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Defining Democracy: Democratic Commitment in the Arab World

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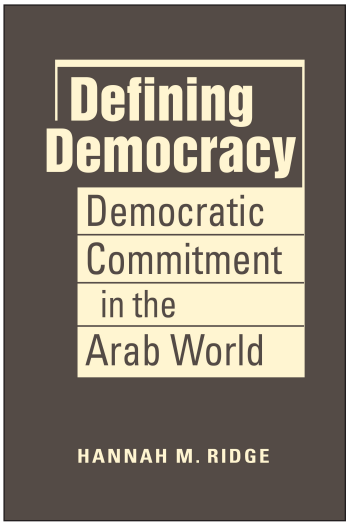

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A Democracy Paradox?

But why does no one explain this dimuqratiyya *to us? Is it a country or an 'afrita or an animal or an island?*

—Fatima Mernissi, *Islam and Democracy*[1]

In 2010, a Tunisian fruit seller was interrogated by the police for operating without a license. When he could not pay the fine—or bribe —that they required for his unpermitted cart, they confiscated his wares. After unsuccessfully seeking redress from Sidi Bouzid officials, Mohamed Bouazizi publicly set himself on fire. His death kick-started protests by his family and other informal workers. Social media spread word of the protests, and more suicides bolstered the public's commitment and expanded the demonstrations.

Following a familiar pattern in Tunisia, antiregime protests started in southern and central regions of the country, which were poorer and had engaged in previous demonstrations. However, unlike during those protests, the security services could not shut down the demonstrations before they reached the wealthier capital and coastal areas (King 2019). The Zine El Abidine Ben Ali regime faced mass movements against corruption, economic stagnation, and human rights abuses. Most crucially, these demonstrations spread beyond Tunisia.

Millions of people across the Middle East poured into the streets to call for social change. International media coverage highlighted chants for the downfall of authoritarian regimes. The situation, from the popular outpouring to the observers' awe, recalled the suddenness of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Like in the USSR, "the leadership was generally despised, lofty economic promises remained unfulfilled, and freedoms

taken for granted elsewhere existed only on paper" (Kuran 1991, 12). The surprise was not the rebellion but the timing.

Western leaders, though reticent initially to support the ouster of their political allies, publicly lauded calls for democracy. President Barack Obama, speaking at the State Department in May 2011, called Tunisia the "vanguard of this democratic wave." He also committed US support: "There must be no doubt that the United States of America welcomes change that advances self-determination and opportunity. Yes, there will be perils that accompany this moment of promise. But after decades of accepting the world as it is in the region, we have a chance to pursue the world as it should be." On behalf of the United States, he endorsed liberal democracy as the framework for foreign policy:

> The United States opposes the use of violence and repression against the people of the region. The United States supports a set of universal rights. And these rights include free speech, the freedom of peaceful assembly, the freedom of religion, equality for men and women under the rule of law, and the right to choose your own leaders—whether you live in Baghdad or Damascus, Sanaa or Tehran. And we support political and economic reform in the Middle East and North Africa that can meet the legitimate aspirations of ordinary people throughout the region. (Obama 2011)

Baghdad and Damascus residents might argue that the administration failed to live up to its commitments. Overall, however, Western media and Western leaders were quick to identify the Arab Spring as a democratic revolution.

It was, in the short term, for some countries. Egypt and Tunisia successfully removed their long-standing leaders, wrote new constitutions, and held elections. For many, though, the Arab Spring has fallen into what some call the Arab Winter (Magharoui 2019; Feldman 2020). Wars are raging in Syria and Yemen. Libya spent most of a decade in war. Nondemocratic regimes persisted in states like Morocco and Algeria. A military coup upended the elected government in Egypt. After nearly a decade of democracy, Tunisia—the success story of the uprisings—seems to have lost its democracy to a self-coup. After decades of struggle—the democratization efforts did not start with the Arab Spring—the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) is the least democratic region of the world.

This lack of democratization flies in the face of high expressed public support for democracy in the Middle East. The extensive support predated the Arab Spring, and it continues in the most recent surveys. Researchers have termed this discrepancy the *democracy paradox*. Why

has the region not democratized? Why, in particular, do we see such strong and recurrent expressions of support for democracy in such an undemocratic region? This book contributes to answering these questions about the Arab world. To do so, it looks at what people mean when they protest for democracy, evaluate political reforms, and express this supposed democratic support. Understanding how Arabic speakers are using the language of democracy grants insight into the political behavior, social movements, and popular will of the Middle East. This information is vital to promoting or supporting self-determination and regional democratization.

Fundamentally, *dimuqratiyya*, the Arabic word that typically stands in for *democracy* in this discourse and in these public opinion polls, does not always signify what political scientists and foreign observers mean when they say *democracy*. *Democracy* refers to a system of government based on binding elections—though some advocates append liberal values and economic success to the agenda. *Dimuqratiyya*, in fact, has two meanings. For about half of listeners, it refers to political institutions, like elections and freedom of speech. For the other half, *dimuqratiyya* describes a set of socioeconomic outcomes, independent of the political structures that generate those outcomes. Thus, to look at any invocation of *dimuqratiyya*—by protestors or pollsters—and assume that it is an invocation of *democracy* is potentially to misconstrue what is being said. To properly understand Middle East/North African citizens' politics and preferences, we must ask the right questions and listen for the answers.

A Democracy Deficit

The democracy deficit in the Middle East/North Africa is overdetermined. Myriad explanations are given for why democracy has not taken root. Some resign these states to authoritarianism because the fault is historical. If the cause is in the unchangeable past, then the future is a foregone conclusion. Others would allow for regional development. Decades of democratic struggles demonstrate that Middle East/North Africa residents do not think democratization is impossible. I consider these impediments briefly before turning to how people inside and outside the Middle East/North Africa view democracy.

The most famous "cause" of the regions' failure to democratize is Islam. Researchers point out that a country's likelihood of being a democracy is lower when its Muslim population share is higher (Potrafke 2013).

They argue that this results from the tenets of the faith itself, which they argue oppose freedom, pluralism, or voting (Fukuyama 2006; Minkenberg 2007). Others argue that it stems from Islam's failure to separate religion from the state (Lewis 2002). Huntington (2000) posited that Islam suffused the region's culture and traditions, as opposed to supposedly Western values like human rights and democracy. For an expert unpacking of the arguments for and against Islam's philosophical support for and opposition to these values, see Ciftci (2022).

Islam's influence could also be instrumental and indirect. Islamic systems pervading society, such as Islamic endowments (*waqf*), inhibited the development of civil society organizations and political participation that might have pressed for democratization (Lewis 2002; Kuran 2012). Islamic law caused the region's retrenchment in global status and restrictions on human development. From the other side, the insufficiency of Protestant missionaries to the region and the attendant educational and organizational development their involvement created elsewhere relatively stunted democratic development (Woodberry 2012). Lewis (2002, 156) counters that "to blame Islam as such is usually hazardous, and rarely attempted. Nor is it very plausible," since the predominance of Islam has not varied substantially with the centuries. A constant cannot explain variation. The influence of Islam on personal preferences, cultural norms, and legal precepts is an ongoing question.

