



Anti-Americanism, Authoritarian Politics, and Attitudes about Women's Representation: Evidence from a Survey Experiment in Jordan¹

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A pillar of American foreign policy in the Middle East since September 11, 2001, has been promoting democracy, with particular emphasis on support for women's representation. Given high levels of anti-Americanism in the region, does foreign pressure for policy reform undermine this project? Evidence from a nationally representative survey experiment in Jordan shows that an American endorsement of women in politics has no average effect on popular support for women's representation. Instead, domestic patterns of support and opposition to autocrats determine citizens' receptivity to policy endorsements, with policy endorsements of foreign-supported reforms polarizing public opinion. Both foreign and domestic endorsements of women in politics depress support among Jordanians who oppose their regime significantly more than among Jordanians who support it.

In the wake of September 11, 2001, Washington embraced democracy promotion as a central component of its policy toward the Middle East. Policymakers have focused on multiple aspects of forwarding political liberalization, but few have received more attention than increasing women's representation. Indeed, advancing the standing of women in politics is now a pillar of US democracy promotion in the Middle East (Abu-Lughod 2002:783–784; Bush 2015:chapter 7; David and Nanes 2011:284–286; Ottaway 2005a:115). This emphasis stems from the long-standing under-representation of women in politics in the region—a condition that persists despite

relatively small gender differences in education and health (United Nations Development Programme 2009). Currently, 16% of representatives in the region's parliaments are female—the second-lowest such percentage in the world (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2013).

In response to international pressure, Arab governments have adopted quotas that reserve seats or spaces on political party lists for women. Algeria (2002), Djibouti (2002), Egypt (2009), Iraq (2004), Jordan (2003), Mauritania (2006), Morocco (2002), Somalia (2004), Sudan (2005), and Tunisia (2005) have all passed such laws. Yet, the efficacy of quotas in advancing the overall role of women in politics remains uncertain. Observers worry that American pressure on Middle East governments could undermine the local legitimacy of women's representation. Citizens' support for women's representation matters a great deal. Quotas need at least some popular backing for women to gain office, enjoy credibility in the political sphere, and make laws.

Does American support undermine public support for women's representation? Would support from more popular domestic opinion leaders—specifically, Islamic religious leaders (imams)—enhance public support for women's representation? Indeed, what factors influence citizen attitudes toward government policy in autocracies? We answer those questions using evidence from a survey experiment in Jordan. Rather than endorsements being uncritically accepted or opposed based on citizens' opinions about the endorser, we find that domestic patterns of support and opposition to autocrats determine citizens' receptivity to policy endorsements. As a consequence, policy endorsements of foreign-supported reforms further polarize public opinion.

Our experiment exposed respondents to information about Jordan's gender quota and randomly informed them about an endorsement—from an American

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government-supported organization or imams—before measuring their support for women’s representation. In the real world, American actors pressure countries in part to overcome a lack of local support for women’s representation.² The survey’s experimental design thus provided a unique opportunity to examine the independent effect of foreign influence on citizens’ attitudes. As we explain below, we focus on Jordan—where the king decreed a six-seat quota for the elected lower house of parliament in 2003 and increased it to 12 seats out of 120 in 2010—since Jordan has relatively high levels of anti-Americanism and foreign pressure. Moreover, like other countries in the Middle East, Jordan is a conservative society with considerable support for patriarchal values and trust in religious leaders, despite the government’s restrictions on the religious sphere.

Our findings challenge conventional wisdom about American democracy promotion and citizen attitudes in the Middle East. Few Jordanians report favorable opinions about the United States, but informing them about an American endorsement of Jordan’s quota does not—on average—reduce support for the representation of women in politics. Furthermore, although most Jordanians report favorable attitudes about imams, informing them about a religious endorsement also does not—on average—improve support for women’s representation. Instead, both endorsements depress support significantly more among women who oppose the monarchy than among those who support it. That finding holds even though regime opponents and supporters hold similar attitudes about gender. Moreover, it is robust to respondents’ pre-existing political knowledge and beliefs about the endorsers. To interpret those unexpected findings, we develop a novel theory of policy endorsements in autocracies.

In a nutshell, we argue that, in autocracies, disposition toward the incumbent regime is often a more important cleavage than partisan identification. Authoritarian regimes directly and indirectly restrict freedom of speech and of the press. Therefore, citizens often operate in an information-poor environment concerning how others view their government. In this context, the act of endorsing an autocrat’s policies signals—or is interpreted as—support for the regime itself. Thus, opponents of a regime will be less likely to accept endorsements of its policies than its supporters.

This situation has direct implications for how international pressure influences the attitudes of citizens. When American actors endorse a policy reform in an autocracy, they appear to support the regime. This prompts a more negative reaction among opponents of a regime than among its supporters. Moreover, that effect applies to domestic actors as well. The response to endorsers—even trusted ones, such as local imams—should also be influenced by their audiences’ attitudes toward the regime.

As we discuss in the conclusion, our insights matter to both theory and political practice. They suggest that researchers studying the impact of political cues in authoritarian regimes where parties are weak or nonexistent should focus their attention on the role of cleavages related to support for the regime. They also imply that

the effect on public opinion of American pressure for democratization in general, and greater representation of women in the political process in particular, is more complicated than scholars and policymakers often presume. Foreign endorsements can, in fact, increase polarization in the Middle East (Corstange and Marinov 2012).

Second, our findings help us to understand important dynamics associated with democracy promotion, a topic of recent scholarly interest (Finkel, Pérez-Liñán, and Seligson 2007; Donno 2010; Hyde 2011; Kelley 2012). International pressure can provoke public outrage, especially in countries where citizens are predisposed to distrust outsiders (Carothers 2006). However, scholars have paid less attention to the individual-level effects of international pressure.³ Nor have they directly compared them to the effects of pressure from *domestic* actors. At least in Jordan, we show that American support for quotas will not—even in the context of anti-American sentiment—necessarily undermine the legitimacy of women’s political representation. Existing research suggests that suspicion of foreign actors colors local attitudes about political reform (Lynch 2007:214–216; Jamal 2012). Both policymakers and activists worry about such dynamics. Thus, our null finding contradicts received wisdom among scholars and practitioners working on this topic.

