



GOVERNMENT STRATEGY BEHIND RELIGIOUS CONFLICT

EXPLAINING VIOLENCE AGAINST
CHRISTIANS IN EGYPT AND JORDAN

Research Puzzle

- ▶ Why does religious violence vary from place to place?
- ▶ Why does the level of violence vary across time?



Research Question

- ▶ What explains violence against Christians in the Middle East from 1952 to the end of 2011?



Intellectual Context

- ▶ **Existing literature on religious conflict in the Middle East**
 - ▶ Essentialism and anti-essentialism
 - ▶ No empirically supported explanations for religious conflict
- ▶ **Ethnic riot literature**
 - ▶ Explains outbreak of violence (TIME)
- ▶ **Institutionalism**
 - ▶ Explains cross-national variation (SPACE)



The Argument

- ▶ This thesis argues that government strategy explains the extent of religious violence in the Middle East.
 - ▶ Short-run strategy
 - ▶ Changes in policy catalyze outbreaks of violence
 - ▶ Explains variation in time
 - ▶ Long-run strategy
 - ▶ Political institutions
 - ▶ Explains cross-national variation



Significance/So What?

- ▶ New theoretical model for understanding religious violence
- ▶ Security concerns
- ▶ Timeliness
 - ▶ Arab Revolutions



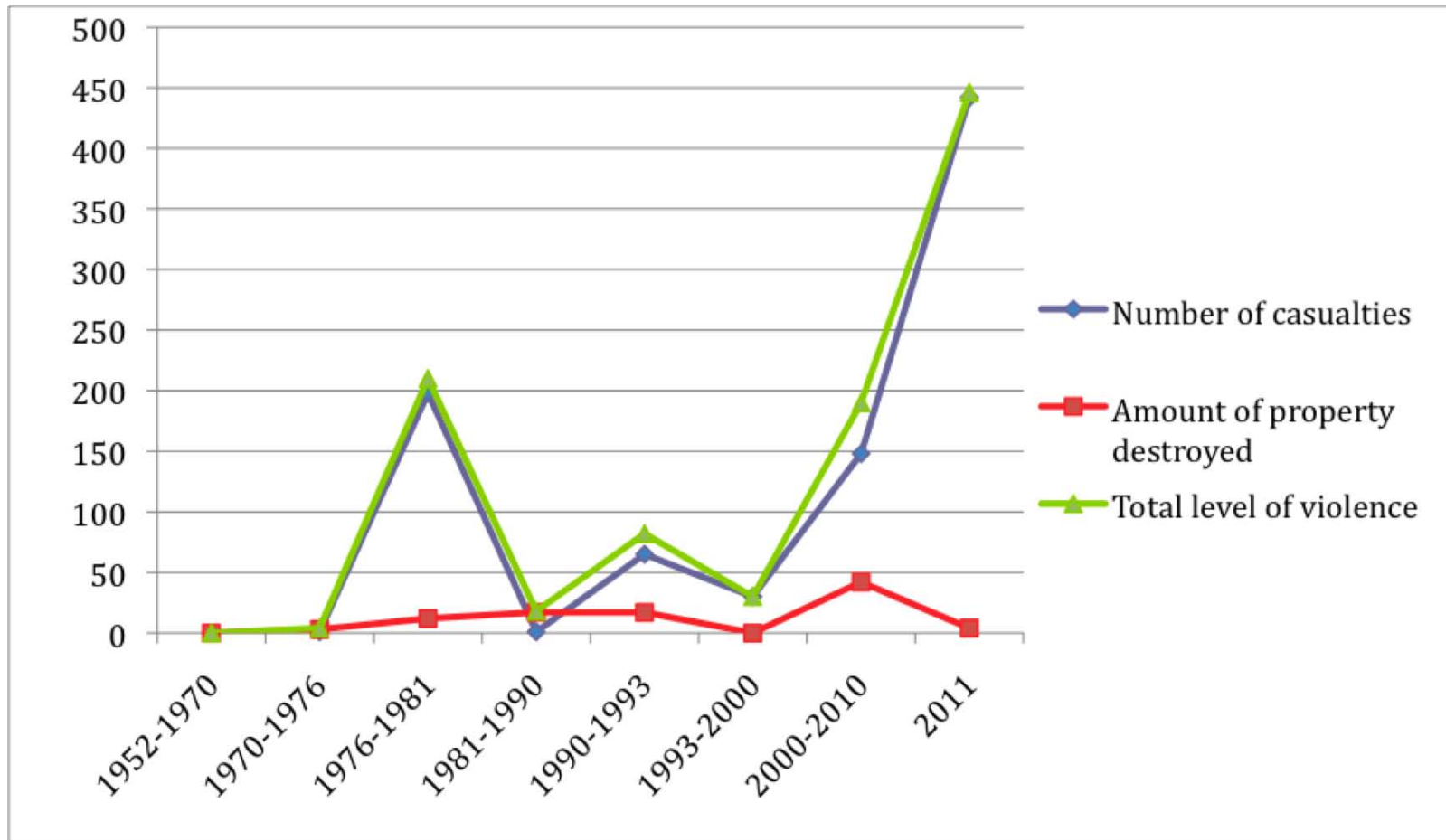
Research Design

- ▶ **Two-axis approach**
 - ▶ Egypt across time (longitudinal)
 - ▶ Large-n dataset
 - ▶ Process tracing
 - ▶ Egypt vs. Jordan (cross-national comparison)
 - ▶ “The method of difference” aka “most similar systems”



