

# Regionalism in New Democracies: The Authoritarian Origins of Voter–Party Linkages

Political Research Quarterly  
1–15  
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DOI: 10.1177/1065912919862363  
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Chantal E. Berman<sup>1</sup>  and Elizabeth R. Nugent<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

We investigate the path-dependent effects of subnational variation in authoritarian state-building policies on voter–party linkages after regime change. We argue that long-term patterns of regional favoritism and marginalization produce patterned regional heterogeneity in the attitudes and preferences linking voters with parties. Postcolonial state-building policies create “winners” and “losers” from particular interventions, in turn shaping local citizens’ preferences over these policy areas and forming axes of contestation ready to be activated by democratic politics. We argue that attitudes associated with regionally consistent state-building policies should function uniformly as determinants of vote choice across regions, while attitudes associated with regionally divergent state-building policies should experience patterned regional variation in their effect on vote choice. We develop these arguments empirically with historical analysis of Tunisian state-building and an original exit survey of voters in five diverse regions conducted on the day of Tunisia’s first democratic legislative elections in 2014. Our findings contribute to a growing literature on the importance of analyzing political transformation at the subnational level.

## Keywords

elections, transitions, Middle East, Tunisia, survey methods

## Introduction

How do legacies of authoritarian governance affect processes of voter–party alignment in newly democratizing states? Citizens in new democracies have the opportunity to (re)-form linkages with both new and legacy<sup>1</sup> political parties, and parties in early legislative elections seek to build durable coalitions over diverse subnational territories. Results from first elections exert considerable influence over political and economic outcomes moving forward, significantly shaping possibilities for autocratic retrenchment or democratic consolidation (Darden and Grzymala-Busse 2006; O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986). Scholars benefit normatively and theoretically from identifying the origins of voter–party linkages in new democracies.

A compelling literature on historical legacies has demonstrated the enduring effects of authoritarian policies on the political systems of new democracies (Collier and Collier 1991; G. Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2011). Many of these investigations leverage cross-national research designs to assess the impact of national political institutions on public opinion and voting behavior after regime change. Yet cross-national comparisons tend to overlook

*within-country variation* in these historical experiences—specifically, the ways in which state–society relations under authoritarianism are constructed unevenly throughout national territory (Herbst 2000; Migdal 1988; O’Donnell 1993). Indeed, a growing literature in the politics of development has emphasized the importance of understanding subnational variation in political and social processes (Pepinsky 2014; Snyder 2001).

This paper investigates the path-dependent effects of subnational variation in authoritarian state-building strategies on voter–party linkages during a democratic transition.<sup>2</sup> State-building policies create “winners” and “losers” from particular interventions, in turn shaping citizens’ preferences over these policy areas and forming axes of contestation ready to be activated by democratic politics. We argue that regional variation in state-building policies

<sup>1</sup>Princeton University, NJ, USA

<sup>2</sup>Yale University, New Haven, CT, USA

### Corresponding Author:

Chantal E. Berman, Princeton University, Corwin Hall, Princeton, NJ 08544-0001, USA.

Email: chantalb@princeton.edu

may produce patterned regional heterogeneity in voter-party linkages. We leverage historical variation in the scope of different state-building policies to better identify these effects, arguing that state-building policies implemented unevenly across national territory should generate greater variation in the strength of these attitudinal variables as determinants of vote choice. We illustrate our argument with an original survey of voters fielded on the day of the October 2014 legislative elections in Tunisia, which formed the first Assembly of Representatives of the People as outlined in Tunisia's January 2014 democratic constitution.<sup>3</sup>

The paper proceeds as follows. First, we situate our argument within existing literature on authoritarian legacies and develop a theory of how regional state-building interventions shape public opinion and voter-party linkages moving forward. Next, we turn to the case of Tunisia. We provide historical evidence demonstrating that while the state's campaign of secularization was implemented consistently across national territory, economic development and distribution policies varied widely between regions. We then present evidence from our original voter exit survey, comparing predictors of vote choice for three important parties between historically favored and nonfavored regions. In line with our theory, our results show significant divergence in the predictive power of support for redistribution between historically favored and nonfavored regions. By contrast, support for the influence of religious law on governance is nationally consistent in its effect on vote choice. Finally, we show that public support for lustration—defined as the desire to ban old regime affiliates from participation in democratic politics—likewise varies regionally in its electoral impact.

### **Theory and Concepts: Legacy, Regionalism, and Voter-Party Linkage**

Historical legacies may be conceptualized as “durable causal relationships between past institutions and policies on subsequent practices or beliefs . . . beyond the life of the regimes, institutions, and policies that gave birth to them” (Beissinger and Kotkin 2014). Rather than simple patterns of historical continuity, legacy arguments address situations where chains of influence persist through major political ruptures, most importantly that of regime change.<sup>4</sup> The aftermath of authoritarianism features heavily in historical legacy scholarship, as scholars seek to make sense of variation in post-authoritarian outcomes such as party systems, economic growth, and geopolitical alignment (Darden and Grzymala-Busse 2006; Hicken and Kuhonta 2015; Mainwaring 1989; Riedl 2014). There is also a normative dimension to the prevalence of

authoritarian legacy research; scholars are interested in identifying factors that may prevent transitioning regimes from consolidating democracy (Linz and Stepan 1996; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986), and a great deal of scholarship on authoritarian legacies has therefore centered on explaining conditions under which autocrats may return to office (Bruszt and Stark 1991; Bunce 2005; Darden and Grzymala-Busse 2006; Jhee 2008; Kopstein and Reilly 2000; Tucker 2006).<sup>5</sup>

*Postcolonial* authoritarian regimes, such as Tunisia, exert particularly strong historical legacies because they adopt active and frequently transformative roles in the lives of citizens, directing and reforming spheres including industry, agriculture, labor, religion, and associational life (Migdal 1988). State-building interventions invariably create “winners” and “losers,” causing citizens who experience these policies, for better or for worse, to adopt divergent views toward the central state and its policies. For example, the common postcolonial practice of expropriating agricultural wealth to support industrialization (Bates 1974) may cause farmers to oppose state intervention in the economy; industrial workers, by contrast, may come to favor such interventions. By similar logic, policies of enforced secularization may alienate pious citizens from the state but curry favor among the nonreligious, rendering a previously cultural or personal divide into an axis of *political* polarization.

