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## Change in Willingness to Participate in Political Action in the Middle East

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## Abstract

This study examines change in willingness to engage in political action in five Middle Eastern countries (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, and Turkey) using data from the 2005-2009 and 2010-2014 *World Values Survey*. Despite the high levels of political action observed in the Middle East during the Arab spring, individuals in the region report greater reluctance to sign a petition, boycott, or demonstrate than individuals in all other world regions. We examine the effect of biographical availability, cultural attitudes and behaviors, and geopolitical beliefs on willingness to engage in political action at two time-points: before and after/concurrent with the Arab spring. At both points in time, education, civic engagement, interest in politics, and confidence in national and global governance are key in explaining willingness to participate (words=125).

## INTRODUCTION

Despite the recent political uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA),<sup>i</sup> individuals in the region continue to report less willingness to participate in political action than individuals in other areas of the world. This may be because types of political action that are routine in other regions, such as Europe and North America, entail high risks in the Middle East, such as loss of employment, court charges, police violence, and detention without trial (Bayat 2013). The inability of individuals to organize also limits mobilization; except for rare episodes of political opportunity, “the authoritarian regimes in the region have expressed little tolerance toward sustained collective dissent” (Bayat 2013:9). Analysis of Global Barometer data on the pre-Arab spring era shows that in comparison to individuals in other developing regions, respondents in the Middle East were significantly less likely to have voted in the last election, to report interest in politics, to participate in volunteer activity, and to have contact with public officials (Kuhn 2012). It is our aim to better understand the factors that encourage or hinder individual political action in the Middle East, and how these factors may have changed during the Arab spring period.

We examine individuals’ willingness to engage in political action in a selection of five Middle Eastern countries within two time frames: before and after/concurrent with the Arab

spring uprisings<sup>ii</sup>. Four of the countries we examine (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Morocco) experienced a surge of political action as part of the Arab spring. Turkey provides an interesting counterpoint: while not an Arab state, it did experience large anti-government protests in 2013, beginning with the Gezi Park demonstrations. Recognizing that classical social movement theory is insufficient to explain political action in the Middle East (Beinin and Vairel 2013), we draw on modernization and world society theories, creating country models of political action that incorporate traditional measures of biographical availability as well as cultural attitudes and geopolitical beliefs.

We hypothesize that education, civic engagement, interest in politics, and confidence in national and global governance will be key to explaining willingness to participate in political action at both time points. However, we expect that the direction of effect will not be consistent for all of these predictors across countries and at both time points. For example, research has shown that “system justification” reduces willingness to protest. Individuals who believe that a system is justified are less likely to engage in political action (Jost et al. 2012). Ideas on global governance, namely attitudes towards the United Nations, may vary throughout the region and have disparate effects on protest behavior. We discuss our expectations for the predictors in greater depth in the section sub-titled, “Why Do People Protest?”

## **THE ARAB SPRING**

It is impossible to discuss change in political action in the Middle East over the last half-decade without discussing the impact of the Arab spring. The Arab uprisings demonstrated a significant increase in collective protest behavior that is expected to continue as “the end of political apathy of large sectors of the population have embodied and set in motion dynamics of political change” (Beinin and Vairel 2013). Four of the five countries we examine (Egypt, Iraq,

Jordan, and Morocco) experienced civil uprisings or significant protests before or concurrent with the second wave of surveys, allowing for an examination of how the overall percentage of individuals willing to protest and the factors contributing to reluctance to participate in political action may have changed with the Arab spring. Although we cannot discuss any of our cases in depth, we briefly summarize the protests, demonstrations, and conflict occurring in each country. We then turn to the main focus of this paper, which is a comparative analysis across the five countries.

### *Uprisings and Issues of Contention in Each Country*

Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan were early examples of the Arab spring. Protests in Tunisia at the end of 2010 spread to Egypt in January 2011 and led to the ousting of the long-standing authoritarian leader, Hosni Mubarak, in February (Moghadam 2013). More protests were spurred by the delay of parliamentary elections. When elections did occur, a dominant Islamist party came to power in January 2012. In June 2012, Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Morsi was elected president, and protests continued over the new constitution, which limited free speech and increased the political role of Islam. Morsi was ousted by the military in July 2013 after ongoing mass demonstrations. In response to Morsi's ousting, there were demonstrations and conflict. A new constitution was approved in January 2014 and former army chief Abdul Fattah al-Sisi was elected president in May 2014 (BBC News).

In Morocco, demonstrations also followed the protests in Tunisia. In February 2011, thousands of people demonstrated in Rabat and other cities calling for constitutional reforms and limits on the king's power. King Mohammed responded by proposing reforms, but protests continued calling for greater action. Parliamentary elections in May 2011 placed a moderate Islamist Justice and Development party in power, headed by Prime Minister Benkirane. In May

2012, large-scale protests continued, accusing Prime Minister Benkirane of failing to meet proposed reforms (BBC News).

Protests in Jordan were also spurred by those in Tunisia, beginning in January 2011. Protestors called for constitutional reforms and greater political power for the Muslim Brotherhood's party continuing through late 2012. In November 2012, there were mass demonstrations against the lifting of fuel subsidies. In January 2013, pro-governmental candidates won the parliamentary elections, but these were boycotted by the opposition party, the Islamic Action Front of the Muslim Brotherhood (BBC News).

