

Comparative Political Studies

<http://cps.sagepub.com>

When Is Social Trust a Desirable Outcome?: Examining Levels of Trust in the Arab World

Amaney Jamal

Comparative Political Studies 2007; 40; 1328 originally published online Jul 13, 2007;

DOI: 10.1177/0010414006291833

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://cps.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/40/11/1328>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

Additional services and information for *Comparative Political Studies* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://cps.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://cps.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations <http://cps.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/40/11/1328>

When Is Social Trust a Desirable Outcome?

Examining Levels of Trust in the Arab World

Amaney Jamal

Princeton University, New Jersey

Levels of both political and social trust tend to play a crucial role in democracies. Yet we have little understanding of the ways in which trust operates in nondemocratic societies. This article finds that levels of political confidence are linked to generalized trust in both democratic and nondemocratic states. In democracies, then, levels of generalized trust may reinforce existing democratic institutions. In nondemocracies, however, generalized trust may be linked to support for authoritarian patterns of rule. This article argues that although generalized trust serves democracy in democratic settings, it is not linked to democratic forms of political and social engagement in the less democratic states of the Arab world.

Keywords: *interpersonal trust; political culture; Arab world; social capital; political development; Islam*

Although scholars believe levels of both political and social trust tend to play a crucial role in democracies, we have surprisingly little understanding of the ways in which trust operates in nondemocratic societies. Most studies do not take into account the ways nondemocratic conditions structure levels of generalized social trust. Yet the implications drawn from cross-national studies on trust come to a common conclusion: Where there is little generalized trust, democracy suffers. But can generalized trust, on its own, create the conditions necessary for democracy in nondemocratic settings?

Author's Note: I would like to thank Chris Achen, Larry Bartels, Ellen Lust-Okar, Tali Mendelberg, Irfan Nooruddin, Jennifer Widner, Deborah Yashar, participants in the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics at Princeton University, and three anonymous readers for their valuable comments and feedback. I would also like to thank Raymond Hicks of the Princeton Center for Globalization and Governance for his research assistance on this project.

This article advances two major arguments. Accepting the premise that generalized trust is structured by risk aversion, I argue that governing institutions play an important role in instilling levels of generalized trust (Hardin, 1996; Levi, 1996; Sztompka, 1999). Formal laws ensure that trusting relationships are not violated and the rule of law holds citizens accountable when breaches of confidence take place. Therefore, I argue, political regimes structure levels of generalized trust. This has two important implications. First, because regimes vary across states and societies, we should also expect levels of generalized trust to vary. And second, because levels of generalized trust are structured by governing institutions, *the operative democratic capacities of those levels of trust* differ from democracies to nondemocracies. In democracies, higher levels of generalized trust allow for greater civic cooperation in ways important to democratic sustainability; in authoritarian settings, however, higher levels of generalized trust correlate with factors that lend credibility to the existing nondemocratic status quo. In fact, in both democracies and nondemocracies in the Arab world, higher levels of political confidence are directly linked to higher levels of trust. Whereas in democracies these levels of trust may bode well for legitimizing existing democratic regimes, in nondemocracies these levels of trust, in essence, produce greater legitimacy for authoritarian regimes. Furthermore, in authoritarian states throughout the Arab world, critical assessments of the ruling regime are linked to lower levels of trust. Because generalized trust is strongly linked to performance-based evaluations, I argue that the lack of generalized trust need not be a negative outcome in Arab societies. In fact, I also find that higher levels of trust are linked to cultural predispositions that are often considered not favorable to democracy.

This article is organized as follows. First I document the correlation between political confidence and generalized trust in democratic societies. In democratic societies, this positive correlation between trust and political confidence is well established. Second, this article will demonstrate that a similar positive and direct relationship exists between trust and political confidence in three Arab nondemocratic regimes: Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco. However, where in democratic countries the direct link between trust and political confidence may serve democratic objectives, in Arab authoritarian settings that link serves authoritarianism—and not democracy. Third, gauging the democratic utility of trust in Arab nondemocratic settings, this article also finds that cultural predispositions considered important for democracy are not systematically linked to trust.

Trust and Democracy

Studies of political culture have long emphasized the importance of trust—both its social and its political dimensions—for effective democratic governance. Social trust is important because it lubricates cooperative relationships; the foundation of community, it facilitates collective action in societies that might otherwise be plagued by atomized individuals (Almond, 1963; Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 1993). Political trust, it has been argued, is essential to the validation of various democratic institutions, thereby giving democratic institutions legitimacy (Mishler & Rose, 1997). Furthermore, Gamson (1968) argues that trust in political institutions is important for democracies because it enables democratic governments to make decisions on behalf of society. Political trust is central to the representative relationship; democratic states cannot rely on coercion, as authoritarian governments do (Bianco, 1994). Larry Diamond (1993) skillfully summarizes this dual function of social trust: “Social trust and cooperativeness, and overarching commitments to the system, the nation, and the community moderate the conflicts and bridge the cleavages of politics” (p. 14). In his formulation, social trust is integral to a political culture that not only enables but also supports democracy.¹ In fact, many studies examining aggregate data on trust have found it highly correlated to effective democratic governance (Almond & Verba, 1963; Inglehart, 1990; Muller & Seligson, 1994; Uslaner, 2002).

