THE STATE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE ARAB WORLD
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The Arab Uprisings of 2011 and Beyond

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ABSTRACT. The Arab uprisings were sometimes seen as calls for democracy, but we argue that in fact they were more accurately calls for social justice. Citizens across the region took to the streets to demand better economic, political and social outcomes including reducing levels of inequality, eliminating corruption and increasing respect for human dignity. These protests yielded significant changes across the region, including the downfall of numerous long-standing leaders. However, to what degree have their underlying calls for social justice been realized? By comparing data from nationally representative public opinion surveys conducted at the time of the Arab uprisings and a few years after these events, we find that citizens experienced some tangible improvements after the uprisings including declines in the importance of *wasta*. Still, major reforms targeting corruption, economic outcomes and to improve the effectiveness of government remain needed.

Keywords: social justice; Arab uprisings; public opinion; protests; reform

Introduction

At its core social justice means creating a just or equal society by ensuring all members of society are treated equitably, human rights are respected, and there is no discrimination based on membership in a group or other forms of identity. In other words, social justice means ensuring equality or at least

providing equal opportunities for all members of society (Tyler 1995). The grievances that led to the Arab uprisings of 2011 largely centered on issues related to social justice. For years, governments had limited political inclusion and failed to provide for the basic needs of many (Yousef 2004). Demonstrators called for economic, political and human rights, including governments that held to account those who violated these principles (Dunne 2013). In Tahrir Square in Cairo one of the principal chants was "*aish*, *huriyya*, *karama insaniyya*" – which can be translated as "bread, freedom and human dignity." Similar but distinct calls were heard in capitals and other towns throughout the region. Rather than calling for a specific political system or set of reforms, those on the streets were demanding social justice in its broadest sense – economic justice, political justice and basic human rights for all (Clarke 2012).

Prior to the Arab uprisings, the vast majority of Arab countries had endured long-standing authoritarian rule. Although the post-independence years were accompanied by periods of significant economic growth, by the 1980s economic stagnation became the norm (Richards and Waterbury 2007). By the late 1980s, many countries reluctantly embraced economic reforms and also allowed for limited political openings. Yet, this period of liberalization failed produced little meaningful change (Schneider and Schmitter 2004).

Economic reform resulted in the rise of crony capitalism whereby the regime dominated most economic interests (King 2007). In some cases like Egypt, the military elite owned large sectors of the economy while in others such as Tunisia the ruler and his family controlled a vast share of economic activity (Cook 2007; Anderson 2011). In both cases, however, economic power became concentrated in the hands of the elite or the connected resulting in continually worsening economic prospects for the masses. Combined with a staggering number of young people entering the work force – in 2004 the World Bank estimated that the region needed to create 100 million new jobs in 15 years simply to keep up with the demand for employment – economic outcomes continued to deteriorate (World Bank 2004). The failure of regimes to promote economic equality was a key factors leading to the popular discontent voiced by the protesters who took to the streets.

Political outcomes were similarly constrained. Brief experiments with free and fair elections in Jordan and Algeria in 1989 and 1991 were quickly reversed (Robinson 1998; Laremont 2000). Similar openings in Egypt more than a decade later were cut short as well (Masoud 2014). Since that time in no country were citizens given an unimpeded right to have direct say over how they were governed – or at least not through existing political institutions. This inability to affect meaningful political change further contributed to widespread frustration across the region and widespread support for democracy (Diamond 2010).

Beyond economic and political concerns, regimes had little respect for human dignity. In Egypt, Syria and other countries, regimes retained emergency laws that limited basic freedoms and provided the regime with virtual impunity to prosecute any dissent (Reza 2007). Yet, the state's power went far beyond persecuting those who stood up against it. Mohamed Bouazizi – the street vendor whose act of protest against the system set off the demonstrations that eventually led to the fall of the Tunisian regime – simply wanted the right to make a living. Yet, local authorities harassed him and confiscated his goods taking away even this ability (Chomiak 2011). In sum, regimes and their associated coercive apparatuses had stripped their citizens of even the most basic human dignities.

The events of the Arab uprisings represented a critical juncture in the relationship between society and the state. The protests brought out citizens of all political backgrounds – young and old, men and women, the educated and the illiterate, and the religious- and secular-minded – to the streets to voice their frustrations with these political systems (Goldstone 2011). They made clear that long-standing authoritarian regimes could no longer rely on the combination of force and the old social contracts to maintain stability (Salehi-Isfahani 2012). Citizens demanded governments that would promote political, economic and social justice.

Regimes across the region were deeply affected. Leaders fell in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and – following significant foreign intervention – in Libya (Brownlee et al. 2013). In response to these events, regimes across the region responded in a variety of different ways. For example, soon after the protests broke out Saudi Arabia increased social spending dramatically and even made a vague promise of elections (Robbins and Tessler 2012). Similarly, in Algeria, the government increased social spending and passed wide-ranging reforms to laws governing civil society and basic freedoms (Volpi 2013).

Following the protests of 2011, massive changes swept across the region. Long-standing stability gave rise to ongoing chaos in some countries, most notably Syria and Libya, but also to a significant extent in Tunisia and Egypt (Heydemann and Leenders 2014). Meanwhile, Islamist parties won free and fair elections in Egypt and Tunisia and were allowed to come to power (Tessler 2015). These and other changes greatly altered the political landscape across the region (Robbins 2015).

Yet, amidst talk of a renewed Arab Cold War, changing balances of power in the region, the growing strength of Islamist forces, and the onset of an Arab "winter," a number of questions remain unanswered that lie at the heart of the Arab uprisings (Ryan 2012; Bayat 2013). Most centrally, to what degree did calls for social justice drive the protests associated with the Arab uprisings? Second, has the quality of governance improved across the region? Have regimes – whether new or long-standing – responded to these events

by making tangible improvements on issues of social justice? Or, has political infighting and strategic rebalancing by regimes resulted in a continuation of the status quo? Finally, what steps are necessary to yield improvements in social justice in the future? Using data from nationally representative surveys conducted by the Arab Barometer, we seek to understand whether or not citizens believe governments have addressed their calls for social justice across the Middle East and North Africa.

Over three waves, the Arab Barometer has conducted nearly 35,000 interviews in 14 countries. The first wave in 2006–7 measures attitudes well before the events of the Arab uprisings at a time when citizens in most countries had lived under authoritarian rule for many years. The second wave began in late 2010 and continued through 2011, meaning it spanned the events of the Arab uprisings. The third and most recent wave began in late 2012 and ran through early 2014, providing insight into beliefs and attitudes after these momentous events.

We argue that Arab countries have made limited progress on issues of social justice in a number of areas, but that there still remains a long way to go. Most citizens have insufficient income to meet their needs and economic concerns continue to trump political and social issues throughout the region. Unemployment remains high, especially among youths leading many to harbor a desire to emigrate abroad.

Despite demands for an end to corruption driving many protesters in the Arab uprisings, the vast majority of citizens across the region say corruption remains endemic. Most also believe that *wasta* – or the use of family or kinship connections – is at least as important as qualifications in obtaining government employment. Yet, in Tunisia and Yemen – two countries deeply affected by the Arab uprisings – citizens came to believe *wasta* is less important than it was before these events. Thus, although far from solved, it appears that citizens experienced some initial gains as a result of the political changes brought about by the uprisings.