We begin this article by developing an argument about how cues might affect support for women’s representation in autocracies. Next, we introduce the research design. We then present and discuss our main results: cues do not affect average levels of popular support for women’s representation in Jordan. Instead, their effect is conditional on respondents’ attitudes about the authoritarian regime. We conclude by discussing the article’s implications for theory and practice, as well as directions for future research.

Foreign Actors and Popular Support for Political Reform

Do international actors succeed at encouraging autocracies to liberalize? Outside actors have played important roles in democratization under specific conditions (Pevehouse 2002; Levitsky and Way 2005; Hyde 2011; Kelley 2012). But their record is not uniformly positive. Some poorly designed democracy-promotion efforts have inadvertently reinforced autocracies (Carothers 1999; Carapico 2002).

The existing debate largely focuses on the state-level consequences of democracy promotion. That emphasis makes sense, but individual-level consequences also matter. First, many of the changes associated with democratization occur among individuals. That is especially true when it comes to improving women’s political representation, because social and cultural barriers often block progress (Inglehart and Norris 2003:chapter 6).⁴ Women cannot access and assume positions of political power without sufficient popular support for their active role in public life.

Second, democracy promotion can trigger a nationalist backlash (Carothers 2006). In some cases, citizens have embraced democracy promotion and, specifically, foreign support for women’s representation. Latin American

³ Hyde (2007) and Corstange and Marinov (2012) are important exceptions.

⁴ Some readers may wonder whether pressure on women’s rights is rightly considered democracy promotion since autocrats can use institutions such as quotas to their advantage. As noted above, however, the United States says that promoting women’s representation is a core component of democracy promotion, and so it is appropriately studied as such.

² Note that we refer to American “actors” because, despite its strong emphasis on empowering women and its funding of American non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that encourage countries to adopt quotas (Bush 2011), the US government has not always encouraged Arab quotas diplomatically (Krook, O’Brien, and Swip 2010).

countries, for example, have “borrowed” quotas from neighboring countries when encouraged to do so by local civil society actors (Krook 2009; Bush 2011:125–126). Elsewhere, though, female politicians have resigned from elected office to protest gender quotas imposed through external pressure (Krook 2006:315). Thus, we need to understand how international pressure affects attitudes about women’s representation in general. That task is particularly important in the Middle East, where anti-American attitudes have undermined the legitimacy of US-supported political reforms (Ottaway 2005b:181–184; Haddad 2007:46; Lynch 2007:214–216; Chiozza 2009:54–78). Our starting point is the literature on source cues.

Policy Cues and Political Attitudes in Democracies

When political elites publicly support or oppose a policy, they often affect popular attitudes. Diverse research in American politics shows how trusted elites (usually party or media leaders) influence mass attitudes.⁵ Public opinion polls support the claim that the endorsement of trusted elites can significantly shape respondents’ stated political preferences (Druckman and Lupia 2000:15). Indeed, many researchers argue that partisan cues have a stronger effect on political attitudes than new policy information (Bullock 2011:496).

Citizens in democracies tend to view elites that share their partisan identification as knowledgeable and trustworthy sources. And even in pseudo-democracies—such as Russia under Vladimir Putin—party cues can change citizens’ political attitudes (Brader and Tucker 2008). But how do endorsements work in true autocracies, including in the Arab world, where political parties may be weak, proscribed, or non-existent? How might cues matter in settings where endorsers who do not belong to the governing regime have little influence over policy? Whom do citizens in autocracies rely on to form their political opinions? As Lupia and McCubbins (1998:11) explain, “concepts such as reputation, party, or ideology are useful heuristics [to citizens] only if they convey information about knowledge and trust.”

With these questions in mind, we now discuss two frameworks for thinking about cues in autocracies.

The Politics of Cue-Giving in the Authoritarian Arab World: Two Perspectives

The conventional wisdom among many policymakers, activists, and scholars holds that overt American policy endorsements in the Middle East—including of gender quotas—risk backfiring as a result of widespread anti-American sentiment. That idea builds on insights from the literature on elite cues; because citizens in the Middle East generally distrust the United States, they may react negatively to its policy endorsements. Carothers (2006:55), for example, argues that fears of Western meddling played a role in a global backlash against democracy promotion. Surveys by the Pew Global Attitudes Project, which indicate that no more than 20% of citizens in Egypt, Jordan, and the Palestinian Territories viewed the United States positively in 2011, seem to confirm the risks faced by American leaders when publicly supporting reform (Pew Research Center 2013).

American officials worry about those risks. During the Arab Spring, President Obama took care to avoid charges of American interference in Egypt’s revolution and to underline that the popular movements bringing down dictators in the Middle East were being driven by Arabs, for Arabs (Lynch 2012:197). Activists in the Middle East shared the fear that public perceptions of American interference could sour support for indigenous reformers’ efforts. As one feminist activist in Jordan told us in an interview in 2010, “Ever since I became involved with women’s rights issues, there have always been accusations that I’m a foreign agent. You wouldn’t want to say publicly that you got support from the United Kingdom or United States.”⁶ Indeed, only 38% of the respondents in our survey reported a great deal or quite a lot of trust in the American government prior to the treatment.

On the other hand, conventional wisdom expects that public endorsements by trusted local elites will forward the cause of democratic reforms. It particularly values the support of Islamic leaders. Indeed, because imams are widely trusted throughout the region, we would expect their policy endorsements to prove particularly consequential. 85% of the respondents in our survey, for example, claimed to have a great deal or quite a lot of trust in religious leaders prior to the treatment. Consistent with that rationale, Arab feminists have often sought endorsements from religious leaders (Clark 2006:549). Hypothesis 1 summarizes the perspective that citizens’ trust in and proximity to leaders should affect their policy positions.

Hypothesis 1: *Endorsements by the distrusted United States of a quota should negatively affect Arab citizens’ attitudes about women’s representation; endorsements by trusted imams should positively affect citizens’ attitudes about women’s representation.*

Although the conventional wisdom rightly underscores the skepticism of many Arab citizens about the United States, we argue—and find—that it misunderstands the relevant political cleavages in authoritarian societies. As we show later, American endorsements of Jordan’s quota do not depress support for women in politics, either on average or among respondents that distrusted the United States. Likewise, religious endorsements of the quota do not raise support for women in politics. Instead, we argue that public endorsements of regime policies can signal the endorser’s support for the regime. Opponents of a regime who see elites as reinforcing their leaders’ rule and policies will react more negatively than regime supporters.

