

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/Technical Paper.3
23 June 2014
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

THE MIDDLE CLASS IN THE ARAB REGION AND THEIR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION – A RESEARCH AND POLICY AGENDA

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April/May 2014

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United Nations
New York, 2014

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This paper is submitted as part of UN-ESCWA Economic Development and Globalization Division Working Paper Series

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14-00170

Introduction

Globally the size of the Middle Class is expected to increase from 1.8 billion in 2009 to 4.9 billion in 2030. In the Arab region (Middle East/North Africa) 234 million people will be considered part of the Middle Class by 2030 compared to 105 million in 2009.¹ While there is a significant amount of research on the Middle Class in Europe, the Americas and Asia² many open questions remain concerning the Middle Class in the Arab region, for example: Who are the members of Middle Class in the Arab region? What was their role in the so-called “Arab Awakening”? What are their professional, educational, social and economic profiles? How do they exercise political influence, if any?

To contribute towards finding answers to these questions, the present paper complements recent research at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission (UNESCWA) on the Arab Middle Class³ and discusses the political role of the Middle Class. The paper will use existing economic definitions for a “middle class” as its unit of analysis. In lack of a formally agreed definition for the Middle Class strata, the “one third rule” (i.e. a third of the income left for discretionary spending after covering the basic needs for food and shelter) - based on its prerequisite, a so-called “steady job”⁴ – will serve as starting point to develop insights into the nature of areas of concern onto which the middle class can have political influence, such as: health care, education, public transport and others.⁵ For example, as per the interests and incentives of the middle class, it would affect public policy through their voting behavior or through exercising a certain position on taxation or fiscal policy.⁶ As a qualitative definition on who constitutes “middle class” and with reference to the aspirations and ambitions of Brazilians, Eduardo Gianetti da Fonseca describes the middle class as composed of “people who are not resigned to a life of poverty, who are prepared to make sacrifices to create a better life for themselves but who have not started with life’s material problems solved because they have material assets to make their lives easy”⁷. However, in the context of the Arab States, the political engagement of the middle class may not only depend on a wish to improve material needs, but may be rather owed to an increasing frustration with the exclusive political and social contracts in place.

This paper explores the concept of middle class as a certain group of “citizens” (or a population stratum)⁸ with political relevance and with an incentive to translate political participation into political influence. However, the paper will not discuss the role of Middle Class representatives becoming politicians (“political

¹ (Sawhill, Winship, & Grannis, 2012; Yueh, 2013)

² For example refer to (Banerjee & Duflo, 2007; Barton, Chen, & Jin, 2013; Dallinger, 2013; International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth & Poverty Practice and Bureau for Development Policy, 2013; Kharas, 2011; Sawhill et al., 2012; Solimano, 2006)

³ (Abu-Ismaïl & Saranji, 2013; Prasad, 2014)

⁴ (Banerjee & Duflo, 2007; Parker, 2009)

⁵ The use of such rule of thumb affords certain flexibility, since income levels vary at the national, regional and international level.

⁶ (El-Mikawy, 2013)

⁷ (Parker, 2009, p. 1)

⁸ Given that citizenship could be also a criteria for identifying membership in the so-called middle class

professionals”). The objective of the paper is to lay the groundwork for a contextual model of analysis on political participation of the Middle Class in the Arab region and to develop a policy and research agenda on meaningful political participation based on democratic principles. Thus, the preliminary guiding questions for this explorative research paper lean on political comparative analysis⁹:

1. Do members of the middle class possess a *compatibility of major values beyond individual identities* (e.g. belonging to a certain religious group) relevant to political decision-making that would enable collective political participation geared towards a broad scope of functional policy areas?
2. Do members of the middle class have the *will¹⁰, ability and capacity to participate in political entities, institutions or governments in general* to shape a national response to needs, messages, policies and actions without resort to violence (e.g. link to governance and institutional quality)?

The Middle Class: political participation and political transition

With these questions in mind and assuming that “prosperous societies often have large and stable middle classes”¹¹, the aspiration and ambition component draws attention to the middle class’s role as a potential agent for development as well as economic and social transformation that is not necessarily grounded in an inherited status and that extends benefits of improved economic and social policies to poorer populations. How to instrumentalise and enhance the overall development agent functionality of the middle class is the question, given that a very diverse middle class across the globe appears to be awakening (e.g. “rising expectations of the expanding middle class in developing countries contrast with the stagnating living standards of a shrinking middle class in OECD countries”¹²). In the context of the Arab Region this question takes on even more complex dimensions: Firstly, a study on inequality concluded that “there is a tendency to believe that the Arab middle class experienced an 'authoritarian bargain', where developmental achievements were traded for political freedom in this part of the world”¹³. In a sense, the Arab Middle class traded voice and participation for economic favours that may be rather short-lived and limited in benefit to their kin. The bureaucratic and exclusive governance conflicts with democratic participation¹⁴, thus both direct and indirect citizen participation (e.g. representative democracy) has become more and more limited over time and caused frustration towards the professional political elites, especially among a younger generation that wants both: economic development and political participation. Secondly, the Arab society is dominated by identity-based

⁹ (Deutsch, Burrell, & Kann, 1957 (reprint 1967))

¹⁰For example in India, where the professional classes were “considered indifferent to politics and less inclined to vote than the poor”, but a change of their attitude was observed after the Mumbai attacks in late 2008 (Parker, 2009, p. 2).