However, governments and their officials remain remote in the eyes of most citizens. At the time of the Arab uprisings most Arab publics believed that government officials neither cared for their needs nor took their opinions seriously. Yet, about half or more believed they could influence government policies. Citizens living in Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen – three countries where leaders fell during the Arab uprisings – were most likely to say they could influence their governments in 2011. Nevertheless, in other countries many citizens say they have this ability, perhaps reflecting a belief that policy could be affected through non-official means such as protests and demonstrations.
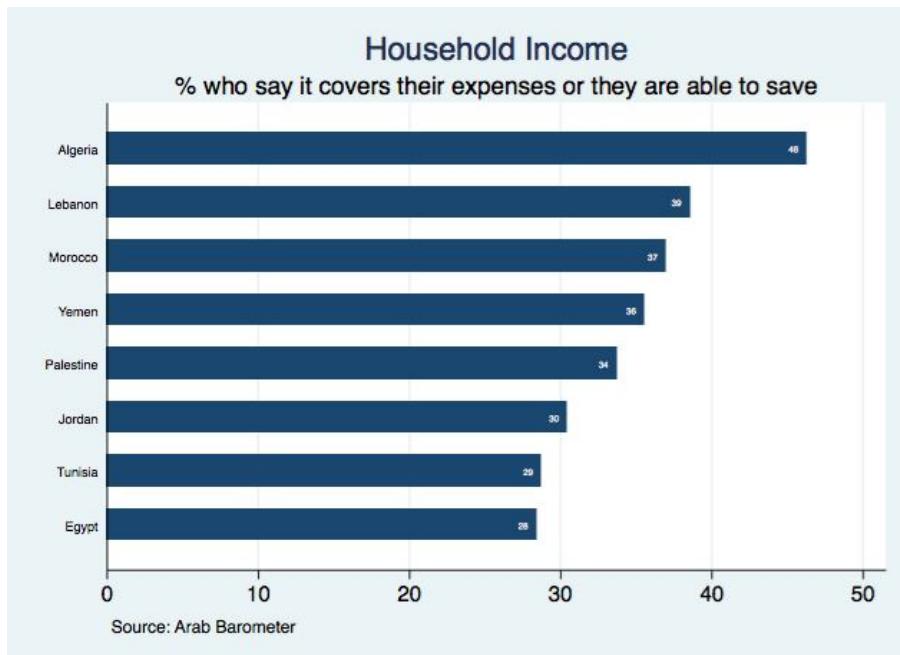
Additionally, we find that few Arab citizens rate their governments or the state of democracy and human rights positively. In most countries, govern-

ment ratings declined after the Arab uprisings. This is especially true in Egypt, where support fell by 38 points from June 2011 to May 2013. Yet, there has been little change in ratings of democracy and human rights over time, suggesting dissatisfaction with the regime is linked to other issues such as the failure to improve economic issues or seriously address corruption.

In light of these results, reform remains badly needed throughout the region. However, given recent events in the region the prospects for serious reform appear remote (Masoud 2015). Egypt and Tunisia have taken steps back while Yemen and Libya are engaged in civil wars. Regimes that survived the Arab uprisings are placing a greater emphasis on security than political or social reforms. Compounding these factors, rather than encouraging reform, most Arab publics see international interference as an impediment to meaningful change. This perception is also increasing dramatically, likely a reflection of the increasing role that regional actors such as Qatar, Turkey and Saudi Arabia have played post-Arab uprisings. Additionally, in most countries higher percentages of citizens say that the Arab-Israeli conflict is an impediment to reform than in years past, underscoring the need to find a meaningful resolution to this issue.

Economic Equality

Economic frustration is commonly posited as one of the primary – if not the key – issue leading to the outbreak of public protests across the Arab world in 2011 (Richards et al. 2013). This narrative asserts that citizens in many Arab countries, especially youths, were frustrated by years of economic stagnation and high unemployment rates resulting in the mass protests. Improving economic outcomes and increasing levels of economic equality are key elements in promoting levels of social justice after the Arab uprisings (Hoffman and Jamal 2012). To gauge potential changes in economic outcomes, this brief focuses on four indicators: economic well-being, concern about economic issues, employment status, and desire to emigrate.

Household Income
% who say it covers their expenses or they are able to save

Country	Value
Algeria	46
Lebanon	39
Morocco	37
Yemen	36
Palestine	34
Jordan	30
Tunisia	29
Egypt	28

Source: Arab Barometer

The Arab Barometer reveals that only a minority of citizens lives in households where the family income is sufficient for their needs. In the most recent wave of surveys, fewer than half in any country say they have enough money to cover their expenses or to save some money. Overall, Algerians (46%) are the most likely to say they have sufficient income to meet their needs, as do a third or more Lebanese (39%), Moroccans (37%), Yemenis (36%), and Palestinians (34%). Elsewhere, between a quarter and three-in-ten say their family's income is sufficient for their needs.

Although the protests are strongly linked to the economic conditions, those who participated in the protests are actually somewhat more likely to come from households that better off. For example, in Tunisia protestors are 13 points more likely than non-protesters to say their income meets their needs. A similar gap is found in Yemen (9 points) and in Jordan (8 points). Smaller but insignificant differences exist in other countries, but in no country are non-protesters more likely than protesters to be economically secure.

Protesters More Economically Secure			
% who say their household income meets their needs or allows them to save			
Country	**Protester**	**Non-Protester**	*Diff.*
Tunisia	39	26	*+13*
Yemen	41	32	*+9*
Jordan	38	30	*+8*
Palestine	39	33	*+6*
Egypt	32	28	*+4*
Morocco	40	37	*+3*
Algeria	48	46	*+2*

The plight of Arab youth is often highlighted as a cause of the protests, but the surveys do not paint a picture of poverty among the youngest age cohorts. Instead, citizens of all ages are about as likely to say that their income is sufficient for their needs. This finding is most likely a reflection of the fact that many households include members of multiple generations in Arab countries, meaning youth without economic opportunity often live with their parents or extended family.
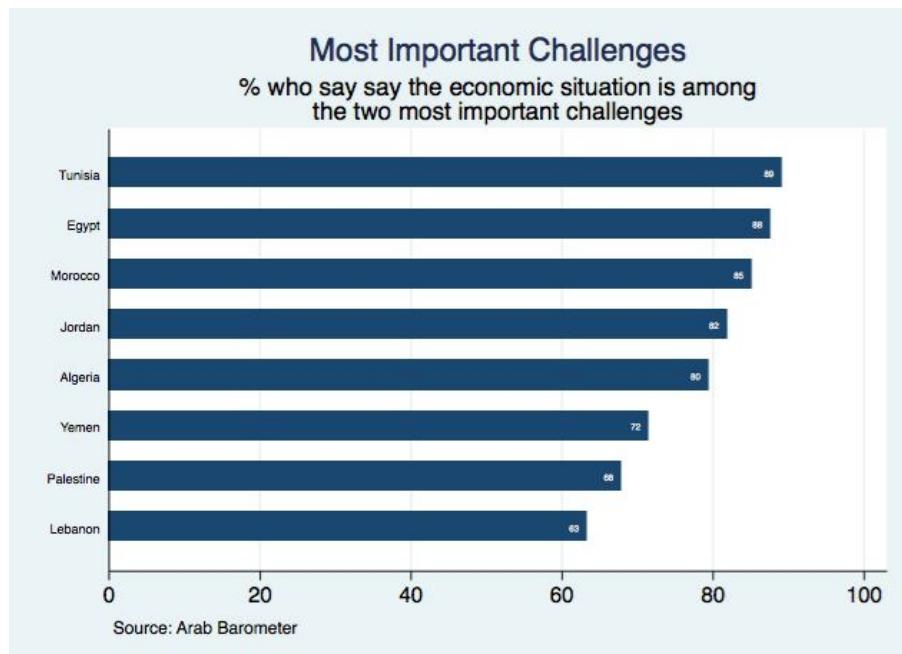
Moreover, economic outcomes do not appear substantially worse as a result of disruptions caused by the Arab uprisings. This finding is somewhat surprising given that the World Bank estimates that Tunisia's economy contracted by 2% in 2011 (WDI 2014). Egypt's rate of economic growth also declined following the Arab uprisings, while poor outcomes plagued many other countries in the region. Nevertheless, in no case are citizens *less* likely to say that their household income is sufficient than at the time of the Arab uprisings. In fact, in two countries – Yemen and Egypt – citizens are *more* likely to say that their household has sufficient income (18 and 7 points, respectively).

These results may reflect a stabilization or – in some cases – economic recovery that began to take place in the years that followed the main protests. Alternatively, it may reflect the fact that some citizens have adjusted their expenditures as a result of the economic dislocations that resulted from the Arab uprisings. Regardless, it suggests that while economic outcomes have not improved dramatically after the Arab uprisings, on the whole ordinary citizens are not significantly worse off than before.

Most important challenges
The Arab Barometer reveals that economic concerns remain a primary issue for most Arab citizens. The survey asks respondents what are the two most pressing challenges facing their country among the economic situation, corruption, strengthening democracy, resolving the Palestinian issue, achieving internal stability, curbing foreign influence or something else. In all but two

countries majorities of seven-in-ten or more say that economic conditions are one of the two most pressing problems their country faces. Concern about economic conditions is highest in the two post-revolutionary countries, Tunisia (89%) and Egypt (88%), followed by Morocco (85%) and Jordan (82%). Economic concerns are relatively less important in Palestine (68%) and Lebanon (63%).

Most Important Challenges
% who say say the economic situation is among the two most important challenges

Source: Arab Barometer

Although Arab youth suffer disproportionately in terms of unemployment rates and other indicators, the Arab Barometer indicates that they are about as likely as older generations to say that the economic situation is one of their two primary concerns (Ahmed et al. 2012). A key exception is Palestine, where those ages 18–29 are 15 points more likely than those 50 and older to say economic issues are among the biggest challenges. By contrast, youth are somewhat less likely to worry about economic issues in Algeria and Morocco (-7 points each).