That dynamic emerges because, in autocracies, support or opposition to the regime is a key cleavage that shapes domestic political debates and discourses. Despite the existence of legislatures, and thus political parties, in many autocracies today (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009), citizens often have relatively little control over policy. Thus, one of their key political concerns is likely to be whether to support the regime itself. Of course, authoritarian regimes vary in a number of ways, including the degree to which their leaders hold personal power (Geddes 2003; Weeks 2012). When regimes are relatively constrained by domestic elites, such as in machines, cue-giving dynamics may more closely resemble democratic dynamics. Nevertheless, across a variety of authoritarian regimes, accurate political information is often scarce, suggesting the applicability of our approach.

⁵ The literature is large. Important studies include: Arceneaux (2008); Berinsky (2009); Kam (2005); Rahn (1993); Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock (1991); Zaller (1992).

⁶ Interview with Jordanian political activist, conducted by author (Bush), July 6, 2010, Amman, Jordan.

Our logic suggests that source cues *should* matter for attitudes in autocracies. Crucially, however, people already have strong attitudes about their rulers and those attitudes (rather than attitudes about endorsers such as the United States) should determine their receptivity to endorsers' cues. Citizens could oppose their regime and support one of its policies (or vice versa), but in repressive environments they will assess many policies according to whether they hurt or harm the regime. In our case, for example, citizens might view the improvement of women's rights as a way for autocrats to enhance their legitimacy amidst international pressure to democratize and improve women's representation.⁷

According to this perspective, regime supporters should respond more positively than regime opponents to endorsements that reinforce the regime's policies. An endorsement of an authoritarian regime's policies provides relevant information to citizens about the endorser and the endorser's support for the regime. Such information is valuable in autocracies, where accurate political information is scarce and people hide their true political preferences (Kuran 1991; Scott 1992:chapter 6). Policy endorsements thus differ in autocracies and democracies, even if the underlying psychology is similar. After all, in democracies, endorsements of a government's policy are often most likely to generate support when a person does not already trust their government (Grieco, Gelpi, Reifler, and Feaver 2011).

In autocracies, however, citizens have good reasons to view otherwise progressive policies, including gender quotas, as strengthening the regime. Because quotas enjoy significant international legitimacy, for example, those authoritarian leaders who enact them may enhance their standing with other countries and international organizations. Thus, improving women's rights may serve as a strategy of authoritarian survival in the Arab world (Ottaway 2005a:120–125; Sater 2007; David and Nanes 2011:285); this is one reason why there is no statistically significant relationship between the level of democracy in a country and its likelihood of adopting a gender quota (Bush 2011:122).

If citizens come to view quotas as a pro-regime policy, then we would expect endorsements of a country's quota to increase support for it among backers, but not opponents, of the regime. Indeed, regime opponents are likely to view an endorsement as evidence that the regime is improving its position through the adoption of policy reforms that appeal to key international and domestic actors. The implication of that logic is that even endorsements from generally trusted sources, such as local imams, should more negatively affect attitudes among regime opponents than among regime supporters. Hypothesis 2 summarizes this argument.

Hypothesis 2: *Endorsements of an authoritarian regime's quota should more negatively affect attitudes about women's representation among regime opponents than among regime supporters.*

The Research Method and Case Selection

This section explains our selection of the Jordanian case and describes our strategy for testing the hypotheses laid

out above. Jordan presents an appealing location to test our argument about authoritarian cues because (i) it is a monarchy ranked “unfree” by Freedom House, (ii) the international community has pressured Jordan to improve women's representation, and (iii) anti-Americanism is widespread among its population. Moreover, Jordan has historically low levels of female participation in civic life.

Despite the value of understanding how foreign cues affect popular attitudes about women's representation, studying those effects poses challenges. Foreign governments do not generally put pressure on countries to increase women's representation when those countries' citizens favor an active role for women in politics. Leaders adopt quotas, in part, precisely because they face international pressure to increase women's representation but societal attitudes preclude other means of doing so. Thus, observational studies of the effects of foreign endorsements of women's quotas on popular opinion face substantial endogeneity problems. An experiment allows us to expose randomly selected participants to foreign and domestic endorsements. Furthermore, focusing on individual-level effects within a single country enables us to hold many factors constant while collecting data on other factors—specifically, support or opposition to the regime—that may condition the effect of endorsements.

Women's Quotas in Jordan

Jordan adopted a gender quota in 2003 and increased it in 2010 under international pressure to improve women's representation. Recent aid agreements, such as a \$275 million Millennium Challenge Corporation grant from the United States and €223 million EU aid package, were conditional on political reform (Jordan Times 2010; Neimat 2010). The regime responded by increasing women's representation, including by adopting gender quotas in parliament and municipal councils. We focus on the former. Although the parliament is not a fully democratic institution, it is the site of important political competition and fights over access to state resources (Lust-Okar 2006). For a discussion of international pressure and the adoption of quotas for municipal councils, see David and Nanes (2011).

The United States has strongly supported women's representation in Jordan. American government-funded democracy promotion activities in Jordan have included: a female candidate training program run by the National Democratic Institute, an American NGO that trained 12 out of the 13 women elected to parliament in 2010; sessions for female MPs run by the Arab Women's Leadership Institute, an offshoot of the International Republican Institute, another American NGO; and a parliamentary training and monitoring program funded by the National Endowment for Democracy, a quasi-governmental American foundation (National Endowment for Democracy 2005:98–99; National Democratic Institute 2010). Such programs are typical of democracy assistance since the end of the Cold War. In fact, during this period, developing countries have proven more likely to adopt quotas if they depend on foreign aid or have been the targets of democracy promotion (Bush 2011). Because of that dynamic, countries such as Jordan may adopt quotas both because of international pressure and as part of their leaders' survival strategies. Thus, quotas can exist in countries that otherwise evince a poor record on gender equality.

⁷ King Abdallah of Jordan has argued that improving women's rights not only helps women but also advances political development (for example, see Jaridat Al Ghad 2010).

The fact that Jordan adopted its quota during a period of international pressure creates problems for the quota's domestic legitimacy. The role played by the United States in pushing for increased women's representation in Jordan may exacerbate these problems. Most Jordanians distrust the United States; between 1% and 25% of Jordanians have held a favorable opinion of the United States since 2002 (Pew Research Center 2013).⁸ In turn, lack of support for the quota in Jordanian civil society makes it harder for women to gain office, have credibility, and influence legislation.

