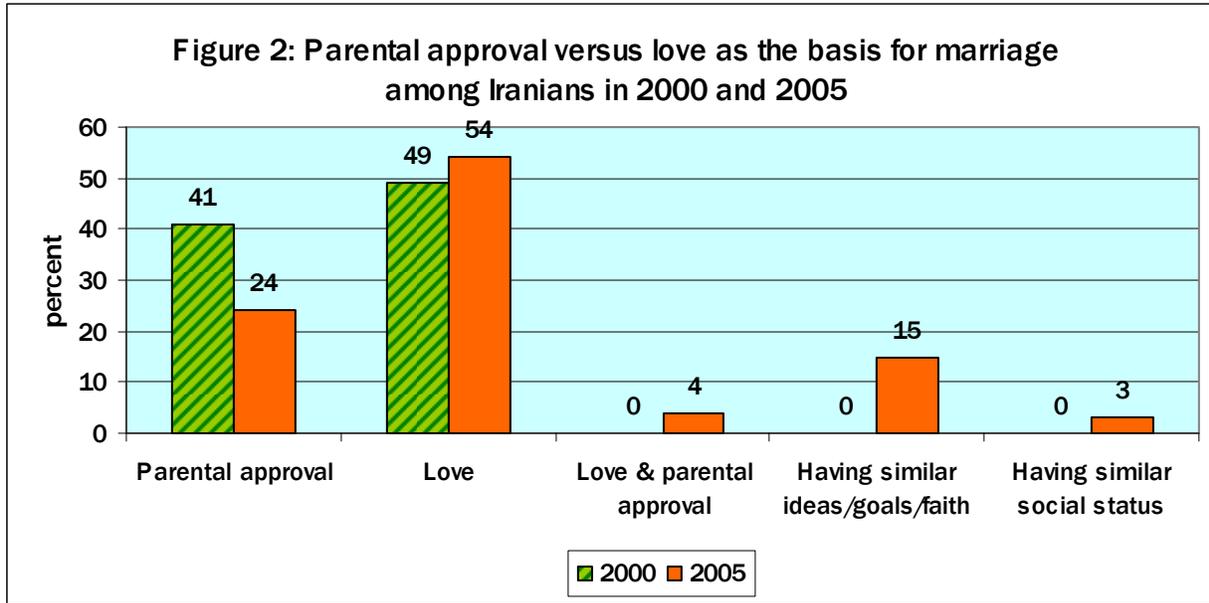
- I. *Here is a list of qualities that children can be encouraged to learn at home. Which, if any, do you consider to be especially important?*
  1. *Independence*
  2. *Religious faith*
  3. *Obedience*
- II. *In your view, what is the basis for marriage: parental approval or love?*

Figure 1 shows the change in Iranian attitudes toward favorable qualities for children between the 2000 and 2005 surveys. The percentage of respondents who considered independence a favorable quality increased from 53% to 64%, while those who mentioned obedience decreased from 41% to 32% between the two surveys. These changes are statistically significant, indicating a trend toward individual autonomy. Iranian attitudes toward religious faith as a favorable quality for children, however, did not change between 2000 and 2005.



Attitudes toward the basis for marriage may constitute an even stronger indication of the extent of public support for individualism. As shown in Figure 2, 41% of the respondents in the 2000 survey believed that parental approval was the basis for marriage, while this value dropped to 24% in 2005. The percentage of the respondents who mentioned love as the basis for marriage, on the other hand, increased from 49% to 54% between the two surveys. In the 2005 survey, some respondents volunteered their own views on marriage instead of choosing between love and parental approval. These included “both love and parental approval” (4%), “having similar ideas/goals/faith” (15%), and “having similar social backgrounds” (3%). Again, among these responses, the largest group (15%) referred to factors that are related to individuality—“having similar ideas/goals/faith”—and to personal choice in the selection of a spouse. If we add this group to those who considered love as the basis for marriage, we may conclude that 69% of the respondents considered individual attributes—love or having similar ideas/goal/faith—as the most important criteria in selecting spouse. The steep drop in support for parental approval over the survey period, coupled with the sharp rise in support for individual choice, suggest that Iranians may be approaching their own “Romeo and Juliet revolution.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>The expression of “Romeo and Juliet revolution” is used in recognition of the freedom of the individual to choose a spouse was part of the humanism movement in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth century that gave priority to individual choice over religious dogma and tradition (Deutsch 1981).



Economic individualism is measured by three indicator variables as outlined below: attitudes toward private versus government’s ownership of businesses and industry, attitudes toward individual versus governmental responsibility, and attitudes toward merit pay.

