



Islamic Work Ethic?

In Search of Empirical Evidence in the WVS

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Motivation

- Stretching the Protestant work ethic concept (Norris&Inglehart 2004; Arslan2001)
- More companies with international staff; Islam is second biggest religion in the world, Asia-located
- Concept of Islamic work ethic verified against small Arab samples only
- Comparative studies of work ethic (Dülmer 2011)
- Internationally developed concept (IWE)+ no other references across the world but PWE

Theory

- Work ethic – commitment to hard work;
- PWE (Weber) – a popular explanation for economic success
- However, hard work \neq prosperity
- Is it education, nor religion, that matters?
(Hoorn & Maseland 2008)

Theory

- IWE proposed (1988) to explain for economic behaviour in Islamic countries (Ali 1988; Ahmad & Owoyemi 2012; Awan & Akram 2012, etc.)
 - Confucian work ethic (Geren 2010; Lim & Lay 2003)
 - Australian work ethic (Ho 1984)...

Theory: IWE vs. PWE

- **PWE**: belief in hard work, leisure avoidance, careful use of time, asceticism, and faith in the reward of God (Furnham 1990; Jones 1997)
- **IWE**: hard work is religious worship but not an end in itself, balance between work and other obligations (“work & play hard”), cooperation during work, honesty, belief in the reward of God, sharing profits with community (Ali 1988; Ahmad & Owoyemi 2012)
- **FOCUS**: leisure as a deserved complement to hard work

Theory: Islamic work ethic

- Islam is orthopraxic = attention to religious practice, not to the principles of behaviour;
- Islamic work ethic is more conservative among orthopraxic religions
- Harder to be flexible; but everyone wants to be a success