Finally, our interviews with more than one dozen local activists suggest that at least some well-informed citizens view Jordan's gender quota as linked to the Hashemite monarchy. This makes it a good test case for Hypothesis 2. They view Jordan's quota as having been imposed by their King in an effort to impress foreign-aid donors. Although some feminists had campaigned for a quota in Jordan, they were not heavily involved in the King's decree. Many even opposed it (Clark 2006:555). As a former parliamentarian and human rights activist in Jordan told us:

I think the international community is really committed to gender quotas. I have really met this global sisterhood and they're very sincere. Quotas can be really good elsewhere in the world... [But] the regime just takes the quota as a form of make-up to put on the face of the regime—it's like a facelift and no one notices that the main parts of the face are still there. It's just a façade because the international community cares about it. If they [the government] really cared, they would address the fundamental concerns of women activists and other human rights activists in Jordan.⁹

If this assessment is correct, then the effect of endorsements may be conditioned on a person's level of regime support.

The Experimental Research Design

This article uses evidence from a general political attitudes survey to assess the effects of endorsements of women's representation on public support.¹⁰ After a pre-test, a Jordanian survey research firm with local interviewers conducted the face-to-face survey in Arabic during the week prior to the November 9, 2010 parliamentary election. The experiment's nationally representative sample

comprised 1,650 adult Jordanian residents.¹¹ The response rate was 98%.¹²

The experiment involved informing the respondents about Jordan's quota and telling them about a randomly assigned endorsement. Endorsements came either from an American government-funded organization or Jordanian imams. If Hypothesis 1 is correct, then the endorsements should have different effects. If Hypothesis 2 is correct, then both endorsements—despite Jordanians' high levels of trust in religious leaders and low levels of trust in the United States—should elicit effects that are conditional on respondents' pre-existing support or opposition to the monarchy.

Interviewers read this script to respondents in the control group: "In 2003, the electoral law in Jordan was revised to include a six-seat minimum quota for women in the national parliament. The new electoral law, which was announced in May 2010, raised the quota to 12 seats that are reserved for women." Interviewers read the same script to respondents in the treatment groups plus an endorsement.¹³

- Treatment 1: Many US government-funded organizations in Jordan, including the National Democratic Institute, have strongly supported women's political participation and the women who were elected via the quota in the past.
- Treatment 2: Many imams and other religious leaders in Jordan have strongly supported women's political participation and the women who were elected via the quota in the past.¹⁴

The experiment entailed complete randomization within Jordan's governorates. Table A1 in the Supporting Information shows the design. Blocking geographically worked well for our survey teams, which lacked computer access, and promoted covariate balance since many relevant characteristics—such as income, education level, and country of origin—vary geographically (Horiuchi, Imai, and Taniguchi 2007). Although we specifically examine the Palestinian–East Bank Jordanian divide below, several of those covariates could be the main focus of future studies about support for women's representation.

¹¹ The median ages, employment rates, and population distributions in the survey are statistically indistinguishable from those reported by the government (Department of Statistics 2011). A probability proportional sampling method was used.

¹² AAPOR Response Rate Category 1, which is defined as "the number of complete interviews divided by the number of interviews (complete plus partial) plus the number of non-interviews (refusal and break-off plus non-contacts plus others) plus all cases of unknown eligibility (unknown if housing unit, plus unknown, other)." See American Association for Public Opinion Research (2011:44). Although extremely high for other regions, this response rate is comparable to the response rates obtained by the Arab Barometer.

¹³ Future surveys could inform a control group that quotas have been endorsed but omit an endorser to minimize acquiescence bias. Since we do not find any positive average treatment effects (ATEs), however, we do not think that acquiescence bias is a major problem in our survey.

¹⁴ We omitted the name of a religious endorser because no nationally recognizable Jordanian imam had endorsed the quota. This omission may impede comparisons across the treatment groups and likely biases us *against* finding similar conditional ATEs. Note, however, that men and women answered questions following the religious treatment as often as after the other treatment and control. Some prominent religious leaders in Islam, such as the Egyptian cleric Sheikh Yusuf Al Qaradawi, have endorsed women's political participation, so this endorsement should not be entirely implausible. Moreover, and as we discuss below, religious leaders in Jordan may be viewed as allies of the monarchy, which lends the endorsement some credibility. An interesting direction for future research would be to use endorsements from diverse Islamic leaders.

⁸ James Zogby reported that 10% of Jordanians held a favorable opinion of the United States in 2011—lower than the percents in Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia (Arab American Institute Foundation 2011:3).

⁹ Interview with Jordanian political activist, conducted by author (Bush), June 30, 2010, Amman, Jordan.

¹⁰ A few notes: First, although the survey contained other experiments (the results of which are available upon request from the authors), no experiments preceded this one. Second, in keeping with local culture, men interviewed men and women interviewed women. Third, our results are robust to controls for interviewers' religious dress. Fourth, the survey took respondents between 25 and 45 minutes to complete in face-to-face interviews. Finally, by reading the short script out loud, noncompliance was minimized. An English translation of the interview questionnaire is included in Appendix S1 in the Supporting Information.