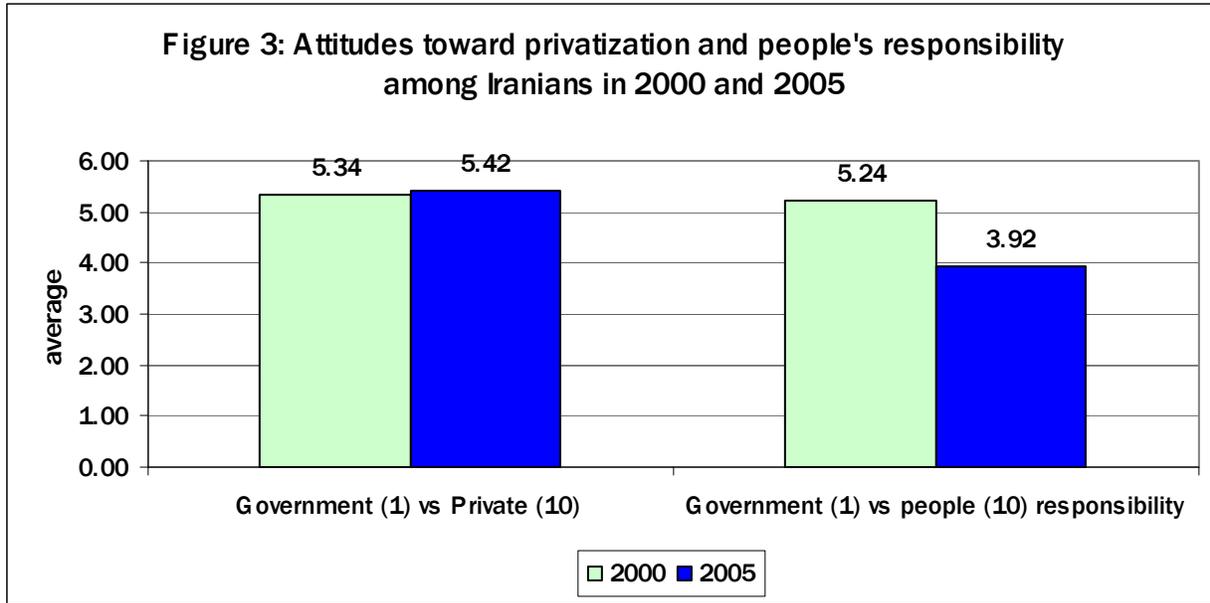
III. *How would you place your views on this scale? “1” means you agree completely with the statement on the left; “10” means you agree completely with the statement on the right; and if your views fall somewhere in between, you can choose any number in between.*

1. *Government ownership of business and industry should be increased (1) versus private ownership of business and industry should be increased (10). (Privatization)*
2. *The government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for (1) versus people should take the responsibility to provide for themselves (10). (Individual responsibility)*

IV. *Imagine two secretaries, of the same age, doing practically the same job. One finds out that the other earns considerably more than she does. The better paid secretary, however, is quicker, more efficient and more reliable at her job. In your opinion, is it fair or not fair that one secretary is paid more than the other? (Merit pay)*

1. *Fair*
2. *Not fair*

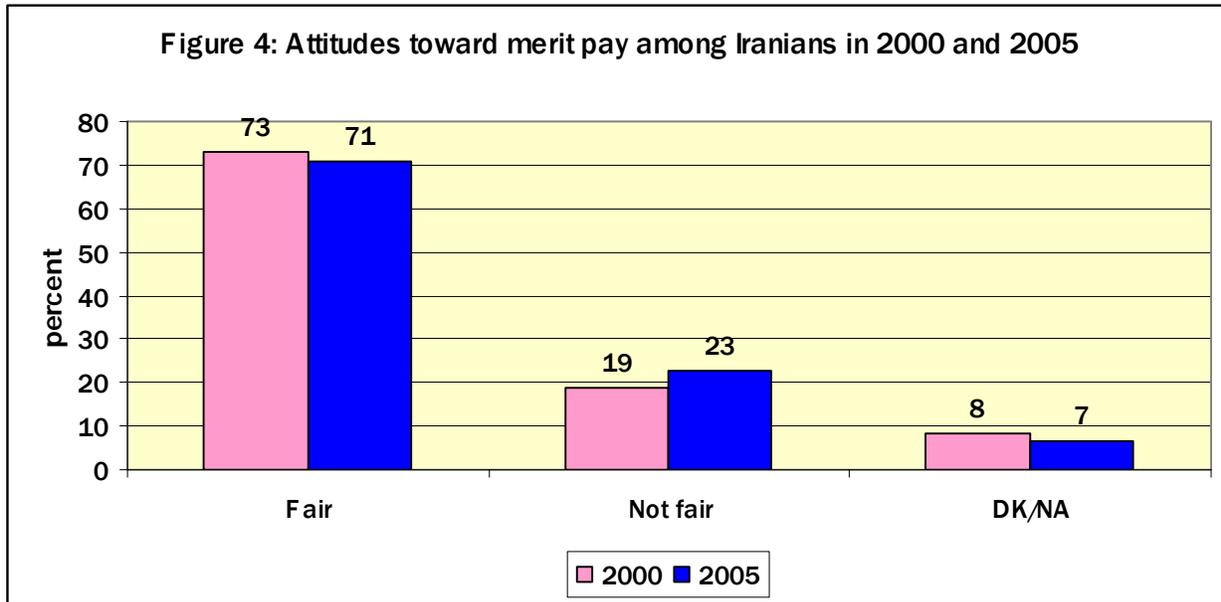
Figure 3 summarizes the changes in attitudes toward privatization and individual responsibility between the 2000 and 2005 surveys. Iranian attitudes toward privatization increased negligibly in this period (from 5.34 to 5.42), while their attitudes toward individual versus governmental responsibility declined significantly (from 5.24 to 3.92). The latter change in particular may indicate a decline in support for economic individualism among Iranians.



The correlation coefficient between privatization and individual responsibility is significant and positive:  $r=.274$  for the 2000 survey and  $r=.091$  for the 2005. That is, the more favorable attitudes the respondents had toward privatization, the stronger is their support for the view that people should take responsibility to provide for themselves. Because these two factors are positively correlated, although the correlation coefficients are relatively weak (particularly in the 2005 data), we may argue that they have a degree of validity in measuring economic individualism. Nonetheless, one may argue that given the country's specific conditions, the stress on government responsibility may be in fact associated with favorable attitudes toward individualism. That is, given the situation that the Islamic government has extensive ownership of businesses and industry, a rise in the expectation that the government should do more for its people may reflect a growing sense of individual rights to the fruits of these enterprises. This contrasts to Western countries, where an expansion in government-sponsored social welfare would mean higher taxation. Thus, people may support economic individualism, at least in part, to avoid higher taxes.