The correlation between trust and democratic government has opened several new debates in which two overarching themes have become particularly visible. The first examines the source from which trust emerges. From what cultural dynamic does trust arise? Is trust based on early socialization patterns? Or is it in fact structured by actual experiences and evaluations of those experiences? The debate between cultural models and performance-based approaches of trust has not yet been fully fleshed out.² The cultural model holds that “modern man” or the “civic nation” can be traced to the cultural roots of communities. Some societies, because of their socialization patterns and historical trajectories, are more trusting of others. Because trust exists in these societies, individuals are more likely to cooperate with others and work for the common good. In these formulations, preexisting cultural tendencies that facilitate trusting relationships between individuals bode well for a democratic political culture.

Other scholars view these cultural arguments with skepticism, arguing that trust in others is in fact a function of institutional evaluation. Where

state or government institutions protect citizen interests, then citizens are more likely to be trusting (Hart, 1978; Knight, 2000; Levi, 1996; Offe, 1999). Mishler and Rose (1997), for instance, claim that the difference between cultural and performance-based models of trust is “overdrawn” and can in fact be reduced to an issue of timing:

Both perspectives conceive of trust as a product of experience; they differ principally in their time frame. The socialization model emphasizes the primacy of early life or formative experiences, whereas the performance model emphasizes more recent and contemporary experiences: “what has society done for me lately?” (p. 34)

Leaving aside these differences for the moment, proponents of both formulations tacitly agree that trust—whatever its source—is an essential characteristic for the promotion of democratic efficacy. Current studies working from a presumption of democracy seem to substantiate these findings. Kenneth Newton and Pippa Norris (2000) find strong links between aggregate levels of trust and public confidence.³ Putnam finds that higher levels of trust lead to more cooperative relations, which in turn lead to more effective democratic governance. And Mishler and Rose (1997) argue that the lack of public confidence is one of the reasons that Russian democratic institutions lack legitimacy. In more ways than one, regardless of its source, trust is seen as a productive social force.

All of this scholarship, however, implicitly assumes a preexisting democratic polity. These studies all focus on societies that have already transitioned to democracy or institutionalized democratic settings, where governing institutions are representative. What is less clear is whether existing democratic institutions generate trust, or whether trust promotes these democratic institutions. Higher levels of trust in these societies enable broader forms of cooperation important for democratic participation. The importance of trust for democratic governance is hence predicated upon the establishment of already democratic institutions and polities. When the public expresses confidence in democratic institutions, these institutions are understood to represent citizen concerns.⁴ Similarly, cooperation among strangers—that is, cooperation in societies that have become more individualized—is essential to reshaping notions of community. Cooperation transforms the “I” into the “we,” which enables better democracy (Putnam, 1993). In these already democratic contexts, social and political forms of trust help sustain and promote democratic effectiveness. Yet we know little about the importance of trust in societies that are not already democratic.

Trust and Authoritarian Regimes

Many questions emerge when we apply existing models of trust to societies that are not already democratic and even entrenched in authoritarian rule. Here, it is less clear what function trust serves. To understand the sources of trust without context, therefore, seems like an aimless task—unless we have good reasons for such exploration. What are the functions of trust (or the plausible functions of trust) in nondemocratic regimes? What role does trust play in societies that do not already have democratic political institutions that rely on collective forms of participation or are not characterized by the type of individualism that dominates Western liberal societies? Does more generalized trust entail more support for democratic institutions or, conversely, for the authoritarian governments in power? Does more trust among citizens mean stronger primordial attachments or a stronger willingness to cooperate and work with others? And what types of cooperation schemas are desirable in nondemocratic settings? In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville (1956) historically argued that trust alleviates pressures from the state, allowing it to function more effectively. That is, interdependence among the citizenry, facilitated by cooperation through trust, enables governments to function more efficiently. However, if this same logic were to be adopted in nondemocratic settings, would more citizen self-reliance serve the process of democratization? Or would it simply allow the authoritarian government to rule unabatedly?

Revisiting the Importance of Trust in Nondemocratic Societies: Hypotheses

The central thesis of this article argues that levels of social trust are influenced by citizen evaluations of their governments. In authoritarian regimes, then, one would expect levels of social trust to naturally lag behind those of the democratic world. As Pippa Norris (1999) argues,

Dissatisfaction with the performance of regimes characterized by widespread corruption, abuse of power and intolerance of dissent, can be regarded as a healthy reaction. Too much blind trust by citizens and misplaced confidence in leaders, for good or ill, can be as problematic for democracy as too little. (p. 27)

In authoritarian states plagued with nonrepresentative governments, citizens can rely less on effective institutions to secure and protect their interests

(Hardin, 1996). According to these formulations, lower levels of trust in nondemocratic states should be unsurprising. Without the guarantees of equal protection, fairness in treatment, and judicial recourse, citizens are less likely to trust others. This article will therefore first probe the extent to which social trust is associated with political confidence in both democracies and the Arab world, and then gauge the extent to which levels of social trust correlate with other characteristics useful for democratic citizenship. I use data from the fourth wave of the World Values Surveys to examine my argument.