¹¹ (Solimano, 2006, p. 8)

¹² (Pezzini, 2012)

¹³ (Ali, 2009)

¹⁴ (Callahan, 2007), also see Annex (table 1) for an overview on political systems in the Arab region

participation in political processes rather linked to religious beliefs and ethnicity than a national identity, if it exists.¹⁵

Arguably underlying the events of the Arab Spring has been the demand for change from prevalent social contracts and relationships between the administration and the public. A desire to move away from traditional modalities¹⁶ of “Administrator as Ruler vs. People as Subject” (coercive approach with an authoritarian dynamic that is government controlled) and “Administrator as Expert vs. People as Client” (perceived competence-based approach with a controlling dynamic that requires peoples’ compliance) brought people to the streets. Testing the waters of democracy, people took personal risks to demand a more “interactive” (i.e. participatory) relationships between the government and its people (e.g. administrators becoming accountable to and entrusted with the actual implementation of peoples’ votes; the administration being a public service engaged with the people being citizens). Unfortunately, there is a gap between expectations and realities emerging three years after the start of the Arab Spring movement and - as previous research confirms - “if we expect administrators to be facilitators, partners, and collaborators who encourage dialogue, build teams, foster partnerships and utilize participatory decision making strategies then we need to provide the appropriate training to equip these public administrators with the skills they need to do their jobs effectively”¹⁷. Changes in public administration leading to changes in patterns for political participation are a lengthy process of (mutual) training and education of all stakeholders. That is relevant even more so in traditional, hierarchical, or authoritarian societies, in countries without pre-existing social, civic and institutional frameworks to support political participation of citizens and/or in countries with elevated levels of distrust and fear dominating the relationship between authorities and the people.

With changing social contracts and the government-public relationship in the Arab region, the Middle Class’s aspiration and ambition could translate into material and non-material investments geared towards increasing policy influence and civil society engagement. In turn, the augmentation of opportunities/capabilities and freedoms of the Middle Classes hopefully cause a trickle-down effect for development that not only benefits the middle class themselves but could also benefit the poor and vulnerable (i.e. an expansion on “poverty-sensitive development”). As the events of the Arab Spring illustrate, the middle class might play a significant role in establishing, triggering, sustaining or consolidating social and political transformations (i.e. establishing democracies) though it is not an automatism and they cannot achieve social transformation on their own.¹⁸ In addition and as the “protest demographic” showed, the middle class in the Arab region is no homogenous group of people with similar profiles. Instead the profiles of the members of the middle class distribute along numerous dimensions, for example the urban-rural divide, the modern-traditional professions, gender, origin-immigrant and so on.

¹⁵ For a comprehensive discussion see (Collier, 2010)

¹⁶ For more details on the discussion of the roles of citizens and administrators, how they are intertwined and how they reflect various public administration reform movements as well as differences in public opinion on the role of government, please refer to: (Callahan, 2007)

¹⁷ (Callahan, 2007)

¹⁸ (Parker, 2009)

While the Arab Spring “blurred the lines between formal and informal political spheres”¹⁹, the post-revolutionary Arab region undergoes a transition process that does not necessarily lead to democratic consolidation. In result the political influence of the Middle Class resulting from both deliberate and non-deliberate activity may also transition either into becoming democratic or remain elite-based. Political participation in whatever shape or form or in whichever realm depend on the existence of functioning political institutions that enable/provide a direct and observable relationship with the process of policy decision-making applicable nation-wide, the channels of access to decision-makers as well as the forming of interests and identities underlying the access.

Khatib (2013, pp. 328-329, 331-332) identified four main challenges to formal political participation: Firstly, “endurance of formal political institutions that benefit from sustaining the old political status quo”. Second challenge is the overlap of the political environment with the social and economic, which makes “it difficult for emerging political entities and newly formed government institutions to carve an independent path” (see below in the case of Egypt). Thirdly, political participation and its direction are influenced by people’s wish for stability and security, but unfortunately transitions to democracy are unstable. Fourth challenge, the lack of capacity of certain groups (e.g. women, minorities) in terms of having an effective role in shaping public policy, means that formal political participation is negatively affected.

Current forms of political participation in the Arab Region

Historical and contemporary events in the Arab region have influence on civil and political rights, thus leading to an Arab “freedom and democracy deficit” as pointed out in the first Arab Human Development Report in 2002.²⁰ As such deficit is not limited to the political sphere, the guiding questions address the important interrelationship of the political participation realm with the economic development role of “middle class”: For example, participation in political processes could allow influence on the definition and implementation of a formula for sharing/allocating revenues or on effective decision-making, while the ability and willingness to contribute or drive necessary compromises and concessions arises from the social contract in place or emerging in order to benefit all population layers that (i.e. reducing the perceived politico-socio-economic divide that shapes the relationship between the “middle class” other classes)²¹. In democracies the socioeconomic status (SES model) works well to explain political activity as a function of education, income and occupation.²² Consequently, one could assume that with better income, better education and relevant

¹⁹ (Khatib, 2013, p. 317)

²⁰ (A. Sabbagh, 2005)

²¹ Please note: The use of the expressions “lower” and “upper class” is by no means a value judgment. However, the sociological idea of different social classes reflects a distinction and exclusion. For example, classic political economy (i.e. David Ricardo) differentiates classes based on source of income. On the one hand considering both capital and labour, also Karl Marx, Max Weber, Thorstein Veblen and Joseph Schumpeter build theories based on class differentiation and relationships between classes (e.g. conflicts). On the other hand, modern interpretations of class (i.e. by Pierre Bourdieu) focus on expanding the understanding of capital to include economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital.

²² See (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995): endnote 4 on p. 290 provides a literature overview on the SES-participation relationship.

occupations, the Arab Middle Class would engage in political activity. However, the prevalent 'authoritarian bargain' prevented it. In turn and once that authoritarian bargain is not honoured any longer by the ruling elites, i.e. once there are no economic gains traded against popular political participation, then the threat of losing income, access to education for oneself or future generations and jobs may turn the middle class into political actors. The events of the Arab Spring bringing together protesters from all walks of life, education levels and occupations indicate such change.

A focus on socioeconomic status is not sufficient to explain political participation, apart from general political interest – a “standard measure of psychological engagement in politics”, the resource-based extension of the SES model considers time, money and “civic skills” (e.g. language ability, communication, presentation and organisation skills) to explain the mechanisms that link social status to political activity.²³ Brady et al. (1995, p. 285) summarizes:

“Resources can be measured more reliably than is possible with the motivations (e.g., efficacy or political interest) that often are used to explain activity. Furthermore, they are causally prior to political activity, deriving from home and school, choices about jobs and family, and involvements in nonpolitical organizations and churches. The civic skills that facilitate participation are not only acquired in childhood but cultivated throughout the life cycle in the major secondary institutions of adult life. In this way, the institutions of civil society operate, as Tocqueville noted, as the school of democracy.”