Another factor is colonialism. The reshaping of regional boundaries and interference in constitutional processes by European and, eventually, American forces have received substantial blame for MENA politics. Europeans replaced the Ottoman political institutions, promoted secularism, and failed to develop domestic civil society. Europe also endorsed the state of Israel, itself blamed for the Middle East's ills (Alkadry 2002). The empirical evidence for a colonial effect, however, is weak (El Badawi and Makdisi 2007; Fish 2002). Lewis (2002, 153), while acknowledging nationalism as a European "import," criticizes this argument: "In the Middle East, there have been good reasons for such blame. . . . But the Anglo-French interlude was comparatively brief and ended half a century ago; the change for the worse began long before their arrival and continued unabated after their departure."

Much of the region was controlled by the Ottoman Empire. The empire's policies did not set the region on the path to democratization (Kuran 2012). Why would they, when the sultan sought to retain power? Even prior to that, the Middle East had been subject to the Arab conquests. These domains saw widespread use of slave armies and treated "religious leaders as the primary check on the power of the sovereign"

(Chaney, Akerlof, and Blaydes 2012, 382). The areas of the Muslim world that were conquered by Arab armies in the early decades of Islam, to this day, have lower rates of democratization. This is consistent with the gap between Arab and non-Arab Muslim-majority states in democratization (Stepan and Robertson 2003). The historical persistence of Arab-conquest and Ottoman institutions and resultant weakness in democratic and civil society organizations keeps them down.

The Middle East's history of armed conflict also has been indicted. Muslim-majority states are not significantly more likely than others to have experienced armed conflict, but the Middle East has seen substantial conflict in the last century. The Arab world is the exception to the assertion that conflict encourages democratization (El Badawi and Makdisi 2007). The Gulf wars and US-led incursions in Iraq are pertinent. The conflict over Israel is particularly central to this discourse. Stepan and Robertson (2003, 42) posit that neutralizing the Israel conflict by establishing a recognized two-state solution would obviate a foreign policy question that MENA governments use to sustain "high military spending, authoritarianism, the world's greatest concentration of traditional autocratic monarchies, and the willingness to sacrifice, or interfere with, national goals in the name of pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism."

Another supposed source of nondemocracy is a resource curse. Oil deposits and mineral wealth allow rentier regimes to keep their publics demobilized, to provide services without taxation, to finance systems of repression, and to avoid investing in human capital (Ross 2001; El Badawi and Makdisi 2007). Oil resources stabilize the authoritarian power structure. The negative effects of oil are not unique to the Middle East (Ross 2001; Fish 2002). The threat, however, is greater in poor countries, for which the resource wealth will represent a larger share of the economy. Furthermore, oil-based economies are more likely to exclude women from the labor force (Ross 2008), especially in countries with "strong patriarchal structures" (Groh and Rothschild 2012, 84). The exacerbation of gender-based inequalities undermines representation in government of the full populace, undercutting democracy and democratization (Abdo-Katsipis 2017; Fish 2002; Inglehart and Norris 2003).

Democratic culture theory posits that for regions to democratize durably, there must be a coterie of supportive institutions and pro-democracy values. Durable democracies require sufficient economic deliverables, self-expressive values, tolerance, interpersonal trust, and a propensity toward social and political participation (Inglehart 2003). The Middle East faces challenges in these domains—the democratic culture is uneven and decoupled from democratic attitudes (Welzel

2021b; Ridge 2022a, 2022b). In this theory, any democracy that is instituted will be on shaky foundations.

Subjective well-being in the region is low. There are high rates of unemployment and poverty. The regimes sometimes target these needs instead of ameliorating the political deficits, creating a tacit nondemocratic social contract. The regimes also perform poorly on human rights indicators. Scholars have singled out two particular values as holding the region back. Low support for women's rights constrains human development (Inglehart and Norris 2003; Fish 2002). Although expressed support for democracy is high, opposition to women's rights discourages support for a democratic regime that might liberalize that dimension. Conversely, women in the region may fear democratization if they believe the elected government would roll back extant rights (García-Peñalosa and Konte 2014). For instance, if elected, an Islamist party could promote a conservative interpretation of personal status law or undermine women's education. That is why Rizzo, Abdel-Latif, and Meyer (2004) argue that women in Arab countries are less likely to support democracy than women in other Muslim-majority countries. Ridge (2022a) finds that Egyptian women are not more or less likely to be democrats if they are assured of a liberal regime; however, they are less supportive of illiberal democracies than men are.

The other value highlighted is religious freedom. Muslim-majority states have less religious freedom than other states. Rowley and Smith (2009) posit that constraints on religious freedom result in restraints on religious and political discourse. They suppose that the constraints come from Islam. Fear of being viewed as an apostate causes self-censorship, which undermines political development. The states' control of religious groups and religious people has both organizational and individual-level effects. Limitations on religious freedom in Muslim-majority countries impact citizens' compliance with religious law and popular displays of religiosity (Ridge 2019, 2020). To the degree that religious beliefs and religious participation drive political behavior, these policies have knock-on effects (Hoffman and Jamal 2014; Arikan and Bloom 2019). The regulations states use to repress religious freedom in Muslim-majority countries restrict political competition by suppressing civil society groups that the regimes see as threats to their power (Sarkissian 2012). This perceived challenge is part of why some regimes place greater restrictions on Islam-affiliated organizations than on minority-serving organizations. The states' regulatory capacity in turn discourages democratic transition. Once the role of regulation is taken into account, the empirical predictive power of Islam for a country's level of democracy "disappears" (502).

Each or all of these factors could contribute to the democracy deficit in the Middle East/North Africa. Some of the theories produce a bleak outlook. After all, a history of colonization or regional conflict cannot be rewritten. Theoretically changeable characteristics are also not necessarily actionable. "Stop being Muslim" is not earnest political advice. In other cases, the future may be more optimistic. Economic development can transpire, and gender egalitarianism can spread. Oil deposits will eventually run out. Whether those changes truly would facilitate democratization, though, is hypothetical at this point.

What these theories cannot do is explain the democracy paradox. They do not convey why democracy would poll so highly in the Arab world, even while democracy is rare. Some of these theories themselves even suggest that the support should be low. For instance, the supposed antidemocratic nature of Islam or Islamic culture should lower support. This is not what is found. That could mean the theory is wrong or that the support for democracy is disingenuous.

If the high support is genuine, maybe the paradox results from the overwhelmingness of these forces. The public may wish to democratize but is doomed by the past. Since the past is unchangeable, pro-democracy efforts are in vain. Again, this is bleak. It is also a diagnosis by default. It takes the lack of democracy as given and functionally unrelated to the popular will. Such a fatalistic view that obviates popular will is by its own nature antidemocratic.