The first set of hypotheses tests the assumption that political confidence is linked to trust. Do higher levels of trust map onto higher degrees of political confidence? Again, the literature based on democratic settings makes a strong argument for this case. In democracies, levels of increased trust and political confidence both facilitate forms of cooperation useful to bolstering democratic forms of participation and give existing representative institutions greater legitimacy. In nondemocratic countries like those in the Arab world, however, greater political confidence is linked to the legitimization of authoritarian rule. Citizens who lend extensive support to existing regimes can very well be providing support for existing nondemocratic forms of governance. In democracies, therefore, a positive correlation between political confidence and trust is seen as beneficial to democracy more broadly—but in nondemocracies, a positive correlation between political confidence and trust should be of more concern. There, trust would appear to be lending itself to patterns of engagement that are considered less democratic. It is particularly important to disentangle the correlation of political confidence to trust in nondemocratic settings. If higher levels of political confidence are indeed associated with higher levels of trust, this certainly poses a problem in states that lack democratic institutions. Authoritarian governments wish to induce political confidence in their regimes; therefore, higher levels of political confidence in authoritarian institutions do not bode well for democracy. Second, this article will also examine the extent to which political-cultural factors are deemed “hindrances” to democratic political culture: namely, the role of religion and attitudes about gender equality in the Arab world are linked with levels of trust.

Cases: Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt

This article focuses on three nondemocratic countries in the Arab world, all of which are characterized by authoritarian patterns of governance. In

Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco, citizens enjoy few political and civil liberties. Although the past decade has seen movements toward more liberalization, the Arab world today is one of the last regions that has remained particularly stubborn to democratization efforts. In fact, Egypt, according to Freedom House (2005), has consistently and for the past decade obtained the lowest possible ratings in both civil and political scores, with an overall assessment of *not free*. In 2005, however, Egypt moved up because of more relaxed restrictions on the media and increased tolerance of public criticism. Morocco and Jordan exhibit similar trends. Although their Freedom House scores rank higher than Egypt's, they have resiliently maintained firm authoritarian grips on basic political and civic freedoms. In 2005, both countries received slightly better scores than Egypt, with overall assessments of *partially free* (see Appendix A). Of each of these countries, the Freedom House reports made particular comments. Despite taking "two steps forward," Egypt also took "one step back." Egyptians still can not change their governments democratically, and the existing legislative body is dominated by proregime entities. The Freedom House report points out that

governmental restrictions on the licensing of political parties, state control over television and radio stations, and systemic irregularities in the electoral process, the 454 seat People's Assembly (Majlis al-Sha'b) is perpetually dominated by the ruling NDP. . . . There is no competitive process for the election of the president . . . [while] political opposition remains weak and ineffective.

Of Morocco, the Freedom House study expresses a similar critical position. Moroccans cannot change their government democratically. In fact, the monarch retains supreme authority and "may appoint or dismiss cabinet members, dissolve parliament and rule by decree. . . . Opposition parties remain weak. Press freedom remains somewhat restricted [and] freedom of association is somewhat limited." In Jordan, despite the functioning of an elected legislative assembly in Jordan, the legislature does not possess full autonomy or the ability to exercise accountability of other branches of government. The report states,

King Abdullah holds broad executive powers and may dissolve parliament and dismiss the prime minister or cabinet at his discretion. . . . The electoral system is heavily skewed toward the monarchy's traditional support base. . . . Freedom of Expression is restricted. . . . In 2004, all broadcast news media remain[ed] under state control. . . . [Furthermore,] freedom of assembly is

heavily restricted [and] Jordanian citizens enjoy little protection from arbitrary arrest and detention.

Clearly, based on Freedom House scores and descriptions of executive dominance in these states, Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco are strong authoritarian states. Citizens in these countries enjoy few democratic liberties.

Trust and Confidence in Authoritarian Political Institutions

Compared to levels of trust in Western democracies, levels of social trust in these three Arab countries are quite low. When asked whether most people can or cannot be trusted, only 38% of Egyptians said that most people could be trusted.⁵ Only 27.65% of Jordanians, and an even lower percentage of Moroccans (22.8%), felt that others could be trusted. In comparison, 59.6% of Swedes, 65.1% of Norwegians, and 48.6% of Americans report that they trust others in their societies.⁶ The low levels of trust in Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco also correspond to attitudes about general social untrustworthiness. When asked whether people tend to be fair or exploitative, 53.96% of Egyptians, 61.63% of Jordanians, and 70.96% of Moroccans felt that most people would try to take advantage of others.⁷ All in all, it does not appear that Arabs in these countries hold high levels of trust for others.

A set of existing arguments holds that social trust is important for institutional legitimacy. Citizens who trust one another are also more likely to trust government. In democracies, levels of social trust are important for democratic legitimacy, important to government representation and effectiveness (Pharr & Putnam, 2000). Yet following this same logic, social trust is also important in authoritarian settings, especially because authoritarian regimes preserve and legitimate their own nondemocratic rule by inducing trust among the populace. Authoritarian regimes seek to induce trust among their populace, either through coercion or patronage, to preserve and bring legitimacy to their own nondemocratic rule (Sztompka, 1999). Why, then, should social trust be important for democracy in authoritarian settings? Higher levels of trust in nondemocratic settings would equally imply high levels of confidence in authoritarian regimes, as well.