So how does that model apply to the Arab region, if - for example in Egypt (see box 1) - the relationship between politics and economics are a result of “informal” and non-democratic means of political participation? Compared to the example of Egypt in which a networking approach evolved out of necessity and as an alternative to - though not displacement of - formal state power, modes of political participation in democratic societies are more “official” and formal. They include, for example: 1) electoral engagement: voting, campaigning and/or donations to political campaigns; 2) civic engagement: protesting and/or lobbying, 3) faith-based engagement and 4) other types of engagement: grassroots movements and/or (social) media. Independent though of the degree of formality, the individual in Arab countries also needs resources to engage.

Box 1: The case of Egypt – Alternative forms of political participation

“The successive regimes of Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak have relied upon organized labour, elections, professional groups, political parties, and the bureaucracy more as instruments of control and co-operation than of participation. Through the use of formal legal, political, and military power, the ruling elites present their dominant positions as both natural and necessary, and thus exclude from participation the subordinated classes. Western modernization theorists help perpetuate these biases because their definitions of political participation in the Middle East deny the political resources and experiences of non-elites. ... [Need] to examine politics from the perspective of the popular classes, the sha'b [...] by examining the political institutions that these people created to pursue their various interests. **To the bureaucratized and largely authoritarian Egyptian society, the sha'b responded by evolving networks designed to facilitate access or provide alternatives to the formal resources of the state, without displacing the formal power of the Egyptian state.** The sha'b rely on the ties of family or

²³ (Brady et al., 1995)

neighbourhood to plant a sympathetic word with, or ask a financial favour from normally unreceptive bureaucrats; they mitigate the effects of unemployment by holding supplementary jobs in a vigorous informal economy; they establish savings associations to provide credit to individuals who would not otherwise qualify in the rigid, formal banking system. The overall image which emerges [...] is one of **a dynamic and struggling people**, unlike the popular image of a subdued and fatalistic popular underclass in Muslim society. The family is an Islamic microcosm acting as the repository of social -- and Muslim -- values in Egyptian society: informal saving associations respond to economic needs and at the same time preserve the Islamic rejection of usurious practices; the private voluntary health and social organizations fill needs unmet by the state system, and at the same fulfill the religious requirement of Islamic alms. [...] **Men and women in Sha'bi communities who actively cultivate their networks can gain access to power politicians, subsidized commodities, savings, and credit organizations, and local bureaucrats who may facilitate another range of services."**

Source: ((Safty, 1995), emphasis added)

However, the socioeconomic status may be secondary to other factors (e.g. family connections, the time devoted to care for 'business relationships') and the degrees to which these forms of political participation are possible or allowed differ in Arab countries (e.g. freedom of expression). Thus the resource-based extension to the SES model may provide a set of arguments or incentives driving the Middle Class' political participation behaviour: On the one hand, while the resource "money" may be available to representatives of the Middle Class in the Arab region, their "civic skills" may be underdeveloped due to 1) less opportunity²⁴ acquiring the skills in early in life through education and conducive social environments and/or 2) non-democratic political systems actively discouraging civic skills. On the other hand, members of the middle class having a higher level of education²⁵ and holding a steady job may result in their resource "time" being limited and not leaving enough room for allocating time to political activity. However, there appears to be a generational²⁶ (see box 2) and a gender aspect at play: the children of the Arab Middle Class are better educated, but the youth unemployment rate (25 per cent for men and 48 per cent for women)²⁷ is comparatively high and leaves time to be allocated to political activity. Furthermore, frustration with exclusive political institutions grows with increased education and lack of (employment) opportunities. While the skills learned in school and university may not correspond to the needs of the Arab labour market, they may be a set of skills that corresponds to "civic skills", which in turn increase the propensity to engage in political activity.²⁸

²⁴ Notwithstanding a general measurement issue, civic skills can also be acquired in religious environments (e.g. church/Sunday school, mosques/ madrassa), which tend to be more independent from social stratification or education level (Brady et al., 1995)

²⁵ {ADD info on mean schooling years} According to the latest Arab MDG report: 1) the primary net enrolment rates have increased from 85 per cent in 1999 to 92 per cent in 2011; 2) the literacy rates of youth aged 15-24 years old have increased from 70 per cent in the 1990s to 89 per cent in 2010. (United Nations & States, 2013, p. 17 and 20)

²⁶ The demographics of the Arab countries shows a distinct "youth bulge" (Bajoria & Assaad, 2011).

²⁷ (International Labour Organisation (ILO), 2012, p. 54)

²⁸ (United Nations & States, 2013, p. 19): "Another issue is the relevance of skills acquired for the labour market, as even a high level of education does not guarantee a job. Employers complain that youth are not well prepared and do not develop the needed skills. In Tunisia, the education system produces highly educated youth, with more than 57 per cent of new entrants to the labour market in 2010 holding a university degree. In an economy dominated by low-skill industries, however, few could find the jobs that university graduates expect."

Box 2: Understanding the Arab Digital Generation – What is the Arab Digital Generation

The ADG's members are Internet users ages 15 to 35 who are digitally active; own a laptop, computer, or smartphone; access the Internet multiple times each day; and have at least one account on a social network. **They are educated and independent; they are decidedly religious yet also free-spirited. They are politically aware, if not politically active.** They are aligned with general Islamic principles and country/family traditions and culture, but they are **constantly questioning tradition and its effect on their lives.** Family still represents their most important social unit, and friends are a source of counsel for many decisions. Through the digital world, **women—particularly in some cultures of the MENA region—now have a platform to express themselves, share their ideas, and interact with men in virtual space.** In previous generations, interaction with men and the outside world was limited.

This generation has grown up during a time of political turmoil in the region. They have witnessed or heard about the 1991 Gulf War, have watched the attacks of 9/11 and military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and have been exposed to the more visible forms of religious extremism. They have participated in one form or another in the Arab Spring. They are very much affected by Western culture and are wary of its effect on themselves, their children, and future generations.