Embedded in the study of historical legacies is the notion that experiences under authoritarianism may shape citizens' attitudes and preferences in a manner salient to their political behavior after regime change. In particular, several cross-national studies demonstrate how divergent experiences of Communist rule shaped the ideological leanings of voters in new democracies (Markowski 1997; C. Pop-Eleches and Pop-Eleches 2012; G. Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2011, 2013; Tucker 2006), demonstrating the *durability* of public attitudes formed under authoritarianism. Echoing this logic, we posit that *state-building interventions under authoritarianism produce axes of contestation among citizens that may be activated and exploited by latter-day democratic competition*. Thus, beyond shaping citizens' *vote choice*—the dependent variable in most legacy studies—we argue that state-building interventions also shape *voter-party linkages*, defined in our study as *the policy attitudes linking voters with parties in a multiparty and multidimensional vote space*.<sup>6</sup>

Our study of voting behavior after transition builds on prior findings and incorporates an additional set of factors that we believe to be consequential, yet undertheorized: namely, *regional variation in authoritarian state-building strategies*. As consequential as postcolonial state-building policies may be, these interventions are rarely

**Table 1.** Authoritarian Regionalism and Voter–Party Linkages: Theory and Observable Implications.

Nationally consistent state-building policies	→	National consistency in voter–party linkage	→	Electoral outcomes
Regionally divergent state-building policies	→	Regional divergence in voter–party linkage	→	

implemented evenly across national territory. Rather, regimes of limited resources gaining independence from colonial powers must choose how and where to invest. Patterns of authoritarian regionalism are complex, often resulting from an interaction between geographic endowments and the logic of authoritarian survival; for example, states embracing a growth strategy of export promotion will likely invest heavily in coastal areas prime for maritime trade. Yet, geographic patterns of investment are also driven by elite political motivations and rivalries; leaders have been found to reward their home regions through policies such as favorable taxation, asymmetric public goods provision, and public employment schemes (Burgess et al. 2015; Hodler and Raschky 2014; Kasara 2007; Kramon and Posner 2013; Shleifer and Vishny 1994). Furthermore, early decisions pertaining to subnational investment may exert strong path-dependent effects on later-day patterns of investment (Herbst 2000), further entrenching dynamics of regional favoritism and marginalization.

The multidimensionality of state-building strategies, combined with an array of political motivations, implies that not all interventions follow the same regional logic; crucially, some state-building interventions will prove more nationally coherent, while others are regionally targeted. This *variation in the degree of variation* helps to identify the effects of authoritarian regionalism on voting behavior after regime change, as outlined in Table 1. State-building interventions implemented uniformly throughout national territory should generate similar preference patterns across regions, and therefore, *national consistency in the strength of associated attitudes as determinants of vote choice in early democratic elections*. By contrast, attitudes associated with regionally targeted state-building policies should vary accordingly in their capacity to shape vote choice. If our intuition is correct, we expect to observe that in regions targeted by specific state-building interventions, associated public attitudes should prove significant determinants of vote choice on the individual level; elsewhere, effects of these attitudes should prove small or statistically insignificant.

In summation, our theory predicts *patterned heterogeneity in voter–party linkages between historically “favored” regions—those that received particular state-building interventions—and “nonfavored” regions—those that did not*.

Cumulatively, these regional effects contribute to shaping electoral outcomes. Regional voter–party linkages therefore enhance our understanding of early democratic

elections, including the processes by which authoritarian successor parties may re-enter political office or, conversely, the mechanisms by which citizens may reject these parties. In the following section, we present a condensed account of historical regionalism in Tunisia, followed by a descriptive analysis of Tunisia’s post-authoritarian party system, before testing our empirical expectations using an exit survey of Tunisian voters.

### Historical Variation in Tunisian State-Building Policies

Tunisia is the only country to have begun democratization as a result of the 2011 Arab Uprisings and therefore represents an important contemporary case of transition in a region long defined by stable authoritarian governance. Nearly, sixty years of authoritarian governance in Tunisia produced both nationally consistent and regionally targeted state-building policies, a fact that we exploit to test our theory. This section provides an historical account of state-building policies in postcolonial Tunisia, demonstrating that while the Tunisian autocrats’ campaign of secularization and repression toward organized religion was implemented consistently across national territory, policies of economic development and distribution varied widely between geographic regions.

Tunisia gained its independence from the French in 1956. Its two authoritarian presidents, Habib Bourguiba (1957–1987) and Zine el-`Abidine Ben Ali (1987–2011), undertook ambitious state-building and social modernization programs. Under both Bourguiba and Ben Ali, the regime invested considerable resources to create a modern and secular Tunisia, a project in which the country’s Islamic history and identity were relegated to a position of secondary importance. An important component of Tunisian state-building, policies of secularization and repression toward organized religious life were *national* in nature and experienced as such. These policies were conceived by centralized ministries and similarly instituted in both cosmopolitan and rural areas. Shortly after independence, Bourguiba prevailed in an internal split in the national movement between his faction, which was committed to the French model of *laïcité* and the elimination of “backward” cultural and religious norms, and that of Salah Ben Youssef, who advanced a state-building program in which Arab-Muslim values were central to the new state. The elimination of the latter faction set the course of Tunisia’s relationship with religion, and both presidents took significant action to “diminish and

eventually eliminate the primary role and status of Islam and the grip of its official interpreters has on matters related to education, the judiciary, and public displays of religiosity” (Cavatorta and Haugbølle 2012).

As early as 1960, Bourguiba publicly discouraged Tunisians from observing Ramadan, arguing that it lowered economic productivity (Salem 1984). The government passed laws to discourage public displays of religiosity; in 1985, legislation passed by the Ministry of Education banned women from wearing the hijab at public education institutions and governmental buildings. In addition, the regime decreased the autonomy of the Zitouna University, an independent Islamic institution rivaling well-known Sunni centers of learning in Egypt and Iraq. The regime also spent considerable resources to control mosques throughout the country, preventing these spaces—which have often fallen beyond the control of the state to the detriment of authoritarian regimes (Kurzman 2004)—from being used by political opposition. Under Bourguiba, the Ministry of the Interior required the approval of—and sometimes even distributed pre-written—sermons given at Friday prayers.

Upon coming to power, Ben Ali reaffirmed the government’s commitment to *laïcité* in the public sphere and, moreover, continued his predecessor’s policies of increasingly eliminating politicized versions of Islam from public life. As the Islamist political opposition began to organize more formally in the 1970s and 1980s, the state began to institute national policies to bring individual expressions of religiosity, religious institutions, and religious spaces under state control (Perkins 2014). In 1988, the Ben Ali regime passed a law in 1988 that prohibited “any activity in the mosques, in the form of speeches, meetings, or writings, by people not belonging to the institution that oversees their work, unless authorized by the premier,” a thinly veiled ban of political activities in these spaces. The regime arrested eight thousand known leaders and members of the Islamist organization *Haraket Ennahda* after it performed very well in the country’s 1989 parliamentary contest, essentially sidelining *Ennahda* politically, as its leaders remained in jail and the organization largely absent from public life through the early 2000s (Alexander 2010, 60). Thus, under both post-colonial leaders, national policies regarding religion in public life were applied consistently across the state, as an important survival strategy intended to demobilize religious opposition wherever it existed.