To understand whether trust correlates to the legitimacy of authoritarian structures, I provide correlation matrices in Table 1 showing the relationship between levels of political confidence and trust first in democratic

Table 1
Correlation Between Political Confidence and Trust
in Democracies and the Arab World

Democracies		Arab Cases	
Correlation	Trust	Correlation	Trust
Political confidence	.1614	Political confidence	.1642
<i>N</i>	9,020	<i>N</i>	4,723

countries and then in the three Arab countries under examination here—Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco. Political confidence is an index variable consisting of respondent evaluations of the overall government, the parliament, political parties, and the police.⁸ The data are pooled from the democratic countries, participating in the World Values Survey (see <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/services/index.html>), that received a score of 1 (*completely free*) on 2001 Freedom House scores, including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, the United States, and Uruguay. The data for the three Arab countries are also pooled together. In both democratic countries and the Arab world, this data show that political confidence is positively correlated with levels of trust.

In fact, the results are quite comparable across the two sets of cases. The correlation between trust and political confidence in democracies is .1614, and in the Arab world the correlation is .1642. That trust and political confidence are intertwined across these two sets of different countries is compelling; apparently, trust is linked to political confidence regardless of the nature of the political regime. The evidence suggests that trust is useful to regime legitimatization whether the regime is authoritarian or democratic in nature. If this formulation is correct, then the dearth of trust in nondemocratic settings, in this case the Arab world, need not be linked to an antidemocratic political culture. Just as higher levels of trust in democracies may be useful for democratic governance, it may lead to further regime legitimatization in authoritarian contexts. Higher levels of trust in authoritarian settings, therefore, can pose a threat to democratization more broadly.

Contextualizing the Role of Trust in the Arab World

Based on the evidence thus far, it appears that trust is associated with levels of political confidence in the Arab world. The direct positive correlation

between trust and political confidence raises important concerns about the “democratic utility” of trust in these less than democratic countries. Yet before making conclusive statements about the utility of trust in nondemocratic settings, it is important to subject social trust to a more critical and rigorous analysis. Although trust is linked to higher levels of political confidence, it still might be associated with other factors considered important for a democratic political culture.

Main Hypothesis

The main hypothesis advanced in this article is that levels of political confidence, regardless of regime type, are associated with levels of interpersonal trust. If political confidence is linked to higher levels of trust regardless of regime type, then it only follows that those more critical—those with lower levels of political confidence in the regime—may also hold lower levels of social trust. This hypothesis is predicated upon a straightforward cost-benefit analysis at the individual level. Those individuals who feel existing political institutions are adequate in representing their interests are also more likely to feel trusting towards others (Hardin, 1996). Because individuals feel that existing political institutions can protect their interests, they are more likely to feel secure when trusting others. Representative institutions can create the foundations of trust. When citizens feel their rights are protected through legal institutions, for example, they are more inclined to trust others. Those individuals who do not have confidence in existing political institutions, on the other hand, are less likely to be trusting.

To test whether this finding holds, the first logit model examines the overall effect of political confidence on levels of trust. I have added two additional variables that gauge performance-based political assessments. The first variable measures satisfaction with the state of human rights in Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco. The question asks, “How much respect is there for individual human rights nowadays in [your country]? A lot of respect for individual human rights, some respect, not much respect, or no respect at all?” The second question measures attitudes towards of democracy by asking whether a respondent agrees or disagrees with following statement: “Having a democracy is better than any other political system.” I hypothesize that individuals in these authoritarian Arab states who are more critical of the human rights situation in their own countries will hold lower levels of interpersonal trust. Furthermore, stronger support for democracy should be inversely related to levels of interpersonal trust.

Based on a wealth of empirical information derived from studies in democratic nations, analysts tend to assume a direct positive link between support for democracy and levels of trust. I hypothesize, however, that individuals with stronger levels of support for democracy will hold lower levels of interpersonal trust. Because political confidence is linked to levels of trust, I anticipate those individuals more critical of the regime and who would like to see both more democracy and a better human rights record to hold lower levels of trust. Individuals who are more content with the status quo should have higher levels of political confidence, higher evaluations of human rights, and lower support for democracy and, on the other hand, should hold higher levels of interpersonal trust. In this equation, I also include multiple control variables that include age, gender, income, education, and financial situation.⁹

If this hypothesis is correct, it nicely complements existing work that highlights the link between political dissatisfaction and growing democratic awareness across the globe. One would expect, as a criterion to democratic citizenship, that citizens in the Arab world be more critical of their governing regimes. "Critical citizens," a term coined by Pippa Norris (1999), reflects growing democratic awareness among the world's population. As people and nations converge toward more democratic awareness, they are more likely to demand that governments be held accountable. I predict that this lack of faith in the authoritarian structures of government—the perception that these institutions cannot either represent or protect citizen interests—has led to falling levels of interpersonal trust.

Alternative Hypotheses

A wealth of literature, as we have seen, underscores the importance of trust as a political-cultural variable important for democratic citizenship. Not only are higher levels of interpersonal trust deemed important for a democratic political culture, but it has also been argued that trust is linked to other pertinent political-cultural variables, like tolerance, essential to democracy (Gibson, 2001; Inglehart, 1990; Putnam 1993). The argument presented in this article thus far views trust as a function of institutional evaluations. Trust is contingent on the ways citizens evaluate their own political climates. Those citizens more satisfied with the political status quo are more trusting; conversely, those less satisfied are less trusting.