Another set of analyses calls the support itself into question. Maseland and van Hoorn (2011, 481) explicitly state that "there is no puzzle." It is a question of diminishing marginal utility to democracy or thermostatic preferences (Claassen 2020). That is to say, because Muslims live in places that are less democratic, they will "have a craving for more democracy," not as paradox but as "basic microeconomics" (Maseland and van Hoorn 2011, 482). The marginal value is not a phenomenon unique to the Muslim-majority states, but it impacts the Middle East because of the lack of democracy on the ground. The paradox is thus resolved because the support is not itself real.

The marginal value hypothesis would then predict that Tunisians would place less value on democracy than other MENA-country nationals, since Tunisia was the only regional democracy for a time. That is not what the 2018 Arab Barometer results show. Tunisia had some of the highest rates of belief that *dimuqratiyya* may have problems but is still the best form of government. Other high-support countries had diverse regime structures.

There is, of course, always the threat that people are just lying. Strategic and intentional misrepresentation of attitudes, opinions, and

preferences is known as *preference falsification* (Kuran 1997). Preference falsification is, by necessity, a concern in any survey. In this case, the argument would run that citizens in nondemocracies feel compelled to lie and say they like democracy or hate it because of fear of the regime. However, "the positive relation between democratic attitudes and Islam exists not only at the country level but also at the level of individual Muslims. For these reasons, biases due to repressive environments likely do not cause the positive relation between Muslim identity and democratic attitudes" (Maseland and van Hoorn 2011, 485).

In general, researchers have found that Middle East/North African citizens are eager to participate in survey studies (Gengler et al. 2019; Corstange 2014). In original surveys conducted for this book, some individuals noted that they welcomed the opportunity for the public to express its opinions and interests. For instance, an eighteen-to-twenty-four-year-old Muslim Moroccan woman said, "This questionnaire pleased me a lot, because it is good to know the people's opinions about politics and the government system in their country."[2] Another Muslim Moroccan woman, forty plus years old, wrote, "This type of survey is very useful to know the citizens' opinions and also to advance the country to the highest of positions."[3] This is not to say that every respondent was positively disposed to discussing politics. One respondent in Egypt even thought that the survey was a prelude to an attempt to overthrow the government or that the responses, if made public, could be destabilizing for the regime. The forty-plus-year-old Cairene Muslim man with an advanced degree wrote, "[This is] a political poll that is intended to shake citizens' confidence in the political leadership and to spread the spirit of rebellion against the current regime in order to destroy the country."[4] He still filled out the survey. Furthermore, arguably, if a survey could trigger a revolution, the antigovernment sentiment was already boiling under the surface.

Concern about being spied on seemed limited. One Moroccan respondent, a forty-plus-year-old suburban Muslim woman with an advanced degree, wrote, "The worst governments in the world are Arab governments and Islamic governments."[5] This response does not betray a great fear of observation or identification, though it might indicate openness to regime change. Heightened levels of concern among researchers that ideology and regime type lead to systematic misrepresentation may reflect researchers' own biases rather than the realities of regional survey studies. Benstead (2018, 536) argues "that worries that the Arab world is a more challenging survey context—or that citizens answer dishonestly—reflect biases of 'Arab exceptionalism,' more than

fair assessments of data quality." It is necessary to consider the choices in survey construction that can influence respondents' behavior, but the Middle East can be treated as functionally similar to other regions of the world in survey studies.

MENA residents are also reasonable but not perfectly rational actors with imperfect political knowledge (Lupia and McCubbins 1998), who can update their preferences based on "core cultural values and enduring social needs" just like other people, through "the natural combination" of intuition and deliberate reasoning (Fatas-Villafranca, Dulce Saura, and Vázquez 2011, 419). Political preferences reflect citizens' "personality traits, values, principles, group affiliations, and material interests" (Leeper and Slothuus 2014, 131). Politics is discussed at sites ranging from civil society organizations in Palestine (Jamal 2007) to khat chews in Yemen (Wedeen 2007). Citizens have also turned to bodies like political parties, religious organizations, slogans and cartoons, and unions to be informed and to express themselves (Beinin 2015; El-Ghobashy 2021).

Evaluating public opinion in the Middle East is hardly new. Public opinion (*efkâr-i umûmîye* or *efkâr-i âmme*) played a recognized role in Ottoman politics, especially after the 1860s. Şiviloğlu's (2018) *The Emergence of Public Opinion* documents the process by which the introduction of public debts and the expansion of civil society spaces gave public opinion the opportunity to flourish and drive policy, including deposing political figures. At times the sultanate was constrained by the public will, while at other points it relied on the "illusion of public consent" (56). Previously the Janissary corps had served as the embodiment and constraining force of the public voice. That the military can be the people's voice will be discussed more in Chapter 5 on Egypt. Şiviloğlu (2018) argues that the Ottoman regime was not merely mimicking the West in expressing concern for public opinion but was actively incorporating a sense of public agency into its strategic framework.

Explicitly empirical analyses of public opinion in the Middle East are, of course, more recent. Turkey has been incorporated into the World Values Survey since the second wave (1990–1994), and a variety of Arab states have been included since Wave 4 (2000–2004). The first wave of the Arab Barometer was completed in 2007. North African countries appeared on the Afrobarometer starting in the fifth wave (2011–2013). The Arab world has decades of experience with public opinion invocations and examinations. This book draws on data from the World Values Survey, several waves of the Arab Barometer, and original survey studies in Egypt and Morocco to develop its claims.

This combination of datasets means two decades' worth of public opinion studies—thousands of citizens' responses—can be brought to bear in these analyses. These original surveys included free response space for the citizens to voice any additional thoughts they had on these topics. The quotes above were some of these discursive comments; other statements will be introduced in the following chapters. For more information about the surveys conducted for this book—including additional comments from survey respondents and demographic information—see Appendix A. Although surveys should be conducted mindfully with respect to citizens' comfort and safety, there is not substantive reason to believe there have been decades of mass deception about the democratic interest.

An Alternative

I posit, in this book, a middle road. The support that the respondents are expressing is genuine. However, it is being misinterpreted and therefore misunderstood. To preview the most important finding: the support for democracy is lower than we have thought. Thus, the absence of democratization is not as paradoxical as it seems.

Why have we thought the support was higher than it is? It is because of how we have been measuring it. A concept or structure that a researcher seeks to measure is a *construct*. Trust, for instance, is an idea or interpersonal condition one might measure. Converting that idea into a numerical metric is termed *operationalizing the construct*. The accuracy of that empirical representation of the thing—the construct—is called *construct validity* (Cronbach and Meehl 1955; Adcock and Collier 2001). The typical measurement tools for assessing democratic commitment globally lack construct validity. This is because the difference between the constructs—the underlying ideas—*democracy* and *dimuqratiyya*[6] is not taken into account when formulating these questions. While the former highlights (liberal) political institutions, the latter is regularly tied to socioeconomic outcomes.