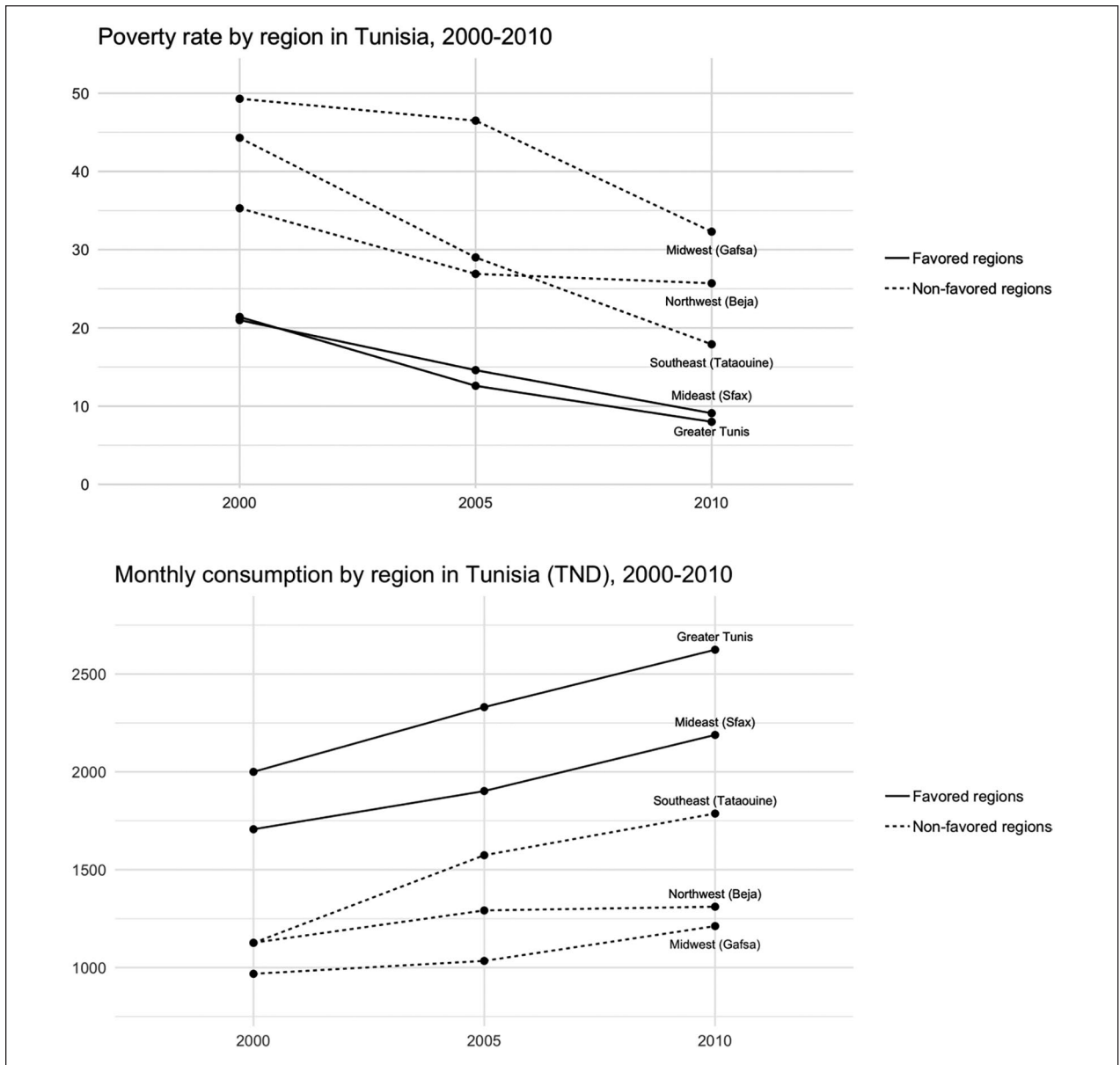
By contrast, during this same state-building period, economic development and distribution policies varied drastically between Tunisia’s regions.<sup>7</sup> From Bourguiba onwards, politics of economic modernization skewed investment heavily toward to Tunisia’s northern (including the urban capital Tunis) and eastern coasts (known also as the *Sahel* and including Tunisia’s second-largest

city, Sfax).<sup>8</sup> After the short-lived import substitution industrialization (ISI) period in the immediate postcolonial years, the Tunisian regime became an early liberalizer in North Africa,<sup>9</sup> refining a strategy of export promotion supported by infrastructural investment, close ties between the state and select domestic capitalists, and a legal framework offering fiscal incentives and networking support to domestic and foreign firms (Bellin 1991; Murphy 1999). Beginning in the early 1970s, a series of new laws and trade agreements encouraged and increased foreign investment and delineated a new outward orientation for Tunisia’s economy.<sup>10</sup> Heavily promoted sectors of tourism and export-oriented manufacturing (textiles and other products) brought job opportunities and infrastructural investment to Tunisia’s urban and coastal areas, where select firms could also take advantage of offshore industrial zones.

In contrast, few investments were made in the diversification or economic modernization of the south and interior, where economies remained extractive (in the case of the interior phosphate mining region of Gafsa) or agrarian (in the case of the country’s northeast, including Beja, and south, including Tataouine; Boughzala and Hamdi 2014). In the wake of debt crisis in the 1970s and 1980s, the Tunisian state like many of its neighbors initiated a program of structural adjustment and privatization, resulting in even smaller levels of investment for Tunisia’s south and interior (Hibou 2011). Tunisia also adopted corporatist and exclusionary labor relations with its premier union UGTT (Bellin 2002; Yousfi 2018), further marginalizing nonurban Tunisians from many labor benefits offered in select coastal sectors.

Although regional disparities in investment throughout the postcolonial period were largely guided by the economic logic of late development, we note that elite political rivalries also played a role; during the crucial period surrounding independence, Bourguiba, who hailed from Monastir in the Sahel region, clashed with fellow nationalist Salah Ben Youssef, from the southern governorate Djerba. The drive to punish Tunisia’s south, in confluence with a governing ideology privileging more urban and cosmopolitan citizens, may well have influenced Bourguiba’s choices regarding the regional distribution of public investment during crucial early years of independence (Perkins 2014).

The late 1980s and 1990s saw the first governmental efforts to redress regional inequality through a series of integrated development plans. However, these were “not enough to change the main resource-allocation mechanisms or significantly reduce the level of inequality” (Boughzala and Hamdi 2014). As shown in Figure 1, data on regional poverty rates collected by the Tunisian National Institution of Statistics (INS) show persistent regional disparities.<sup>11</sup> Data on per capita consumption



**Figure 1.** Economic disparities by region.

(INS) suggest parallel disparities in quality of life. Finally, the geographic concentration of Tunisia’s employment opportunities in 2010 provides insight into the scale of the discrepancies of opportunity facing coastal and inland, northern and southern regions directly prior to the 2011 revolution. As of 2010, 95 percent of foreign direct investment concentrated in the coastal governorates of Tunis, Bizerte, Nabeul, Sousse, Monastir, and Sfax, where only 60 percent of Tunisia’s population lives. In addition, some 90 percent of new jobs created during the previous decade were also created in these six governorates. These persistent disparities are testament to the high degree of

regionalism guiding Tunisia’s policies of economic state-building during the postcolonial period.