The argument above does not take into account existing political-cultural explanations that posit trust is less a function of performance-based evaluations and more a function of political culture measures. To test whether

political culture, as an alternative explanation, influences levels of interpersonal trust, I introduce two political-cultural measures pertinent to Arab countries in the second and third logit models. Recent scholarship on the subject has advanced theories linking the low democratic status of the Arab world to two political-cultural factors: Islam and the status of women. A wealth of literature has “blamed” the absence of democracy in the region on Islamic culture and its fundamentalist traditions. To gauge the effect of “Islam” on interpersonal trust, I employ two questions—the first examines levels of attendance at religious services, and the second examines the extent to which individuals believe that political leaders need to be more religious.

The democratic deficit in the Arab world has also been linked to the status of women. Fish (2002), for instance, argues that it is not Islam per se but the plight of Muslim women in Muslim societies and the religious underpinnings of their subordination that explains the persistence of authoritarianism. “The station of women,” he writes, “more than other factors that predominate in Western thinking about religious systems and politics, links Islam and the democratic deficit” (p. 37). Inglehart and Norris (2003) advance a similar argument, reasoning that a glaring cultural gap is visible between Western and Muslim societies when it comes to attitudes on gender equality. Western societies are far more accommodating of women than Muslim cultures; this, they maintain, illustrates the lack of broader cultural phenomena pertinent for democracy, such as “tolerance, trust, political activism and emphasis on individual autonomy.” And finally, Bruce Russett and Daniela Donno (2004) argue that the gender deficit is more pronounced in the Arab world than in the Muslim world more broadly. Arab Muslim cultures, they contend, are deficient in these necessary dimensions of democratic political culture.

To gauge the effects of attitudes about gender equality on levels of interpersonal trust, I use five questions from the World Values Survey.¹⁰ The first question asks whether men, women, or neither are entitled to jobs when jobs are scarce. The second question on gender equality asks respondents whether women with jobs are able to forge the same bonds of closeness with their children as stay-at-home moms. Third, citizens in Egypt, Jordan and Morocco were asked whether men made better political leaders than women. Fourth, respondents in these countries were asked whether they support polygamy. And finally, those surveyed were asked whether they felt women “must obey their husbands.”

If the main hypothesis in this article holds—that institutional performance evaluations are linked to levels of trust—then adding these political-cultural

variables should not eliminate the significance of these performance-based institutional variables in explaining levels of interpersonal trust. Furthermore, these political-cultural variables should not be significantly linked with levels of interpersonal trust. That is, if the main hypothesis is correct, levels of interpersonal trust are directly linked to institutional evaluations and not political-cultural explanations.

Findings

The findings in Table 2, Model 1, substantiate the main hypothesis driving this analysis. Levels of political confidence, even while controlling for pertinent demographic variables like age, income, education, financial situation, and gender, have a direct and positive relationship on levels of interpersonal trust in Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan. Where individuals have more confidence in existing political institutions, they also have higher levels of interpersonal trust. In fact, a shift from low to high in levels of political confidence, while holding other independent variables at their means, leads to a 16% probability change in levels of interpersonal trust across these three countries. As hypothesized, human rights evaluations are also significantly linked to levels of trust in these three countries. Those citizens who are more skeptical of the human rights situation are more likely to hold *lower* levels of trust. In fact, a unit shift from positive to negative evaluations of human rights leads to a 27% probability decrease in levels of trust. Support for democracy is inversely linked to levels of interpersonal trust; however, it is only significant at the .10 level. This suggests that those individuals who are stronger supporters of democracy also have lower levels of interpersonal trust, substantiating the main argument of this article: Those individuals who are more critical of existing political institutions also tend to have lower levels of interpersonal trust. The findings here indicate that *lower* levels of trust are influenced by factors deemed important for democracy, in this case lower levels of political confidence, dissatisfaction with the state of human rights, and—to an extent—support for democratic forms of governance.

Other control variables are also significant in explaining levels of trust. Those more educated are more likely to hold lower levels of interpersonal trust. It appears that those who are more educated have higher expectations of government and citizens more broadly. As they become more educated, their growing expectations are met with a disappointingly static status quo. As a result, their levels of trust fall. Those who are older hold higher levels of trust, perhaps indicating that older people have a larger network of individuals

Table 2
Logit Models: Social Trust in the Arab World¹

	Arab Countries Model 1 (Performance-Based Evaluations)	Arab Countries Model 2 (Performance- Based + Religiosity)	Arab Countries Model 3 (Performance-Based + Religiosity + Attitudes Toward Women)
Social trust			
Demographics			
Education	-.066*** (.016)	-.075*** (.017)	-.073*** (.019)
Age	.098*** (.027)	.086*** (.028)	.073** (.030)
Gender	-.051 (.075)	-.106 (.081)	-.155 (.094)
Income	.014 (.016)	.023 (.018)	.007 (.019)
Financial satisfaction	.099** (.044)	.094** (.046)	.100** (.047)
Political performance- based evaluations			
Political confidence	.195*** (.043)	.162*** (.048)	.129*** (.055)
Human rights evaluation	.444*** (.047)	.482*** (.050)	.486*** (.054)
Support for democracy	-.092* (.065)	-.163** (.070)	-.133 (.077)
Religiosity			
Mosque attendance	—	-.022 (.014)	.004 (.151)
Religious leaders	—	-.088** (.038)	.079* (.044)
Attitudes toward gender			
Working mother	—	—	.069 (.042)
Scarce jobs	—	—	.051 (.071)
Men make better leaders	—	—	.090 (.055)
Polygamy	—	—	.151*** (.047)
Women must obey husbands	—	—	.077* (.043)
Probability changes (shift in political confidence and human rights evaluations on trust)			
Probability change:	16%	13.5%	11%
Political confidence (from low to high)			
Probability change:	27%	30%	30%
Human rights evaluation (from low to high)			
Percentage predicted correctly	69%	68%	67%
Constant	-.076 (.237)	.233 (.259)	1.12*** (.353)
N	3,620	3,211	2,742

Note: Significant variables appear in bold.