In Iraq, protests related to the Arab spring were less clearly delineated due to the ongoing turmoil there. There were widespread protests in western Iraq at the end of 2013 over what protestors saw as a campaign against Sunnis by Shias in power (Ruhayem 2013, BBC News). In September 2014 there were protests in Kurdistan over rising fuel prices (Ekurd Daily 2014). In sum, it is clear that the Arab countries we examine experienced a sudden increase in political action as part of the Arab spring, supporting our hypothesis that we may see change in *willingness* to protest and in the factors predicting political action within the second time frame.

As a non-Arab country, Turkey is a unique case in our study. Turkey experienced protests later than the Arab spring countries. Demonstrations began in May 2013 in response to violent repression of protestors of the Gezi Park urban development plan. More than 10,000 demonstrated at Gezi Park on May 30, 2013 and about 100,000 people on May 31, 2013. This was followed by anti-government protests across Turkey calling for greater civil liberties and for the government to protect secular rights (BBC News). In March of 2014, there were protests in over 30 towns and cities over the death of a teenager hit by a teargas canister in the 2013 protests (BBC News). While Turkey is not an Arab state, it saw large-scale collective action.

## **WHY DO PEOPLE PROTEST?**

### ***Country-level and Global Change***

The Arab spring uprisings presented challenges to traditional social movement theorizing (Beinin and Vairel 2013), which is why many researchers and policy makers were caught by surprise at the power and swiftness with which these protests spread across the region. After the first national uprisings, researchers put forth a number of factors that likely contributed to the revolutions. *The Economist* produced “The Shoe-Thrower’s Index,” which included several factors, including the incumbent’s years in power, democracy, corruption, press freedom, the size of the youth population, and GDP per capita. It also listed low employment rates and a repressive secret police force as other factors that should have been included if data were available (*Economist* 2011). Other research has argued that the mass expansion of education is a key factor in explaining the political uprisings of the Arab spring. Middle Eastern countries that saw large protests also tended to have had relatively recent large expansions of education, but relatively low growth in employment opportunities (Campante and Chor 2012).

Modernization theory (Rostow 1960) is a useful first step to explaining why these factors contributed to the Arab spring starting when it did, and where it did. Huntington (1968) argued that with increased mass education, the population would demand democratic freedoms. He was also concerned that if modernization occurred too rapidly, cultural changes would not be able to keep pace, leading to uprisings. The MENA region has seen rapid expansion of education, including very high tertiary enrollment rates for both men and women, but few employment opportunities, and a small private sector. Unemployment rates in the region are some of the highest in the world (Nimrod 2006). We argue that the recent expansion of mass higher

education, combined with high unemployment and low democratic freedoms, encouraged political action in the Middle East.

World society theory (Meyer, Ramirez and Soysal 1992; Meyer 1999) provides another lens for understanding the role of globalization in the Arab spring, and other forms of political action in the Middle East. World society theory (similar to World polity theory) argues that as the globe becomes ‘smaller’ due to increased movement in people, goods, and ideas, countries will become more similar in terms of behavior and policy, and individuals can draw on a much larger repertoire of action. New forms of media (especially social networking platforms) have created a space for not just for criticism, organization, and activism in the region, but also for learning from activists across space, and across time. In Egypt, since 2008, social media has played a key role in allowing individuals to organize protests (Rizzo, Price, and Meyer 2012; Khondker 2011). Social media has been particularly key for women, who have even less ability to organize in public spaces than men, and have made use of blogs and Facebook (Al-Ali 2012). We believe that the shrinking world polity has led to a new expectation of democratic freedoms, which are ensconced—at least in rhetoric—at the existing global governance institutions we have, such as the United Nations. We also believe that the internet and social media have enabled individuals to organize collectively, even in repressive environments.

### ***Biographical Availability***

In empirical research, historically, personal characteristics of individuals that influence participation in political action include age, gender, marital status, education, and employment status. Biographical availability explanations for social movement participation (McAdam 1986) focus on socio-demographic characteristics that encourage or constrain political action. Those who are older and married tend to be more reluctant to engage in political action (Jenkins and

Wallace 1996). Women also participate less than men, due to traditional gender norms and familial constraints (Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 1997). Employment might be considered a deterrent to political action as these individuals have more to lose; however, previous research (e.g. McAdam 1986; Nepstad and Smith 1999) has found that people in the United States and Nicaragua who are employed full-time are actually more likely to protest. Full-time employment leads to higher socioeconomic status and more resources, both of which predict greater protest activity (Brady, Verba and Schlozman 1995). Education has also been linked to increased protest potential, and universities have been seen as key hotspots for the development of political behavior and social movements (Hall, Rodeghier, and Useem 1986; Jenkins and Wallace 1996). Just focusing on age, with approximately one-fifth of the Middle East population between the ages of 15 and 24 (Assad and Roudi-Fahimi 2007), there was substantial ‘biographical availability’ for protest before the Arab spring, but protests were extremely rare.

### ***Cultural Attitudes and Behaviors***

We recognize that modernization theory does not just posit economic growth and increased human capital, but also changed cultural attitudes. Accordingly, we include measures of cultural attitudes and behavior that we expect to shape individuals’ willingness to engage in political action. We expect that a trend of rising social liberalism in the Middle East over the past ten to fifteen years will be an important explanatory factor in examinations of political action in this region. Research has shown a rise of social individualism in Iran and increased support for gender equality in both Saudi Arabia and Iran (Moaddel 2010). Thus, we use a measure of social liberalism which includes a scaled measure of gender ideology, a scaled measure of social individualism, and a measure of democracy. Social liberalism is predictive of attitudes in a number of areas, contributing to reduced social prejudice (Lambert and Chasteen 1997), greater



environmentalism (Buttel and Flinn 1978), and opposition to the death penalty (Jacobs and Carmichael 2002). Those who are more socially liberal are also expected to be less reluctant to engage in political action. We use an index of social liberalism consisting of a scaled measure of gender ideology, a scaled measure of social individualism, and a measure of support for democracy (see Table 2).