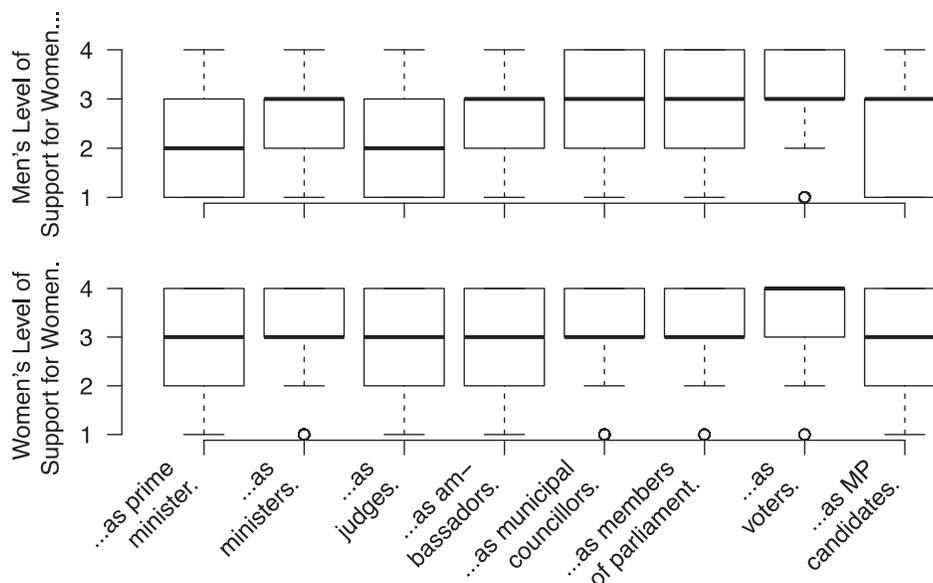


Fig. 1. Support for Women's Representation Across Different Measures in the Control Group. (Notes. This box plot depicts the medians (dark lines), interquartile ranges (boxes), minima/maxima (whiskers), and outliers (dots) for the questions that we combine to create our indexed dependent variable. On the four-point index, one represents no support at all and four represents strong support. $N = 531$.)

After receiving the treatments, respondents were asked a number of questions, including how likely they were to vote for a woman in the parliamentary election and to what extent they supported women voting, running for municipal councils, running for parliament, and being appointed as an ambassador, judge, minister, or prime minister. Figure 1 depicts the responses of people in the control group to those questions using box plots. Since the responses were highly correlated, we created an index that averaged responses to those questions.¹⁵ 1,596 out of 1,650 respondents answered all of the questions, raising few issues of missingness. The index, which is standardized so that its mean is zero and its units are standard deviations, serves as our main dependent variable: *support for women's representation*. Figure 2 depicts the distribution of this variable within the control group.

We focus on explaining support for women's representation, rather than support for the quota, per se, for both theoretical and practical reasons. First, gender quotas aim to enhance not just the number of women in politics but also the interests and image of women in politics. Some research suggests that quotas can significantly improve women's substantive (Beaman, Chattopadhyay, Duflo, Pande, and Topalova 2009) and symbolic representation (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004), but it remains uncertain whether the effects identified in previous studies hold true in countries where quotas are adopted under international pressure. Indeed, one recent review of the literature on gender quotas identified that lacuna as an important area for future research (Franceschet, Krook, and Piscopo 2012:6). Second, given the political dynamics discussed above, popular support for the quota may capture attitudes unrelated to women's representation.¹⁶

What are the basic trends in support for women's representation? As Figure 1 shows, women on average

reported moderate (that is, not strong) support for women's representation; men on average reported moderate support or opposition. Of course, the mean responses reported in Figure 1 are not "true" values. Since the survey includes sensitive questions, respondents may anticipate the interviewer's socially desirable response and alter their answers. Importantly for our inference, however, the endorsements should not change the respondents' likelihood of anticipating the interviewer's socially desirable response.

Results

In this section, we present the average and conditional average treatment effects (ATEs).¹⁷ We find little support for Hypothesis 1. Neither did an endorsement from the distrusted United States harm public support for the quota nor did an endorsement from the trusted local imams help it. We do find support for Hypothesis 2. Both endorsements harmed support among regime opponents significantly more than among regime supporters.

Average Effects: American Endorsements Do Not Harm Support for Women in Politics

Figure 3 reports the ATEs for men and women—in other words, the differences in average responses between the control and treatment groups—using the

¹⁵ Chronbach's α for the eight-item scale is 0.91, which indicates considerable internal consistency.

¹⁶ Nevertheless, if we replace our dependent variable with an indicator of the number of seats respondents prefer to have reserved for women, we obtain similar results although they are not statistically significant.

¹⁷ Unfortunately, one set of our interview teams inadvertently over-distributed control questionnaires to men and over-distributed the religious treatment questionnaires to women. Since gender is an important determinant of attitudes toward women's representation, that randomization error could lead us to incorrectly estimate the average effects of the treatments. To avoid that problem, we estimate the average and conditional ATEs separately for women and men. Otherwise, the randomization procedure generally succeeded, as illustrated in Table A2 the Supporting Information. There are no statistically significant ($p < .10$) differences in age, employment status, religion, religiosity, political knowledge, country of origin, or income across the groups. Furthermore, the mean responses to attitudinal variables that may affect our outcomes, such as pre-existing support for women having equal opportunities, working outside of the home, and attending college, do not notably vary across the experimental conditions.

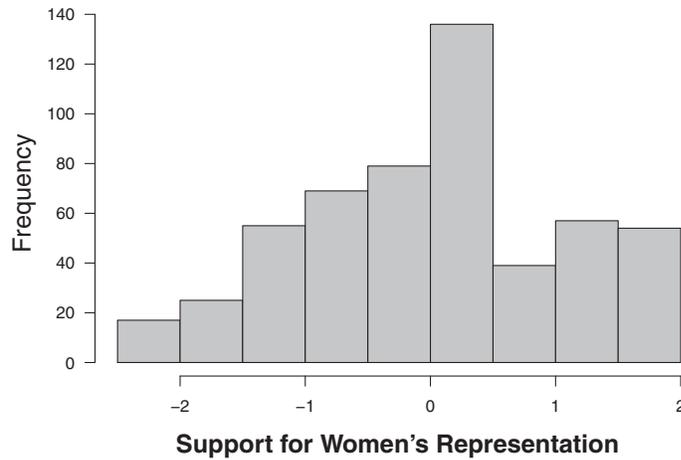


FIG. 2. Distribution of Support for Women's Representation in the Control Group. (Notes. This histogram uses our indexed dependent variable. $N = 531$.)

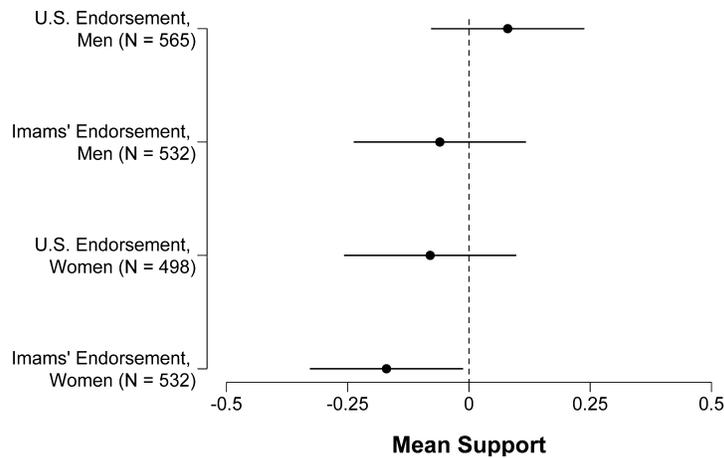


FIG. 3. How the Endorsements Affect Support for Women's Representation. (Notes. Dots represent the average treatment effects (ATEs). Error bars are 95% confidence intervals. Negative (positive) ATEs show a reduction (improvement) in support of women's representation.)

index measure as our dependent variable. In robustness checks, we confirmed the results by reducing the responses via factor analysis and analyzing the outcome variables separately.