Although economic issues was by far the greatest concern among protesters, those who took part in the Arab uprisings are less likely than other citizens to cite the economic situation as one of the two most important problems. The difference is greatest in Jordan where 83% of non-protests worry about economic issues compared with 59% of protestors (-24 points). Similar gaps are found in Morocco (-16), and Palestine (-8).
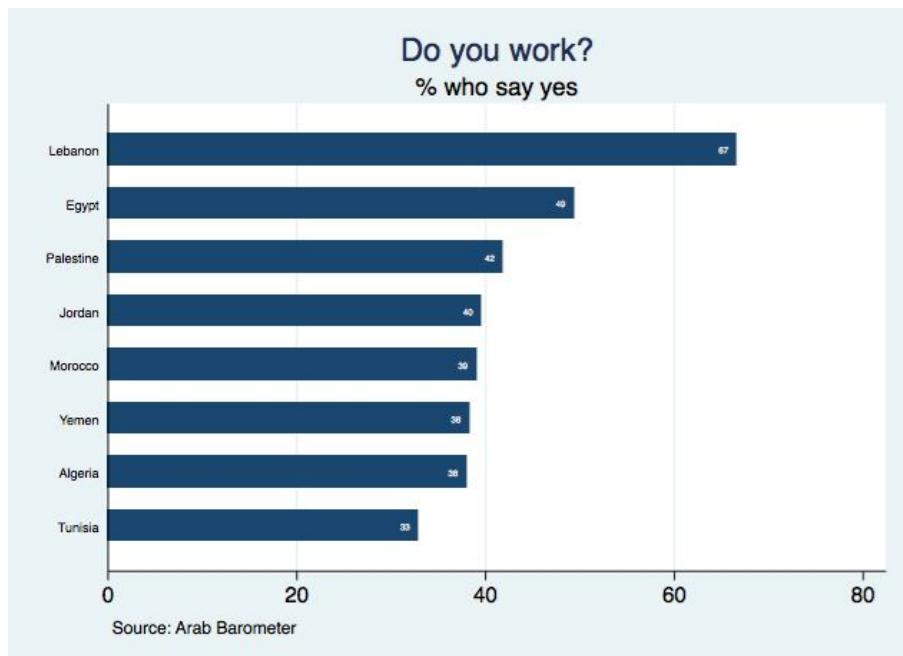
The Arab Barometer also makes clear that levels of concern about the economic situation are growing across the region. The importance of eco-

nomic issues has increased dramatically in Tunisia, rising from 70% in 2011 to 89% in 2013 (+19 points). Similar increases are observed in Lebanon (+17), Algeria (+10) and Palestine (+12).

Growing Concern about the Economy % who say one of the two most important challenges facing their country is the economic situation			
Country	2nd Wave	3rd Wave	Diff.
Tunisia	70	89	+19
Lebanon	46	63	+17
Algeria	70	80	+10
Palestine	60	68	+8
Egypt	83	88	+5
Jordan	80	82	+2
Yemen	73	72	-1

Unemployment
The Arab Barometer includes questions about whether a respondent is employed, although it does not specifically ask a respondent who is not employed if he or she is seeking work. In most countries, about four-in-ten respondents say they work. The highest percentage of employed respondents is found in Lebanon where two-thirds are employed, followed by Egypt at 49%. Meanwhile, just a third in Tunisia say the currently are employed.

Source: Arab Barometer

To an extent, these cross-national differences are likely the product of cultural differences between countries (Chamlou et al. 2011). For example, in Lebanon more than half of female respondents say they work, which is by far the highest rate in any country surveyed. However, other factors such as the dominant industries, the preponderance of informal employment, and the availability of work also explain this variation.
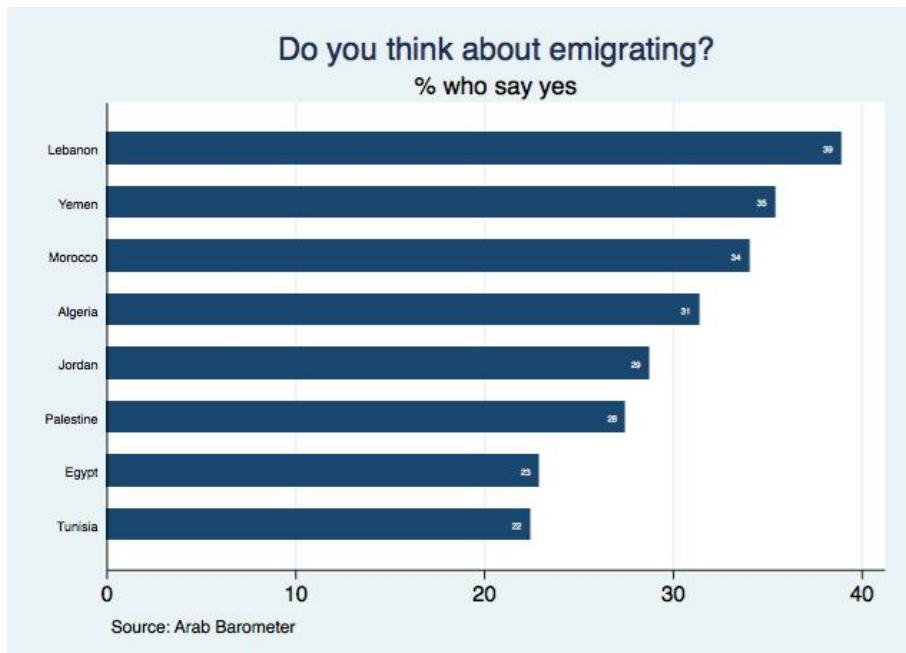
Across all countries, citizens who are ages 30–49 are by far the most likely to work. Those ages 18–29 are generally more likely to be students or unemployed while those 50 and over are commonly retired or homemakers.

Protesters are significantly more likely to work than non-protesters, but in most countries this relationship is due to the fact that both protesters and those who are employed are male. A comparison of male protesters to non-protesters reveals no consistent differences in the employment status of those who participated in the Arab uprisings.
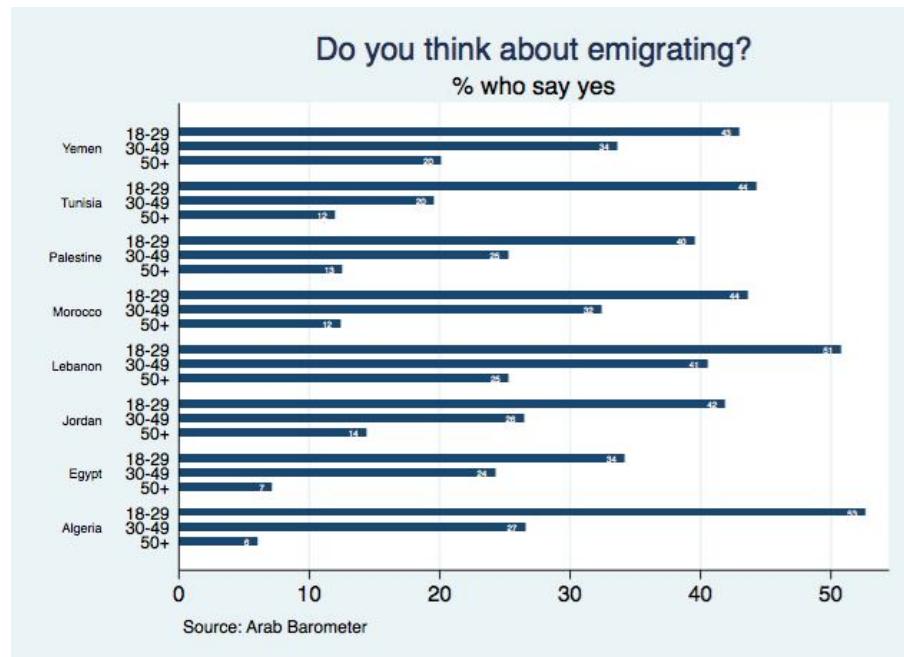
Despite the economic disruptions brought about by the Arab uprisings, most countries exhibited little change in the percentage of citizens who work between the second and third waves. The exceptions are Yemen where the percentage who worked declined from 52% to 38% (-14 points) and Tunisia (-9 points). These differences are noteworthy given that these two countries were among the most deeply affected by the protests of the Arab uprisings.