Civic engagement is believed to foster generalized trust and demonstrates that citizens are interested in shaping their societies. Research has also shown that individuals do not need to be part of political associations for civic engagement to lead to increased political awareness—even having more individuals involved in artistic groups leads to better governance. This can be explained by theory of “spillover effect,” which demonstrates that that involvement in non-political arenas, such as workplace or religious organizations, leads to greater political participation (Peterson 1992).

The role of religiosity in constraining protest in the Middle East is also unclear. When looking at the relationship between religiosity and support for democracy in the Middle East, Tessler (2002) found that high attachment to Islam did not preclude support for democracy in any way. Protest and public speech are arguably important components of a strong democracy. How does religiosity affect willingness to protest, then? In the Arab spring uprisings, there were alternative accounts suggesting that those protesting were “secular liberals,” or alternatively, the religiously devout who were encouraged to protest in sermons at their mosques (Hoffman and Jamal 2013). However, analysis using 2011 Arab Barometer data found that those who frequently read the Qur’an were the most likely to protest, while those who rarely or never read it were the least likely (Hoffman and Jamal 2013).

### ***Geopolitical Beliefs***

We draw on world society theory for a third set of explanatory factors; namely, geopolitical beliefs that examine individuals' interest in politics, their views on authority, and their beliefs about their relationship to the rest of the world. First, views on the legitimacy or authority of national government are expected to affect protest behavior. Research has shown that "system justification" reduces willingness to protest. Those who believe that a system is justified are less likely to engage in political action (Jost et al. 2012). Ideas on global governance, namely attitudes towards the United Nations, may vary throughout the region and have disparate effects on protest behavior. For example, Kuwaitis are expected have more positive views of global governance due to the Iraqi occupation in 1990 and the western role in liberation (Ulrichsen 2011). In contrast, individuals in those countries that were formerly colonies may see global governance as neo-colonial western dominance (Ulrichsen 2011).

## **DATA AND ANALYSIS**

Data come from the 2005-2009 (wave 5) and 2010-2014 (wave 6) of the *World Values Survey* (WVS). The WVS consists of six waves of surveys that have been conducted between 1981 and 2014 by a global network of social scientists. Nearly 100 countries have been surveyed using common questionnaires, which allows for an examination of change in values and behaviors (WVS). MENA nations available in the 5<sup>th</sup> wave were Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, and Turkey. We used all except Iran because respondents there were not asked about their willingness to participate in political action (our dependent variable). We examine the same five countries in the 6<sup>th</sup> wave<sup>1</sup>. First, we examine change in individual reluctance to participate in political action in the Middle East by examining the percentage of individuals in each wave who report that they would never sign a petition, take part in a boycott, or sign a petition. We contextualize these percentages by comparing them to the percentage reluctant to

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participate in political action in other world regions. Next, we develop multivariate regression models for each country in each time frame to compare significant predictors of reluctance to engage in political action.

***Dependent Variable: Scale of Political Action***

To study reluctance to participate, we use a scale of three items from the 5<sup>th</sup> wave of the *World Values Survey*: unwillingness to sign a petition, unwillingness to join a boycott, and unwillingness to participate in a peaceful demonstration. For each item, respondents were asked if they have done, might do, or would never do the action in question. These items were fairly well distributed, although in the Middle East substantially more individuals responded that they would never do the action in question than responded that they have done or might do the action. Each of the items was recoded so that those who said they have done or might do the action in question were coded as 0 and those who said they would never do the item in question were coded as 1. They were then combined in a scale. Exploratory factor analysis with the four Middle Eastern nations showed that these items had factor loadings above 0.8. Cronbach's alpha (reliability coefficient) for the three items is 0.8008.

***Reluctance to Sign Petitions, Join Boycotts, and Attend Demonstrations by World Region***

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Table 1 presents the percentage of individuals unwilling to sign a petition, join a boycott, or participate in a peaceful demonstration by region of the world in each wave of the survey. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, 64% of respondents would never sign a petition, 70% would never join a boycott, and 68% would never participate in a peaceful demonstration in Wave 5<sup>iii</sup>. When the MENA region is limited to the five nations available for analysis in both waves (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, and Turkey), 75% of MENA residents

report that they would never sign a petition, 78% that they would never join a boycott, and 75% that they would never attend a demonstration in Wave 6. For each type of political action, these are higher levels of reluctance than seen in the previous wave, demonstrating that *overall, for men and women combined*, reluctance to participate in political action has *increased* in these Middle Eastern countries between the two waves<sup>iv</sup>.

### ***Independent Variables***

In accordance with our theoretical frameworks, the models include three categories of independent variables. First, following classical social movement theory, we use measures of biographical availability, an approach that highlights the importance of personal characteristics. *Education* is an ordinal measure, ranging from one (no formal education) to nine (has a university degree). *Employment* is a dichotomous variable where one is employed (full-time, part-time, or self-employed) and zero is not employed. *Gender* is a dichotomous variable where ‘women’ are coded as one and ‘men’ are coded as zero. *Marital status* is a dichotomous variable where one is married, and all others are coded as zero. *Age* is coded in years.