A better measure of economic individualism would be the commitment to merit as the basis for the distribution of reward in society and the belief that people ought to work hard to provide for themselves (Feldman and Zaller 1992: 272, note 3; Free and Cantril 1968). Figure 4 summarizes attitudes toward merit pay. The percentage of respondents who indicated that it is fair for the more efficient secretary to receive a higher wage declined from 73% to 71% and the percentage of those who said that it is unfair went up from 19% to 23%. Although small, these changes are statistically significant.

On the whole, we may thus conclude that while Iranians have displayed a sizable shift toward social individualism, economically, they have become less individualistic.



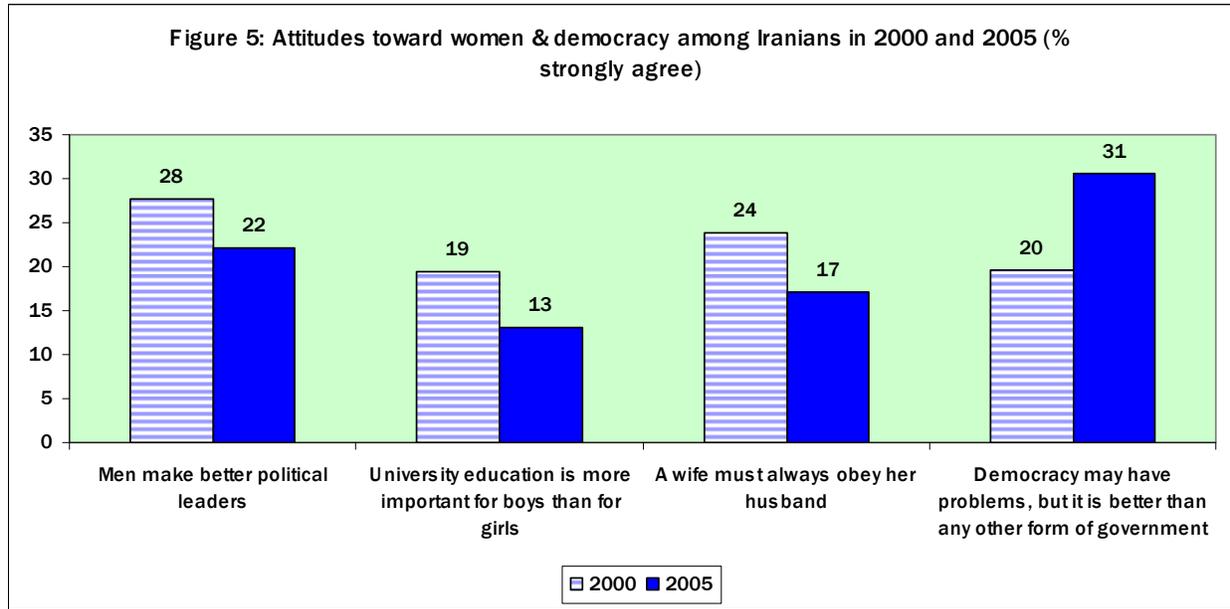
### Gender Relations and Democracy

The change in attitudes toward political individualism and liberal politics may be measured in terms of attitudes toward democracy and gender equality. Iranians were asked:

IV. For each of the following statements, can you tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with each. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree?

1. On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do.
2. A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl.
3. A wife must always obey her husband.
4. Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government

Figure 5 shows the change in the respondents' attitudes toward these issues between 2000 and 2005. Significant declines occurred in the proportion of Iranians that strongly agreed with the following statements: "men make better political leaders," (from 28% in 2000 to 22% in 2005); "university education is more important for boys than it is for girls," (19% to 13%); and "a wife must always obey her husband" (24% to 17%). In addition, the percentage of the respondents who strongly agreed that "democracy may have problems, but it is a better form of government" increased from 20% in 2000 to 31% in 2005. These changes evidence remarkable shifts in attitudes toward liberal democracy and gender equality between the two surveys.