To identify this high level of support, researchers have turned to a variety of multicountry surveys, including the World Values Survey, the Arab Barometer, and the Afrobarometer. When these surveys are performed in the Middle East, questions that were developed in English are rendered in Arabic. This act of translation introduces a challenge: "Poor translation can rob researchers of the chance to ask the questions they want to ask across languages and cultures. However, we cannot always expect to notice from the data that translation problems have arisen"

(Harkness, Pennell, and Schoua-Glusberg 2004, 454).[7] If results are changed due to the act of translation, such as by inadvertently calling on a different construct or by changing the meaning of response options, then there will be mismeasurement. This measurement error introduced by translation is the *translation bias* in the estimate.[8] In this case, in place of the word *democracy*, the surveys ask respondents about their attitudes toward *dimuqratiyya*. Although democracy and *dimuqratiyya* sound alike—both derive from the same Greek root—they are not calling up the same idea for the survey takers. In fact, *dimuqratiyya* calls up different ideas even within the Middle East. As such, the surveys will misestimate the attitudes toward democracy by asking about *dimuqratiyya*.[9] The researchers are introducing *translation bias* into the survey results by conflating these different constructs.

A Global Consensus?

The widespread use of surveys to identify support for democracy has previously engendered concern that survey takers in different regions do not share similar understandings of democracy, which in turn corrupts the interpretation of survey results. Scholars have concluded, based on open- and closed-ended survey questions about meaning, that not only do mass publics understand the word *democracy* when it is put to them in a question but also that publics globally share a very similar understanding to each other and to researchers. They propose that most citizens identify democracy with freedom and the procedural and institutional elements of democracy (Dalton, Shin, and Jou 2007). Thus they conclude that global publics are construing democracy as political scientists do.

This pattern would be fortuitous. The focus on electoral or participatory institutions is consistent with researchers' expectations when asking these questions. Democracies are systems of competitive elections that rule by consent of the governed as determined by majority rule (Dahl 2008 [1971]; Schumpeter 2008 [1942]; Przeworksi et al. 2000). Democracy is an expression of the "freedoms that entitle people to self-determine their private lives and to have a voice and vote in the public sphere of which they are a part" (Welzel 2021a, 21). States can construct myriad institutions and norms befitting local preferences and traditions around the elections. These range from the particular form elected government takes, from direct election to the separation of powers, to the kinds of policies the governments create, such as welfare systems and acculturation structures. In crafting the questions used to analyze citizens'

democratic attitudes and commitments, this study has focused on *choosing the government by election*.[10] This focus on elections does not devalue other things states do or goals citizens might have for them. It recognizes that political scientists have a meaning in mind when using the word *democracy*. More will be said on how political scientists define and measure democracy as a construct in Chapter 2.

These conceptions drive survey researchers' expectations about democracy and its meaning. Fuchs and Roller (2006, 77–78) explicitly state, "We assume that citizens of Central and Eastern Europe possess enough information about democracy that cognitively it is not a difficult object," and respondents can thus be asked "directly for democracy" in survey questions; when they ask subjects about democracy, they report that subjects identify "theoretically relevant criteria of liberal democracy." Ferrín and Kriesi (2016) affirm a pan-European understanding of democracy as liberal democracy. Bratton (2009) addresses this question as well in his near-global study of democratic attitudes and political participation. He finds a "common pattern of shared meanings across all world regions" and reports that "a regime of civil liberties" is the most common meaning given for democracy (Bratton 2009, 7). Bratton includes, however, an important caveat. His results omit the Middle East and Latin America, where the open-ended question had not been posed; the Arab Barometer asked for "characteristics of democracy" by his reckoning (7). Nevertheless, he favors this globalized interpretation of questions and answers related to democracy.

However, omitting later-wave democratizing countries from the sample artificially increases the apparent cross-cultural agreement about the meaning of democracy. Ariely (2015, 632)—who avers that there is "a common understanding of the core procedures of democracy across most countries"—uses the World Values Survey to conclude that more "democratic" countries are more likely to have citizens who view procedural elements as "essential" to a country's being a democracy. Similarly, European Social Survey and Comparative Congressional Election Survey data show that "public opinion on both sides of the Atlantic, therefore, seems to converge quite strongly on what are the most important characteristics of democracy, and traditional liberal elements such as the rule of law, free and fair elections, and free media clearly are of paramount importance for most citizens" (Oser and Hooghe 2018b, 18–19). The United States and Europe are not uniform in the level of importance they place on social rights for identifying a democracy; however, the essential features are held in agreement, and they are political institutions. This pattern would bias the results toward the afore-

mentioned impression of agreement about a proceduralist understanding of democracy. Omitting democratizing areas, intentionally or otherwise, is biasing in favor of a globally shared political-institutions-based understanding of democracy. Canache (2012) addresses this question for Latin America. Using LAPOP data, she affirms the predominance of the liberal political understanding of democracy in Latin America.

The corollary of a high rate of political conceptions of democracy is a low rate of economic conceptions. Dalton, Shin, and Jou (2007, 147) find that "few people define democracy in terms of social benefits," a category in which they include "social equality, justice, and equality of opportunities, rather than blatant economic benefits such as employment, social welfare, or economic opportunities." They interpret this pattern as a refutation of the notion that support for democratic systems derives from a desire for improved living standards. Bratton (2009, 7) finds that "fewer than 5 percent" reference "a regime of social rights or economic development" in an open-ended question, although he acknowledges the rate increases when respondents choose from a list. The purported global uniformity contributes to researchers' belief that a political conception of democracy can be assumed when analyzing survey data on democratic support.

This optimism about a uniform popular understanding of democracy is not without its detractors. Schaffer (2014) uses a case study of the Philippines to argue that the apparent conformity around liberal (political) democracy as an understanding is based on methodological errors on the part of survey compilers for the open-ended questions that create this apparent agreement in answers. He identifies three faults: compression, compartmentalization, and homogenization of open-ended answers. *Compression* is the shortening of long answers into single words and simple phrases. *Compartmentalization* is the division of the open-ended response into a number of categories by a coder that can subtract meaning in disintegrating the thoughts rather than treating them as fitting together. *Homogenization* is interviewers' glossing respondents' statements to retrospectively construct apparently unified response blocs that may not reflect nuances.[11] This problem is magnified when the responses are only recorded in a different language than the respondent is using and the interviewer has sole discretion over how the responses are rendered in the new language. Qualitative work and more rigorous questions are Schaffer's preferred solution, though these suggestions pose their own logistical and interpretative challenges. His skepticism of compressed open-ended responses and the equation of results across cultures is understandable.

Papacharissi (2021, 38) finds qualitatively that people think of "democracy" in terms of equality, especially with respect to freedom of expression, under a system of "consensus or majority rule." However, since her focus was not explicitly on "democracy" but on an "ideal democracy, or if it's not a democracy, what might lie after it," she is tapping more directly into what people want from their government. She follows "desire lines" to identify what should replace democracy and proposes that there is no global "disconnect" with respect to what individuals think is "wrong with democracy" (x, xii). She does this without establishing that the many words her multilinguistic study used for democracy tapped into the same construct. In fact, she argues that "coming up with a definition of democracy that lasts forever is an impossible problem. Democracy is a fixed ideal with flexible morphology, one that must be adjusted with the least measure of compromise" (49). She is not seeking to assess a construct, then. She targets an ideal government, then casts the word *democracy* onto that system. The use of the word to describe something that may not be a democracy at all—as political scientists typically measure and understand it—demonstrates the linguistic drift that complicates the use of this word. Chapters 3 and 7 demonstrate that such casting of meanings is driving the application of the label *dimuqratiyya* to different types of government.