Second, drawing on modernization theory, we use measures of cultural attitudes and beliefs to examine the cultural changes that are expected to accompany the economic and human development that has occurred in the region. *Social individualism* (Table 2) is measured by three items: 1) agreement with “Obedience is important for a child” (reverse coded); 2) agreement with “Independence is important for a child”; and 3) agreement with “One of my main goals in life has been to make my parents proud.” All items are coded so that a higher score represents greater individualism. Gender ideology is measured by level of agreement with 3 items: 1) “Men make better political leaders than women”; 2) “When jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to a job than women”; and 3) “University is more important for a boy than a girl.” All

items are coded so that a higher score indicates greater gender egalitarianism. Support for democracy is measured by a question asking whether having a democratic political system is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad, or very bad thing (where a higher score indicates greater support for democracy). These three constructs align well, and this measure of social liberalism has been used in previous research to predict protest behavior (see Moaddel 2012).

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

*Civic engagement* is measured by a scale of three items: whether an individual is an active member, an inactive member, or not a member of a sports club; of an educational, art, or music club; and a humanitarian/charitable organization. Greater scores on this variable indicate more civic engagement. Factor analysis of these items indicated good alignment with factor loading scores above 0.6. *Importance of religion* is an ordinal measure of how important religion is in the respondent's life, where one is 'not at all important' and four is 'very important'.

*Religious interpretation of the law* is a separate measure of how strongly the respondent feels about the relationship between religion and politics. The measure is part of a series of statements on what makes for a good democracy. Here, we use "in a democracy, religious authorities interpret the laws", with choices ranging from one (an essential characteristic of democracy) to ten (not an essential characteristic of authority). Thus, higher scores indicate a greater belief in the separation of religion and politics. Some research has found that secularism leads to increased potential for political action (Jenkins and Wallace 1996). Support for secular politics in Iraq has risen over the past decade (Moaddel 2010).

Third, we use measures of geopolitical beliefs to capture the effects of globalization on attitudes, which are highlighted in world society theory. We measured *political interest* with an

item that asks individuals how important politics is in their life, where possible responses range from 1, very important, to 4, not at all important. The item was reverse coded so a higher score corresponds to a greater importance of politics to the individual. To measure *confidence in the government*, we used an item that asked respondents how much confidence they had in the government, where response choices ranged from 1, a great deal, to 4, none at all. This item was also reverse coded so that a higher score represents greater confidence in the government. *Confidence in the United Nations* was measured on the same four-point scale, and was similarly reverse coded. We also measured how individuals felt about *having a strong leader*, where response choices ranged from 1, very good, to 4, very bad. This was also reversed, so a higher score indicates favoring a strong leader. Finally, we measured the *degree to which individuals feel globally connected*. We used an item assessing individual agreement with the statement, “I see myself as a world citizen,” where response choices ranged from 1, strongly agree, to 4, strongly disagree. This item was reverse coded so a higher score indicates a greater feeling of world citizenship.

## **FINDINGS**

### ***Factors Predicting Reluctance: 2005-2009***

Multivariate regression results are presented in Table 3 and 4. Results of regressions examining the factors constraining political action in the Middle East in the earlier time frame demonstrated a few trends that were apparent across the region: women were more likely to be reluctant to participate in political action (significant in all five countries) and those with less education were more likely to express reluctance (a significant predictor in Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan). Other findings were clearly country-specific.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

In Turkey, more reluctance to participate was found among people who were: less educated, less liberal, not employed, not civically engaged, and highly religious; among people who did not consider politics important; among people who favored a religious interpretation of law; and among women as a whole. In Egypt, those reluctant to participate were older, were more likely to be women, were less educated, and were married. Those reluctant were also less liberal, less civically engaged, less likely to think politics were important, and more likely to view themselves as world citizens. In Morocco, more reluctance to participate was found among people who were: employed, less educated, less religious, and less interested in politics; among those who favored a religious interpretation of law; among those who did not believe a strong leader to be important; among those who did not see themselves as world citizens; and among woman as a whole. Looking to Jordan, those more likely to be reluctant were women, the less educated, the less civically engaged, those who placed less importance on politics, those with more confidence in the government, and those who did not feel a strong leader to be important. In Iraq, those reluctant to participate were women, unmarried, did not place particular importance on religion or politics, did not favor a religious interpretation of law, had confidence in the government, and lacked confidence in the UN.

***Factors Predicting Reluctance: 2010-2014***

[TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

Table 4 presents the corresponding country regression models using the 2010-2014 wave of data. Looking across all five countries, there appears to be a clear change in the role of gender between the two time frames. In the later period, Iraq is the only country where women are significantly less likely to participate in political action, unlike in the previous models where being female was a clear deterrent across all five countries. The models using the 2010-2014 data

suggest that being female is no longer a key factor in reluctance to participate in political action in the Middle East. Besides gender no longer being significant, looking across the model shows much consistency of predictors from one time period to the next. Across nearly all countries and both waves, the more educated are more likely to protest, as are those who are more engaged in civic life and place a greater importance on politics. In contrast, confidence in the government reduces the likelihood of protesting—and yet, confidence in the UN encourages protest behavior. In those cases when liberalism is significant, those who hold more liberal attitudes are more likely to protest. Next, we discuss each country model individually, focusing on consistency and change in significant factors influencing reluctance.