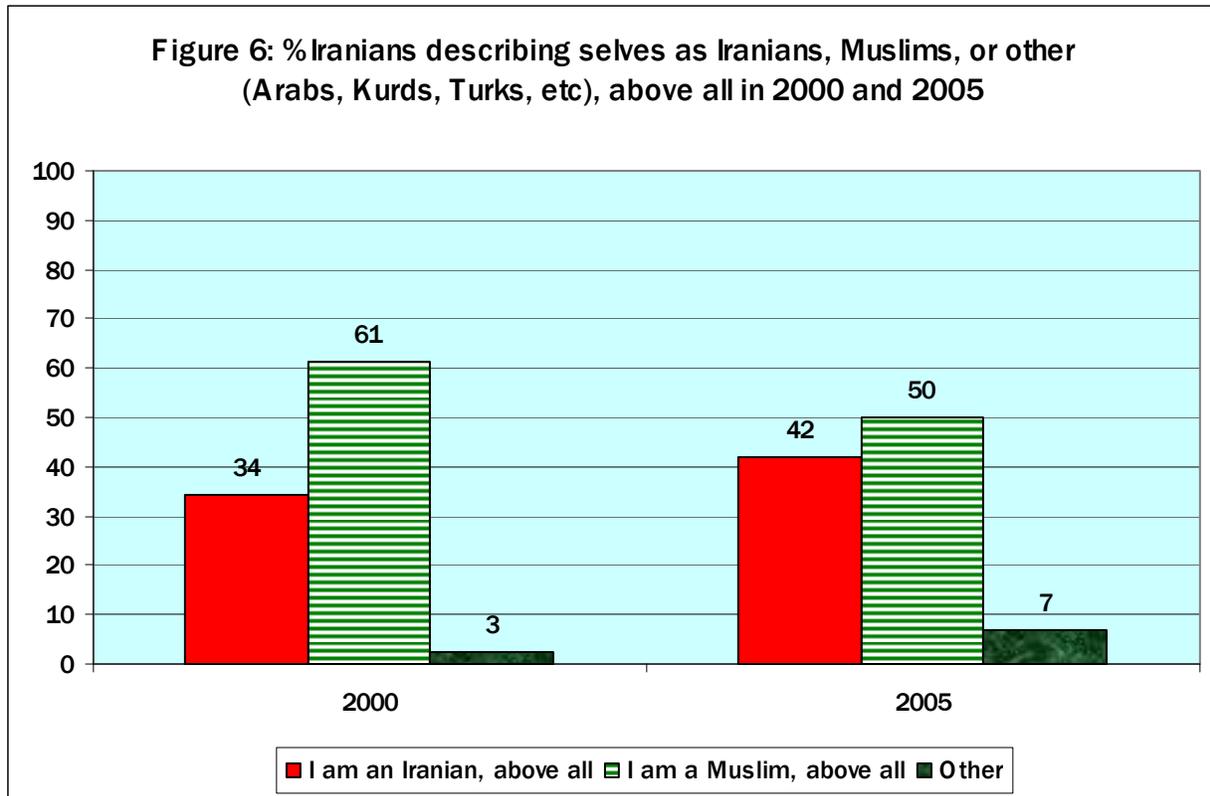
### National Identity

Another key component of political values is how people identify themselves – in particular, whether they base their identity on religion, ethnicity, or nationality. The change in the basis of identity may imply a shift in people’s political attitudes toward the government and their perception of international and regional politics. To measure this change, Iranians were asked:

IV. “Which of the following best describes you?”

1. *I am a Muslim, above all.*
2. *I am an Iranian, above all.*
3. *Other (I am an Arab, Kurd, Turk, etc., above all)*

Figure 6 shows the change in the respondents’ conception of identity between 2000 and 2005. The percentage of respondents that identified themselves as “Iranian, above all” increased from 34% to 42%, and the percentage that selected “Muslim, above all” declined from 61% to 50%. These changes may imply that religion plays a less important role in shaping Iranian political attitudes, while secular factors related to Iran as a nation are gaining in significance and shaping Iranians’ orientation toward outsiders.



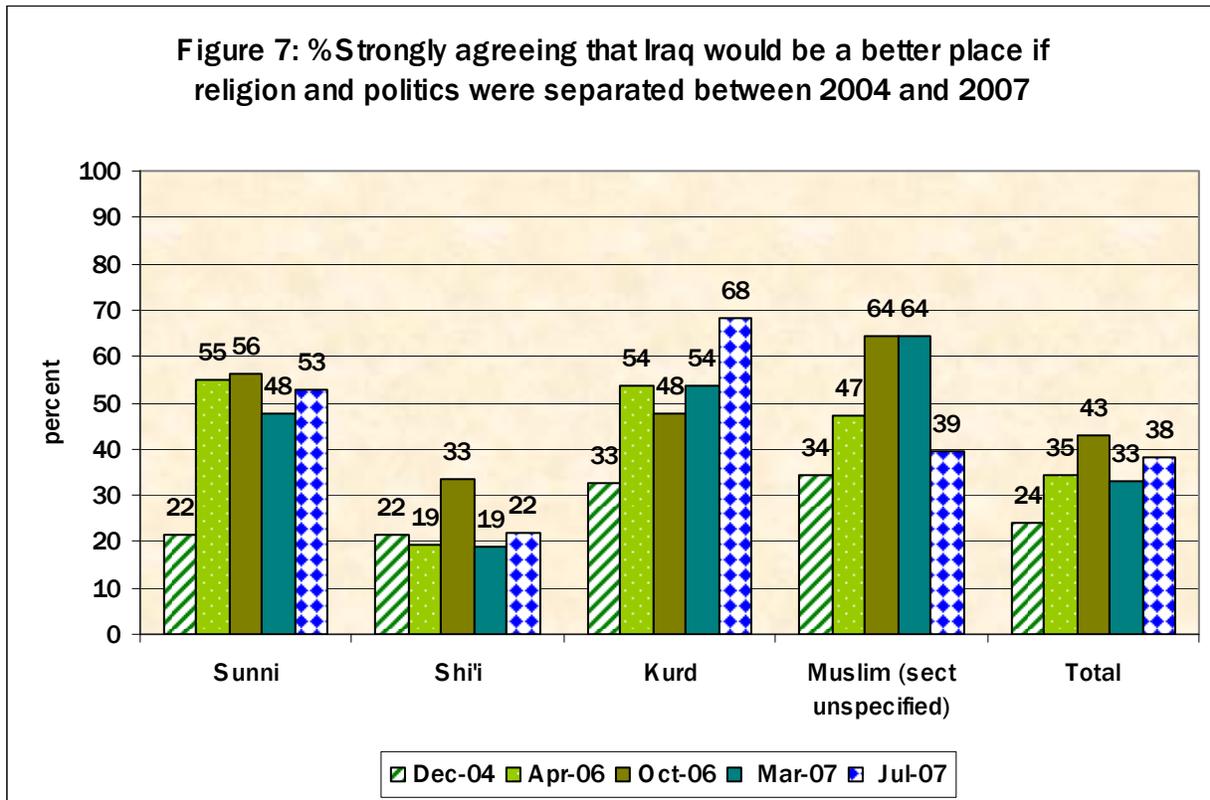
Despite Iran's religious authoritarian regime, these data indicate that Iranian political values have changed during the past several years in favor of social individualism, democracy, gender equality, and national identity. This trend was not reflected, however, in economic terms, as Iranians placed greater emphasis on the government's responsibility to provide for them and were less supportive of merit pay in 2005 than in 2000.