### Tunisia’s 2014 Legislative Elections: Parties and Platforms

In January 2011, Tunisia began its transition after unprecedented mass protests that began in the impoverished South unseated long-term authoritarian president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. In October of the same year, Tunisians elected a National Constituent Assembly (NCA) consisting of 217 lawmakers charged with drafting a new

**Table 2.** Coding of Party Platforms and Legacy Status in 2014 Elections.

Major parties in the 2014 Tunisian legislative elections			
Party	Economic platform	Shari'a platform	Legacy status
Nidaa Tounes	Center-Right	Secular	Legacy
Ennahda	Center-Right	Islamist	Historical Opposition
Front Populaire	Left	Secular	None

constitution. After the new constitution was passed in January 2014, Tunisia held its first legislative elections on October 26, 2014. Further context surrounding the Tunisian transition, as well as the earlier NCA elections of 2011, may be found in Supplemental Appendix A.

The 2014 parliamentary elections placed in competition three distinct types of parties, represented in this study by Ennahda, Nidaa Tounes, and the Front Populaire. Table 2 summarizes these parties in terms of their programmatic offerings and their legacy status.

First, the Ennahda party defines itself as civic-Islamist and is known to voters as such. Ennahda's precursor movement was founded in 1981 but had not contested elections since 1989. The movement had played a historical oppositional role to the Bourguiba and Ben Ali regimes; many of Ennahda's current leaders were exiled or imprisoned by the regime during the 1990s. The party's 2014 platform highlighted the importance of Tunisia's Islamic identity, listing among the party's accomplishments the unification of the country under a constitution that "combined the principles of Islam and the essence of modernity." The 2014 platform embraces a free market economy with a contained role for government in addressing the social needs of Tunisians, including housing, education, healthcare, and the environment.

Second, Nidaa Tounes represented a secularist big-tent party united in its opposition to Ennahda and Islamism. The party was formed after the 2011 elections and is composed of members of the former ruling party (the Constitutional Democratic Rally), secular leftists, members of the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) and the national employers' union (UTICA), and members from former secular opposition parties under Ben Ali. Despite this heterogeneity, its leadership is known among voters as belonging to the previous ruling party apparatus. The party's president, Beji Caid Essebsi (also elected president of Tunisia in 2014), was the Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1981 to 1986, and over half of the party members elected to the 2014 parliament held high positions in the former ruling party under Ben Ali (Marzouki 2015). During the 2014 elections, Nidaa Tounes issued three separate platforms detailing their positions on cultural, social, and economic issues. The economic platform develops a detailed development plan for Tunisia based on a free market economy for business and a moderate

welfare role for the state with regards to unemployment and health issues.

The third party is Front Populaire, a coalition formed in 2012 in an effort to consolidate the resources of left and labor interests.<sup>12</sup> Front Populaire is a representative example of a number of small parties that positioned themselves in opposition to both Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes during the 2014 elections. These smaller parties are secular and did not contain old regime members; rather, they comprise members of the prerevolutionary opposition and political actors newly mobilized in the post-authoritarian period. Espousing one of the clearest political platforms among small parties, the Front Populaire advocates a strong government role in regulating industries, opposes privatization, and favors significant redistribution of wealth to improve national living conditions.<sup>13</sup> The Front Populaire had not formally organized in one cohesive unit prior to 2012 and carries no particular symbolic mantle as a bearer of opposition to the old regime, particularly when compared to Ennahda.

Regional voting returns during the 2014 parliamentary elections display clear variation mirroring the economically favored versus nonfavored status of Tunisia's governorates, as demonstrated in Table 3. Greater numbers of citizens in the northeast and coastal areas voted for Nidaa Tounes, while Ennahda support is concentrated in the south, and Front Populaire support emerged in the interior western region. Regression analysis included in Supplemental Appendix F demonstrates that among Tunisia's twenty-seven electoral districts, being a historically favored region (coded as 1 for districts in the northeast and Sahel and 0 elsewhere) results in a highly significant 19 percentage point advantage for Nidaa Tounes. On average, the Nidaa Tounes vote share of economically favored regions is nearly double that of historically nonfavored regions.<sup>14</sup>

## Research Design

Methodologically, this paper follows in the footsteps of other comparative political studies that leverage significant subnational variation to explore important theoretical topics in the study of democratic politics. Subnational comparative designs allow scholars to more precisely identify chains of causal influence at the microlevel while

**Table 3.** 2014 Party Vote Share by Region.

Party percentage vote share by region (2014)			
	Ennahda	Nidaa	Front populaire
Beja	21.24	38.35	3.25
Gafsa	27.16	20.97	5.44
Sfax	33.78	34.58	3.96
Tataouine	65.41	7.68	0.63
Tunis	25.96	45.39	3.07

controlling for national-level trends (Snyder 2001). This approach also corrects for a disciplinary bias toward the study of elite and urban politics in developing states, where political processes in “peripheral” regions are often understudied (Pepinsky 2014).

We now turn to our original exit survey of Tunisian voters. On October 26, 2014, the day of parliamentary elections, we partnered with enumerators from the Tunisian nongovernmental organization *Sawti*, *Sawt Chebab Tounes* to administer an exit survey to 1,157 Tunisian voters as they exited polls in five governorates.<sup>15</sup> Directly after exiting her or his polling place, each survey respondent answered a battery of open- and closed-ended questions related to social and demographic background, policy preferences, and past and current political behavior, in addition to vote choice. To our knowledge, ours is the first exit survey to be fielded in the Middle East. Due to the relatively broad composition of the Tunisian political scene, the relative openness of the electoral environment in 2014, and the broadly free and fair nature of elections in Tunisia since 2011, we do not believe any significant level of preference falsification occurred among our survey respondents.

An exit survey provides two main benefits in analyzing the linkage between preferences and voting behavior. First, an exit survey provides an adequate sample of voters, providing enough statistical power to conduct analyses on the relationship between preferences and voting behavior. Nationally representative public opinion surveys, which do not specifically stratify on voting behavior, often do not contain a large enough sample of voters for researchers to conduct robust analyses. The small sample issue is exacerbated by the many surveys that do not specifically ask about vote choice. This question can be politically sensitive in the electoral authoritarian political systems of the Middle East and is frequently removed from the regional cross-national surveys that must undergo review by several governments or censor officials before being fielded.<sup>16</sup> The resulting small sample sizes pose difficulties for making inferences about voters in general and make it nearly impossible to detect any subnational variation in voter-party linkages.