As Figure 3 shows, there is little support for Hypothesis 1, which predicted that American endorsements of Jordan's gender quota would worsen citizens' attitudes about women's representation because of distrust of the United States. Average support for women's representation after the US endorsement is statistically indistinguishable from average support without it for both men and women. The ATE is -0.003 ($p < .96$).

Moreover, the religious endorsement failed to improve support for women's representation, despite generally high levels of trust in imams. The ATE is 0.06 ($p < .32$). In fact, the religious endorsement *depresses* support among women. That finding runs contrary to most expectations and merits further research.¹⁸ It is worth noting that the

¹⁸ Preliminary analysis suggests that religious conservatives may be particularly unhappy when imams publicly endorse "female-friendly" policies. We do not find that religious conservatives react particularly negatively to the US endorsement, nor do we find that women are more likely to be religious conservatives. Existing work (Joseph 1999; Mahmood 2005; Deeb 2006) would argue that religiously conservative women are more likely to feel empowered (and comforted by) patriarchal networks. So, it could be that conservative women fear losing patriarchal protections if women gain more rights. Future research is needed to better understand this surprising result.

American endorsement also has a negative average effect among women, although that effect lacks statistical significance. The American and religious endorsements' ATEs are not, however, statistically distinguishable from each other (difference = 0.09 , $p < .27$). That both treatments move female respondents in the same direction suggests that our null finding with respect to Hypothesis 1 was likely not due to a weak treatment. Moreover, it suggests that the religious endorsement's effect on female respondents was substantively meaningful.

In sum, generally trusted and distrusted endorsers' statements do not affect public support for women's representation on average. Since the randomization procedure worked, the average effects of the treatments hold constant factors—such as the respondents' religiosity, income levels, and pre-existing support for women's rights—that might otherwise matter. This null finding challenges the assumptions held by many activists, government officials, and scholars.

We consider several explanations for why the American endorsement failed to depress support for women's representation. First, support for women's representation in Jordan may already be as high as it can be and thus the endorsement was not likely to alter peoples' attitudes. Yet as Figure 1 showed, on average, Jordanians fall somewhere between moderate (that is, not strong) opposition to and support of women's representation. That tepid

support provides little evidence that the treatments could not enhance attitudes. What about the possibility that the treatments did not have significant average effects because ordinary citizens think the quota (or parliament) is ineffective and ignore it? That seems unlikely, as 88% of the respondents in our survey support reserving seats for women and 49% support reserving more than the existing 12 seats.

Second, respondents may have already believed that the United States and imams supported the quota. We addressed that concern in three ways. First, we calculated treatment effects conditional on respondents' pre-treatment beliefs about the United States' and imams' support for gender equality. Our endorsements may have given a more meaningful signal to people who previously thought the United States or imams opposed women's representation. We found, however, no significant effects. That null finding matters since politically savvy Jordanians could support their government's attempt to curry international favor by improving women's representation out of a belief that such policies will lead to more foreign aid and help Jordan's economy.

Second, we searched *Jaridat Al Ghad*, an Arabic language daily newspaper based in Amman, online for articles containing the words "quota" and either "imams" or "sheikhs" or "the United States." We found only 15 articles between 2005 and 2010 that mention both the United States and quotas, and 16 articles that mention imams or sheikhs and quotas. The absence of widespread discussion of the endorsers' support for quotas is inconsistent with pre-experimental exposure to the treatments.

Finally, we calculated the treatment effects, conditional on respondents' levels of pre-treatment political knowledge. We measured political knowledge with four factual questions.¹⁹ People with low political knowledge are less likely to have already been exposed to the treatments. We did not find, however, significant effects among low-knowledge respondents. In fact, the endorsements affected high-knowledge respondents more than low-knowledge respondents. That finding is consistent with Hypothesis 2. High-knowledge respondents may be more likely to infer something about the speaker's support for the regime and its policies from the cue than low-knowledge respondents. We also tested for treatment effects only among respondents with mid-level political knowledge. These respondents are usually more persuadable than high-knowledge people and more likely to understand the content of treatments than low-knowledge people (Druckman and Lupia 2000:15). We obtained null results.

Having dispensed with the conventional wisdom about the relative impact of American and religious endorsements on Jordanian support for women's political representation, we now turn our attention to how attitudes about the Jordanian monarchy moderate the influence of policy endorsements. Although such an inquiry was not part of our pre-analysis plan, we find that women in Jordan who oppose the regime are less likely to support women's representation than regime supporters after both endorsements.

There are Effects Conditional on Attitudes about the Jordanian Monarchy

We gauge pre-treatment support for the regime using the respondent's reported trust in the Prime Minister, which we measure dichotomously (that is, trust or distrust). That measure is admittedly noisy; some people may view the Prime Minister as independent from the regime. Nevertheless, the measure makes sense for our purposes. The government prohibits surveys from asking respondents directly about support for the monarchy (and even if asked, doing so is unlikely to yield reliable answers). But the King directly appoints the Prime Minister—who is the highest-ranking political official in Jordan. Indeed, replacing the Prime Minister has been described as a "time-honored safety valve" for dealing with popular discontent in Jordan (Pelham 2011). In robustness checks, we used alternative pre-treatment measures for regime support and generated similar results. The first alternate measure was voting in the last parliamentary election, since many Jordanians stay home on Election Day because of disenfranchisement (Lust-Okar 2006:462). The second alternate measure was the respondent's agreement with the following statement: "People should always support the decisions of their government even if they disagree with these decisions." This measures authoritarian tendencies.

