MEMO
Data and Description: Mapping Religious Pluralism in Muslim Countries
Shaheen Mozaffar, Ph.D.
Bridgewater State University
smozaffar@bridgew.edu

The Purpose and Structure of Social Scientific Enterprise

The purpose of social scientific enterprise is to foster systematic understanding of empirical phenomenon. Systematic understanding involves: (1) *Description*, which answers the "what" question and consists of statements and narratives that represent the empirical phenomenon as accurately as possible; and (2) *Explanation*, which answers the "why" and the more complex "how" question by explicating the reason the empirical phenomenon occurs and the process by which it occurs.

In the technical language of philosophy of science, descriptions are the *explanandum*, the phenomenon requiring explanation, while explanations are the *explanans*, the narratives that serve to explicate the phenomenon (Hempel and Oppenheim 1948; Kaplan 1964). Description and explanation, then, are intimately related components of the social scientific enterprise. They contribute to systematic understanding of empirical phenomenon when they are analytically rigorous. Analytical rigor obtains when description and explanation produce testable hypotheses and eventually theories that are logically coherent, conceptually sound, theoretically informed, empirically grounded, and methodologically rigorous.

Ideally, analytically rigorous descriptions are idiographic studies that enable nomothetic analysis. In the social sciences, however, as opposed to the physical sciences, the goal of nomothetic analysis in discovering universal laws governing social behavior remains elusive and aspirational. In practice, therefore, the realistic contribution that descriptions as idiographic studies can make to the systematic understanding of empirical phenomenon is to foster middle-range theories derived from testable hypotheses grounded in context-sensitive data.

To make this contribution, the research design of analytically rigorous descriptions as idiographic studies must involve a "disciplined configurative approach" (Verba 1969; Eckstein 1975) that treats an empirical problem not as a sui generis phenomenon, but in terms of concepts, hypotheses and explanations that have more general applications, thereby facilitating theory-building. Such an approach helps (a) in identifying contextual complexities and contingencies that mediate the impact of otherwise of general social, economic and cultural variables on political outcomes, (b) in tempering broad theoretical generalizations based on limited data, but (c) also in uncovering previously unmined data and thus to generate new hypotheses and enrich theoretical generalizations.

The disciplined configurative approach frames my paper. Specifically, it engenders several analytical questions and issues around which the paper is organized.

What is Religion?

I conceive of religion not as a sui generis phenomenon, but as a sociological concept that represents a source of social cleavage around which human behavior is organized. Religion, so conceived, serves, separately or in combination with other sources of social cleavage (e.g. race,

ethnicity, gender, class), as a strategic resource for rational actors to form groups, construct identities, define political interests and organize collective action in pursuit of those interests.

While similar to the other sources of social cleavage, religion is distinguished from them by a more or less coherent ideology that (a) articulates a normative purpose of human existence, (b) identifies the means for achieving that purpose, and (c) serves as a belief system for guiding the behavior of its adherents.

What is Religious Pluralism?

Pluralism is the presence of variations in the number of major religions with distinct belief systems, in the different denominations and sub-denominations with associated belief systems nested within one or more of the major religions, in the number of adherents of the larger religions and their nested denominations and sub-denominations, and in the distribution of all these variables within and across countries. This bewildering range of variables poses a daunting challenge to the development of a comparative framework for the systematic measurement of religious pluralism. I take up this challenge in the larger project on 183 countries from which my paper on mapping religious pluralism in 53 Muslin countries is drawn.

I take up this challenge in three ways: (1) I draw on the insights of the relatively new field of religious demography to identify the key variables that provide the analytical foundation for measuring and mapping religious pluralism; (Johnson and Grimm 2013); (2) I use data on the 18 religions and their nested denominations reported in the World Religion Database (WRD [www.bu.edu/cura/programs/religiousdemography/]) to identify the religious demography and the associated variations in patterns of religious pluralism in Muslim countries; and (3) I use this data to develop quantitative indices to measure religious pluralism.

Religious Demography and Religious Pluralism

Religious demography is the systematic study of religion as a demographic characteristic of human populations. It classifies religious populations with respect to five key variables that have direct relevance for measuring religious pluralism: (1) number of religions with distinctive belief systems; (2) the number of such religions without nested denominations; (3) the number of such religions that are divided into various nested denominations; (4) the number of nested denominations with and without nested sub-divisions; and (5) the population shares of all religions and nested denominations and sub-denominations. (Todd and Grim 2013). www.bu.edu/cura/programs/religiousdemography/).

The combination of these five variables produce a complex religious demography in Muslim countries that is displayed in Table 1. Column 1 in the table lists in **bold** font the 18 religions in the world that are included in WRD. Of the 18, only Christians and Muslims feature nested denominations in Muslim countries. Column 2 lists these nested denominations in underlined font. There are 7 Christian nested denominations; none are subdivided. And there are 7 Muslim nested denominations, 2 of which are sub-divided. Column 3 lists in italics the 10 sub-denominations into which the two Level 2 Muslim denominations, the Sunnis and the Shi'as, are divided. The two denominations have five nested sub-denominations each.

Table 1 Religious Demography in Muslim Countries

Level 1 Groups (N = 18)	Level 2 Groups (N = 14)	Level 3 Groups (N = 10)

Agnostics
 Atheists
 Baha'is
 Buddhists
 Chinese Folk-Religions
 Confucianists
 Christians
 Ethnoreligionists
 Hindus
 Jains
 Jews
 Muslims
 New Religionists
 Shintoists
 Sikhs
 Spiritists
 Taoists
 Zoroastrians
	Christians
	    Anglicans
	    Protestants
	    Roman Catholics
	    Orthodox
	    Independents
	    Doubly-Affiliated
	    Unaffiliated
	 Muslims
	    Sunnis
	    Shia's
	    Ahmadis
	    Black Muslims
	    Druzes
	    Kharjites
	    Other Islamic Sectarians
		Sunnis
		    Hanafis
		    Malikis
		    Shafii's
		    Hanbalis (Wahabis)
		    Undesignated Sunnis
		 Shi'as
		    Alawites
		    Ismailis
		    Ithna-Asharis
		    Zaydis
		    Undesignated Shias

      The combination of the five religious demographic variables listed above also means that religious pluralism is a multidimensional phenomenon. Different combinations of the five variables produce five types of religious pluralism displayed in Table 2.