Second, the proximity of the exit survey to actual voting behavior provides more accurate identification of the relationship between policy preferences and vote choice. Capturing the preferences and reported voting behavior at the time of voting is crucial, as previous scholarship has demonstrated that both political opinions and reported vote choice may be falsified or influenced by the passage of time. Postelection polls typically inflate the proportion of people who voted for the winning candidate, at all levels of government, because respondents “bandwagon” due to perceived norms of social desirability (Atkeson 1999; Crow, Johnson, and Bowler 2015). Similarly, responses to polls conducted before elections are variable because they are influenced by the priming of campaign events (Gelman and King 1993). Political preferences appear to be particularly volatile during times of political transition more generally, and the same pattern is observable in newly democratizing political systems.

We recognize that there exists a tradeoff between nationally representative samples and oversampling voters, and both have significant strengths as well as weaknesses. Our targeted exit survey is a novel source of data for understanding vote choice and provides particularly focused and temporally valid insight by capturing vote and preferences at the time of voting.

## Sampling Methodology

Our sampling methodology involved a combination of strategic and random sampling calibrated to test our argument about regional variation in voter-party linkages. We strategically selected five governorates (states) based on observed historical variation in state-building policies implemented in these regions. These governorates are shown in the map in Figure 2. Beja, Gafsa, and Tataouine represent historically marginalized regions of the country in the interior and southern regions of the country. Tunis and Sfax are emblematic of the country’s favored regions, constituting the country’s capital and one of its major cities.<sup>17</sup> Selecting these five governorates resulted in a sample of seven electoral districts (Beja, Gafsa, Sfax 1, Sfax 2, Tunis 1, Tunis 2, and Tataouine).<sup>18</sup> We then selected six administrative subunits (delegations) from each district through population-weighted random sampling with weights constructed from national census population data.<sup>19</sup> From each delegation selected, a polling station was chosen randomly from lists provided by the *Instance Supérieure Indépendante pour les Élections* (ISIE). In total, forty-two polling stations were surveyed, representing forty-two delegations.

The surveys were conducted by trained Tunisian enumerators from *Sawti* using paper and pencil questionnaires. One enumerator was placed outside each selected polling station for the duration of voting hours. Enumerators

selected interview candidates using a randomization technique wherein the enumerator approached every third voter leaving the polling station until a voter agreed to be interviewed. Enumerators repeated this technique for each interview. Before interviewing, all potential subjects were introduced to the content and purpose of the survey and to their rights of refusal and termination. Each enumerator collected between twenty-five and thirty surveys, and interviews on average lasted fifteen minutes each.

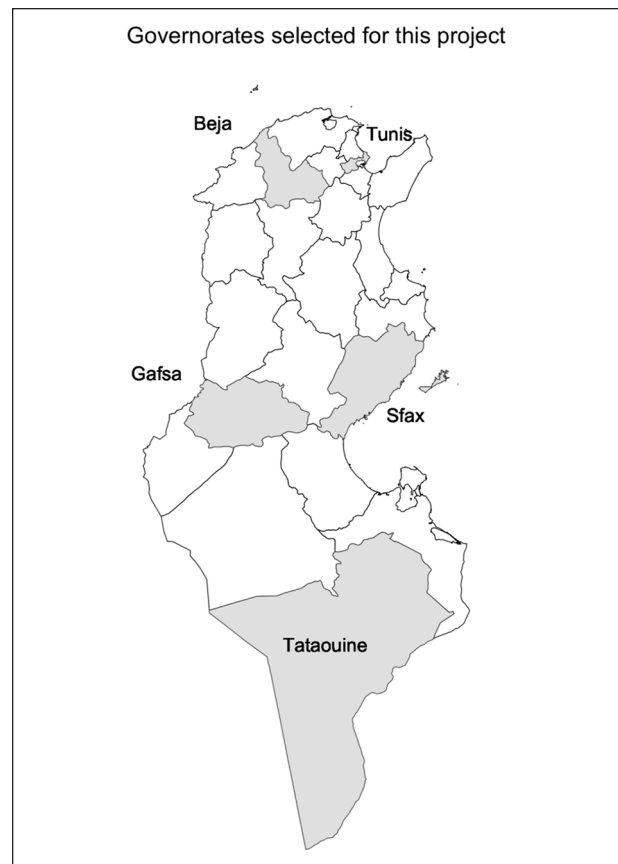
## Analysis and Results

In this section, we analyze support for three present-day political parties: Nidaa Tounes, Ennahda, and the Front Populaire. We conduct separate binomial logistic regressions with outcome variables coded as 1 for reported support for each party of interest. We choose to present the binomial regressions for several reasons. First, we are conceptually interested in understanding how an individual came to choose a specific party over all other parties, and our use of binomial regressions reflects this. Second, while we oversampled voters, our sample size remains significantly small that we retain statistical power by coding the vote choice variable in this way and using binomial regressions for analysis. Finally, binomial regression provides greater clarity in interpreting the coefficients. (For robustness, we also conducted a multinomial logistic regression, pitting choices for the top three parties against each other; patterns of significance on our independent variables are similar to those observed in the binomial logistic regressions and we include the full results in Supplemental Appendix D.)

To test our hypotheses regarding divergence in the preferences linking voters with political parties between historically favored and historically disfavored regions, we divide our sample between favored regions (Tunis and Sfax;  $n = 228$ ) and disfavored regions (Gafsa, Tataouine, and Beja;  $n = 206$ ), limiting the sample to the set of voters who revealed their vote choice.<sup>20</sup> We compare the size and significance of three main preference variables—support for shariah as the basis of law, support for redistribution, and support for lustration—as predictors of vote choice within each subset. Thus, within each subset and for each party, we estimate the following equation, where for voter  $i$  in delegation  $d$ :

$$\text{logit}(\pi_{id}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{shariah}_{id} + \beta_2 \text{redistribution}_{id} + \beta_3 \text{lustration}_{id} + X_{id} + \alpha_d + e_{id}$$

In this model,  $\alpha_d$  indicates delegation fixed effects, which are used to account for unobserved heterogeneity at the level of sampling.  $X_{id}$  indicates a vector of individual-level covariates that we may expect to affect vote choice, including log age and education measured as a 5-point



**Figure 2.** Map of Tunisia highlighting governorates selected for this project.

scale. (In Supplemental Appendix E, we also include models with a broader range of behavioral covariates, including religious behavior, employment status, and revolutionary protest behaviors. We note that some significance is attenuated due to loss of power, but that these expanded models largely confirm findings from our baseline models in this section.) Standard errors are clustered at the delegation level. Results from these analyses are presented graphically in Figure 3 and in regression Tables 1, 2, and 4, which also include parallel models run on the full sample of voters ( $n = 575$ ).