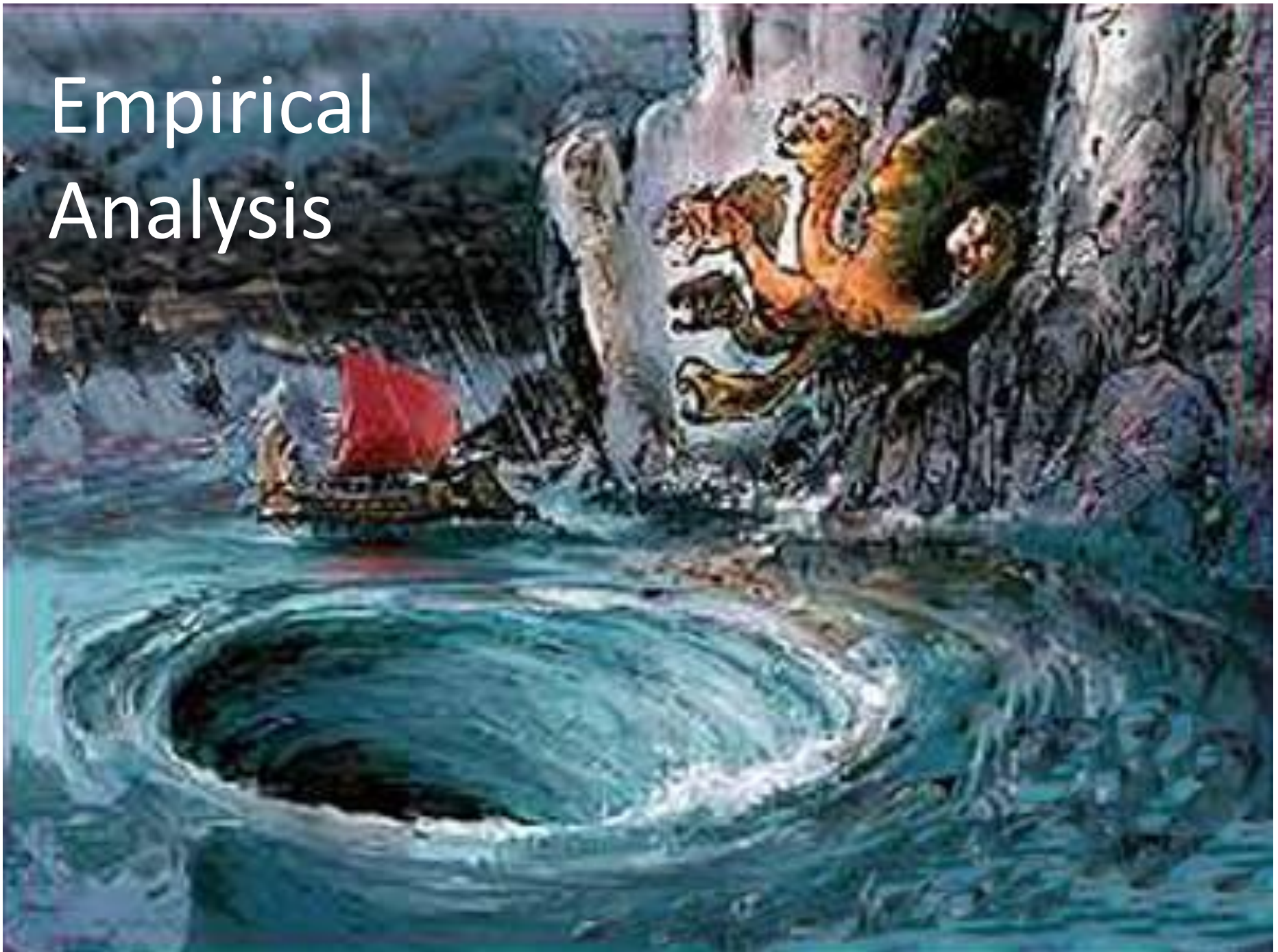
My Contribution to the Field

- So far IWE tested in Islamic countries only – Iran (Chanzanagh & Akbarnejad 2011), Malaysia (Ahmad & Owoyemi 2012), UAE (Yousef 2000)
- I check on an international sample whether Christians and Muslims are different with regard to work

Hypotheses

- If IWE exists not only as an Islamic concept, but also as part of Muslims' behaviour, Christian and Muslim respondents should differ on the specific issues like
 - Balance between obligations
 - Working and sharing
 - Working in cooperation with others --- Agree???

Empirical Analysis



Two Problems on the Horizon



1) Ambiguity of interpretations,
e.g. work as a duty (to whom?)



• 2) Some items are (too) universal,
e.g. Leisure (avoided / a complement to work)

• My solution : pick up the items and check

Data and Questions

- WVS battery on work, waves 1-4 (C008-C060):
 - Work compared with Leisure(C008)
 - To develop talents you need to have a job(C036)
 - Humiliating to receive money without having to work for it(C037)
 - People who don't work turn lazy(C038)
 - Work is a duty towards society(C039)
 - People should not have to work if they don't want to(C040)
 - Work should come first even if it means less spare time(C041)
- ...

Hypotheses Revised:

- *H1. All things being equal, Muslims would support a more balanced preference between work and leisure than Christians*
- *H2. All things being equal, both Muslims and Christians strongly disapprove of laziness.*

Sample

- Pooled data of WVS waves 3-5 (1995-2008)
(they cover most)
- Countries with Christians and Muslims in the sample left identifying themselves as religious (81 and 87 per cent of all)
- After all cleaning up – 50 countries left
(not there: Israel, Hungary, Jordan, Russia 😞)

Variables

- Christian or Muslim
- Education (Bogt et al. 2005)
- Employment (Susokolov 2009; Hassall et al. 2005)
- Income (Hassall et al. 2005)
- Gender (Kumar & Rose 2009)
 - HDI

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	n	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Dev.
Christian-Muslim	103044	0	1	.29	.45
Income scale	109432	0	9	3.44	2.40
Gender	123057	0	1	.45	.50
Age groups	121730	0	5	2.13	1.57
Level of education	116319	0	7	3.41	2.34
TURN LAZY	50278	0	4	2.88	1.11
WORK OR LEISURE (4="work")	69485	0	4	2.78	1.20
HDI 2008	55	.397	.955	.75	.14

Bivariate Results

- H1: leisure (0) or work (4) ?
- Christians – 2.7 (1.2), Muslims – 2.9 (1.2)
- ANOVA: $F=219$, $\text{Sig}=.000$
- Correlation (Cramer's $V \rightarrow 0$)
- H2: turn lazy (4) without working?
- Christians – 2.8 (1.1), Muslims – 3.2 (1.0)
- ANOVA: $F=1159$, $\text{Sig}=.000$
- Correlation (Cramer's $V=.18$, $\text{Sig}=.000$)

Two-Level Regression

- Models: 1) individual variables
2) Christian / Muslim
3) HDI

H1	H2
R2,%	R2,%
0	0
0	1
8/34	3/23

Two-Level Regression

VAR	LEISURE/WORK	TURNS LAZY
INCOME (0-9)	-.01	n.s.
EDUCATION (0-7)	-.01	-.015
GENDER (0=fem)	n.s.	+.07
AGE (0-6)	+.07	+.04
ISLAM	n.s.	n.s.
HDI	-2.84	n.s.
HDI*ISLAM	n.s.	n.s.

Discussion & Further Steps

1. Controlling for the factor of being a religious Christian/ Muslim, people do not differ in their attitude to laziness
 2. Against theory, Muslims show no more relaxed attitude to work than Christians
 3. For women, “not working” ≠ lazy (98% housewives)
- Further steps: other items; other methods.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!