Table 2 Types of Religious Pluralism

Types of Religious Pluralism	Description
Inter-Religious Pluralism	Measured by the number and size of all Level 1 groups at the highest level of aggregation
Intra-Religious Pluralism	Measured by the number and size of Level 2 groups nested within Level 1 groups and all undivided Level 1 groups
Total Religious Pluralism	Measured by the number and size of all undivided Level 1 groups, all undivided Level 2 groups, and all Level 3 groups nested within Level 2 groups
Inter-Denominational Pluralism	Measured by the number and size of divided and undivided Level 2 denominations*
Intra-Denominational Pluralism	Measured by the number and size of Level 3 groups nested within each Level 2 denominations.**

*Muslims: Sunnis, Shi'as, Ahmadis, Black Muslims, Druzes, Kharjites, Other Islamic Sectarian. **Christians:** Anglicans, Protestants, Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Independents, Doubly-Affiliated, Unaffiliated
**Sunnis: Hanafi, Maliki, Hanbali, Shaf'i, Undesignated. <u>Shia's:</u> Alawites, Ismailis, Ithna-Asharis, Zaydis, Undesignated

The Methodology for Measuring Religious Pluralism

      To measure variations in religious pluralism as a multidimensional phenomenon associated with the complexity of religious demography, I rely on the widely-used Herfindahl index of social diversity to measure Inter-Religious Pluralism, Intra-Religious Pluralism, and Total Religious Pluralism. I created a new index to measure Inter-Denominational Pluralism and Intra-Denominational Pluralism. Table 3 displays these formulas with the corresponding types of religious pluralism indices they measure.

Table 3 The Measurement of Religious Pluralism

Religious Pluralism Indices	Formula
Inter-Religious Pluralism Intra-Religious Pluralism Total Religious Pluralism	Religious Pluralism Index $= 1 - \sum_{i=1}^{n} g_i^2$, Where: • "g_i^2" is population share of each religious group • Index value ranges from 0 to 1
Inter-Denominational Pluralism Intra-Denominational Pluralism	Religious Pluralism Index $= \left(1 - \sum_{s=1}^{N}\left(\dfrac{p_s}{P_H}\right)^2\right) \times P_H$, Where: • Index measures pluralism among Level 3 sub-denominations nested within the largest Level 2 denominations weighted by the population share of Level 2 denomination • p_s is sub-denomination s's proportion in the population, • N is the number of sub-denominations nested within the largest Level 2 denomination H, and P_H is the largest Level 2 denomination's proportion of the population • Index value ranges from 0 to 1

Mapping Religious Pluralism in Muslim Countries

Table 3 displays the mean values of 8 types of religious pluralism in 53 Muslim countries grouped for analytical convenience into five regions: 7 countries which were part of the former Soviet Union; 7 Asian countries; 18 countries which are located in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA); and 22 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The results are statistically significant as indicated by the Eta values in Column 4 of the Table.

The mapping exercise reveals the complexity and contingency of religious pluralism. It reveals that religious pluralism is a complex multidimensional phenomenon and that the associated variations in patterns of religious pluralism are correlated with the geographical locations of Muslim countries. Thus, the most religiously plural Muslim countries are found in Africa, followed by MENA (*contra* conventional wisdom), Asia and Central Asia. And it also reveals some surprising findings, such as the fact that (*contra* conventional wisdom) Saudi Arabia turns out to be one of most religiously plural countries not only in MENA but also among the 53 Muslim countries.

The So What Question

The paper presents a brief illustration of the explanatory utility of the mapping exercise by showing via probit analysis that, *ceteris paribus*, high religious pluralism increases separation of religion and state, and via regression analysis that, *ceteris paribus*, high religious pluralism increases religious freedom and reduces religious repression even in Muslim countries (*contra* conventional wisdom). It concludes with a discussion of the contributions of the mapping

exercise to hypothesis testing and theory building about the social and political implications of religious pluralism not only in Muslim countries, but in other countries as well.

Table 4 Mapping Religious Pluralism in Muslim Countries*

Types of Religious Pluralism	Former USSR (N=7)	Asia N=7)	MENA (N=18)	SSA (N=21)	Total (N= 53)
Inter-Religious Pluralism	.24	.27	.16	.35	0.28 Eta = .53 (sig = 00)
Intra-Religious Pluralism	.34	.34	.36	.44	0.40 Eta = .57 (sig = .00)
Total Religious Pluralism	.37	.43	.57	.60	0.55 Eta = .47 (sig = .01)
Inter-Denominational Pluralism	.28	.25	.32	.20	.26 Eta = .34 (sig= .05)
Intra-Denominational Pluralism	.30	.31	.50	.34	.39 Eta = .44 (sig = ,01)
Intra-Sunni Pluralism	.27	.25	.38	.34	.17 Eta = .28 (sig = .05)
Intra-Shi'a Pluralism	.08	.03	.38	.34	.13 Eta = .53 (sig = .00)
Intra-Christian Pluralism	.11	.03	.06	.21	.17 Eta = .44 (sig = .05)

*Cell entries are mean values of Religious Pluralism Indices.

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