Consistent with our hypotheses, we find the effects of support for shariah on vote choice to be relatively uniform between historically favored and disfavored regions. Support for shariah as the basis of law is positively and significantly associated with support for Ennahda (Islamist party) across subsets, and negatively and significantly associated with support for Nidaa Tounes and the Front Populaire across all subsets. Moreover, coefficients between subsets are similar in magnitude, suggesting comparable performance of attitudes vis-à-vis religious law as predictors of vote choice. Analysis of the “support for shariah” variable therefore lends support to our theory



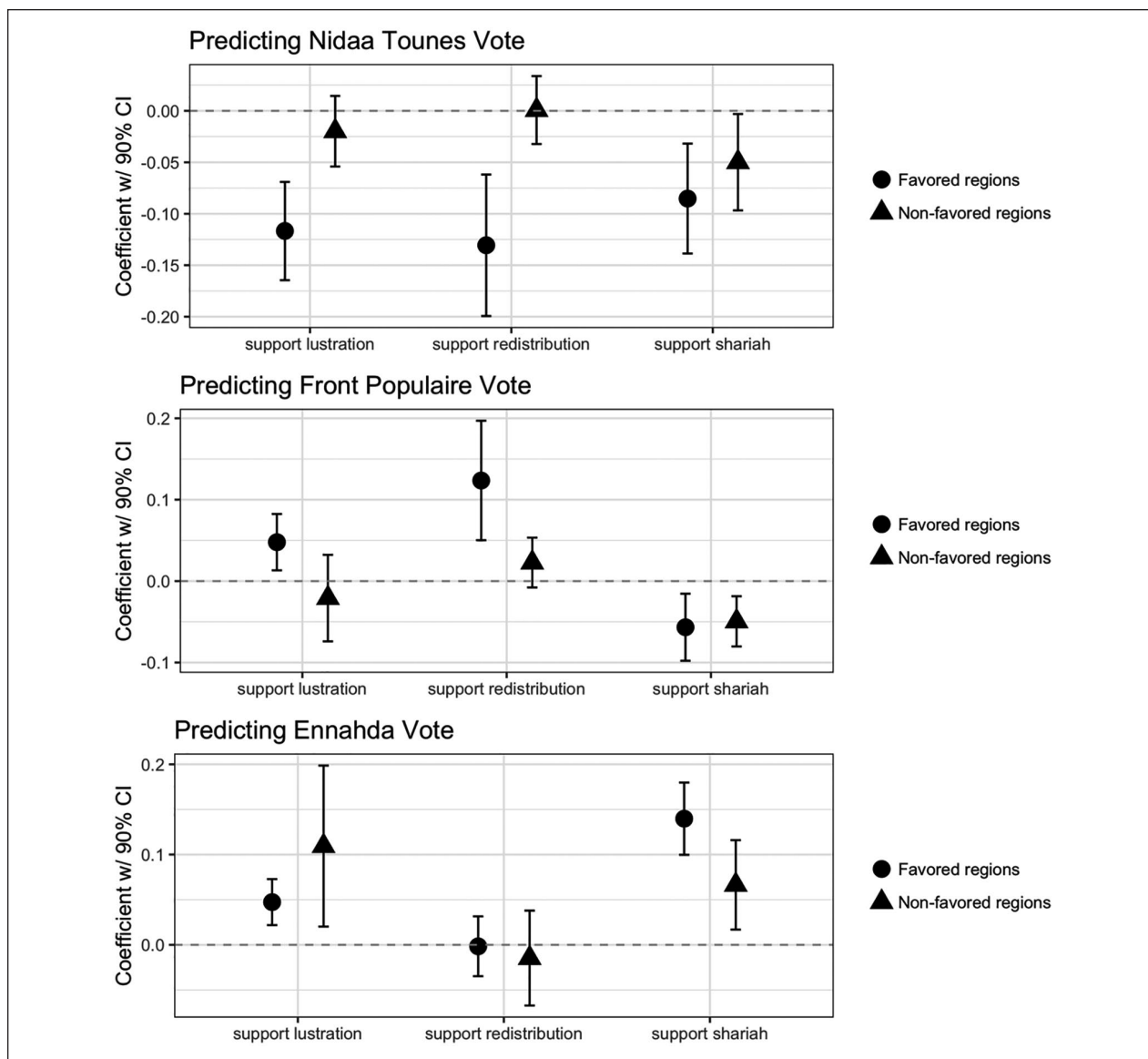


Figure 3. Binomial regression results for predicting vote choice in favored and nonfavored regions.

Table 4. 2014 Parliamentary Election Returns.

Parliamentary election results (2014)		
Party	Percentage of national vote	Seat share
Nidaa Tounes	37.56	86
Ennahda	27.78	69
UPL	4.13	16
Front Populaire	3.64	15
Afek Tounes	3.02	8
CPR	2.05	4
Democratic Current	1.95	3
People's Movement	1.34	3
National Destourian Initiative	1.34	3
Current of Love	1.20	2

CPR = Congress for the Republic; UPL = Free Patriotic Union.

that attitudes born of regionally consistent state-building policies should function uniformly as determinants of vote choice in early democratic elections.

By contrast, we find that effects of support for redistribution on vote choice vary significantly between favored and nonfavored regions. More specifically, we find support for redistribution to be a significant determinant of vote choice in historically favored regions but *not* in nonfavored ones, where coefficients on this indicator for each party remain close to zero. This trend lends support to the theory that attitudes born of regionally divergent state-building policies should experience regional variation in their predictivity vis-à-vis vote choice. As we have outlined in previous sections, Tunisia's historically favored regions experienced significant periods of centralized economic planning as these regions were "developed" as centers of industry, commerce, and trade. Active policies of taxation, investment, and redistribution in these regions created winners and losers from these economic interventions, rendering distributive policy as a salient axis of contestation ready to be activated by democratic competition. Thus, in favored regions, support for redistribution positively predicts voting for Front Populaire (leftist party) and negatively predicts voting for Nidaa Tounes (right wing legacy party). A relative lack of investment and economic planning in nonfavored regions, by contrast, has led distributive issues to play a far smaller role in determining vote choice in these governorates, as indicated by the small and insignificant coefficients.

Finally, we find that effects of support for lustration vary in their effect between regions in a pattern similar to

that of support for redistribution. In historically favored regions, support for lustration positively predicts voting for the Front Populaire and Ennahda and negatively predicts voting for Nidaa Tounes (legacy party). In nonfavored regions, by contrast, support for lustration does not significantly predict support for any party. These findings are consistent with the intuition that where voters have historically greater experience of state-building, attitudes toward the regime's legacy actors should play a larger and more polarizing role in determining vote choice.