Source: ((JWT, 2013; K. Sabbagh, Mourad, Kabbara, Shehadi, & Samman, 2013) emphasis added)

The overview on the existing political systems in the Arab region (see Annex, table 3) highlights the range from absolute as well as constitutional monarchies over presidential republics and republics to confessional systems and federations of states. Notwithstanding the events of the Arab Spring and while non-democratic²⁹ in most cases, each political system affords different channels, means and degrees of political participation as well as system-specific barriers to political participation. Based on an analysis of parliamentary systems in the region (see Annex 2), a spurious argument could be made in theory that the opportunity for political participation is reflected in parliamentary representation (additional consideration would be needed to identify the size of local, sub-national and national administrations and their channels of interaction with national level parliaments): For example, Jordan has one Member of Parliament (both upper and lower house combined) per 28,332 people, while Egypt has one Member of Parliament per 298,970 people³⁰. However, a meaningful analysis needs not only distinguish between how many seats are directly elected and how many are by appointment through a central authority (e.g. President), but also needs to analyse the mechanisms on how local level political entities influence policy-making (such as the family and neighbourhood networks in Egypt) and how individual motivation for election evolves.

Overall, research on political participation in the Arab region is limited and the findings on citizens' motivation – at least prior to the Arab Spring – to participate in elections showed that voting - given weak institutions in the Arab World – means only expressing an expectation to gain access to state resources via “wasta” or benefits conferred by the elected political candidates instead of actual identification with policy issues.³¹ So what happens when the expectations are not met or when the economic space of the middle class shrinks: Does it lead to greater demand for political participation? The regular assumption that economic crises

²⁹ Even though regular elections are being held.

³⁰ Germany with a similar population size to Egypt has one parliamentarian per 122,773 people.

³¹ (Blaydes, 2008; Gandhi & Lust-Okar, 2009; Tessler, Jamal, & Miguel, 2008)

increase the likelihood of political instability and institutional reform due to popular discontent and increased political participation and pressure from the opposition has been challenged in countries such as Morocco and Jordan in times prior to the Arab Spring.³²

The latest Arab MDG report concurs that political space (e.g. political parties, trade unions, media, civil society) in the Arab countries remains controlled, constraint and restrictive, thus leading to social and political tensions or even full blown conflict.³³ And in line with the argument for a “authoritarian bargain” that the middle class has entered in the region, Lust-Oskar (2009, p. 161) explains the different protest dynamic or different participation as a function of the prevalent political environment in the two countries (see table 1):

“In divided environments loyalists who previously mobilized popular movements may become unwilling to challenge incumbents when crises continue, even if their demands have not been met. Because loyalists have organizational structures and lower costs of mobilizing an independent protest, they are often able to exploit the early stages of crises to demand reforms. However, as crises continue, radicals gain strength and become more likely to join in demonstrations, even if they are unwilling to mobilize independently. Thus, to avoid the possibility that radicals exploit unrest to demand radical reforms, moderates choose not to mobilize. The very same elites who previously exploited economic discontent to demand political change now remain silent, while radicals who might take to the streets if the moderates mobilized are unwilling to do so alone.”

Bringing together the analysis of the personal environment (status, resources, etc.) and the analysis of the political/institutional environment allows the formulation of another determining driver for the behaviour of the Middle Class vis-a-vis political participation: The personal environment (i.e. perceived or acknowledged identity of belonging to a certain group) as a influencing variable determining political participation behaviour is situated within and shaped by the overall political/institutional environment of the Middle Class. Both realms have specific characteristics acting either as barriers or enablers towards political participation.

Table 1: Morocco and Jordan – Different political opposition in response to economic crises

	Morocco	Jordan
Similarities	Monarchies, with central control of the distribution of resources and determination of the political rules Economic crisis starting in 1975 in result of depletion of natural resources (e.g. phosphate) Economic reforms to address the crisis lead to mass discontent	
Differences	Stronger civil society, though less willing to press demands in times of crisis	Weaker civil society
Determinant Political Environment	Divided, as a result of oppressing political organisations (e.g. closure of parliament between 1974 to 1984) and creating an insider/outsider dynamic	Undivided, as a result of reestablishing a role for political parties following coup attempts in the 1970s

Source: (Lust-Oskar, 2009)

³² (Lust-Oskar, 2009)

³³ (United Nations & States, 2013)

Callahan (2007) summarises the “nature of contemporary life, administrative processes that are in place, and the techniques utilized for participation” as barriers to “authentic participation”, which require “education and re-education for citizens and administrators, as well as the redesign of administrative processes and structures in an effort to change the way citizens and administrators communicate and interact”. Additional barriers to political participation include illiteracy, lack of time and cost, lack of information, lack of access to information, gender, lack of recognition of constituency, lacking recognition of constituency feedback³⁴ and so on. To overcome individual barriers of specific population groups for effective political participation a number of approaches involving civil society have proven effective (see box 3 and the example of establishing Youth Councils in Yemen). In addition to the impact of the different political environments and the different personal resources, the so-called middle class is no homogenous group of people with similar individual profiles. Instead the profiles of the members of the middle class scatter along numerous dimensions, for example the urban-rural divide, the modern-traditional professions, origin-immigrant and other factors. Value surveys are a useful way to elicit such differences, as they “were designed to measure all major areas of human concern, from religion to politics to economic and social life” (Inglehart, 2006).

The resulting matrix (see figure 1) covers the two dimensions³⁵ – “traditional vs. secular-rational” and “survival vs. self-expression” – that “explain more than 70 percent of the cross-cultural variance on scores of more specific values”³⁶: Unsurprisingly, the few Arab countries covered by the survey have all a traditional value structure meaning that religion is very important. Interestingly, in the case of Jordan, the value system has become more traditional between two surveys (1995 and 2000), while the comparison of values in Morocco in 2000 and 2006 shows a shift towards a less traditional outlook (For example, Morocco’s parliament passed family law reforms in 2004). Even though anecdotal, in view of these observations the outcomes are remarkable given a similar trajectory of events and governmental responses (both constitutional monarchies) during the Arab Spring³⁷:

³⁴ Recognition of constituency feedback: Example Uganda (<http://ureport.ug/pollresults/>) - U-reporters join and answer an SMS poll or question on issues dealing with health, child protection, school, safe water, and more. Poll results are published in newspapers, reflected on radio, and placed directly into the hands of members of parliament. All text messages are free, a vital element in removing the barriers to participation.