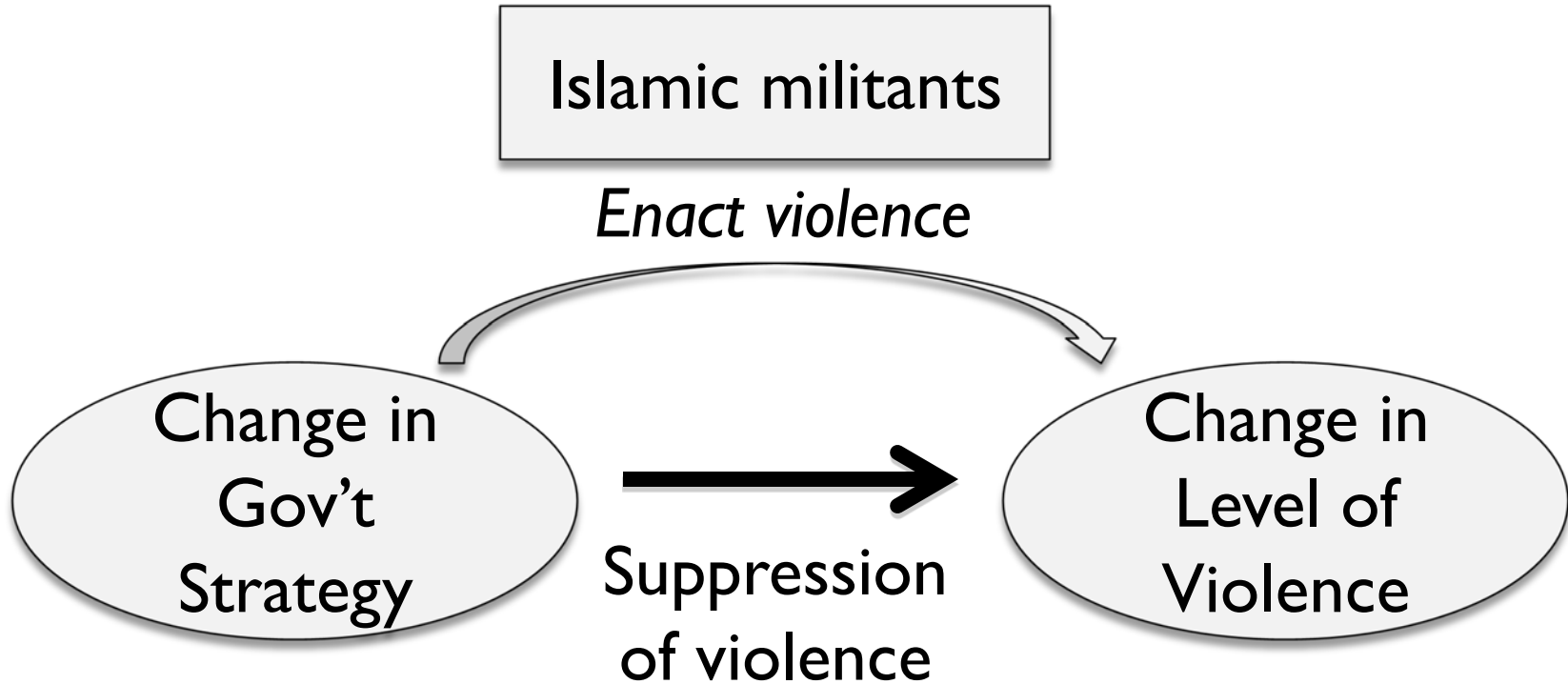
Findings I

Level of Religious Violence in Egypt 1952 to 2011



Findings II

- ▶ Government Strategy Behind Religious Violence



Findings III

Egypt	Jordan
Unified, consistent government strategy to marginalize Copts	Government strategy to accommodate Christians
Presence of Religious Violence	Absence of Religious Violence



Findings IV

- ▶ **Government strategy in Jordan**
 - ▶ Legal institutions → protected status
 - ▶ Rhetoric of tolerance
- ▶ **Factors underlying the strategy of accommodation**
 - ▶ Historical status
 - ▶ Moderate Islamist opposition
 - ▶ Personal ties between the monarchy & Christians
 - ▶ Management of political opposition



Implications

Theoretical

- ▶ Islamic militants as reactors
- ▶ New theoretical model

Practical

- ▶ Comprehensive strategy to eliminate violence
- ▶ Future of post-revolution Arab countries



Future Research

- ▶ Why do some militant Islamic groups target Copts to express dissidence while others target state officials?
- ▶ Geography
 - ▶ What explains geographic concentrations of violence?
- ▶ Extending analysis of violence to other regions
- ▶ Analysis of religious riots