Emigration
As the migration crisis in Europe has demonstrated, a substantial percentage of citizens in Arab countries want to emigrate for political or economic reasons. In all countries, nearly a quarter or more say they would go abroad if they had the chance, including 39% in Lebanon, 35% in Yemen and 34% in Morocco. Notably, Tunisians (22%) and Egyptians (23%) are the least likely to say they intend to emigrate, perhaps reflecting an underlying optimism in each country despite the significant challenges both countries are facing.

Do you think about emigrating?
% who say yes

Country	%
Lebanon	39
Yemen	35
Morocco	34
Algeria	31
Jordan	29
Palestine	28
Egypt	23
Tunisia	22

Source: Arab Barometer

Age cohort is the defining factor of the desire to emigrate. Adults ages 18–29 are far more likely than those who are older to want to leave their country. Over half of young adults in Algeria (53%) and Lebanon (51%) seek to emigrate, as do more than four-in-ten in Tunisia (44%), Morocco (44%), Yemen (43%) and Jordan (42%). Egyptians who are 18–29 are the least likely to want to emigrate, although a third still seek to go abroad. The strong desire of young adults to emigrate implies that existing political and economic systems are not meeting their expectations and they are looking to other options to secure a better future.

Do you think about emigrating?
% who say yes

Source: Arab Barometer

Among citizens 30–49, between a quarter and a third want to emigrate in most countries. More than four-in-ten Lebanese (41%) in this range favor leaving the country compared with a low of two-in-ten in Tunisia. The desire of those 50 and older to emigrate is even lower, ranging from a high of one quarter in Lebanon to as few as 6% in Algeria.

Protesters are far more likely than non-protesters to say they want to emigrate in all countries. The greatest difference is found in Algeria where those who took part in demonstrations are 28 points more likely than those who did not to want to emigrate. Large gaps are also found in Egypt (+25), Yemen (+15), Tunisia (+11), Morocco (+10), Jordan (+10), and Palestine (+10).

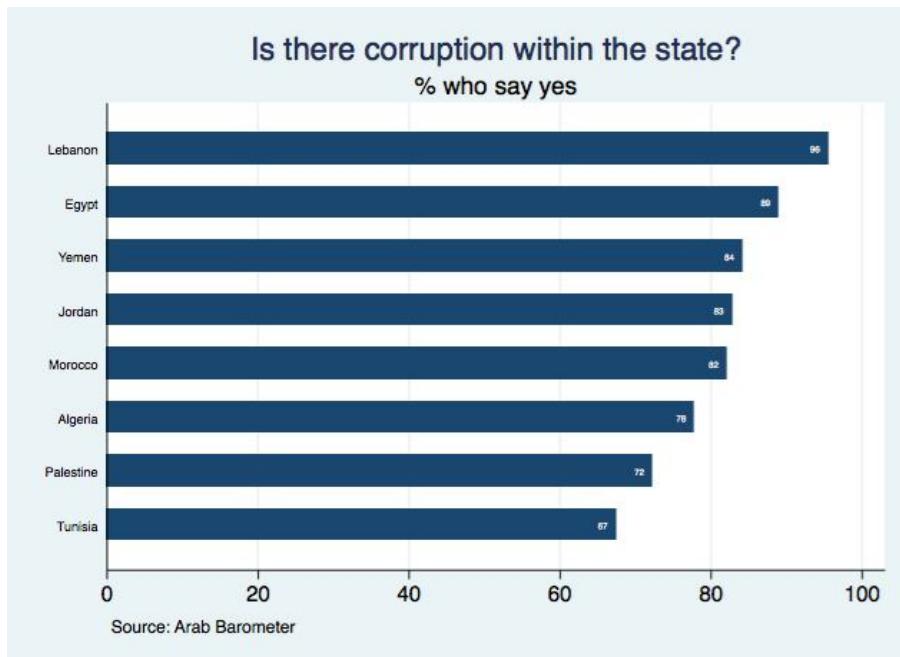| Protesters Want to Emigrate % who say they want to go abroad for political or economic reasons			
Country	**Protester**	**Non-Protester**	*Diff.*
Algeria	58	30	*+28*
Egypt	45	20	*+25*
Yemen	44	30	*+14*
Tunisia	31	20	*+11*
Morocco	43	33	*+10*
Jordan	38	28	*+10*
Palestine	36	26	*+10*

In many countries the desire to emigrate has generally declined over time. In the first wave of the Arab Barometer (2006–7), over half of Algerians (52%) wanted to leave their homeland but by the third wave (2013) fewer than a third (31%) harbored this desire. Similar declines are found in Morocco (-18 points), Yemen (-15) and Lebanon (-12). During the same period, the desire of Palestinians to emigrate has increased from 18% to 28%, likely reflecting the failure of the peace process and the political situation in the country (Savir 2014). Additionally, Egyptians are more likely to favor emigrating than they were in the months immediately after the Arab protests, representing an increase from 10% to 23%. In other countries, including Tunisia and Jordan, the desire to emigrate has remained more-or-less constant before and after the Arab uprisings.

The lower percentages of those seeking to emigrate may be related to changing attitudes in Western countries, particularly in Europe. As attitudes against immigrants have hardened among many publics, fewer Arab citizens are likely to look abroad for refuge from the political or economic conditions in their homeland (Davidov et al. 2014). In fact, the inability to emigrate combined with the ongoing failures of existing regimes to improve lives of their citizens could partially explain the increased frustration about existing political orders that ultimately was manifested in the Arab uprisings.

Corruption and Political Inequality

The protests of the Arab uprisings were also fueled by citizens' frustrations with endemic corruption that plagued their societies, which represents another call for social justice (Guetat 2006). Social justice requires equal treatment by state institutions (Tyler et al. 1997). Corruption undermines this equality by giving those with greater financial means to pay bribes or those with more influential networks preferable treatment compared to those who lack such resources.

Despite a number of reforms that have come out of the Arab uprisings (Robbins 2015), the vast majority of citizens in the region believe that corruption remains widespread. Nearly all Lebanese (96%) hold this view, as do more than eight-in-ten in Egypt (89%), Yemen (84%), Jordan (83%) and Morocco (82%). Tunisians are the least likely to say corruption is widespread, but still two-in-three hold this view.

Is there corruption within the state?
% who say yes

Country	%
Lebanon	96
Egypt	89
Yemen	84
Jordan	83
Morocco	82
Algeria	78
Palestine	72
Tunisia	67

Source: Arab Barometer

Citizens of all ages are overwhelmingly likely to say corruption is widespread, although a few countries those who are younger are more likely to say it is a problem. For example, Tunisians ages 18–29 are more likely to say corruption is widespread (78%) than those who are 30–49 (69%) or who are 50 and older (59%). In Algeria those who are over 50 (68%) are also less likely to perceive corruption compared with those who are 18–29 (82%) or 30–49 (80%).

On average, protesters are somewhat more likely to say corruption is widespread compared to those who did not take part in the demonstrations. Protesters are more likely to say corruption is a problem in Tunisia (+15), Algeria (+13), Egypt (+8), Morocco (+7) and Yemen (+7).

Protesters More Likely to Say State Is Corrupt			
% who says there is corruption within			
the state's institutions and agencies			
Country	**Protester**	**Non-Protester**	*Diff.*
Tunisia	80	65	*+15*
Algeria	90	77	*+13*
Egypt	96	88	*+8*
Yemen	89	81	*+8*
Morocco	89	82	*+7*
Jordan	89	83	*+6*
Palestine	71	73	*-2*