In Turkey, those with greater education, who are more liberal, place high importance on politics, and are engaged in civic life are the least likely to express reluctance to participate in political action. However, confidence in government increases reluctance to act in both waves of data. Turkish women were more reluctant to protest than men in the earlier period, but not in the later wave. Also, in the earlier period, being employed decreased reluctance, and being religious increased it, but neither of these factors was significant in the second time frame. At the later period, those who were married were more reluctant to participate.

In Egypt, in both time periods, those who were older were more reluctant to protest, while those who were educated, reported greater civic engagement, and were more interested in politics were less reluctant. Some socio-demographic effects differed between waves: women and the married were more reluctant to protest only in the earlier period and the employed were less reluctant in the second period. Looking at attitudes, seeing oneself as a world citizen increased reluctance only in the first period. Confidence in the UN decreased reluctance in the second period.



In Morocco, far fewer factors predict reluctance to protest in the later period. In the second time period, only civic engagement, interest in politics, and confidence in the UN are significant; each decreases the likelihood that individuals will be reluctant to participate. At the earlier time period, women and the employed were more reluctant, while education, importance of religion, importance of politics, secularism, belief in the importance of a strong leader, and seeing oneself as a world citizen all decreased reluctance.

In Jordan, the predictors in each time period are very similar. At each time, those who are educated, engaged in civic life, and place a strong importance on politics are the least reluctant. Confidence in the government increases reluctance. Just as in most of the other countries examined, women are more reluctant only in the earlier time period. Belief in the importance of a strong leader decreased reluctance in the first wave, and employment decreased reluctance in the second wave.

Iraq is the only country where women were more reluctant to protest in the second time period as well as the first. In both time periods, those who placed more importance on politics and more confidence in the UN were less reluctant to protest. Those who reported greater confidence in the government were more reluctant to protest. There were some differences in the effect of socio-demographics between the two waves. Being married decreased reluctance only in the first wave and greater education increased reluctance only in the second wave. In terms of attitudes and behaviors, those who placed a greater importance on religion and the secular were less reluctant in the first wave. Those who were engaged in civic life, placed less importance on a strong leader, and did not consider themselves world citizens were less reluctant in the second wave. Table 5 presents a summary of the results across waves and countries.

[TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE]

### *Tests for Equality of Regression Coefficients*

Tests for equality of regression coefficients can be used to determine “whether the effect of a given independent variable is the same before and after some historically relevant point in time” (Paternoster et al. 1998). In this case, we examine whether the factors influencing reluctance to engage in political action are different post Arab spring. For each case in which a variable significantly influences political action in one wave but not in the other, we conduct a hypothesis test to determine if the null hypothesis, that the coefficients are not different, can be rejected. For hypothesis testing we use a z-test at the .05 alpha level. Looking first to the effect of gender, we find a significant difference in Jordan, where women are no longer more reluctant than men to engage in political action after the Arab spring. The effect of education differs in Iraq. Post Arab spring, the more educated were more reluctant to protest. In Egypt, after the Arab spring, the employed were less likely to be reluctant to protest than the unemployed. In Turkey, the married were significantly more likely to be reluctant post Arab spring. In Iraq, there is a significant difference in the effect of religiosity before and after the Arab spring. Prior to the Arab spring, placing a higher importance on religion encouraged political action, but not after it. In terms of geopolitical beliefs, the effect of confidence in the government on political action changed in Jordan. Before the Arab spring, believing in the importance of a strong leader reduced reluctance, but not in the post Arab spring period. The most consistent change across countries came in the effect of belief in a strong leader before and after the Arab spring. In Turkey, Jordan, and Iraq, the effect of believing in a strong leader on political action changed with the Arab spring. In Turkey and Iraq, believing in a strong leader significantly increased reluctance post Arab spring, but was not a significant factor in the prior period. In Jordan, believing in a strong leader decreased reluctance only in the period prior to the Arab spring. In

sum, there were a number of significant differences in predictors in the two time periods, but no clear change in any predictors that were consistent across countries and in direction of effect.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

In this paper, we examine change in individual willingness to engage in political action in five Middle Eastern countries (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, and Turkey) in two time frames: 2005-2009 (in the pre-Arab spring era) and 2010-2014 (after or concurrent with the Arab spring uprisings).

In examining political action, we find that education, interest in politics, and civic engagement are the best predictors that individuals in the Middle East will be willing to sign a petition, take part in a boycott, or participate in a demonstration. This suggests that modernization, which has led to a relatively recent mass expansion of higher education in the Middle East (with high tertiary enrollment rates for both men and women), has been a key factor in explaining the increase in collective action and political participation that has recently occurred in the Middle East. Education has been recognized previously as a key factor influencing protest in the U.S. (Hall, Rodeghier, and Useem 1986; Jenkins and Wallace 1996). Not only does a college education expose students to new and controversial ideas, but colleges also are areas where students can easily organize, where there is a high degree of political awareness, and where students are typically not yet constrained in their activism by full-time employment and family obligations.

Changing cultural attitudes and behaviors also explain increased collective action. Civic engagement (whether the organization is civic/humanitarian, arts/cultural, or sport oriented)

increases individual willingness to sign a petition, take part in a boycott, and participate in a peaceful demonstration. The theory of “spillover effect” (Peterson 1992) explains this by positing that increased involvement in civic life, no matter the type of organization, tends to increase political involvement as well.