Despite the supposed consensus, disparate understandings of democracy are on view in some closed-ended cross-national survey questions. The widely used World Values Survey is an instructive case. The World Values Survey has respondents rate how important a series of characteristics are to democracy—or, rather, whatever word is used for democracy in that survey. The scale ranges from "Not an essential characteristic of democracy" (1) to "An essential characteristic of democracy" (10).

On one hand, the World Values Survey responses seem to back up the optimistic results: people all over say political institutions are essential to the word-idea named. In Wave 7 (2017–2020), 80.5 percent of respondents indicated that the public's choosing leaders in free elections was an essential feature of democracy;[12] 73 percent stated that civil rights protections guarding people's liberties from oppression were essential. Equal rights for men and women were essential to democracy for 81.5 percent of respondents. Institutional features fit for most people. On the other hand, one might construe these frequencies as unfortunately low for features political scientists consider definitive of democratic governance.

At the same time, these surveys justify Schaffer's (2014) skepticism. According to the same World Values Survey data, 59.5 percent said that government taxation of the rich to subsidize the poor is essen-

tial for a country to be a democracy; 69.1 percent rated state unemployment aid as essential. For 54 percent of respondents, a state's making people's incomes equal was essential to democracy. Half to two-thirds of respondents label economic characteristics essential features of democracy, though they are not necessarily something democracies can, or could exclusively, provide.

Even more indicative of confusion of constructs is that many respondents rated potentially antidemocratic elements as essential to democracy. For instance, 47 percent stated that people's obeying the rules is essential; if these respondents are thinking of the rule of law, then that would make sense, but if they mean forced or unthinking obedience to a ruler, then it is undemocratic. Allowing religious authorities to interpret the laws was marked essential to democracy by 24.1 percent of respondents; 33 percent identified permitting a military takeover of an incompetent government as essential to democracy. Viewing these features as essential suggests that respondents are thinking of a different system entirely when they hear that word.

These patterns are not globally uniform. A few scholars have noted this point; however, they have not reached the same conclusions about its meaning. Cho (2015) studies global heterogeneity in the fifth-wave World Values Survey data. He reads the essentialness ratings for elections, civil liberties, military-takeover opportunities, and a role for religious leaders in interpreting the law as reflecting the degree to which respondents are "informed" or not about the meaning of democracy (241). He makes it a question of whether or not the respondents are correct about democracy rather than an indication that the multiple terms employed are not equivalent.[13]

Taking nearly a reverse position on the data, Davis, Goidel, and Zhao (2021) affirm some of the existing expectations about a shared meaning for democracy by looking at these questions in a subset of the World Values Survey countries: the democratic world. They find "general consensus *and* differences on some characteristic of democracy both within and across countries" in these democracies (854). However, "all concur generally about the importance of free elections, referendums, civil rights, and gender equality and seem to reject army rule" (857). While concluding that the multidimensional nature of democracy should be treated with "greater sensitivity" in cross-national studies, they also conclude that "despite measurable differences in public understandings of democracy, the vast majority of respondents across countries are 'pro-democracy'" (861). In fact, they take the rating of essentialness as an indicator of support rather than a recognition of an objective fact.

The "apathetic" class—which gave a low score to every feature—is considered apathetic to democracy if not "antidemocracy" (861). This elision implies that recognizing that elections are democratic is tantamount to supporting elections, which is not true. Davis, Goidel, and Zhao do not test the implications of these different understandings for democratic commitment. This book does.

Ulbricht (2018) approaches this point. He weights World Values Survey respondents' answers to the "what [do] you think about each [political system] as a way of governing this country" and "how important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically?" questions by how important certain features are to "democracy." The respondents were classed as authoritarian democrats, representative democrats, direct democrats, social democrats, radical direct democrats, socialist democrats, and inconsistent democrats. He uses the word *democrat* not to convey support for democracy but rather as a placeholder for the idea of viewing essential elements of democracy in that fashion.

Ulbricht (2018, 1414) concludes, "When people's stated desire for democracy is adjusted in accordance with procedural, participatory, and social variants of political liberalism, support for any kind of liberal democracy declines considerably, with striking differences across political regimes." He also argues that desire for liberal democracy is primarily a function of the regime in which the respondent lives. He reports, "Authoritarian and illiberal attitudes, which are rejected by academic definitions of democracy, are extremely common in autocracies, hybrid autocracies, and even hybrid democracies" (1414). The Middle East would certainly fall into this category. Thus, he concludes that the scholarly consensus that democracy is popular is wrong and that, globally, the support for democracy under autocracies is truly low. Ulbricht's work is a tremendous foray into the implications of different understandings of democracy. This book answers the question more explicitly by evaluating support for democratic institutions.

Meaning in the Middle East

The Middle East does not demonstrate this seeming consensus on the meaning of democracy. This can be seen in the World Values Survey results. Having people choose the government by election is well recognized as important to "democracy" in the Middle East, as in other places. Civil liberties to protect citizens are also broadly identified with democracy. The consensus, however, breaks down when other considerations are introduced. Equal rights for women are not viewed as essen-

tial in the same way that other rights protections are; survey respondents in Muslim-majority countries, including the Middle East, and in South America view this element as less essential to democracy. State interventions to control incomes is viewed as essential in the Middle East and Asia, while North America and Europe view it as far less crucial. State unemployment aid gets a higher rating on essentialness in MENA countries. The rating far exceeds the rating in North America or Oceania, while it is on par with considerations in Europe and Asian countries. In the Middle East, ratings of the essentialness of taxing the rich to subsidize the poor outstrips those in other regions, even much of Europe. Economic interests thus seem to play a larger role in MENA responses to what makes something "democratic."

Muslim-majority countries, including in the Middle East, are disproportionately represented among those with the highest ratings for religious authorities evaluating laws. This is a far cry from the position that democracy necessarily requires that religious authorities hold no sway in this domain. For instance, Davis, Goidel, and Zhao (2020, 853) assert that "secular pluralism and elected-self-determination [are] both core features of functional democracy." Identifying a military takeover of an inefficient regime as democratic is also much more likely in Muslim-majority countries, including in the Middle East.

AlAzzawi and Gouda (2017) approach it as a religious question. They compare Muslim and non-Muslim respondents in the sixth wave of the World Values Survey. Muslims, they conclude, place less value than non-Muslims on the procedural elements, such as elections and civil rights. Muslims also are more prone to what AlAzzawi and Gouda call "authoritarian democracy"—identifying military and religious leaders' control of the government as essential to "democracy"—than non-Muslims. They construe these beliefs about the essential nature of these possible elements of government as "higher preference" or "lower preference" for these institutions or as "qualms" about or "faith" in them, which is not what the question actually asks (11). They ultimately compare Muslims and non-Muslims' support for "democracy," despite the fact that they have just established that the respondents conceive of "democracy" differently. While research on global Muslim populations by necessity will invoke Middle Eastern communities, it also extends into multiple linguistic and cultural milieus, which are conflated here. These challenges are overlooked in an effort to establish a seeming religion-affiliated pseudo-consensus *opposed* to democracy.