### VALUES CHANGE AMONG IRAQIS

To assess the changes in Iraqi political values, we focus on and measure three variables: attitudes toward secular politics, attitudes toward major Iraqi religious and secular parties, and types of identity.

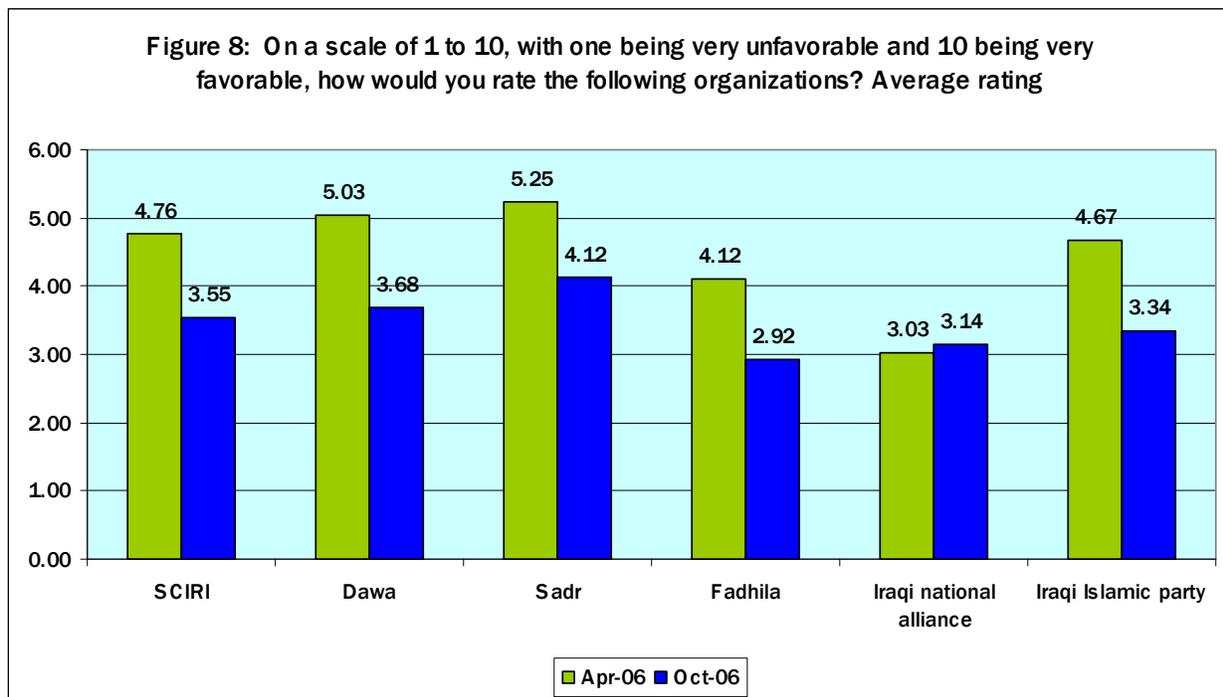
- I. *Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that Iraq would be a better place if religion and politics were separated.*
- II. *On a scale of 1 to 10, with one being very unfavorable and 10 being very favorable, how would you rate the following political parties? Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, Dawa, Sadr, Fadhila, Iraqi national alliance, Iraqi Islamic party.*
- III. *Which of these best describes you?*
  1. *I am an Iraqi, above all.*
  2. *I am a Muslim, above all.*
  3. *I am a Kurd, above all.*
  4. *Other*

Figure 7 shows the changes in Iraqi attitudes toward secular politics. In terms of the first item, only 24% of Iraqis strongly agreed that Iraq would be a better place if religion and politics were separated in December 2004, compared to 35% in April 2006, 43% in October 2006, 33% in March 2007, and 38% in July 2007. Support for secular politics varied among the three groups, with the Sunnis, Kurds, and Muslims (those who did not wish to be identified as either Sunnis or Shi'is) displaying a much stronger preference for separating religion and politics than the Shi'is. (The Shi'is appear to be under a considerable influence of religious political parties, many of which have ties with the Islamic regime in Iran.)



Another way to assess the trend in support for secular politics during this period is to consider changes in the popularity of religious parties in Iraq. Figure 8 shows the average of the respondents' favorability ratings for all religious political parties. The SCIRI (Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution of Iraq), Dawa, Sadr, and Fadhila are Shi'i political parties. The Iraqi Islamic party is a Sunni political party, and the Iraqi national alliance is a secular party. As this table shows, the popularity of all religious parties significantly declined between April and October 2006, while the popularity of the secular Iraqi national alliance slightly increased. Despite declines in favorability among religious parties, however, they were still more popular in October 2006 (except for Fadhila) than the secular Iraqi national alliance.

Nonetheless, given the trend toward secular politics evidenced in these data as well as the context in which this trend is occurring – namely, the potential for a divisive role of the religious parties in Shi'i-Sunni relations and the inability of the Shi'i majority to lead the country – we may expect either a change in the political platform of these parties toward Islamic reformism or a rise in the popularity of secular parties.



Another indication of the change in the Iraqi political attitudes toward secular politics can be seen in how Iraqis choose to self-identify. In December 2004, only 23% Iraqis described themselves as “Iraqi above all”, a value that increased to 28% in April 2006, 54% in March 2007, and 59% in July 2007. This remarkable shift in the conception of identity among Iraqis lends credence to the view that foreign occupation provokes nationalist awareness among the subjugated public.