We also find support for the importance of world society theory in explaining political action in the Middle East. Demands for democratic freedoms have globalized, and some geopolitical beliefs, such as placing high importance on politics, tend to increase an individual’s willingness to engage in political action. In some of our cases, support for global governance (as measured by confidence in the United Nations) increases willingness to engage in political action. However, individuals who place more confidence in the national government tend to be more reluctant to participate in the types of political participation we measure.

Scholars have argued that social movement theory and the type of political repertoires used in the West are not applicable in the Middle East, and that the focus on such approaches has left scholars unable to predict the uprisings of the Arab spring (Gerges 2014). Because of structural differences in state control, such as the ability of the state to shut down non-governmental organizations, “street politics” and “non-movements” have been better able to explain political action in the Middle East (Bayat 2013, Gerges 2014). Individuals who lack institutional power, such as the unemployed and housewives, are unable to push for change through strikes or boycotts (Bayat 2013). Instead, political action in the Middle East prior to the uprisings often consisted of the same types of political action that we saw intensified during the Arab spring, such as the “active use” of public space (e.g., streets and squares) by citizens who were allowed to use it only “passively,” such as by walking or driving through (Bayat 2013: 11).

In this paper, we move beyond theories of social movements and collective actions developed in Western societies to better understand political action in the Middle East by drawing on modernization and world society theory. Overall, we find much continuity in the key factors that affect willingness to protest across countries and between the two time periods. Education, civic engagement, interest in politics, and (particularly for women) social liberalism are key to willingness to participate.

While the importance of education, civic engagement, and interest in politics represent trends across our cases and both time frames, some of our findings are clearly country-specific, suggesting the need for case studies of individual countries. As we describe, issues of contention differ across our cases, as do structural factors.

However, while some researchers feel that research focused on the Middle East as a unit suggests an artificially homogenous region, recent events have demonstrated regional dynamics for social change (Volpi 2013). Similarities in state structures and population demographics mean that complaints first raised in Tunisia could easily find resonance in other countries. Rising food prices, high unemployment, and repressive governments were concerns across the region (Goldstone 2011). Thus, we believe that additional work on political participation and protest behavior is needed, both that which examines individual cases in depth and that which focuses on temporal and cross-national trends. Importantly, research should particularly examine the factors shaping women's political participation, as it has historically been under-recognized.

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<b>Factors</b>				
<b>Middle East &amp; North Africa</b>	<b>2005-09</b>		<b>2010-14</b>	
<b>Political Action</b>	<b>Would Never Do</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Would Never Do</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Sign Petition</b>	<b>69%</b>	8,826	<b>75%</b>	6519
<b>Join Boycott</b>	<b>75%</b>	8,902	<b>78.24</b>	6523
<b>Attend Demonstration</b>	<b>72%</b>	8,957	<b>74.94</b>	6534

**Europe & Scandinavia**

<b>Political Action</b>	<b>Would Never Do</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Would Never Do</b>	<b>N</b>
Sign Petition	<b>16.76%</b>	12,353	<b>17.66%</b>	6,228
Join Boycott	<b>45.78</b>	12,049	<b>45.39</b>	6,140
Attend Demonstration	<b>32.69</b>	12,273	<b>31.8</b>	6,215

**Eastern Europe**

<b>Political Action</b>	<b>Would Never Do</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Would Never Do</b>	<b>N</b>
Sign Petition	<b>56.23%</b>	9,471	<b>49.98%</b>	10,965
Join Boycott	<b>72.37</b>	9,397	<b>62.99</b>	10,917
Attend Demonstration	<b>53.46</b>	9,531	<b>50.12</b>	10,996

**South & Central America**

<b>Political Action</b>	<b>Would Never Do</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Would Never Do</b>	<b>N</b>
Sign Petition	<b>34.19%</b>	10,330	<b>43.43%</b>	6,657
Join Boycott	<b>73.58</b>	10,128	<b>69.67</b>	6,648
Attend Demonstration	<b>42.89</b>	10,390	<b>48.42</b>	6,715

**Asia**

<b>Political Action</b>	<b>Would Never Do</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Would Never Do</b>	<b>N</b>
Sign Petition	<b>56.10%</b>	12,912	<b>45.72%</b>	13,289
Join Boycott	<b>67.04</b>	12,805	<b>55.56</b>	13,046
Attend Demonstration	<b>64.63</b>	10,888	<b>50.14</b>	13,119

**North America**

<b>Political Action</b>	<b>Would Never Do</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Would Never Do</b>	<b>N</b>
Sign Petition	<b>4.33%</b>	1,224	<b>23.72%</b>	4,191
Join Boycott	<b>26.31</b>	1,220	<b>53.52</b>	4,135
Attend Demonstration	<b>30.52</b>	1,219	<b>38.75</b>	4,189

**Sub Saharan Africa**

<b>Political Action</b>	<b>Would Never Do</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Would Never Do</b>	<b>N</b>
Sign Petition	<b>47%</b>	10,388	<b>61%</b>	6,338
Join Boycott	<b>60.91</b>	10,537	<b>70.75</b>	6,338
Attend Demonstration	<b>43.62</b>	10,755	<b>53.39</b>	6,338

**Australia & Oceania**

<b>Political Action</b>	<b>Would Never Do</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Would Never Do</b>	<b>N</b>
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Sign Petition	<b>3.39%</b>	2,332	<b>3.58%</b>	2,318
Join Boycott	<b>31.3</b>	2,211	<b>30.2</b>	2,172
Attend Demonstration	<b>30.83</b>	2,238	<b>28.26</b>	2,171