These differences could all be attributed to the idea that the people in this part of the world are just not very democratic or do not understand what democracy is and what it is not. That is the implication of

scholars like Welzel (2021a, 14–15), who refer to these as "strongly twisted" understandings or "misunderstandings of democracy." Other researchers suggest that the differences come from having an instrumental view of democracy—democracy still involves elections, but these people are thinking about what those elections will get them and how much they might like those outcomes. They are then assumed to project those desires onto democracy as an idea.

Rather than suggest that these people are ignorant of democracy, I propose that researchers are ineffectually responding to the different meanings of the words introduced by the translated survey questionnaires. As such, this discussion of the so-called paradox has transpired without evidence that citizens have a solid or shared understanding of what the term even means. Consider the quote from Moroccan sociologist Fatima Mernissi (1992) at the beginning of this text. Mernissi is recounting growing up in her grandfather's harem; the women were watching the nightly news. Her aunt noted that speakers did not define *dimuqratiyya*; she wondered if *dimuqratiyya* was a country, an animal, or an *'afrita*, meaning a dirty trick. Given the way waves of democratization have played out across the world, there could be some truth in the latter interpretation. The fundamental point, though, is that *dimuqratiyya* is not one known thing.

Dimuqratiyya, this book will show, has the tenor of "the state as it should be." That means its meaning depends on the hearer. For some, the term conjures a set of political institutions. Others indicate that it describes a set of socioeconomic outcomes. It does not mean *democracy* specifically.

Arab Barometer data indicate that approximately half of the respondents view *dimuqratiyya* primarily as economic conditions rather than a political structure. In 2018, the Arab Barometer asked respondents in twelve Middle East/North African countries to identify, from a closed list, the most important characteristic of a *dimuqratiyya* (Arab Barometer V). Only 28.6 percent of the respondents, across the countries, identified one of the procedural elements—choosing a government by election and the freedom to criticize the government—as the most important; 66.8 percent identified a socioeconomic outcome—the government maintains law and order or the government ensures job opportunities for all—as the most important. In fact, jobs provision was the most commonly selected category (35.7 percent).[14] Rather than there being a consensus understanding of what is essential to *dimuqratiyya* around political *or* economic elements, this split indicates that there is the opposite of consensus. Furthermore, as Chapter 3 shows, which citizens hold which view of this construct is highly idiosyncratic. For simplicity, in this

book, a focus on political-institutional elements is called a political conception of *dimuqratiyya* (PCD); a focus on the socioeconomic outcomes is called a socioeconomic conception of *dimuqratiyya* (SECD).

Interestingly, there is also a schism in the Middle East between liberalism and democracy. For many Westerners, the term *democracy* is "shorthand for liberal democracy," assuming into it features like "the rule of law and the freedoms of speech, assembly, religion, and the press" (Plattner 2019, 6). Recent studies in Egypt and Tunisia find that citizens' attitudes toward elected government are effectively decoupled from their support for liberal values (Ridge 2022a, 2022b).[15] The region features both illiberal democrats and liberal nondemocrats in conjunction with the liberal democrats and less-than-liberal nondemocrats. Still less than *dimuqratiyya* can be assumed to mean democracy should it be assumed to mean liberal democracy.

This lack of consensus introduces questions of what citizens are endorsing when they endorse *dimuqratiyya*. Two diverging meanings are identified in the Arab Barometer. This book examines which citizens are more likely to hold which view of *dimuqratiyya*, whether these groups of citizens perform politics differently, and whether they hold different regime-type preferences. How citizens conceive of *dimuqratiyya*, after all, is not the same as whether or not they support democracy or *dimuqratiyya* as a system of government.

One point must be openly acknowledged in this discussion. This book is not intended to argue that Arabic-speaking respondents are "wrong," "uninformed," or "misguided" about what words mean. The questions posed to them by researchers have asked about a functionally different construct. As such, their answers reflect that construct and its differences from democracy. This is thus fundamentally opposed to Cho's (2015) conclusion. The intragroup discrepancies with regard to the meaning of *dimuqratiyya*—the topic of Chapter 3—may create the sense that some respondents are more correct than others with respect to how that construct should be understood. However, insofar as there is a discrepancy between democracy and *dimuqratiyya*, error should be assigned to researchers who failed to make their questions clear rather than respondents who answered the question as they understood it.

Plan for the Book

This book addresses—to say it bluntly—the causes and consequences of this diversity of understandings of *dimuqratiyya*. It draws on multiple data sources from the Arab world over two decades. Establishing how

citizens understand *dimuqratiyya*, for instance, will draw on several waves of data from the Arab Barometer. This will be the focus of the first half of the book.

Chapter 2 presents an overview of how democracy as a construct is understood in political science. It considers both how researchers talk about the construct and how they measure it. These measurement tools identify what the discipline considers fundamental to democracy. Namely, political science focuses on elements of institutional design—such as competitive elections and universal suffrage—to measure democracy. Some researchers have proposed more maximal definitions of democracy; they may invoke liberal values or welfare economic policies. However, the most commonly used measurements take the minimal, institutional approach. These definitions are the hidden foundation of the literature on democratization, democratic erosion, and democracy deficit that utilize these measurement systems. These conceptions of democracy are thus the touchstone against which Arabs' conceptions of *dimuqratiyya* are compared in the development of that work.

The chapter then compares the factors that make political scientists call a country democratic with those that make Arabs call their countries *dimuqratiyya*. The Arab Barometer allows citizens to rate a country's level of *dimuqratiyya*. The ratings do not map well to expert ratings of countries' democracy levels. Which individual- and state-level factors lead to a state's being given a high or low rating for *dimuqratiyya*? These patterns provide a subliminal insight into how citizens understand the construct onto which researchers have cast the meaning *democracy*. It shows that citizens' evaluations of their country's elections have some influence on their *dimuqratiyya* perceptions but that economic forces and opinions about the current government's performance play a much larger and more consistent role in their assessments. These findings provide a clear demonstration that *dimuqratiyya* and democracy are not one and the same.

The next chapter distinguishes citizens by their conceptions of *dimuqratiyya*. Using the Arab Barometer data, it finds that approximately half of the citizens in the Middle East/North Africa have a primarily political construal of *dimuqratiyya*, and approximately half conceive of *dimuqratiyya* primarily in socioeconomic terms. Who is more likely to identify *dimuqratiyya* with a socioeconomic outcome or with a political process? The study finds limited patterns of cross-cultural predictability of citizens' understanding of *dimuqratiyya*. Citizens' beliefs in this regard are highly idiosyncratic. As one Moroccan woman indicated, "The concept of *dimuqrāṭiyya* is broad and comprehensive, and everyone uses it from their own perspective" (Khanani 2021, 97). Given

this individuation, it is challenging to predict who will use it in a given way. Furthermore, it is doubtful that conception of *dimuqratiyya* would respond to intentional manipulation by governments or policy activists. This fact, though, does not make these social blocs immaterial. As the second half of the book demonstrates, there are multiple knock-on effects of these diverging conceptions of *dimuqratiyya*.