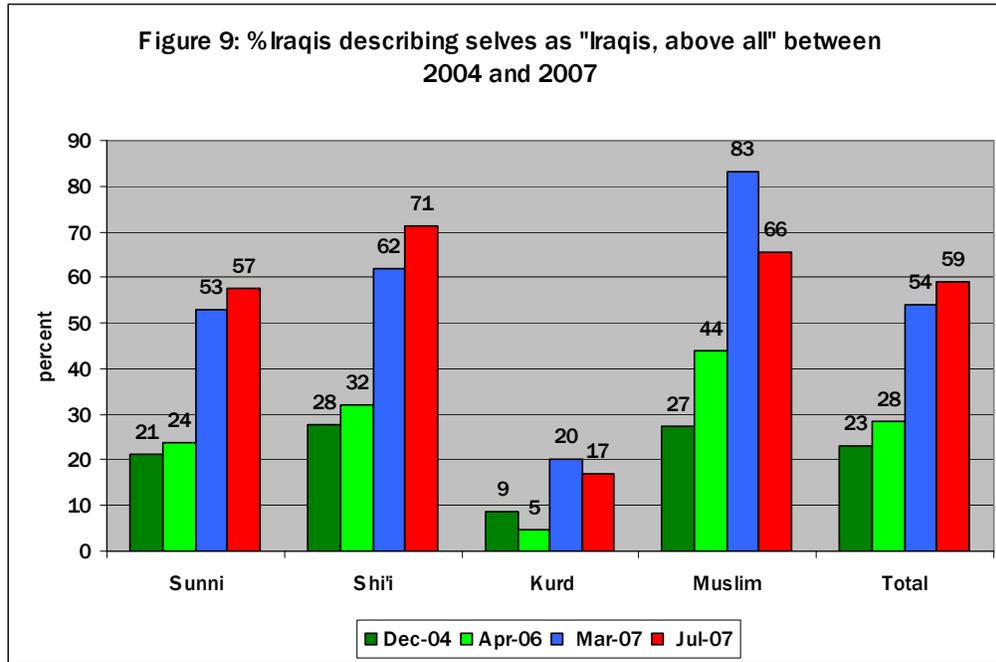
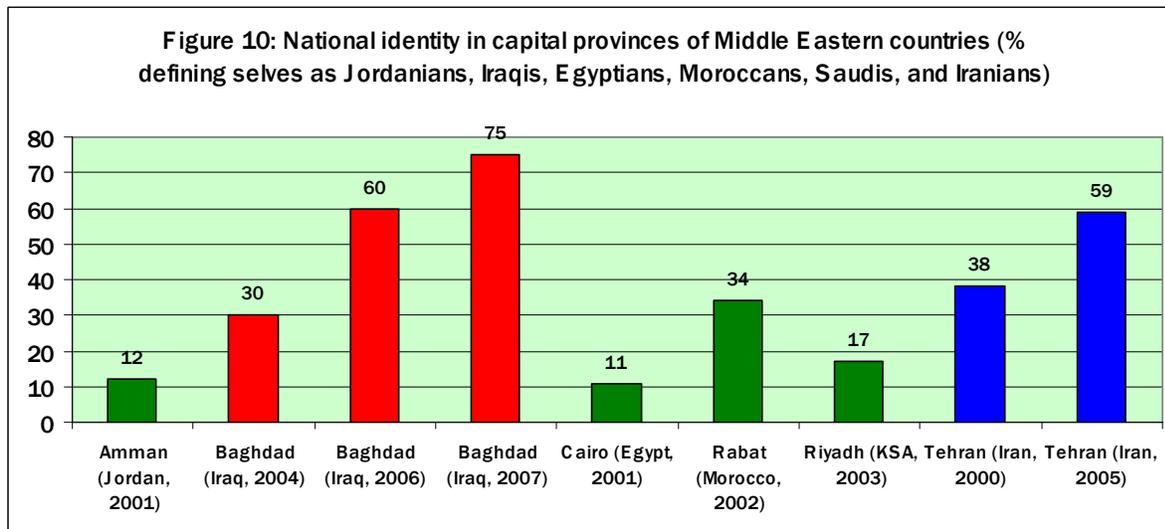


Figure 10 displays variations in nation-based self-identification across capital provinces of several Middle Eastern countries. In Baghdad province, those who described themselves as “Iraqi, above all” increased from 30% in 2004, to 60% in 2006, and then to 75% in 2007. In Tehran, Iran, the proportion jumped from 38% in 2000 to 59% in 2005. Related percentages for those who self-identified by nationality in other cities (in 2001) were: 11% for Cairo, Egypt; 12% for Amman, Jordan; 34% for Rabat, Morocco; and (in 2003) 17% for Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.



## PROSPECTS FOR VALUES CHANGE IN SAUDI ARABIA

Our position is that the religious authoritarianism of the Iranian regime and the domination of Iraqi politics by sectarian religious parties are key factors in explaining the trend toward liberal democracy among Iranians and secular politics among Iraqis, respectively. We draw from this interpretation to project values trends among the Saudi public.