**Table 1. Willingness to Protest, by Region and Wave.**

**Social Individualism**

*Independence is an important quality for a child*

1) mentioned; 2) not mentioned

*Obedience is an important quality for a child*

1) mentioned; 2) not mentioned

*One of my main goals in life has been to make my parents proud*

1) Agree Strongly; 2) Agree; 3) Disagree; 4) Strongly Disagree

**Gender Ideology**

*Men make better political leaders*

1) Agree Strongly; 2) Agree; 3) Disagree; 4) Strongly Disagree

*When jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to a job*

1) Agree; 2) Neither Agree nor Disagree; 3) Disagree

*University is more Important for a boy*

1) Agree Strongly; 2) Agree; 3) Disagree; 4) Strongly Disagree

**Democracy**

*Having a democratic political system is:*

1) Very bad; 2) Fairly Bad; 3) Fairly Good; 4) Very Good

**Table 2. Social Liberalism Scale**

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>Turkey</i>	<i>Egypt</i>	<i>Morocco</i>	<i>Jordan</i>	<i>Iraq</i>
<i>Biographical Availability</i>					
Women	<b>0.168*</b> (0.069)	<b>0.154**</b> (0.050)	<b>0.261**</b> (0.083)	<b>0.376***</b> (0.078)	<b>0.528***</b> (0.058)
Age	0.002 (0.003)	<b>0.003*</b> (0.001)	0.002 (0.004)	-0.000 (0.003)	0.002 (0.002)
Education	<b>-0.044**</b> (0.015)	<b>-0.041***</b> (0.007)	<b>-0.042**</b> (0.015)	<b>-0.070***</b> (0.017)	-0.001 (0.009)
Employed	<b>-0.147*</b> (0.071)	0.033 (0.050)	<b>0.014*</b> (0.114)	NA	-0.053 (0.058)
Married	-0.107 (0.074)	<b>0.089*</b> (0.046)	-0.141 (0.087)	0.051 (0.090)	<b>-0.148**</b> (0.058)
<i>Cultural Attitudes and Behavior</i>					
Liberalism	<b>-0.276***</b> (0.059)	<b>-0.146***</b> (0.040)	-0.143 (0.098)	-0.118 (0.073)	0.088 (0.046)
Civic Engagement	<b>-0.097***</b> (0.030)	<b>-0.041*</b> (0.019)	-0.097 (0.054)	<b>-0.117***</b> (0.034)	NA
Religion Important	<b>0.133**</b> (0.046)	-0.089 (0.078)	<b>-0.309***</b> (0.097)	0.185 (0.133)	<b>-0.307*</b> (0.136)
<i>Geopolitical Beliefs</i>					
Politics Important	<b>-0.188***</b> (0.030)	<b>-0.170***</b> (0.020)	<b>-0.370***</b> (0.038)	<b>-0.085*</b> (0.035)	<b>-0.197***</b> (0.023)
Secular	<b>-0.027**</b> (0.010)	0.000 (0.008)	<b>-0.053***</b> (0.013)	-0.006 (0.012)	<b>-0.029***</b> (0.008)
Confidence in Government	<b>0.104***</b> (0.032)	NA (0.020)	-0.022 (0.045)	<b>0.281***</b> (0.045)	<b>0.160***</b> (0.023)
Confidence in UN	-0.016 (0.033)	-0.004 (0.021)	0.077 (0.046)	0.034 (0.034)	<b>-0.116***</b> (0.028)
Importance of Strong Leader	0.038 (0.029)	-0.012 (0.018)	<b>-0.137***</b> (0.040)	<b>-0.115**</b> (0.040)	-0.017 (0.025)
World Citizen	0.007 (0.039)	<b>0.038*</b> (0.018)	<b>-0.079*</b> (0.036)	-0.018 (0.037)	NA
Constant	0.220 (0.312)	<b>0.686*</b> (0.335)	<b>0.277***</b> (0.455)	-0.981 (0.596)	<b>1.366*</b> (0.569)
N	923	2705	596	784	1526
R <sup>2</sup>	0.207	0.075	0.317	0.172	0.208
*05 one-tailed					
**01 one-tailed					
***.001 one-tailed					

Table 3. OLS Regression Results Predicting Reluctance to Participate in Political Action: 2005-2009 World Values Survey