In summation, we view these regression results as supporting our theory regarding the effects of authoritarian regionalism on voter-party linkages in new democracies. Systematic divergence in the predictors of vote choice between historically favored and historically nonfavored regions suggests enduring effects of regional state-building policies on salient axes of contestation after regime change. In our supplementary materials, we go further to test the importance of regional variation in voter-party linkage against variation associated with other subnational groups. These groups include age cohorts, social classes, individuals of similar education status, and public versus private sector employees—in other words, social and demographic groups that may have feasibly formed the basis for alternative authoritarian strategies of selective development and marginalization. As shown in Supplemental Appendix B, we find little systematic variation in voter-party linkage between these groups, again highlighting the outsized role of regionalism as a conduit between authoritarian strategy and early democratic politics.

#### Voting for Nidaa Tounes.

	Logistic regressions		
	Favored regions (1)	Nonfavored regions (2)	Full sample (3)
Support redistribution	-.131*** (.042)	.001 (.020)	-.051* (.027)
Support shariah	-.085*** (.032)	-.050* (.028)	-.068*** (.020)
Support lustration	-.117*** (.029)	-.020 (.021)	-.076*** (.022)
Education	.031 (.027)	-.018 (.023)	-.0002 (.019)
Log age	.135 (.102)	.019 (.046)	.059 (.060)
Delegation fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	.935** (.388)	1.125*** (.202)	1.235*** (.226)

FE = fixed effects.

\*, \*\*, \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

## Voting for Front Populaire.

	Logistic regressions		
	Favored regions	Nonfavored regions	Full sample
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Support redistribution	.124*** (.045)	.023 (.019)	.064*** (.023)
Support shariah	-.057** (.025)	-.049*** (.019)	-.055*** (.015)
Support lustration	.048** (.021)	-.021 (.032)	.018 (.021)
Education	.009 (.041)	-.010 (.028)	.001 (.024)
Log age	-.180* (.093)	-.048 (.049)	-.116* (.060)
Delegation fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	.350 (.386)	.241 (.310)	.213 (.260)

FE = fixed effects.

\*, \*\*, \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

## Voting for Ennahda.

	Logistic regressions		
	Favored regions	Nonfavored regions	Full sample
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Support redistribution	-.002 (.020)	-.015 (.032)	-.014 (.023)
Support shariah	.140*** (.024)	.066** (.030)	.102*** (.022)
Support lustration	.047*** (.015)	.109** (.054)	.080*** (.029)
Education	-.023 (.038)	.008 (.039)	-.008 (.026)
Log age	.081 (.085)	.097 (.084)	.098* (.057)
Delegation fixed effects			.026 (.033)
Constant	-.432 (.397)	-.628 (.465)	-.561* (.289)

FE = fixed effects.

\*, \*\*, \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

## Conclusion

In this paper, we have developed and tested a new mechanism through which legacies of authoritarian governance shape electoral politics in new democracies. We argue that long-term patterns of regional favoritism and marginalization produce patterns of regional heterogeneity in the attitudes linking voters with parties. We demonstrate this heterogeneity in voter-party linkages through analysis of a voter exit survey conducted during Tunisia's first legislative elections in 2014. We believe that this empirical work provides important microlevel evidence concerning the determinants of vote choice and, hence, the outcomes of early legislative elections in this important contemporary case of democratic transition in the Middle East.

Moving beyond the Tunisian case, this paper presents a number of contributions to the literature on historical legacies, regionalism, and early democratic elections. First, our results demonstrate the importance of conceptualizing historical legacies on the subnational level. By

leveraging regional variation in the individual-level determinants of vote choice, and by linking these present-day outcomes with historical patterns of state-building, this paper contributes to a growing literature surrounding the implications of subnational heterogeneity in postcolonial and late-developing states. Existing studies of authoritarian legacies and voting behavior may control for social and demographic covariates, but rarely investigate how predictors of support for legacy parties (or other parties) vary systematically across subnational groups. Our model may lack parsimony but it reveals complex ways in which attitudes born of regional development strategies drive deviation from a national-level model of vote choice. Finally, we exploit the methodological advantages of regionally targeted exit surveying, which enhances the validity of survey response and enables analysis of demographic groups underrepresented in traditional nationally representative household surveys.

We note two main limitations of our study in the hopes of inspiring future research that may test and refine our findings. First, we are only able to demonstrate a

snapshot of voter–party linkages in a new democracy and do not currently have the data to analyze how these linkages may change over time, as democratization progresses. Future research might expand on the 2014 elections by collecting an additional voter survey during Tunisia’s subsequent parliamentary elections. Second, our theory and evidence centers the attitudes and choices of *voters* in explaining voter–party linkages. We do not systematically address how parties and their strategies may also be shaped by historical regionalism. Future analyses may wish to analyze party strategies during the 2014 election and subsequent elections to assess how, and to what extent, parties and candidates may vary their campaigns subnationally, in keeping with the regional dynamics we describe in this paper. We do not view such prospective analyses as mutually exclusive with our findings, but rather as an alternative and complementary set of mechanisms that may strengthen the theoretical relationship between authoritarian regionalism and electoral dynamics after regime change.

Nuanced understanding of early democratic elections is of the utmost importance for transitology studies and it is crucial for social scientists to conduct historically minded inquiries about these contests. Early elections can exert a freezing effect on the course of electoral politics moving forward, and the exit of previous ruling elites after democratization tends to correlate with positive political and economic outcomes (Darden and Grzymala-Busse 2006; O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986). Taking subnational heterogeneity seriously allows for deeper insights into the sources of support for authoritarian legacy parties and, hence, highlights additional factors that may indicate risk for authoritarian resurgence.

### Acknowledgments

The authors thank Amaney Jamal, Chris Achen, members of the Princeton University’s Arab Political Development Seminar, participants at the 2015 Graduate Student Workshop of the Association for the Analytic Learning about Islam and Muslim Societies (AALIMS), and an audience at the 2016 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association for helpful feedback on this project in various stages. They also thank Michael Robbins for assistance with sampling and survey design. Finally, the authors are indebted to Hamza Abidi, Radhouane Addala, and *Sawti, Sawt Chebab Tounes* for being excellent partners during the data collection process.

### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this

article: This project received funding from the Bobst Center for Peace and Justice at Princeton University.