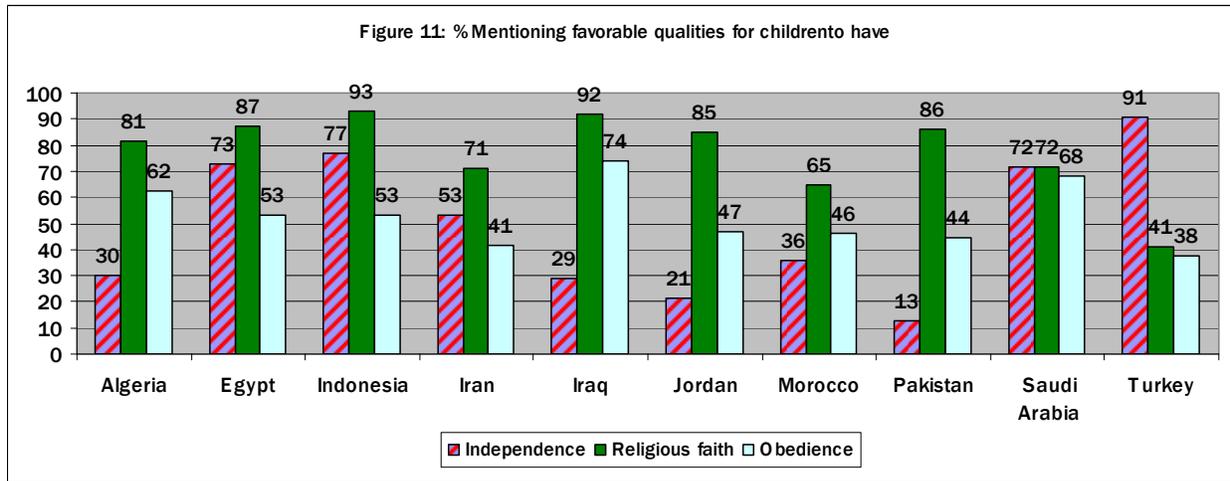
Insofar as the relationship between religion and regime is concerned, Iran and Saudi Arabia are similar in one important aspect: in both societies, a monolithic religious discourse has been imposed from above, and religious vice-squads vigorously enforce the official shari'a rules of conduct. To predict values trends in Saudi Arabia, we advance two levels of comparisons. First, we compare Saudi religiosity and individualistic values with those in Iran and other Islamic countries to assess the extent to which the monolithic religious structures in Iran and Saudi Arabia have shaped the religiosity of the public. Second, we compare the youth portion of the 2003 Saudi survey with the 2005 Saudi youth survey in terms of attitudes toward the basis for marriage, democracy, and gender equality to establish some sense of how values might be changing over time in Saudi Arabia.

Table 1 compares mosque attendance among ten Islamic countries. As shown, Iranians and Saudis, who live under religious regimes, attended mosques less often than the citizens of other Islamic countries. The mean mosque attendance for Iran (1.86) or Saudi Arabia (1.85) is lower than it is for Iraq (1.87), Pakistan (3.15), Turkey (1.87), Indonesia, (2.71), Egypt (2.09), Morocco (2.24), Jordan (2.20), and Algeria (2.23).

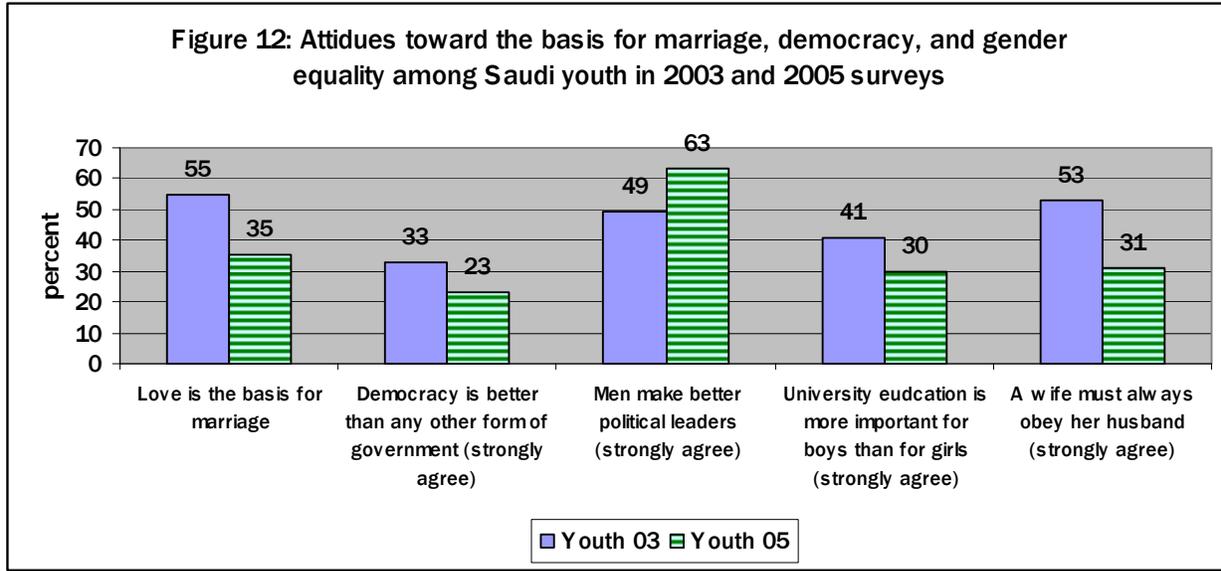
Table 1: Mosque attendance (percent)	Pakistan	Turkey	Saudi Arabia	Indonesia	Egypt	Morocco	Iran	Jordan	Algeria	Iraq
1. Once a year or less or on special holy days	9	63	56	25	55	52	54	53	50	64
2. Once a month	17	2	16	11	3	3	19	2	3	3
3. Once a week	24	20	15	34	20	12	15	15	21	15
4. More than once a week	50	15	12	31	22	32	12	29	26	18
Total	2,000	3,327	1026	1,000	3,000	2,262	2,442	1,221	1,237	2,298
Mean	3.15	1.87	<b>1.85</b>	2.71	2.09	2.24	<b>1.86</b>	2.20	2.23	1.87
SD	1.00	1.19	1.09	1.15	1.28	1.37	1.07	1.34	1.30	1.22
State Religiosity	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1