*Significant at the .10 level. **Significant at the .05 level. *** Significant at the .01 level.

to protect their interests—or they are more accustomed to existing political realities. Younger people, on the other hand, are less trusting, apparently having their emergent expectations not met by existing political institutions. Therefore, the youth have lower levels of trust. Finally, those more financially satisfied also tend to be more trusting. Again, this finding confirms the overall hypothesis advanced thus far, that performance-based evaluations matter. The well-to-do, more satisfied with the status quo, can afford to be more trusting; their status guarantees that their trusting relationships are not violated.

The evidence thus far suggests that higher levels of trust are *not* a function of factors deemed important for a critical and democratic citizenship; indeed, the opposite seems to have emerged. Trust, conventionally understood to support democratic outcomes, is in fact linked to stronger support for the authoritarian governments in power. Those individuals in Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco who have lower levels of political confidence also have lower levels of generalized trust. Similarly, those more critical of the human rights situation, those more educated (more knowledgeable about existing political realities), the youth, and those less financially well-off have lower levels of interpersonal trust. Trust, it appears, is directly associated with performance-based evaluations. In the context of the Arab world, then, lower levels of interpersonal trust should not be seen as inherently antidemocratic. Those citizens who are more critical of the governing regimes—and indeed, more critical in ways that bode well for democracy (less confidence in authoritarian structures, a stronger appreciation of human rights, stronger support for democracy, and more educated)—are more likely to have lower levels of trust. Citizens influenced by democratic expectations tend to hold lower levels of trust.

Cultural Explanations

Adding our two measures of Islam—mosque attendance and support for religious leaders—to the equation (Model 2, Table 2) does not alter the significance of the performance-based indicators that measure support for democracy, political confidence, and evaluations of the human rights situation in these countries. The performance-based indicators remain significant. Furthermore, demographic variables like age, education, and financial situation remain significant as well. The introduction of Islam, a key political-cultural measure, into our equation does nothing to depress the significance of the performance-based measures. Furthermore, and perhaps more surprising, is the statistically significant coefficient on support for religious leaders. Those individuals who believe there should be more religious

leaders in government positions, a measure indicative of a strong orientation toward more religion and perhaps less democracy, are also more likely to have higher levels of trust. Individuals holding these more "traditional" or "religious" viewpoints are more likely have higher levels of trust. Mosque attendance, on the other hand, is not significant. One can conclude that religiosity on its own is not sufficient to shape levels of interpersonal trust. Furthermore, the mosque networks per se are not sufficient in increasing or decreasing levels of interpersonal trust. Apparently, those who hold attitudes deemed more traditional (support for religious leaders) and less democratic also hold higher levels of interpersonal trust.

To further examine plausible alternative explanations, in Model 3 of Table 2, I include a battery of variables that gauge attitudes towards women. Do these additional cultural variables depress the impact performance-based measures have on levels of trust? Do they directly affect levels of interpersonal trust? In accordance with existing models on the democratic utility of trust, one would expect that more equitable gender attitudes are directly linked to higher levels of trust; however, the findings here lend further credence to the hypothesis advanced thus far. The performance-based measures remain robustly explanatory in the face of conventionally plausible cultural measures. Higher levels of political confidence and lower evaluations of human rights remain strong predictors of high levels of interpersonal trust. Those Arab citizens who are most content with the political regime and satisfied with the human rights situation in their own countries are more trusting. Younger cohorts, those more educated, and those less financially satisfied still remain less trusting, as the findings in Model 1 and Model 2 demonstrate. The variable that measures support of democracy is no longer significant at the .10 level, but the coefficient on this variable remains negative. (Those who believe democracy is the best form of system are less trusting.) Finally, those who support religious leaders, those who support polygamy, and those who feel that women must obey their husbands are also more trusting; the other three gender variables are insignificant in the model. That two of the five gender variables are significant in ways that do not conform to existing theoretical expectations on trust, however, is telling. The two variables that gauge support for polygamy and the belief that women must obey their husbands, are, of the five, arguably the two most "threatening" to a woman's position. Patriarchal laws in the Arab world, which tend to favor men over women, are derived from both the threat of polygamy¹¹ and the understanding that women must remain more or less obedient to a husband's wishes.