Overall, perceptions of corruption have changed little in most countries over the last two waves of the Arab Barometer despite the political upheavals in some countries. In fact, Algeria – a country that did not experience major changes following the Arab uprisings – is the only country where citizens believe corruption is now less widespread than it was in the second wave. In Algeria, this perception declined by 12 points from 90% to 78%. This result may be related to a number of high level corruption cases pursued by the regime including a case against former energy minister, Chakib Khelil (Robbins 2014).
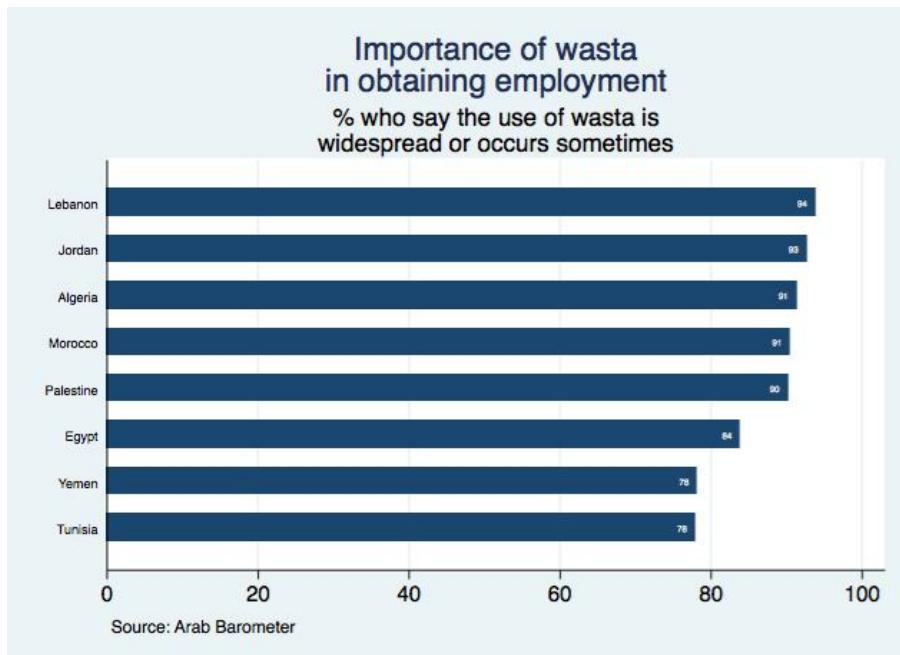
By contrast, in Jordan – another country where the regime survived the Arab uprisings – citizens were 17 points more likely to say corruption was widespread in the 2012 compared with 2010. Yet, in this case, it appears an attempted regime crackdown on corruption may have had the opposite effect as in Algeria. The reasons for this difference are not entirely clear, but again may indicate that Jordanians came to an opposite conclusion following a government crackdown on corruption. For example, in 2011 the Anti-Corruption Commission received 714 complaints, perhaps reinforcing to citizens that corruption was a vast problem in the kingdom rather than convincing them the government was adequately addressing the problem (Yamin 2012).

Finally, Egyptians are also 9 points more likely to say that corruption is widespread in the third wave compared to the second wave of the Arab Barometer. The 2013 survey, conducted shortly before the coup that ousted president Mohamed Morsi, suggests that the new government failed to crackdown on this practice. Instead, it appears that the political opening and decline in state power may have led to an increase in perceived levels of corruption by ordinary Egyptians. Notably, however, a similar increase was not found in Tunisia or Yemen despite the fall of their long-standing strongmen in early 2011.

Wasta
Wasta – meaning the use connections based on family or kinship networks – is a related issue that is closely related to corruption (Cunningham and Sarayrah 1993). Often, wasta is perceived as being a definitive factor in how governments and businesses operate (Kilani and Sakijha 2002).

The Arab Barometer makes clear that Arab publics believe wasta plays a major role in their societies. In all countries, vast majorities say wasta is a commonly linked with getting a job. At least nine-in-ten say the use of wasta is widespread or occurs sometimes in Lebanon (94%), Jordan (93%), Morocco (91%) and Palestine (90%). Elsewhere, more than three-quarters hold this view in Egypt (84%), Tunisia (78%) and Yemen (76%).
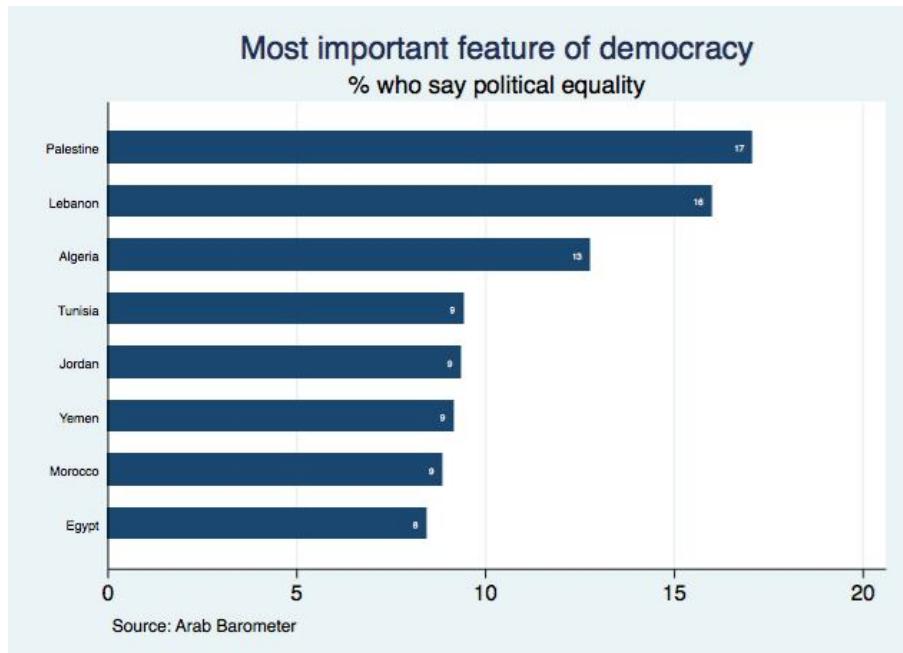
Importance of wasta
in obtaining employment

% who say the use of wasta is
widespread or occurs sometimes

Country	Value
Lebanon	94
Jordan	93
Algeria	91
Morocco	91
Palestine	90
Egypt	84
Yemen	78
Tunisia	78

Source: Arab Barometer

Across the region older and younger citizens are about equally likely to say that wasta is common or widespread in obtaining employment. However, in Tunisia and Yemen – two countries where long-standing dictators fell as a result of the Arab uprisings – younger citizens are more likely than those who are 50 and older to say the use of wasta is prevalent. In both cases, those ages 18–29 are ten points more likely hold this belief.

Meanwhile, those who demonstrated in the Arab uprisings are no more likely than those who did not to say wasta is key to gaining employment. However, the evidence suggests that the events of the Arab uprisings may have had an effect on the role wasta plays in some countries. In Tunisia and Yemen, the percentage who says wasta is commonplace declined between the second and third waves. In 2013, Yemenis were 16 points less likely and Tunisians 13 points less likely to hold this view. In all other countries, there was no significant change between the two waves.

Political equality
Despite concerns about equality before the government, relatively few citizens in the region say that the most important feature of democracy is equality of political rights among citizens (see also Tessler et al. 2012). In no country does even a fifth of the population understand democracy primarily through this lens. By comparison, in most countries about twice as many citizens say the primary feature of democracy is the provision of basic necessities for all.

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Palestinians and Lebanese are the most likely to say democracy is primarily about political equality between citizens at 17% and 16%, respectively. In Algeria, 13% hold this view as do between 8% and 10% in all other countries.

Most important feature of democracy
% who say political equality

Country	Value
Palestine	17
Lebanon	16
Algeria	13
Tunisia	9
Jordan	9
Yemen	9
Morocco	9
Egypt	8

Source: Arab Barometer

In most countries older and younger respondents are equally likely to view democracy in terms of equality of political rights between citizens. However, this pattern does not hold in Egypt and Tunisia. In these cases, citizens 50 and older are more likely than those 18–29 to view democracy through the lens of political equality. In Tunisia, 27% of those over 50 say the primary feature of democracy is equality of political rights compared with 16% of those 18–29. Similarly, in Egypt 26% of those over 50 hold this view compared with 18% of those 18-29.
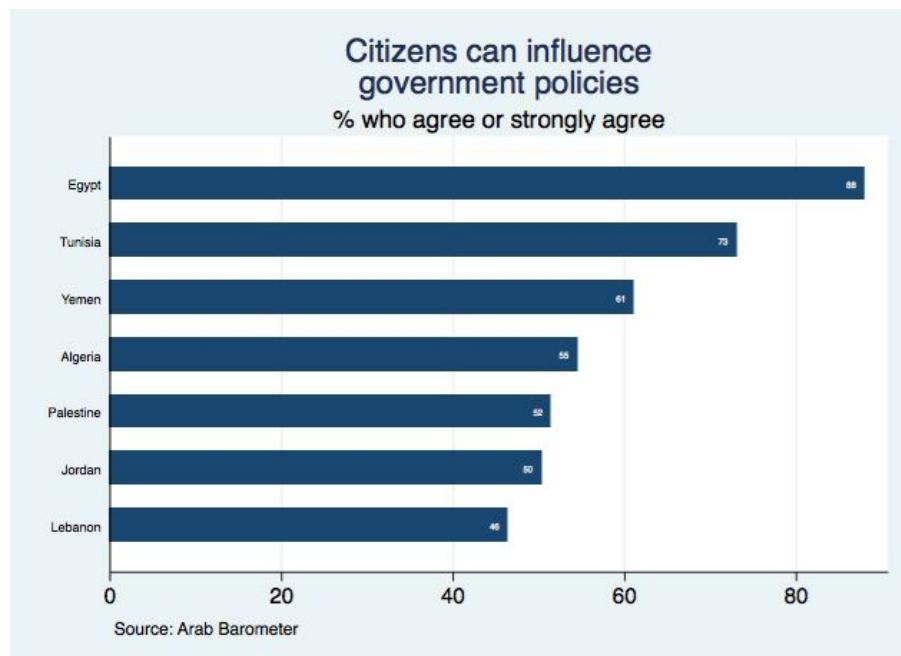
On the whole, those who demonstrated in the Arab uprisings are somewhat less likely to say democracy is about equality of political rights. In Tunisia, protesters were 10 points less likely to hold this view while a similar gap is found in Jordan (-9) and Morocco (-8).