In terms of placing high importance on religious faith as a quality for children, Saudis are comparable to Iranians, and give this quality less emphasis (72% and 71%, respectively) than do respondents from Algeria (81%), Egypt (87%), Indonesia (93%), Iraq (92%), Jordan (85%), and Pakistan (86%). Only respondents in Morocco (65%) and Turkey (41%) rate religious faith for children lower. The rate of selecting independence as an important quality for children is much higher among Saudis (72%) than it is among Algerians (31%), Iranians (53%), Iraqis (29%), Jordanians (21%), Moroccans (36%), and Pakistanis (13%), but it is lower than among Egyptians (73%), Indonesians (77%), and Turkish (91%). However, a higher percentage of Saudis (68%) select obedience as an important quality for children than do respondents from any other of these Islamic countries except for Iraqis (Figure 11). Apparently, Saudis adhere to values that clash—

giving high importance to both the individualistic value of independence and the patrimonial value of obedience. Such contradictory attitudes may reflect a state of values transition in Saudi society, where the respondents have not quite sorted out their firm positions on the value of independence versus obedience. But in the future, we believe that smaller proportions of Saudis will place high importance on obedience as a quality to encourage in children, while similar (or even higher) percentages will continue to value independence in children.



Analyses of data from the 2003 values survey (youth sample) and the 2005 youth survey may provide more insights into trends in values among Saudis. As shown in Figure 12, the attitudes of the Saudi youth grew less supportive of individualism and equality between 2003 and 2005. During this period, the proportion of these youths who considered love as the basis for marriage declined from 55% to 35%. Favorable attitudes toward democracy also declined, with those who strongly agree that “democracy may have problems, but it is a better than any other form of government” dropping from 33% in 2003 to 23% in 2005. During the same period, those who strongly agreed that “men make better political leaders than women do” increased from 49% to 63%. On the other hand, on women’s right to education and wife obedience, these youth became more favorable toward gender equality. That is, the percentage of those who strongly agreed that “university education is more important for boys than for girls” declined from 41% to 30% between the two surveys, and those who strongly agreed that “a wife must always obey her husband” also declined from 53% to 31%.



Since, among the populations surveyed, Saudis have the lowest average mosque attendance and a relatively low rate of reporting religious faith as a highly important quality for children, we posit that a decline in religiosity will be a component of future values trends in Saudi Arabia. And even given the recent downward trends among Saudi youth in attitudes toward social individualism and democracy, we believe that a key area of change in Saudi society will be an increase in favorable attitudes toward gender equality, particularly in the family.

**CONCLUSION**

Findings from the values surveys in Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia provide evidence of different patterns of values change in each of these countries over recent years. In Iran, we saw a shift toward social individualism, liberal democracy, gender equality, and nationalism. A trend away from economic individualism was also noted among Iranians between 2000 and 2005, with an increasing fraction agreeing that the state should take more responsibility for meeting citizens’ needs. For Iraq, the trend was toward secular political values and recognition of national identity in the post-Saddam period. In the case of Saudi Arabia, we saw a trend away from religiosity and a rise in favorable attitudes toward gender equality.

In interpreting these trends, we argue that the nature of the dominant regime is a key predictor of any changes in values. Because both Iranian and Saudi regimes are authoritarian, trends in people’s religious and political values are shaped in oppositional relations to the ideology of these regimes—clerical absolutism in Iran and the monopolization of religion by the Wahhabi cleric in Saudi Arabia. Our findings provided evidence of this process: a low level of mosque attendance in Iran and Saudi Arabia compared to other Islamic countries. The trend in the Iraqi political values also reflects this ideological opposition to the dominant regime—here, foreign occupation and religious parties. We believe the undesirability of both foreign rule and sectarian religious parties has spurred a growing sense of national identity and support for secular politics in Iraq.

From our discussions of the correlates of values change in a non-Western context, we may conclude that Huntington's civilizational paradigm is too essentialist to allow or account for shifts toward Western-like cultural values in these areas. Nothing inherent to Iranian, Iraqi, or Saudi cultural traditions prevents their intellectual leaders and publics at large from supporting social arrangements based in political equality and individualism. In fact, we posit that the shifts we found—Iranians' rising interest in liberal democracy, Iraqis' increasing devotion to nationalism over religious sectarianism, and the Saudis' low mosque attendance and growing support for gender equality—all reflect the significance of social processes in shaping values change and, in turn, the significance of historically specific conditions in shaping social processes. In fact, historical conjunctures may function as counter cultural-liberators, transcending cultural constraints and bringing into relief a new historical pattern.

The connection between social processes and values change is established, we believe, through the resolution of sociopolitical issues in response to immediate ideological targets. In the countries surveyed, these targets may take the forms of governmental regimes, religious institutions, social policies, foreign occupation, or other monolithic social forces. And resolutions may shift values along a number of scales—toward religious or secular government, Islamic universalism/fundamentalism or territorial nationalism, individualism or collectivism, democracy or patrimonial domination, and gender equality or a gendered social hierarchy. The nature of a civilization – its cultural traditions and historical practices, norms, and distributions of power – may support the resolution of the issues in a particular direction. Nonetheless, as history has shown, cultural traditions have not constrained the forms of sociopolitical arrangements adopted as resolutions to ideological targets. The crucial factors that determine values change are the target, in opposition to which social norms are invoked or new values are produced, and the location of this target within the sociopolitical space of the social formation, which shapes the angle from which the target is viewed, interpreted, and criticized.

Iranian intellectual leaders in the early twentieth century, despite their country's much lower level of industrial and commercial development compared to that of Egypt and Turkey in the same period, managed to launch a successful Constitutional Revolution. In this effort, the nature of their ideological target—ulama obstructionism and monarchical absolutism—prompted them to resolve the country's political problem in an oppositional (a constitutional) direction. Today, Iranians are facing a similar target—the obstructionism of clerical absolutism brought about by the revolution of 1979, and our data suggest they are moving in a similar oppositional direction, in this case toward liberal democracy.

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