Considering the Arab world dramatically recasts existing theoretical arguments on the utility of trust for democracy. In the contexts presented by

Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco, individuals who hold beliefs that do not bode well for democracy—like gender traditionalism and support for religious leaders—are also those more likely to be trusting. Again, the findings in Model 3 of Table 2 not only substantiate the main argument of this article but also illustrate that supporters of traditionally based ideologies about religion and the role of women are more likely to be trusting. Either these individuals are in tight traditional networks that generate trust, or they are part of a larger status quo consensus that provides them with the security to be more trusting. Those who oppose polygamy and do not believe that women should obey their husbands are more likely to be less trusting, directly contradicting existing arguments about the direct relationship between trust and democracy. These individuals reject women's secondary status in society and thus may feel that networks to support their viewpoints are inadequate. Similar to democrats, those with less political confidence and those who are more frustrated with the status of human rights in their countries, these individuals exhibit strong orientations of a critical citizenship, a citizenship that does not have the social or political base to bolster their levels of trust.

Conclusion

These findings support claims that other scholars have made about “critical citizens” elsewhere in the world. What we are witnessing in these Arab countries is a growing discontent with the existing political and social status quo. As a result, and during such societal transitions, the social and political bases of authority are in flux as well. These more critical citizens find themselves outside established traditional and regime networks that would allow them the security and protections to be more trusting. Lower levels of trust, in these cases, should in fact be seen as conducive to a democratic political culture. As societies transition, the ability to find and belong to networks—enabling citizens to become more trusting—will depend on the legal protections afforded by the regimes. So long as regimes lag behind the expectations of their citizenries, as many Arab states do, we should expect levels of trust to remain lower than those in already democratic societies. In these formulations, therefore, distrust may be a healthy phenomenon. Yet what is striking about the above analysis is that social trust does not operate in the nondemocratic world of the Arab context as it ostensibly does in democracies. In fact, where we find higher levels of interpersonal trust, it is associated with outcomes deemed undemocratic, like more confidence in existing authoritarian regimes, support for gender inequality, and support for religious leaders. In this regard, the levels of distrust in the Arab world

should not be seen as a negative political-cultural residual; rather, we might view it as a positive democratic building block.

Appendix A

Freedom House Scores for Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco

Year	Egypt	Jordan	Morocco
1972-1973	6,6,NF	6,6,NF	5,4,PF
1973-1974	6,6,NF	6,6,NF	5,5,PF
1974-1975	6,4,PF	6,6,NF	5,5,PF
1975-1976	6,4,PF	6,6,NF	5,5,PF
1976-1977	5,4,PF	6,6,NF	5,5,PF
1977-1978	5,4,PF	6,6,NF	4,3,PF
1978-1979	5,5,PF	6,6,NF	3,4,PF
1979-1980	5,5,PF	6,6,NF	3,4,PF
1980-1981	5,5,PF	6,6,NF	4,4,PF
1981-1982	5,6,PF	6,6,NF	4,5,PF
1982-1983	5,5,PF	6,6,NF	4,5,PF
1983-1984	5,5,PF	6,6,NF	4,5,PF
1984-1985	4,4,PF	5,5,PF	4,5,PF
1985-1986	4,4,PF	5,5,PF	4,5,PF
1986-1987	5,4,PF	5,5,PF	4,5,PF
1987-1988	5,4,PF	5,5,PF	4,5,PF
1988-1989	5,4,PF	6,5,NF	4,5,PF
1989-1990	5,4,PF	5,5,PF	4,4,PF
1990-1991	5,4,PF	5,5,PF	4,4,PF
1991-1992	5,5,PF	4,4,PF	5,5,PF
1992-1993	5,6,PF	3,3,PF	6,5,PF
1993-1994	6,6,NF	4,4,PF	5,5,PF
1994-1995	6,6,NF	4,4,PF	5,5,PF
1995-1996	6,6,NF	4,4,PF	5,5,PF
1996-1997	6,6,NF	4,4,PF	5,5,PF
1997-1998	6,6,NF	4,4,PF	5,5,PF
1998-1999	6,6,NF	4,5,PF	5,4,PF
1999-2000	6,6,NF	4,4,PF	5,4,PF
2000-2001	6,5,NF	4,4,PF	5,4,PF
2001-2002	6,6,NF	5,5,PF	5,5,PF
2003	6,6,NF	6,5,PF	5,5,PF
2004	6,6,NF	5,5,PF	5,5,PF
2005	6,5,NF	5,4,PF	5,4,PF
2006	6,5,NF	5,4,PF	5,4,PF

Source: Freedom House (2005).

Note: NF = not free; PF = partially free.

Appendix B

World Values Survey Questions

- 1) Public Confidence: I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: Is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all:
 - a. The government
 - b. Parliament
 - c. Political parties
 - d. The police

- 2) Support for Democracy: I am going to describe various types of political systems and ask what you think about each as a way of governing [your country]: Having a democratic political system
 1. Very good
 2. Fairly good
 3. Bad
 4. Very bad

- 3) Human Rights Evaluations: How much respect is there for individual human rights nowadays in (your country)? A lot of respect for individual human rights, some respect, not much respect, no respect at all?

- 4) Financial Satisfaction: How satisfied are you with the financial situation of your household? If "1" means you are completely dissatisfied on this scale and "10" means you are completely satisfied, where would you put your satisfaction with your household's financial situation?

- 5) Education: What is the highest educational level that you have attained?

- 6) Financial Situation: During the past year, did your family: save money, just get by, spent some savings, spent savings and borrowed money.