³⁵ “*Secular-rational values dimension* reflects the contrast between societies in which religion is very important and those in which it is not. A wide range of other orientations are closely linked with this dimension. Societies near the traditional pole emphasize the importance of parent-child ties and deference to authority, along with absolute standards and traditional family values, and reject divorce, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide. These societies have high levels of national pride, and a nationalistic outlook. Societies with secular-rational values have the opposite preferences on all of these topics. The second major dimension of cross-cultural variation is linked with the transition from industrial society to post-industrial societies, which brings a *polarization between Survival and Self-expression values*. The unprecedented wealth that has accumulated in advanced societies during the past generation means that an unprecedented share of the population has grown up taking survival for granted. Thus, priorities have shifted from an emphasis on economic and physical security above all, toward increasing emphasis on subjective well-being, self-expression and the quality of life” (Inglehart, 2006).

³⁶ (Inglehart, 2006)

³⁷ For a detailed discussion on similarities and divergence between Jordan and Morocco see (Cramer, 2012). For a detailed and interactive timeline on the events of the Arab Spring (covering 26 December 2010 to 17 December 2011) refer to <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline>

Box 3: The case of Yemen – Youth participation through Youth Councils

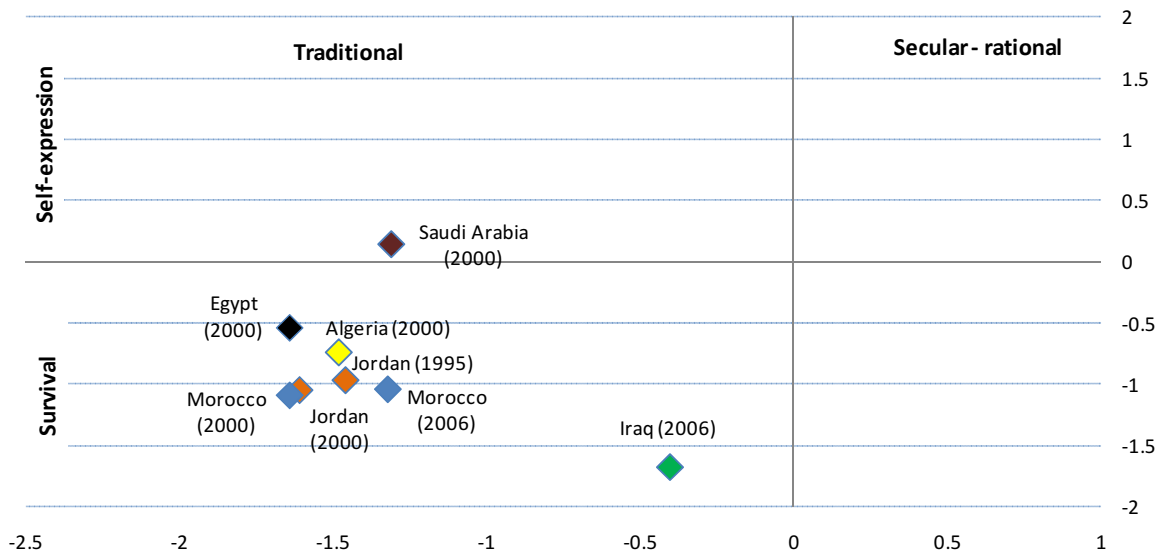
Description: NDI [National Democratic Institute] has established two 46-member cross-tribal youth councils in Yemen. The councils advocate for youth with municipal and tribal leaders, learn and teach conflict prevention and problem-solving skills, and mediate among youth in their communities. NDI supports the councils with training on conflict mitigation, advocacy and fundraising, and on developing achievable projects and plans. Prior to establishing the councils, the organization spent nearly two months meeting with tribal sheikhs, governors, representatives of ministries and local councilors to secure their support for engaging youth. The Marib Youth Council for Development and Social Peace in Juba, for example, has trained and established 14 student mediation teams, which conduct peer-to-peer conflict mediation in their schools. Indicators of success include a decrease in the presence of weapons in schools, the implementation of an awareness-raising programme for young women, and the agreement of 10 imams to preach on peace and conflict prevention during Friday prayers. Council members have used their newly acquired conflict mitigation techniques to resolve tribal disputes. Local governance institutions and stakeholders support the council, giving it office space and inviting representatives to serve as honorary members of the local council. Youth have used peaceful advocacy and protest tools learned during the NDI training to successfully convey their demands to the government. This breaks with the previous tradition of employing sabotage and violence to pressure government.

Innovation: Works with youth in tribal settings; combines training with results-oriented practice and participation; enables youth to participate in community decision-making; youth have successfully influenced community leaders and processes.

Inclusion: Parity between men and women; current chair of elected council board in Juba is a woman; targets conflict-affected, marginalized communities.”

Source: (UNDP, 2013)

Figure 1: National-level Value scores on Traditional/Secular-rational values and Survival/Self-expression values for all available surveys and for all available countries in the ESCWA region



Source: Own graph based on data from the World Value Survey (Inglehart, 2006)

On the one hand, in Morocco, a “broadened monarchy” entered a rather cooperative relationship with the Islamist Party of Justice and Development (PJD) who is the main opposition group. On the other, in Jordan’s

monarchy-Islamist relations appear rather combative, as the Islamic Action Front (IAF) - the main opposition party – stands against upcoming elections perceiving the concessions of the monarchy as insufficient.³⁸ Furthermore, and while underlying structural problems are unresolved, the different degrees of constitutional reforms in both countries mean different measures of political, economic and social changes/freedoms for the population as well as overall national stability.

The dimension “survival vs. self-expression” links values to the transition from industrial to post-industrial societies, in which the population is less concerned about basic survival (e.g. food, shelter) due to sufficient wealth accumulation. With discretionary income, the emphasis shifts from concerns about physical, economic and food security towards considerations of quality of life, individual well-being and self-expression. In a sense the transition could be consistent with the satisfaction of higher level needs (i.e. self-actualisation) captured by Maslow’s pyramid of needs. With the exception of Saudi Arabia, which due to oil revenues raised GDP per capita from 9,400 USD in the year 2000 to 20,540 USD in the year 2011 and, thus transitioned from survival to self-expression mode, the Arab countries surveyed are firmly placed at different levels within the survival scale.