We test Hypothesis 2 by calculating conditional average treatment effects (CATEs). Figure 4 shows how support for or opposition to the Jordanian regime, measured by trust in the Prime Minister, moderates the effects of the endorsements among women. Out of concern for multiple-comparison problems, we report Bonferroni-corrected *p*-values for these tests. The Bonferroni correction "penalizes" our *p*-values for the four comparisons we make in this section and thereby reduces our likelihood of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is really true. Female regime opponents responded more negatively to both the American and the imams' endorsements than female regime supporters. The difference in the case of the US treatment is 0.6 standard deviations; the difference in the case of the religious treatment is 0.7 standard deviations ($p < .02$ and $p < .005$, respectively). Both endorsements also have significant negative effects among regime opponents, suggesting that their updates about the political bias of the endorsers are larger than regime supporters'.

The CATEs are substantively significant. Men on average report about 10% less support for women's representation than women do in our survey. The American endorsement reduces support for women's representation by the same amount among regime opponents; the imams' endorsement reduces it by slightly more (13%). The findings are consistent with our argument that when imams and the United States endorse the regime's quota, regime opponents will retrench more than regime supporters in their attitudes as a consequence of their distaste for the endorser's support of the regime.

Note that although we do find statistically significant effects in the hypothesized directions, these findings are only for women respondents. Why endorsements affect women's responses more than men's remains a question for future research. One possibility is that men may hold firmer—and more negative—opinions about women in politics than women and are therefore less easily moved by our treatments. Men answer our survey questions more often than women, who are more likely to answer "don't know" or not respond. Another possibility is that the diminished statistical power when we test for CATEs by

¹⁹ We sought to reduce non-responses and included multiple-choice answers (Mondak 2001). High-knowledge respondents answered 2–4 questions correctly (45% of the sample), middle knowledge 1–3 questions correctly (70% of the sample), and low knowledge 0–1 questions correctly (55% of the sample).

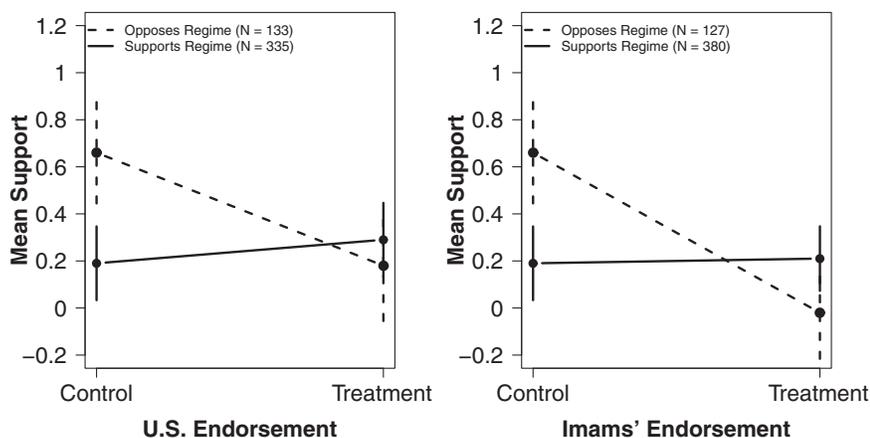


FIG. 4. How the Endorsements Affect Support for Women's Representation, Conditional on Regime Support, for Female Respondents. (Notes. Dots represent the mean responses on the indexed dependent variable. Error bars are 95% confidence intervals. Negative (positive) CATEs show a reduction (improvement) in support of women's representation.)

gender makes it more likely that we will find null results. Just one-quarter of our respondents—388 respondents—are regime opponents according to the measure of trust in the Prime Minister.

But who opposes the Jordanian regime? Could our findings be less about opposition to the monarchy and more about other factors that correlate with support for the regime? For example, is regime support stronger among people who are more urban, liberal, and or otherwise supportive of women's rights? To answer those questions, we examined the characteristics of regime supporters and opponents.²⁰ Support or opposition to the Jordanian regime is not correlated with pre-treatment indicators of how liberal or conservative the respondent's worldview is using conventional levels of statistical significance. Such indicators include support for democracy, support for women's education, and support for women working outside the home.

Discussion

The findings fail to support the hypothesis that American and religious endorsements affect popular support for women's representation on average. Instead, support or opposition to the regime determines how receptive respondents are to endorsements of an authoritarian regime's policies. On the one hand, the findings may encourage activists who seek to advance women's political standing in Jordan by working with the United States: American endorsements will not automatically de-legitimize women's rights. They also suggest that achieving religious leaders' rhetorical blessing of women's representation is unlikely, at least in the short term, to promote egalitarian attitudes. On the other hand, the findings suggest that Jordanians can view both international and domestic endorsements of women's representation as supporting the ruling regime—

something disliked by opponents of the Jordanian regime but accepted by supporters.

In the Jordanian context, both the American government and imams can plausibly be viewed as supporting the ruling regime. But they are not necessarily already viewed as supporting women's quotas. For its part, the United States provides foreign aid in exchange for cooperation on issues such as the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the peace treaty with Israel (Peters and Moore 2009:275–276). Jordanians may therefore view the United States as supporting the survival of their monarchy.

In Jordan, imams have the legal status of civil servants. They must undergo government interviews and are the targets of various forms of surveillance (Wiktorowicz 2001:chapter 2). By involving imams in the bureaucratic state structure, the Jordanian state has co-opted religious institutions. Few Jordanian imams talk about politics during their sermons at Friday noon prayers, the primary weekly religious gatherings in Islam and potential opportunities for anti-regime mobilization. Jordanian citizens may therefore regard imams as bolstering the political status quo, either by choice or circumstance. Even the Islamic Action Front, a group related to the Muslim Brotherhood, has historically had close relations with the government and taken a relatively moderate stance (Schwedler 2006:28–29).

These circumstances may encourage our female respondents to interpret the endorsements of both the United States and Jordanian imams as support for the regime. It also potentially complicates efforts at causal inference. Do regime opponents report more negative views of women's representation after these endorsements than do the regime supporters because they gathered new information from the endorsements? Or is it because they distrusted or trusted certain endorsers in the first place? Perhaps some regime opponents initially viewed women's representation positively, only to change their opinions after hearing the endorsements.