	<i>Turkey</i>	<i>Egypt</i>	<i>Morocco</i>	<i>Jordan</i>	<i>Iraq</i>
<b>Predictor</b>					
<i>Biographical Availability</i>					
Women	0.021 (0.065)	0.127 (0.073)	0.104 (0.132)	0.143 (0.077)	<b>0.411***</b> (0.078)
Age	<b>0.005*</b> (0.002)	<b>0.006**</b> (0.002)	0.004 (0.007)	-0.002 (0.002)	0.001 (0.003)
Education	<b>-0.050***</b> (0.015)	<b>-0.038**</b> (0.010)	-0.041 (0.027)	<b>-0.049***</b> (0.014)	<b>0.034**</b> (0.014)
Employed	0.043 (0.067)	<b>-0.145*</b> (0.074)	-0.295 (0.189)	<b>-0.291***</b> (0.081)	-0.049 (0.080)
Married	<b>0.216***</b> (0.064)	0.109 (0.057)	0.273 (0.149)	0.138 (0.080)	-0.005 (0.082)
<i>Cultural Attitudes and Behavior</i>					
Liberalism	<b>-0.189**</b> (0.060)	-0.073 (0.056)	-0.224 (0.174)	0.045 (0.069)	-0.029 (0.061)
Civic Engagement	<b>-0.146***</b> (0.026)	<b>-0.182***</b> (0.027)	<b>-0.168*</b> (0.070)	<b>-0.084**</b> (0.031)	<b>-0.103**</b> (0.035)
Religion Important	0.067 (0.038)	-0.047 (0.097)	0.022 (0.143)	0.169 (0.123)	0.034 (0.078)
<i>Geopolitical Beliefs</i>					
Politics Important	<b>-0.226***</b> (0.030)	<b>-0.063*</b> (0.028)	<b>-0.378***</b> (0.061)	<b>-0.094**</b> (0.031)	<b>-0.178***</b> (0.035)
Secular	<b>0.028**</b> (0.009)	0.016 (0.009)	-0.007 (0.020)	-0.007 (0.011)	-0.012 (0.014)
Confidence in Government	<b>0.086**</b> (0.030)	0.009 (0.027)	<b>0.208**</b> (0.073)	<b>0.185***</b> (0.030)	<b>0.076**</b> (0.036)
Confidence in UN	0.055 (0.037)	<b>-0.097*</b> (0.043)	-0.028 (0.087)	0.030 (0.045)	<b>-0.103*</b> (0.046)
Importance of Strong Leader	<b>0.144***</b> (0.028)	0.050 (0.037)	-0.077 (0.066)	0.033 (0.032)	<b>0.068*</b> (0.034)
World Citizen	-0.022 (0.038)	-0.016 (0.023)	0.051 (0.080)	-0.027 (0.036)	<b>0.075*</b> (0.035)
Constant	-0.387 (0.282)	0.131 (0.420)	0.394 (0.756)	-0.751 (0.534)	-0.391 (0.341)
N	1083	1454	300	903	898
R <sup>2</sup>	0.2228	0.0894	0.2123	0.1123	0.1003
*05 one-tailed					
**.01 one-tailed					
***.001 one-tailed					

**Table 4. OLS Regression Results Predicting Reluctance to Participate in Political Action: 2010-2014 World Values Survey**

Variable	Turkey W5	Turkey W6	Egypt W5	Egypt W6	Morocco W5	Morocco W6	Jordan W5	Jordan W6	Iraq W5	Iraq W6
Women	<b>+</b> *	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>+</b> **	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>+</b> **	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>+</b> ***	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>+</b> ***	<b>+</b> ***
Age	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>+</b> *	<b>+</b> *	<b>+</b> *	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>
Education	<b>-</b> **	<b>-</b> ***	<b>-</b> ***	<b>-</b> **	<b>-</b> **	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>-</b> ***	<b>-</b> ***	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>+</b> **
Employed	<b>-</b> *	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>-</b> *	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<b>-</b> ***	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>
Married	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>+</b> ***	<b>+</b> *	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>+</b> *	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>-</b> **	<i>N.S.</i>
Liberalism	<b>-</b> ***	<b>-</b> **	<b>-</b> ***	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>-</b> ***	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>
Civic Engagement	<b>-</b> ***	<b>-</b> ***	<b>-</b> *	<b>-</b> ***	<b>-</b> *	<b>-</b> *	<b>-</b> ***	<b>-</b> **	<i>N/A</i>	<b>-</b> **
Religion Important	<b>+</b> **	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>-</b> *	<i>N.S.</i>
Politics Important	<b>-</b> ***	<b>-</b> ***	<b>-</b> ***	<b>-</b> *	<b>-</b> ***	<b>-</b> ***	<b>-</b> *	<b>-</b> **	<b>-</b> ***	<b>-</b> ***
Secular	<b>-</b> **	<b>+</b> **	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>-</b> ***	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>-</b> ***	<i>N.S.</i>
Confidence in Government	<b>+</b> ***	<b>+</b> **	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>+</b> **	<b>+</b> ***	<b>+</b> ***	<b>+</b> ***	<b>+</b> **
Confidence in UN	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>-</b> *	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>-</b> ***	<b>-</b> *
Importance of Strong Leader	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>+</b> ***	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>-</b> ***	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>-</b> **	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>+</b> *
World Citizen	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>+</b> *	<i>N.S.</i>	<b>-</b> *	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N.S.</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N.S.</i>

**Table 5. Summary Table of Regression Findings\***

\*Italicized and bold means change over time

<sup>i</sup> As defined by the World Bank, the MENA region consists of Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen (World Bank website).



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<sup>ii</sup> The 5th wave of the WVS surveyed the Egyptian population in 2008, Iraq in 2006, and Jordan, Morocco, and Turkey in 2007. The 6th wave surveyed Egypt in 2012, Iraq in 2013, Jordan in 2014, and Morocco and Turkey in 2011. Significant unrest occurred in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Morocco in 2011 and 2012.

<sup>iii</sup> For consistency, data are for the five countries examined: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, and Turkey. Although data on Iran are also available, it is excluded because individuals in Iran were not asked about their willingness to engage in political action, so it cannot be included in the country regressions.

<sup>iv</sup> It is important to note that this is a limited and not necessarily representative sample of the region as a whole. When the sample instead includes all MENA nations and territories available in the 6<sup>th</sup> wave (Cyprus, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Qatar, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen), the overall level of reluctance drops to 61% who would never sign a petition, 64% who would never join a boycott, and 56% who would never attend a demonstration. While the Middle East still has low protest potential, using this more inclusive sample presents individuals in the Middle East as less reluctant to participate than are individuals in the sample of Sub-Saharan Africa.