Notwithstanding the different position of Saudi Arabia in the survey, the events of the “Arab Spring” across the whole region warrant an interpretation of “survival vs. Self-expression” beyond purely economical issues towards participation. For example, Jordan’s GDP per capita increased from 1,604 USD in 1995 to 1,764 in 2000 and 4,666 USD in 2011, whereas Egypt’s GDP per capita declined from 1,475 USD in 2000 to 1,208 USD in 2005 and recovered to 2,780 USD in 2011. Notwithstanding a large sub-regional variance, the average GDP per capita³⁹ in the Arab World increased from 2,596 USD in the year 2000 to 6,794 USD in 2011 (The World Bank, 2013).

The Gini coefficients in the region (see annex, figure 4) range from 33.8 in Jordan (in 2010, down from 38.9 in 2003) and 30.8 in Egypt (in 2008) to 40.9 in Morocco (in 2007) and 41.1 in Qatar (in 2007).⁴⁰ Unfortunately, the increase in GDP per capita has not necessarily improved the distribution of income and the realities in Arab countries (e.g. symptoms of conspicuous consumption, increasing slum dwellings).⁴¹ Furthermore, the inverse relationship between income levels and voice /accountability (figure 2) highlights strongly the persistence of the “authoritarian bargain” in the region. The changes in per capita income over time, the different income distribution, as well as the different income levels and sources of income between Arab countries suggest that the endowments and the definition of who economically belongs to the middle class differ from country to country: Based on income, a person can be part of the middle class in Egypt, but would not be considered part of the middle class in Saudi Arabia. Bringing together the two main explanatory dimensions of the value survey, reveals additional value-based tensions affecting national development and impacting on the analysis of middle class in the region: For example, on the one hand the Jordanian monarch has to rely on an urban business elite for economic growth that stems largely from Palestinian origins, while on the other hand, it also

³⁸ (Cramer, 2012)

³⁹ See Annex (table 3) for the GDP per capita (in current USD) per Arab country

⁴⁰ (The World Bank, 2013)

⁴¹ (UNDP, 2011)

has to rely on traditional/tribal elites for security (e.g. Bedouins tribes of the East Bank that supply armed forces).⁴² Both sides have different options, incentives and mechanisms for political participation and for supporting policy-making.

For a study on electoral participation conducted in six Arab countries (Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Yemen), Tessler, Jamal and Miguel (2008) used public opinion surveys (i.e. Arab Barometer data) to investigate individuals' choices and context-specific factors accounting for electoral participation given that elections in the Arab region are mostly designed to confirm or give a token legitimisation to the authoritarian rulers. The study highlights the preferred means of political participation being electoral participation: 65 per cent of the sample population choose to only "vote" (and/or not to "protest" and/or "rally"), while 24 per cent did not vote but chose to "protest" instead⁴³. In addition and relevant for the interpretation of the behaviour since the Arab Spring, the protesting population appears less involved in multiple forms of political participation and with a different logic of participation overall. The question remains what constitutes or triggers such different logic: short-term incentive, degree of grievances, degree of ability to organise a critical mass or other factors.

It has to be said that neither the ability for electoral participation in the Arab States nor rising income levels necessarily affect voice and accountability ("a perception to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and free media", see figure 2)⁴⁴: All Arab States have had some form of elections (see Annex table 4) during the last decade; however the results rarely increased trust in government institutions nor did newly emerging parties after the Arab Spring succeed in forming sustainable programmes, identities and constituencies require for an inclusive political landscape also with an effective opposition. To examine the participation of members of the Middle Class in elections are more detailed analysis on the demographic of voters in Arab States would be necessary. With the changes in terms of place (informal to formal) and of means of political participation (evolution of institutions) as result of the Arab uprisings⁴⁵, the Middle Class is presented with further avenues to engage in political activity. To do so effectively, Khatib (2013, p. 336) zooms in on five crucial factors of the political infrastructure, which also offer different entry points for contribution and participation: 1) Organisation: i.e. the presence of political groups that enable organisation of people into institutions; 2) leadership: political institutions require a clear leadership structure to become effective interlocutors; 3) coherent and concrete political programme and objectives⁴⁶: necessary to effectively communicate with stakeholders and to garner support; 4) long-term oriented agenda and strategy: as the linchpin for a political programme and to sustain growth as well as evolution of a political groups; and 5) ability to build viable coalitions: as a basis for driving

⁴² (Cramer, 2012)

⁴³ (Tessler et al., 2008, p. 22)

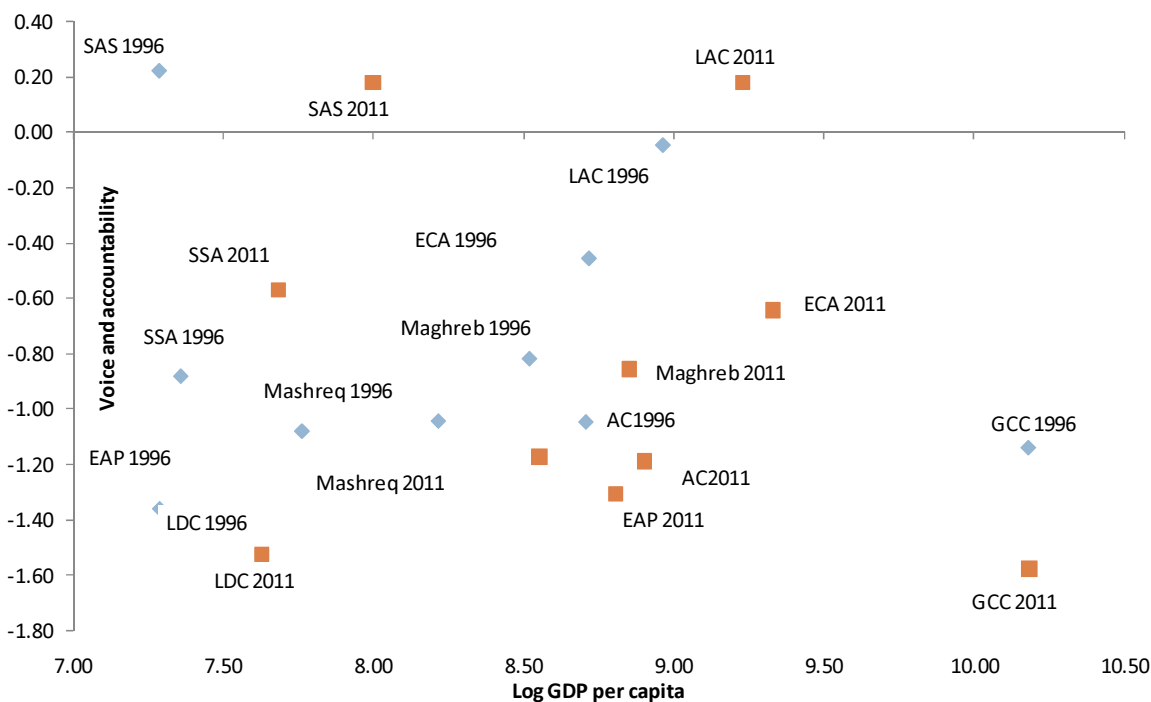
⁴⁴ According to the description of the measure "voice and accountability"(Kaufmann, Kraay, & Mastruzzi, 2013)