However, findings from the Arab Barometer suggest that defining democracy in terms of political rights is a growing trend throughout the region. For example, in 2012 Palestinians were 14 points more likely than in 2006 to cite equality of political rights. Similar increases are found in Algeria (+11 points), Lebanon (+10) and Jordan (+8).

Human Dignity

Social justice also depends on the ability of citizens to influence their governments and exact positive changes (Lister 2008). The third wave of the Arab Barometer did not include a number of questions about the quality of government. However, the first and second waves did, allowing for a comparison of attitudes toward government before and at the time of the onset of the Arab uprisings.

A key question in analyzing the relationship between the governing and the governed is whether citizens feel that they can influence government policies. Despite having endured long-standing authoritarian rule at the time of the surveys (2010–2011), most citizens in the region believed they could affect government policies. This finding is not entirely surprising since many states in the region have elected parliaments providing a potential link between citizen and government, even in non-democracies (Benstead 2008). Yet, there is also a significant divide between those countries that experienced successful revolutions and those that did not. In all three countries where leadership changed as a result of the Arab uprisings, a clear majority of citizens believe that they can influence government policies. Nearly nine-in-ten Egyptians (88%) say they have this ability, as do 73% of Tunisians and 61% of Yemenis.

Citizens can influence government policies
% who agree or strongly agree

Source: Arab Barometer

Meanwhile, fewer citizens living in countries that did not experience dramatic changes say they can influence government policies. Within these countries, Algerians (55%) are the most likely to say they can influence government policies, followed by Palestinians (52%) and Jordanians (50%). In Lebanon, fewer than half (40%) of citizens believe they have this ability.
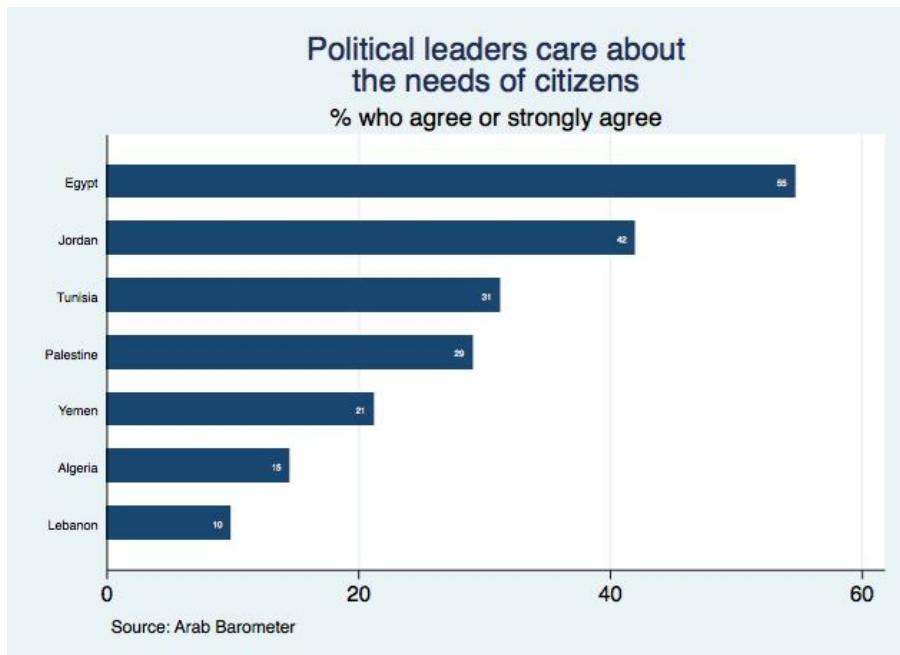
In all but two countries where data are available for the first and second wave, there is no significant change in belief about the ability to influence government policy over time. A major exception is Palestine, where there was a twenty-point decline from 2006 to 2010. Most likely, this difference is due to the fact that the first wave survey was carried out a few months after 2006 parliamentary elections, which international observers considered to be free and fair. By contrast, the 2010 survey was carried out after the Palestinian civil war that resulted in Hamas controlling Gaza and Fateh controlling the West Bank. In both settings, there has been a gradual decrease in political and civil liberties (Freedom House 2011).

The second exception is Algeria where citizens were eight points more likely to say they could influence government policies in the second wave compared to the first wave. This increase is likely attributable to the fact the second wave was carried out in April 2011 during a time the regime was proposing significant reforms that would liberalize rules on opposition groups, the press and civil society in the wake of the Arab uprisings (Robbins 2014). This process of political liberalization – designed to stave off calls for more significant changes – appears to have had the intended effect of making citizens somewhat more likely to believe they could affect government policy.

Relations with Government Officials
Although many Arabs believe they can influence government policies, fewer believe that political leaders are concerned about the needs of ordinary citizens. In all but one country fewer than half agree or strongly agree that public officials care about their needs at the time of the Arab uprisings. Moreover, there is also no clear divide between countries that experienced revolution and those that did not; rather, the overwhelming perception is those who govern remain aloof from those they govern.

Egypt is the only country where more than half say government leaders care for their needs. The survey, conducted a few months after the fall of Hosni Mubarak, suggests that changes brought about by the revolution likely account for this change in attitudes. Yet, citizens in the two other countries where leaders were deposed are much less likely to share this belief. In fact, fewer than a third in Tunisia (31%) and Yemen (21%) say government leaders care about their needs. Moreover, Yemenis were just about as likely to say government officials care in 2011 as they were in 2007.

Political leaders care about the needs of citizens

% who agree or strongly agree

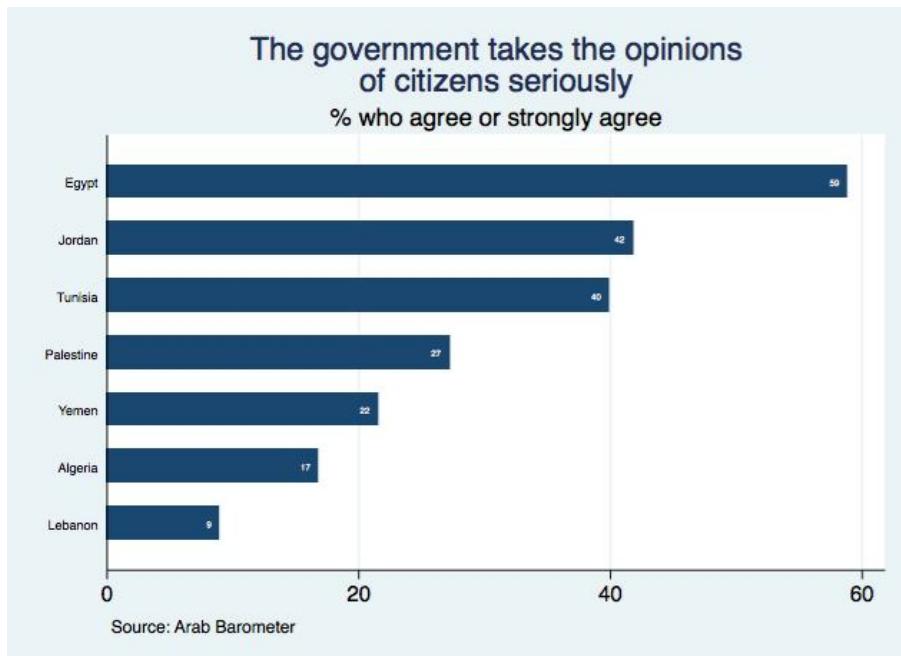| Country	Value
Egypt	55
Jordan	42
Tunisia	31
Palestine	29
Yemen	21
Algeria	15
Lebanon	10

Source: Arab Barometer

In countries where the Arab uprisings did not result in the fall of a leader, few citizens say leaders care about their needs. About four-in-ten Jordanians (42%) share this belief as do 29% of Palestinians, by far the highest levels among these countries. Elsewhere, fewer than two-in-ten say leaders care, including just 15% in Algeria and 10% in Lebanon.