The discussion transitions from concept to practice in the second half. That is to say, the focus shifts from how citizens understand *dimuqratiyya* to how these different conceptions of *dimuqratiyya* engender different politics. Chapter 4 assesses the impact on regime-type preferences and political behavior. Recent Arab Barometer surveys demonstrate that individuals who conceive of *dimuqratiyya* in political terms are more likely to participate in politics. This includes institutionalized participation, like joining a party, and noninstitutionalized participation, like joining a protest or perpetrating political violence.[16] Furthermore, data from early waves of the Arab Barometer hint that different conceptions of *dimuqratiyya* are associated with different attitudes toward elected and unelected systems of government.

However, because existing surveys—even those that acknowledge that survey respondents do not all understand the word *democracy* or the word *dimuqratiyya* in the same way—continue to use that word in their questions, it is impossible to use these surveys to understand the implications of this varied understanding for citizens' attitudes toward democracy. Comparing the answers across clusters of understanding is like comparing apples to oranges. Properly answering this question requires original survey items that address democracy specifically rather than *dimuqratiyya*. To do that, this book draws on original surveys conducted in Egypt and Morocco.

Egypt is the largest Arab country. It has over one hundred million inhabitants and is a driving force in Arab culture. Chants from Tahrir Square—"Al-shaʿab yurīd isqāṭ al-niẓām" (the people want the overthrow of the regime)—created defining images of the Arab Spring. Egypt's prominence during the uprisings also gives it a prime position in the global understanding of the Middle East and its efforts to democratize. The country swept out a decades-long dictatorship and held elections. For electoral democratization, Egypt had to navigate what Hassan, Kendall, and Whitefields (2018) call the Scylla and Charybdis of Egyptian politics: Islamist and military rule. Eventually, the elected Islamist president was himself replaced in a military coup. The supposedly democratic nature of this coup—because the military is populist and Islamists cannot be democrats—demonstrates the ongoing

negotiations between democratic means, democratic processes, and democratic commitment.

Morocco, a constitutional monarchy at the other end of North Africa, has a different state structure than Egypt. The Moroccan monarchy has engaged iteratively with political reform, including transferring more power to parliament and approving alternations in government that involve nonmonarchist parties. These reforms were not true democratization but rather a "pluralization" of power, because the monarchy retains the true power, including the loyalty of the Ministries of Sovereignty: Justice, Defense, Foreign Affairs, Religious Affairs, and Interior (King 2019; Hibou 2011). After the February 20 Movement protests, new reforms and a new constitution were instituted. The movement's underlying concerns about economic problems and corruption were not resolved, but the reforms averted greater change. Morocco's history of the "depoliticization" of politics and the prominence of the king create a strong counterpoint to Egypt's political dynamism (Maghraoui 2002, 2015). The influence of these counter-democratic structures on the relationship between *dimuqratiyya* and democratic commitment will be discussed.

Respondents were asked how they feel about *choosing the government by election*. Namely, do they think that electing the government is best, or is it sometimes better to use a nonelected government? Do they think that choosing the government by election is appropriate for their countries? Both of these questions are informative in their own light. The combination of the two identifies *committed democrats*. People who think that elected government is both right and good are the people we would expect to promote democratization and to defend a democratic regime under threat. They were also given the opportunity to reject undemocratic systems of government. Crucially, these surveys demonstrate that for many citizens who endorse democracy, it is not the only acceptable government. It is one choice among many acceptable alternatives. Thus, the obstacle to democratization is not public opposition but rather the potential to settle on a nondemocratic alternative.

Chapters 5 and 6 discuss the relationship between Egyptians' and Moroccans' individual understandings of *dimuqratiyya* and their support for electoral democracy. These studies find that expressed support for choosing the government by election is lower than reported support rates for *dimuqratiyya*. In both cases, a sizeable democracy-*dimuqratiyya* gap is identified. The standard questions have overestimated support for democracy, indicating positive translation bias. Furthermore, in the surveys from Egypt, the research finds that citizens who identify *dimuqratiyya* with a socioeconomic outcome are less likely to be invested in maintaining a democratic government and more open to several non-

democratic alternatives. The military's involvement in Egyptian political practice is particularly discussed. Parallel surveys in Morocco, however, find that while Moroccans who conceive of *dimuqratiyya* as a set of political institutions are more likely to favor electoral democracy, they are not necessarily proof against nondemocratic alternatives. The import of *dimuqratiyya* is particularly discussed in relation to Morocco's monarchy, which seems to have infiltrated *dimuqratiyya*.

The final empirical chapter considers what kinds of state structures citizens prefer. Namely, it considers whether individuals who think of *dimuqratiyya* primarily in political terms and those who think of it in socioeconomic terms would make different choices for their countries' political futures if they could through a conjoint experiment embedded in the Egypt and Morocco surveys. Respondents were shown several descriptions of potential state structures and asked to choose, of those options, in which state they would prefer to live.

Democratization and democracy are processes of perpetual political choices. What do the people want? When presented with the choice of regimes described in terms of their opportunities for political participation, the role religion and religious leaders would play in the state, and the economic outcomes that the regime would generate, the overall results from Egypt and Morocco are markedly similar. In both countries, citizens prefer a state that features elections and opportunities for political participation while generating widespread employment. Although they want the state to recognize a state religion, they seek no role for religious leaders in that government.

PCD respondents and SECD respondents, however, do reveal different preferences. Again, citizens who view *dimuqratiyya* as a political structure are more committed to choosing an elections-based state and less focused on economic outcomes. They are also more invested in keeping religious leaders out of the government. Not only, then, do these citizens conceive differently of *dimuqratiyya* as a theoretical construct, a term to be defined; they also want different things in and from their government. These differences in their state-structural preferences suggest that some respondents are casting the term *dimuqratiyya* onto the government they prefer rather than simply viewing it as an idea that exists separately from their preferences. It is, as Chapter 2 suggests, a government that works. What working means can be particularized to the respondent. It may be a government for the people, even if it is not, in both conceptions, of the people or by the people.

The conclusion considers the implications of these patterns for political science and Middle Eastern studies research. With respect to the respondents' understanding of *dimuqratiyya* and its relationship to democratic

commitment, that the sizeable population with an economic understanding of *dimuqratiyya* has less interest in elected governance contributes to our understanding of the democracy paradox in the Middle East. The social support for democratic governance has been systematically overestimated through translation bias. As such, this book concludes that the reported levels of support for democracy in the Middle East are likely presenting an overly rosy impression of support for electoral democracy and the interest in democratization.