- 7) Gender: 1 male; 2 female

- 8) Income: Categories (1-10); low-high

- 9) Attitudes Towards Gender:
 - a. It is acceptable for a man to have more than one wife? (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly)
 - b. A wife must always obey her husband. (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly)
 - c. On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do. (strongly agree, agree, disagree, disagree strongly)

- d. A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work. (strongly agree, agree, disagree, disagree strongly)
- e. When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women. (agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree)

10) Religiosity and Support for Religion:

- a. How often do you attend religious services these days?
 - 1. More than once a week
 - 2. Once a week
 - 3. Once a month
 - 4. Only on special holy days
 - 5. Once a year
 - 6. Less often
 - 7. Never, practically never
- b. It would be better for Algeria if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office. (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly)

Source: World Values Survey, <http://worldvaluessurvey.org/services/index.html>.

Notes

1. For a detailed and comprehensive discussion of trust see Sztompka (1999).
2. Abramson (1983) offers a good discussion of this distinction as cited by Mishler and Rose (1997).
3. They find this relationship weaker for individual-level data.
4. On the importance of public trust, see *Disaffected Democracies* (Pharr & Putnam, 2000) for a comprehensive overview of the subject.
5. "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that most people cannot be trusted?"
6. Data derived from the World Values Survey, conducted in the early 1990s.
7. The survey question is as follows: "Do you think that most people would try to exploit you if they got a chance, or would they try to be fair?"
8. See Appendix B for questions. These four dimensions of political confidence loaded reliably to measure a single dimension of political confidence. The Cronbach's alpha is .74. Using principal component factor analysis, I then loaded these four dimensions of political confidence onto a single factor (political confidence). Factor loadings are all .65 or greater.
9. I include financial situation in addition to income to correct for the possibility of mis-reporting on income.
10. The various measures *did not* load reliably on a single dimension. Therefore, I have included these measures as single variable measures.
11. Polygamy is, however, a declining phenomena across the region.

References

- Abramson, P. (1983). *Political attitudes in America*. San Francisco: Freeman and Company.
- Almond, G. (1963). *The civic culture: Political attitudes and democracy in five nations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Almond, G., & Verba, S. (1963). *The civic culture: Political attitudes and democracy in five nations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bianco, W. T. (1994). *Trust: Representatives and constituents*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Diamond, L. (1993). The return to political culture. In L. Diamond (Ed.), *Political culture and democracy in developing countries*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Fish, S. (2002). Islam and authoritarianism. *World Politics*, 55(1), 4-37.
- Freedom House. (2005). *Country reports: Egypt, Jordan and Morocco*. Retrieved from <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=15&year=2005>
- Fukuyama, F. (1995). *Trust: The social virtues and the creation of prosperity*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Gamson, W. (1968). *Power and discontent*. Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press.
- Gibson, J. (2001). Social networks, civil society, and the prospects for consolidating Russia's democratic transition. *American Journal of Political Science*, 45(1), 51-68.
- Hardin, R. (1996). Trustworthiness. *Ethics*, 107, 26-42.
- Hart, V. (1978). *Distrust and democracy: Political distrust in Britain and America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Inglehart, R. (1990). *Culture shift in advanced industrial society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Inglehart, R., & Norris, P. (2003, March/April). The true clash of civilizations. *Foreign Policy*, 135, 62-70.
- Knight, J. (2000). Social norms and the rule of law: Fostering trust in socially diverse societies. In K. Cook (Ed.), *Trust in society* (pp. 354-373). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Levi, M. (1996). Making democracy work [Book review]. *Politics and Society*, 24, 45-55.
- Mishler, W., & Rose, R. (1997). Trust, distrust and skepticism: Popular evaluations of civil and political institutions in post-communist societies. *Journal of Politics*, 59, 418-451.
- Muller, E., & Seligson, M. (1994). Civic culture and democracy: The question of causal relationship. *American Journal of Political Science*, 88, 635-652.
- Newton, K., & Norris, P. (2000). Confidence in public institutions: Faith, culture, or performance? In S. Pharr & R. Putnam (Eds.), *Disaffected democracies: What's troubling the tri-lateral countries?* (pp. 52-73). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Norris, P. (Ed.). (1999). *Critical citizens: Global support for democratic governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Offe, C. (1999). How can we trust our fellow citizens? In M. Warren (Ed.), *Democracy and trust* (pp. 42-87). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pharr, S., & Putnam, R. (Eds.). (2000). *Disaffected democracies: What's troubling the tri-lateral countries?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Putnam, R. (1993). *Making democracy work*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Russett, Bruce, and Daniela Donno. (2004). Islam, authoritarianism, and female empowerment: What are the linkages? *World Politics*, 56(4), 582-607.
- Sztompka, P. (1999). *Trust: A sociological theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tocqueville, A. de. (1956). *Democracy in America*. Heffner, R. D. (Ed.). New York: New American Library.

Uslaner, E. (2002). *The moral foundations of trust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Amaney Jamal is an assistant professor of politics at Princeton University. Her current research focuses on democratization and the politics of civic engagement in the Arab World. She extends her research to the study of Muslim and Arab Americans, examining the pathways that structure their patterns of civic engagement in the United States. She is the author of *Barriers to Democracy: The Other Side of Social Capital in Palestine and the Arab World* (Princeton University Press, forthcoming 2007). In 2005, she was named a Carnegie Scholar.