### ORCID iD

Chantal E. Berman  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4861-6923>

### Notes

1. In our usage, the term “legacy” refers to those parties that represent erstwhile authoritarian ruling parties or erstwhile opposition networks. By contrast, “new” parties represent constellations of political actors that were not meaningfully organized as such prior to the onset of democratization.
2. Our conceptualization of “voter–party linkage” indicates the political attitudes and preferences linking voters with parties on the individual level—eschewing, for the purpose of this analysis, other types of cliental or performance-based linkages that are logically less prevalent in new democracies.
3. Tunisia is the only country to have begun democratization as a result of the 2011 Arab Uprisings and thus represents an important contemporary case of transition in a region long defined by stable authoritarian governance. Mirroring early elections in previously transitioning states, the Tunisian 2014 elections featured an authoritarian legacy party, parties who had historically served as opposition to the old regime, and a range of new political actors with no direct history of political contestation. Equally important for our inquiry, nearly sixty years of authoritarian governance in Tunisia produced both nationally consistent and regionally targeted state-building policies.
4. Whereas many works of legacy analysis consider the durability of singular institutions such as welfare systems, constitutions, and party systems (Geddes 1995; Inglot 2003; Stanger 2004), others consider the influence of pre-rupture institutions on attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (La Porte and Lussier 2011). In a 2013 working paper titled “What is a Historical Legacy?,” Jason Wittenberg helpfully suggests that legacy arguments are most compelling when independent and dependent variables are not phenomenologically the same.
5. Cross-national explanations range from geopolitical positioning (Kopstein and Reilly 2000), to economic performance of the previous or transitional regime (Jhee 2008; Tucker 2006), to the nature of anti-Communist opposition (Bruszt and Stark 1991), and to variation in public education and the popular diffusion of nationalism (Bunce 2005; Darden and Grzymala-Busse 2006).
6. Per Kitschelt’s (1995) conceptualization, voter–party linkage represents the programmatic, clientelistic, or charismatic bond connecting voters with political parties. While acknowledging the potential for personalistic or quid pro quo relationships between parties and voters, we focus on the political preferences that motivate citizens to vote for certain parties over others; indeed, our models indicate that vote choice for each major political party is in some large part predicted by holding preferences that align with that party’s programmatic platform.

7. Although our focus remains on legacies of postcolonial governance, it is worth noting that uneven legacies of regional development in Tunisia also have roots in colonial and precolonial periods. State-building programs during these periods engaged southern and peripheral regions on highly unequal terms, rendering these populations open to exploitation and ultimately neglect by future administrations (Anderson 1986).
8. It is worth noting, as a basis of comparison, that neighboring regimes often expropriated in the opposite direction, specifically co-opting rural politicians at the expense of urban centers (Buehler 2015). Regional legacies of state-building are often historically specific to particular cases of authoritarian rule and must be evaluated in light of a country's historical context.
9. Analysis of Tunisia's shift from more "socialist"-type import substitution industrialization (ISI) developmental policies, such as cooperative agricultural reforms, toward more capitalistic-oriented projects, may be found in Rudebeck (1970).
10. Tunisia began its offshore regime in 1972, offering steep tax incentives for both foreign and Tunisian producers via the 1972 Foreign investment Law (Richards and Waterbury 2007). Further laws in 1992 and 2006 streamlined and reinforced these the initial package of incentives. Finally, Tunisia's trade relationships are extensive. In 1976, Tunisia became the first Arab state to sign an Association Agreement with the European Economic Community (EEC), providing duty-free access to European markets, which accounted for roughly 80 percent of Tunisian exports under the Ben Ali regime, and guarantees of development aid from European states (The World Bank 2014).
11. Boughzala and Hamdi (2014) attribute the apparent progress of the south and northwest in official statistics during this period to those regions' loss of population in migration to the coast, a "safety valve" alleviating some of the social pressures of underdevelopment in these regions. However, it is important to note that these data were collected and distributed and have been documented to have been manipulated, by the regime; Hibou documents how the Tunisian state developed new approaches to economic measurement that falsified evidence in support of a narrative of progress.
12. The choice of analyzing votes for the Front Populaire was driven both by the availability of data and our substantive concerns. First, Front Populaire was the third largest vote choice among our respondents. We chose not to pool these voters with voters for other parties, such as the Free Patriotic Union (UPL) or Afek Tounes, given that these similarly sized parties advanced different kinds of platforms and were founded by individuals who were not considered part of the pre-revolutionary opposition. In addition, the Front Populaire does not have the same political baggage as the Congress for the Republic (CPR), which served in the 2011–2014 Troika government.
13. In contrast, a party like the UPL proposes a free market economy with several regional free trade zones and significant privatization efforts.
14. Among economically marginalized regions, Ennahda performed strongly in the south, including Tataouine, while the Front Populaire performed best in the interior western region, including Gafsa. This differentiation is likely due to the historical strength of organized labor as a bastion of opposition in the western region, in turn a factor of that region's economic structure comprising concentrated labor in exploitative public sector mining firms. Tataouine's economic structure is more diffuse, comprising many small landholders and nomadic social groups, as virtually no public or private enterprises have invested in the transformation of this rural economy.
15. Exit polling is a not a new methodology; media, partisan organizations, and academics have employed this survey technique mostly in democratic contexts since the late 1960s, largely as a tool for parallel vote tabulation. In our study, we deviated from traditional exit polls, which tend to ask only about vote choice and conducted what we call an "exit survey."
16. For example, the 2014 Arab Barometer surveyed 1,119 Tunisians, out of which 707 reported that they voted in the 2011 National Constituent Assembly (NCA) elections. The instrument did not contain a question asking voters about their party choice, but did include one which was phrased, "Which of the existing parties is closest to representing your political, social and economic aspirations?" The question was toned down for more closed political systems. In Tunisia, only 579 respondents articulated a party, 379 of whom were also self-reported voters. The most "popular" party, Ennahda, had 194 self-reported voters, but the rest of the parties had numbers in the tens. These numbers become more problematic when the voters are divided by governorate. Looking only at the governorates that we analyze in this paper, there are 80 voters in Tunis, 40 in Sfax, 25 in Beja, 20 in Gafsa, and only 12 in Tataouine, the majority of whom do not articulate their party choice.
17. We outline in more detail our coding of the governorates as marginalized and favored in Supplemental Appendix C, which includes brief histories of each governorate.
18. Electoral districts in Tunisia are generally concurrent with governorate, except in the case of governorates with major cities, in which case governorates are split into two electoral districts.
19. Delegations are the smallest administrative units through which polling stations are assigned. Delegations range in population from below ten thousand to more than ninety thousand inhabitants, but most contain between twenty thousand and forty thousand residents.
20. Although all of the respondents in our sample of 1,157 respondents were voters, we excluded respondents who did not reveal their vote choice. Our largest analytical challenge with the data was low reporting of vote choice in the governorate of Beja, where fewer than 20 percent of voters surveyed revealed their party choice. In other governorates, an average of 57 percent of voters disclosed their vote choice. We note that in the pooled sample, missingness of the vote choice indicator does not correlate with any of our three preference variables. Additionally, relative

closeness of vote choice percentages in the data to official, district-level returns suggests it is *not* the case that voters for any particular party are significantly more likely to either refuse interview or refuse to share their vote choice. These two validity measures indicate that our models are not significantly confounded by patterns of missingness in the data.

### Supplemental Material

Replication data may be found at <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/8GCL91>. Supplemental materials for this article are available with the manuscript on the *Political Research Quarterly* (PRQ) website.

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