In most non-revolutionary countries it appears that citizens believe government leaders are becoming more remote from their concerns. Between the first and the second wave, fewer citizens say officials care in Palestine (-21 points), Algeria (-7) and Lebanon (-7). Only in Jordan does the percentage remain constant during this period. The dramatic decline in Palestine – from 50% to 29% – highlights the importance of giving citizens a say in democratic elections. In 2006 the survey was conducted shortly after the legislative elections and about half of citizens believed the government cared about their needs. Meanwhile, as previously noted, the second was conducted after the brief civil war between Hamas and Fateh, which indicated needs of ordinary citizens were less important than the partisan divide.

A third question asked citizens if the government takes their opinions seriously. The results are highly similar to the belief that governments care about their needs. Based on the most recent data, only in Egypt does a majority (59%) believe that the government takes their opinions seriously, which almost certainly related to the events of the Egyptian revolution. Yet, again in Tunisia and Yemen, fewer than half say the same (40% and 22%,

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respectively), reinforcing that a change in leadership had little effect on the perceptions of government officials in these countries.

In countries without a change in leadership, few citizens say that government leaders take their opinions seriously. Once again, Jordanians are by far most likely to hold this view at 42%, followed by Palestinians at 27%. In all other countries fewer than two-in-ten believe the government takes them seriously including 19% in Morocco, 17% in Algeria and 9% in Lebanon.

The government takes the opinions of citizens seriously
% who agree or strongly agree

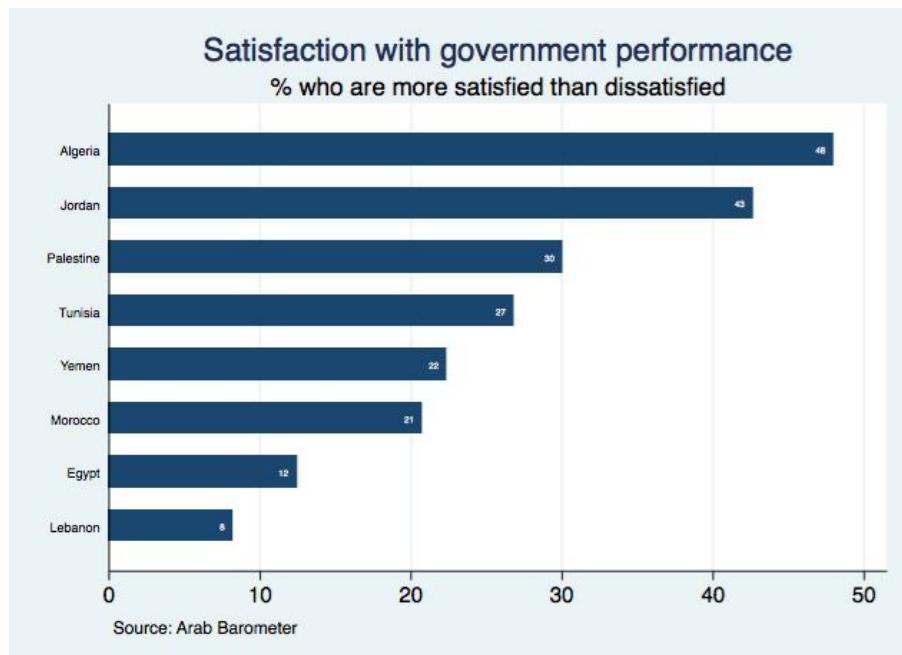| Country	Value
Egypt	59
Jordan	42
Tunisia	40
Palestine	27
Yemen	22
Algeria	17
Lebanon	9

Source: Arab Barometer

By this measure as well, at the time of the Arab uprisings citizens appear to be somewhat more alienated from their governments than in the preceding years. The change is greatest in Palestine (-23 points) followed by Lebanon (-7 points).

Political Satisfaction

Social justice can also be reflected in views of the government and the state of affairs in their country (Kahne and Westheimer 2006). A responsive government focused on the needs of citizens is more likely to be popular, especially if it respects the basic rights of citizens. Yet, in the years after the Arab uprisings, only a minority of Arab citizens is satisfied with their government.

Satisfaction with the government is by far highest in Algeria and Jordan, which are two countries that were minimally affected by the events of the

Arab uprisings. Nearly half of Algerians (48%) are satisfied with the performance of their government while 43% of Jordanians say the same. However, in other countries without a change in leadership, government satisfaction is relatively low. In Palestine, three-in-ten are satisfied compared with 21% in Morocco and just 8% in Lebanon.

Satisfaction with government performance
% who are more satisfied than dissatisfied

Source: Arab Barometer

Support is also quite low in the countries that were most dramatically affected by the Arab uprisings. Slightly more than a quarter of Tunisians (27%) are satisfied compared with 22% of Yemenis and 13% of Egyptians. To a degree, these findings may reflect the timing of the surveys. In Egypt, the survey was carried out in June 2013 shortly before the coup against President Mohamed Morsi. In Tunisia, the survey took place in February 2013, around the time of political assassinations that marked a nadir in the country's transition from Ben Ali's rule.

In most countries across the region, satisfaction with government has decreased in recent years. The most precipitous drop is in Egypt, where 51% were satisfied in 2011 compared with 13% in 2013 (-38 points) followed by Palestine between 2006 and 2012 (-16). Similar declines are found in Lebanon (-14), Morocco (-13), and Tunisia (-9).
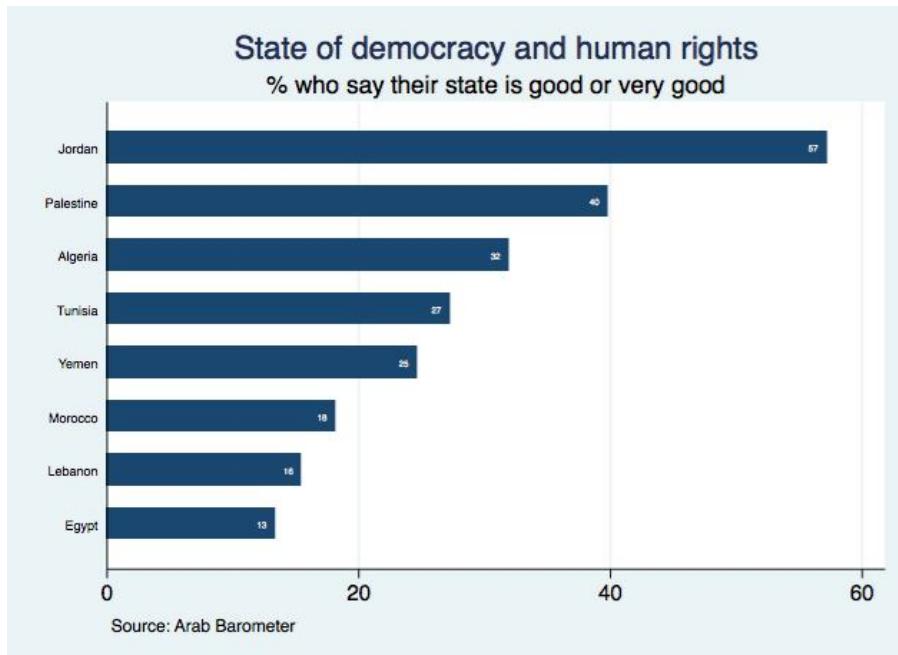
However, the opposite trend is found in Algeria and Yemen. In the former, satisfaction rises from 21% in 2006 to 48% in 2013. This dramatic rise is likely due to a number of factors related to the Arab uprisings. Soon

after the fall of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in neighboring Tunisia, the Algerian regime increased government expenditures and undertook a series of political reforms. Combined with the political chaos and economic decline in Tunisia, the Algerian system likely appeared relatively better than before.

In Yemen, support rose slightly from 16% in 2007 to 22% in 2013. Although still extremely low, this slight increase may reflect a greater satisfaction with the process of National Dialogue that as taking place at the time of the survey.

Democracy and Human Rights

Most Arab citizens do not rate the state of democracy and human rights in their country as good or very good. Notably, in most cases there is very little difference between ratings in countries that experienced vast changes as a result of the Arab uprisings and those that did not.

Only in Jordan do more than half of citizens (57%) say the state of democracy and human rights is good. Elsewhere, four-in-ten or fewer hold this view. Despite ongoing violence, 40% of Palestinians say democracy and human rights are respected, as do 32% of Algerians. Meanwhile, just 27% of Tunisians, 25% of Yemenis, 18% of Moroccans, 16% of Lebanese and 13% of Egyptians say the same about their own countries.