This disparity in conceptions of *dimuqratiyya* also can inform researchers' understanding of protest movements—namely, the potential to misunderstand the objectives of these movements. This could apply to those from decades ago when Mernissi's aunt posed her question or to the most recent movements. Are these pro-democracy protests? Just because they endorse *dimuqratiyya* does not mean that they call for *democracy* as political scientists have used the term or that democratization is a singular or overriding objective. These findings suggest that, to a certain extent, the efficacy of some previous social movements, such as the Arab uprisings, has been inaccurately characterized, and arguably underrated, by researchers and outside observers. Afterall, if they were pro-*dimuqratiyya* movements, then their failure to install a durable democracy does not mean that they have missed the mark. Success would depend on how influential the movement was in instituting elements of *dimuqratiyya*, like equitable economic policies.

Additionally, these results highlight the options that authoritarian regimes have to co-opt or forestall opposition efforts, even potentially while portraying themselves as supporters of *dimuqratiyya*. Caution is urged in construing political agents as supporters of democracy based on appeals to *dimuqratiyya*. This conceptual mismatch introduces an avenue for supporting authoritarian persistence. Outside observers, including foreign powers, should bear these competing forces in mind when considering "pro-democracy" interventions. Durable democracy will require satisfying popular will and averting authoritarians' efforts to use *dimuqratiyya* against democracy. Securing democratization in the region will ultimately also require *dimuqratization*.

Finally, the book also notes that other central political constructs can face this challenge of diverging meanings. Ciftci (2022), for instance, unpacks the multiple meanings given to *'adl/adalet* (justice) in Turkey. Other constructs that merit such study could include secularism, nationalism, and human rights. The list is extensive. The study of democracy should also be extended to other regions. It is possible that this instance of translation bias for "democracy" is an Arabic-language-

specific phenomenon. That cannot be evaluated with these surveys. However, it is also possible that the seeming global consensus about how *democracy* is understood around the world—in the many other languages that are used—has been overstated. Schaffer (2014) argues that it is. Other researchers will have to take up the mantel of examining this point in different language milieus. Countries like China have made ready use of the defense that their governments are "for the people" to claim democratic credentials for their authoritarian regimes. How has language shaped their ability to make such bold assertions? Survey methodologists and researchers will have to grapple with the potential need to alter long-standing survey questions to address these disparities or to account for the biased results the word choice is inducing. To do otherwise risks researchers and respondents talking past each other by consequence of language. First, though, we look inward at political science and how political scientists and Arab publics understand *democracy* and *dimuqratiyya*.

Notes

1. "Pourquoi on ne nous explique pas cette *dimoqratiya*? Est-ce que c'est un pays ou une effrita ou un animal ou une île?" (Mernissi 1992, 115).

2. Aʿjabnī al-istibyān kathīran li'annhu min al-jayyid maʿifa arā' al-nās ḥawla al-siyāsa wa niẓām al-ḥukm fī baladihim.

3. Hādhā al-nawʿ min al-istiṭlā'āt mufīd jiddan li-maʿrifa arā' al-muwaṭinīn wa kadhālk li-l-nuhūḍ bil-dawla ilā a'lā al-markākiz.

4. Istiṭlā' siyāsa al-gharaḍ minhu za'za'a thiqa al-muwaṭinīn fī al-qiyāda al siyāsiyya wabaththh rūḥ al-tamarrud 'alā al-niẓām al-ḥālī li-tadmīr al-dawla.

5. Aswa' al-ḥukūmāt fī al-'ālim hiyya al-ḥukūmāt al-'arabiyya wa al-ḥukūmāt al-islāmiyya.

6. Note: Arabic is a gendered language, and many modes have been designed for transliterating Arabic script into Latin characters. For consistency, the word will be rendered as *dimuqratiyya*. *Dimuqratiyya* will also be used where the adjectival form is meant, regardless of the Arabic-language gender of the referent (i.e., the difference between *balad* [masculine] and *dawla* [feminine] for country).

7. Best practices in questionnaire design for multinational, multicultural surveys involve "subject-area experts, area and cultural specialists, linguistic experts, and survey methodologists" (Lyberg et al. 2021, 52). This is a logistically challenging process. Most multicultural surveys now use TRAPD protocols based on those developed for Bible translations (Lyberg et al. 2021). The instrument is translated, then reviewed by a survey and/or topic expert and the translator(s); adjudication is made about issues in the translations, which are then modified; the instrument is pretested on the target population; and documentation is made regarding the process and decisions that were taken.

8. Pérez (2011) dubs the differences in survey questions' performance based on translation bias "differential item functioning."

9. Consider an analogy: if a survey asks respondents whether they would allow a cat in their homes, and some respondents picture a tabby kitten and some respondents picture a lion, the researcher—who probably meant the former—is likely to misreport and misconstrue the pet policies preferred by the latter group.

10. Democratic commitment refers to citizens' willingness to stand by democracy as a system of government. As will be discussed at greater length in the second half of the book, democratic commitment is typically measured based on the belief that democracy is the best form of government and that it is appropriate for one's country.

11. Arguably, Fuchs and Roller (2006) engage in such a targeted classification. In their open-ended answers, 12 percent of their sample reportedly identify "social justice and economic welfare" as "the meaning of democracy," but they include this population with those answering "liberty and basic rights," "political participation," and "rule of law and equality before the law" to identify "a striking homogenous and focused meaning of democracy," despite its not being a clearly political-institutional representation of democracy (78–79). Their conclusion of uniform understanding is, then, a generous estimate.

12. For this discussion, ratings from six to ten on the one-to-ten essentialness scale are considered as rating the feature essential.

13. Cho (2015, 247) concludes that "only 36 percent of respondents correctly evaluated all four regime characteristics." By default, a global majority are wrong. He attributes this supposed misunderstanding to over acceptance of the nondemocratic features, while, by and large, "the last three decades have been far more successful in enlightening global citizens about the essential attributes of democracy" (249). Unfortunately, the role of translation and the resultant mixture of constructs does not enter into his discussion. As such, he attributes error to respondents that may be better attributed to design choices.

14. Postcolonial MENA governments used extensive public-sector employment as a large-scale jobs program until the structural adjustments of the late twentieth century. The expectation of employment and the cost of fulfilling it placed political and socioeconomic burdens on their societies, which contributed to the Arab Spring and contemporary issues (Hong 2019; Bishara 2021b).

15. Islamists may particularly struggle with this dimension. Liberalism is often an assertion of individual rights. Islamists' assertions of group rights, such as the protection of Muslims' sensibilities in a Muslim-majority society, argue that individual freedoms could undermine the group's freedoms (Khanani 2021). It is an argument for an illiberal democracy. More work is needed on this point, but it is beyond the scope of this book.

16. The Middle East is not unique in this regard. Schaffer (2000, 145) proposes that Western scholars have struggled to understand political behavior in Senegal because the Senegalese are responding to the "different sets of values and concerns" in *demokaraasi* than the scholars envision for *democracy.* He argues that the consensus/solidarity focus of *demokaraasi* leads the Senegalese to engage differently with the concept of voting. In this case, Arab Barometer results indicate that conception of *dimuqratiyya* is linked to the likelihood of engaging in many political behaviors—the PCD are more participatory—but voting is the exception.