⁴⁵ (Khatib, 2013)

⁴⁶ For concrete recommendations for emerging political parties in the Arab region please refer to (Muasher, 2013)and box 4 in the annex.

policy agendas based on a national identity and for a “healthy dynamic” to translate change in voters’ opinion into the political landscape.

Figure 2: Rising income levels but declining voice and accountability

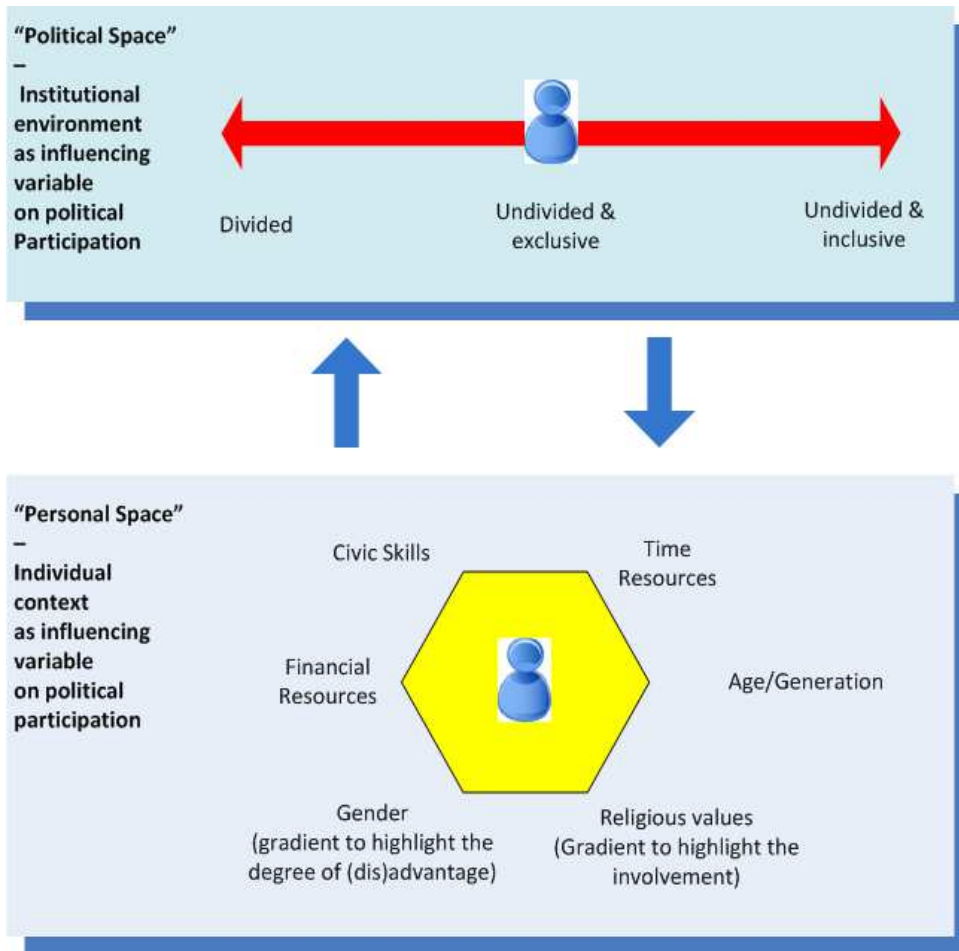


Source: (United Nations & States, 2013)

The way forward on a policy and research agenda for political engagement of the Middle Class

The discussion showed the drivers and challenges for political participation of members of the Middle Class in the Arab region and to conclude, the author proposes a framework of analysis (see figure 3) to guide future policy research. The proposed framework is a tool to combine individual and institutional variables for the empirical analysis of the Middle Class’s political participation. It does support the development of an aggregate regional view on political participation of the Arab Middle Class, while it would enable also a comparison between the circumstances of the Middle Class prior to 2010 with the changes post-2010 at the country-level. With the analysis for the pre- and post-scenarios per Arab country a picture of the determinants for change in the region emerge and show the major influencing variables that motivate political participation of the Middle Class.