Further analyses lead us to conclude, albeit with caution, that respondents gathered information from the cues about endorsers and their political biases. As would be expected, prior to the treatment, regime supporters were 18–19% more likely than regime opponents to trust the United States and imams. We do not, however, find any evidence of statistically significant treatment effects

²⁰ It is also important to note that the religious endorsement causes female respondents of Palestinian origin to approve of women's representation less than respondents of non-Palestinian origin (difference = 0.26; $p < .16$). The American endorsement has a similar effect. We suspect that because respondents of Palestinian origin are more likely to oppose the monarchy (Lust-Okar 2006:462), they are especially prone to dislike a pro-regime endorsement. Respondents of Palestinian origin report similar levels of support for women as political leaders, working outside the home, and having equal personal status rights to other respondents.

that are conditional on respondents' pre-treatment trust of the endorser. In other words, respondents who said that they trusted the United States or imams prior to the treatment were no more or less likely to support women's representation after the treatments than those who said that they did not trust them. That non-relationship suggests that respondents used policy endorsements to learn about the endorsers' support for, or opposition to, their government.

Moreover, a post-treatment question asked respondents how positively they viewed the United States' influence on Jordanian politics. If people learned about the United States from the treatment, we would expect regime opponents to hold less favorable views of American influence after the American treatment. They did (difference = 0.35, measured on a 4-point scale, $p < .14$), even though the sub-sample is small ($N = 450$). That finding suggests that people update their information about the endorsers, although we will need further tests—including post-treatment questions about imams—to fully ascertain the relationship.

Thus, we conclude that respondents learned about the endorsers through cues and responded negatively if they opposed the regime. Causal mechanisms in experiments are notoriously hard to identify. Future research could more thoroughly identify the mechanisms by including cues from endorsers who are not so plausibly linked to the regime as well as by randomly manipulating the hypothesized mediating variables (for example, information about the endorser's support of the regime). Nevertheless, the current findings demonstrate that endorsements can affect public attitudes in Jordan, but in ways conditioned on people's pre-existing views about their government.

Conclusion

Our findings challenge many of the assumptions policy-makers, activists, and academics hold about Arab anti-Americanism and religion. On the one hand, informing respondents about an American endorsement of women's representation did not reduce popular support on average; informing them of a religious endorsement did not raise it. On the other hand, both American and imam endorsements reduced support for women's representation more among women who opposed the Jordanian regime than among those who supported it. Our findings therefore reveal that studying the influence of cues requires taking into account regime type. In Jordan, and likely in other autocracies, respondents' disposition toward their governing is a crucial variable for understanding how citizens respond to cues.

Like all experiments, this one sacrificed external validity for internal validity. Several aspects of the survey's design did, however, render its findings more generalizable. The sample was nationally representative; the endorsements were plausible. Although the actors in our experiment have not publicly endorsed quotas, the National Democratic Institute and some imams have supported female candidates in the past. The tradeoff here is the potential for previous exposure to the treatment. We addressed that concern by examining how the treatments affected respondents with varying degrees of political knowledge and assessing how frequently the endorsers were reported as supporting women's representation in the press. Although we focused our empirical analysis on the case of Jordan, as discussed above, Jordan is but one

case out of many in the Arab region where nondemocratic rulers have adopted quotas as a way to enhance their international legitimacy. Therefore, the study's findings speak to broader trends in a region where citizens often maintain a deep skepticism of international actors.

The findings contribute to both policy and theory. From a theoretical perspective, our article adapted theories of policy cues in democracies to autocracies. We show, for example, that when elites endorse an authoritarian regime's policies, they reveal their support of that regime and their policy endorsements can thus backfire among regime opponents. This political polarization is an important feature underlying the politics of policy endorsement support in authoritarian regimes.

Additional research is needed to fully explore the implications of our findings. Experimental research could examine if regime support moderates endorsements in other autocracies. It could also replicate the findings in Jordan that were not part of our pre-analysis plans. In Jordan, experiments could examine the effects of endorsements of women's representation by diverse religious leaders, tribal leaders, or Arab political leaders. They could also examine the effects of policy denunciations or endorsements for other types of policy reforms. The effects that we find might, for example, be related to the relatively poor information about or high complexity of gender quotas in Jordan. To summarize, our findings suggest that the political landscape constituting regime supporters and opponents needs to be taken into account when assessing the influence of policy endorsements.

From a policy perspective, our findings contribute to discussions about how the United States should promote democracy because increasing women's representation has been a cornerstone of such efforts. After the Arab Spring, commentators such as Wadah Khanfar, the former director general of *Al Jazeera*, as well as American officials, have emphasized that foreign actors must not taint local reformers' efforts (Hamid 2011; Slaughter 2011). At least for gender quotas, our results show that reforms can be popular even if they are adopted under international pressure. Foreign support for gender quotas, including from the United States, does not necessarily undermine their legitimacy. If American support has no average negative impact on public attitudes toward women in politics, the net effect of active American efforts to promote women's representation is more likely to be beneficial.

Furthermore, it appears that American policy endorsements are seen as suspect only insofar as domestic opponents of the regime link them to their rulers. American policymakers therefore should be mindful of when their democracy-promotion efforts might be perceived as reinforcing autocracies.²¹ We do not know if foreign pressure will be benign in other contexts or on other issues. Still, our findings are significant for Jordan, where the United States has invested millions of dollars in improving women's representation. Insofar as Jordan is an exemplar of broader trends in Arab states, the findings are suggestive. They call for research in other settings.

Our findings also dovetail with recent research that suggests that foreign endorsements during elections can polarize domestic attitudes (Corstange and Marinov 2012). If international pressure on countries to democratize reinforces existing political cleavages in autocracies, then it

²¹ On how democracy promotion can be compatible with autocracies, see Bush 2015.

may have unintended consequences in terms of the stability of the regimes that foreign actors seek to reform.

Finally, our findings speak to ongoing debates about the links between anti-Americanism and American support for autocratic regimes. In the Arab world, popular suspicion of the United States as a democracy promoter that routinely supports nondemocratic allies is common (Lynch 2007:214–216; Jamal 2012). The United States has often proved willing to sacrifice its stated values in favor of preserving access to overseas bases (Cooley 2008), maintaining military alliances (McKoy and Miller 2012), and enhancing other strategic interests. This article suggests that Jordanians are highly attuned to how foreign and domestic policy endorsements relate to their government's survival. Public endorsements of policy reforms that are not backed up with other forms of democratic support may therefore endanger long-term US interests.

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Supporting Information

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article:

Table S1. Randomized block design.

Table S2. Randomization checks.

Appendix S1. Survey questions.