For the most part, despite the upheavals related to the Arab uprisings there have been few changes about the state of democracy and human rights. The most substantial difference is in Egypt where in the months after the revolution 57% rated democracy and human rights as good, compared with 13% just two years later (-44 points). By contrast, Algerians say respect for human rights and democracy has improved dramatically during this time rising from 8% to 32% (+24). Meanwhile, a slight increase also occurred in Palestine (+8).

Impediments to Reform

On the whole, the Arab uprisings have led to important but not massive changes to improve issues related to social justice across the region. Further reform is clearly needed, but even in countries like Tunisia and Egypt frustration with a lack of change has clearly mounted. To a significant degree, Arab publics appear to link the failure of reform to international influences.

Since the time of independence international conflict and foreign involvement in the region has been a major influence on the Middle East and North Africa (Kerr 1971). The conflict with Israel has played a prominent role in the ideologies of many authoritarian leaders offering justifications for denying certain civil rights to the population (Anderson 2001). At the same time, foreign military aid has strengthened the coercive apparatus in many countries with the goal of promoting stability over inclusive and open democratic system (Bellin 2004).

Citizens in countries that border Israel overwhelmingly perceive the Arab-Israeli conflict as a significant obstacle to political reform in their country. More than two-thirds in Palestine (84%), Lebanon (84%), Jordan (76%) and Egypt (68%) agree or strongly agree that this conflict makes political reform more challenging. Despite the changes that resulted from the Arab uprisings, this perception has not changed significantly in any country bordering Israel.

The Arab Israeli Conflict and Political Reform
% who say it is an impediment to a great or medium extent
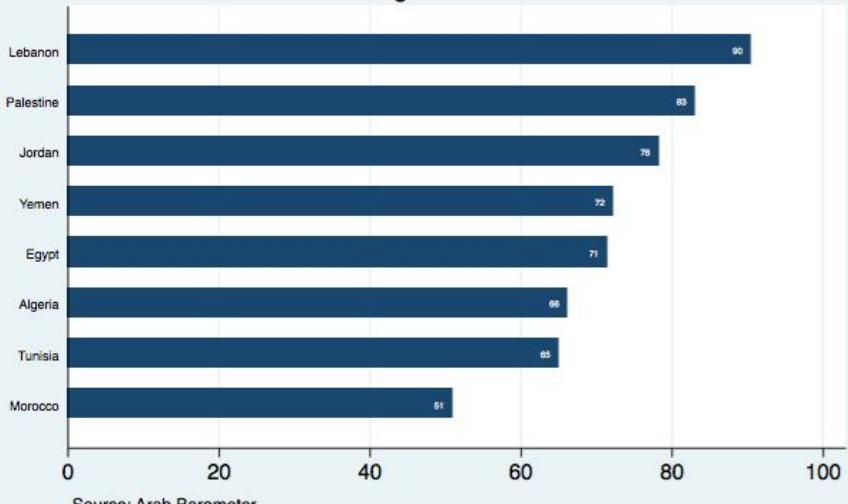

In countries that do not border Israel, many fewer see the conflict as an obstacle to reform. This perception is most widespread in Tunisia (54%) and Yemen (51%), followed by Morocco (40%) and Algeria (33%). However, the perception that the conflict with Israel is an impediment to reform is increasing dramatically in these countries. From 2011 to 2013, Tunisians became 26 points more likely to say it was an obstacle to reform while the percentage increase by 19 points in Algeria and 17 points in Yemen, respectively.

To a greater extent than even the Arab-Israeli conflict, citizens in the Middle East and North Africa worry about the effects of foreign interference on prospects for reform. In all countries half or more say outside interference is an obstacle to reform. Lebanese (91%) are the most concerned about external forces – likely due to the role Syria and Iran have played in domestic politics. More than eight-in-ten Palestinians say the same, presumably reflecting the significant role that outside actors play in their national politics.

Foreign interference and political reform

% who say it is an impediment to reform to a great or medium extent

Country	Value
Lebanon	90
Palestine	83
Jordan	78
Yemen	72
Egypt	71
Algeria	66
Tunisia	65
Morocco	51

Source: Arab Barometer

In other countries as well citizens perceive that outside influences represent an obstacle to reform. In Jordan, 78% hold this view as do 72% in Egypt and Yemen. Concern is somewhat lower in the other Maghreb countries with 66% in Algeria and 51% in Morocco saying these influences are an obstacle to reform.

Despite the Obama administration's relatively non-interventionist approach to the events of the Arab uprisings, concern about outside influences is rising across the region. Algerians in 2013 are 25 points more likely than in 2011 to say foreign interference is an obstacle to reform. Similar increases are found in Tunisia (+18) and Yemen (+13). Most likely, these increases are a result of regional actors such as Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia playing a greater role in the affairs of other countries in the Middle East and North Africa (Dugit-Gros 2015).

A key exception to this trend is Egypt where the percentage who hold this view has declined by 12 points. Given the U.S.'s strong support for the Mubarak regime, its relatively hands off approach in recent years likely accounts for this decrease. Nevertheless, the fear that the U.S. is operating behind the scenes and the increased activity of other regional actors means that despite the changes brought about by the Egyptian revolution, the vast majority of Egyptians (72%) still fear that external interference is an obstacle to reform.

Conclusion

The Arab Barometer surveys confirm that issues of social justice were central to the grievances associated with the Arab uprisings. Frustration over poor economic outcomes, corruption, and a remote government were commonplace across the region at the time of the protests. Moreover, many of the protestors took to the streets exhibited significant frustrations over government corruption.

Notably, there have been some improvements in perceived levels of equality since the Arab uprisings, but vast challenges remain. Although the Arab uprisings brought citizens' needs to the forefront, real progress requires a long-term commitment by governments to take these demands seriously. Successful reforms to address inequalities will be a lengthy process, but one that is necessary to bring better governance and long-term stability to the region.

Above all, regimes must begin by trying to rebuild trust between those who govern and those who they govern. This lack of trust – the result of officials not caring for individual needs and building corrupt systems – is a necessary first step in promoting social justice (Tyler 1998). Providing citizens with a greater say in how they are governed is an important first step in this process. Fortunately, many already believe that they can influence their governments. However, channeling this influence through official channels is a key challenge. Currently, it appears likely that most citizens see demonstrations and strikes as the most important means by which to have a say, which promotes instability and uncertainty and can endanger the well-being those who choose to undertake this potentially dangerous act (Langhor 2014).

After the Arab uprisings, some regimes provided citizens with a meaningful say in free and fair elections. More should follow the Tunisian example of respecting their outcomes, which could lead to improvements the prospects for social justice. By creating effective government institutions, for example, regimes could more readily begin to address the long-standing economic problems that have led to economic stagnation and a lack of opportunities for many citizens, particularly youths.

There is a key role for the U.S. and other external actors in promoting social justice in the region. Many citizens see outside interference as limiting the prospects for meaningful change. In the past U.S. policies favoring stability have clearly played a significant role in fostering this perception. Yet, following the U.S.'s more hands off approach in the wake of the Arab uprising, we have shown that the percentage of Egyptians who held this opinion declined.

Due to the rise of other regional actors, however, in most other countries concern about the role of external actors increased. These changes suggest

that citizens now fear the role of other regional actors in stymieing reform rather than the U.S. The U.S. should take steps to limit the role of these regional actors while pressuring regimes to undertake serious reforms. Combined, these efforts would help ensure that the gains that followed the Arab uprisings are maintained and governments in the region take further steps to promote social justice.

Unfortunately, in part because of the resurgence of authoritarianism in the region, the prospects for improved social justice remain dim. For the most part, the same regimes that failed to take social justice seriously prior to the uprisings have survived or reconsolidated power. At best, regimes are likely to take small steps toward improving social justice outcomes as they seek to protect the interests of vested interests and other key stakeholders that undergird their power.

Yet, even authoritarian governments can take steps to address social justice concerns. Soon after independence, many non-democratic regimes in the region undertook programs that promoted education and social redistribution to yield more just outcomes. Citizens across the region benefited greatly from such policies during the 1950s and 1960s. The subsequent long-term failure of government policies to address the needs of citizens in the region was the key frustration that led to the protests in 2011. Although the calls for political and social change have now subsided, without significant reforms to improve social justice, calls for serious reforms will someday again build and regimes will find themselves under threat. Thus, governments would be well advised to take seriously the interests of those they govern and promote policies that address the inequalities that have become pervasive in their societies.

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