Figure 3: Contextual model of factors driving political participation of the Middle Class



Source: Own figure

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Annex

Table 2: Political systems in the Arab region

Country	Predominant religion	Form of Government	Parliament	Natural resources
Algeria				
Bahrain	Shia muslim	Constitutional Monarchy (independence from UK since 1971)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi-cameral parliament: Consultative Council (40 members appointed by the king) and the Council of Representatives (40 members popularly elected through universal suffrage) 	Yes (oil: 70 % of government revenue)
Egypt	Sunni muslim	Presidential republic (tbc) (independence from UK in 1922 and the Egyptian Republic was declared in June of 1953)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People's Assembly: 454 deputies of which ten are appointed by the president and the remainder being elected. • Shura Council (upper house with 264 elected members. 	yes
Iraq	Shia muslim	parliamentary democracy (Federal parliamentary representative democratic republic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presidential council: President and Vice President • Council of Representatives (elected through representation) • Prime Minister seat is appointed by the Presidential Council 	yes
Jordan	Sunni muslim	Constitutional Monarchy (Hashemite Kingdom, (independence from UK since 1946)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multi-party system and the King's veto can be overruled by two-thirds vote of both houses of parliament. • Parliament: National Assembly with two parts; a Senate (55 monarch-appointed members) and the Chamber of Deputies (110 elected members). • A specified number of seats are reserved for minorities. 	
Kuwait	Sunni muslim	Constitutional Emirate –hereditary position of Emir (independence from UK since 1961)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Assembly 	Yes (oil: xxx % of government revenue)
Lebanon	Diversity of religious groups	Confessionalism (power sharing arrangement which proportionally distributes representation according to ethnic population.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parliament: Single body National Assembly consisting of 128 members elected by popular vote. • Political parties in the traditional sense do not exist as political blocs are typically formed along personal, ethnic, family or regional lines 	no
Morocco	Sunni muslim	Constitutional Monarchy (independence from France in 1956)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi-cameral with the prime minister position appointed by the king: Chamber of Counselors (Upper House, 270 members which are elected indirectly) and Chamber of Representatives (Lower House, with 325 elected seats) 	yes

Country	Predominant religion	Form of Government	Parliament	Natural resources
Oman		Hereditary monarchy (Sultanate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No legal political parties, thus no functioning legislative institutions two part parliament (Council of Oman) consisting : Consultative Assembly and a Council of State 	
Qatar	Sunni muslim	Emirate/Absolute Monarchy (formal independence from UK in 1971)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultative Assembly (35 appointed members) Slow transition to a constitutional monarchy o include more popularly elected members on the Advisory Council, presently, political parties are forbidden 	yes
Saudi Arabia	Sunni muslim	Monarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No parliament and no political parties 	yes
Sudan	Sunni muslim	Republic (independence from the United Kingdom in 1956): power sharing arrangement exists between the Government of National Unity, the National Congress Party (party of Bashir), and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parliament: Two houses - Council of States (50 members elected through state legislatures) and a National Assembly (450 appointed seats) 	yes
Syria	Sunni	Single party republic under a military regime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uni-cameral People's Council (250 members) President Bashar al-Asad was elected in an un-opposed referendum 	
Tunisia	Sunni muslim	Presidential republic (tbc) (independence from France in 1956)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bi-cameral legislature: Chamber of Deputies (189) and Chamber of Advisors (126) 	Yes (minor oil production)

- continued below -

Country	Predominant religion	Form of Government	Parliament	Natural resources
United Arab Emirates	(75% immigrants)	Federation of seven states (Emirates) similar to monarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power is distributed between the central government and the individual emirates • The positions of president and vice president are elected by the rulers of each emirate. There is no suffrage and political parties are forbidden • Parliament: 1) The Federal Supreme Councils serves as the parliament establishing general policies and consists of the rulers of the seven emirates. • The rulers of Abu Dhabi and Dubai have veto power. 2) Federal National Council with 20 appointed members and 20 elected members acting as an advisory council. 	yes
Yemen		Republic (independence of North Yemen from Ottoman Empire in 1918 and South Yemen from UK in 1967)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presidential elections by popular vote with General People's Congress as dominant power • Bi-cameral Parliament: Shura Council (111 seats) appointed by the president and a popularly-elected House of Representatives (301 seats) 	

Source: (Carnegie Endowment, 2008; Milinski, 2009)

Table 3: Parliamentary Structures and Representation

Structure of Parliament	Country	Chamber	Term of parliaments (in years)	Electoral systems	Last elections	Statutory number of seats	Current number of seats	Number of women parliamentarians	Percentage of women	Population size	Average representation
Bicameral	Algeria	Council of the Nation	6	Majority	Dec-12	144	142	10	7.04	38,481,705	270,998
		National People's Assembly	5	Proportional	May-12	462	462	146	31.6		
	Bahrain	Council of Representatives	4	Majority	Oct-10	40	40	4	10	1,317,827	32,946
		Shura Council	4	other	Nov-10	40	40	11	27.5		
	Egypt	Majlis Ash-Shura / Shoura Assembly	6	other	Jan-12	270	270	12	4.44	80,721,874	298,970
		Majlis Al-Chaab / People's Assembly	5	other	Feb-12	508	508	10	1.97		
	Jordan	Senate	4	other	Oct-11	75	75 (60)*	9 (7)*	12	6,318,000	28,332
		House of Representatives	4	Mixed	Jan-13	150	148	18	12.16		
	Morocco	House of Representatives	5	Proportional	Nov-11	395	395	67	16.96	32,521,143	82,332
		House of Councillors	9	other	Oct-09	270	270	6	2.22		
	Oman	State Council	4	other	Oct-11	83	83	15	18.07	3,314,001	39,928
		Consultative Council	4	Proportional	Oct-11	84	84	1	1.19		
	Sudan	National Assembly	5	Mixed	Apr-10	354	354	87	24.58	37,195,349	105,072
		Council of States	5	other	May-10	32	28	5	17.86		
Yemen	House of Representatives	6	Majority	Apr-03	301	301	1	0.33	23,852,409	79,244	
	Consultative Council	other	other	Apr-01	111	111	2	1.8			
	Germany	Bundestag	4		Sept-13	598	631	230	36.45	81,889,839	122,773
		Bundesrat	other			69	69	19	27.54		
Unicameral	Iraq	Council of Representatives of Iraq	4	Proportional	Oct-10	325	325	82	25.23	32,578,209**	100,241
	Kuwait	National Assembly	4	Majority	Jul-13	65	65	4	6.15	3,250,496	50,008
	Lebanon	National Assembly	4	Majority	Jun-09	128	128	4	3.13	4,424,888**	34,569
	Libya	General National Congress	other	Mixed	Jul-12	200	200	33	16.5	6,154,623	30,773
	Qatar	Advisory Council	3	other	Jul-13	35	35	0	0	2,050,514	58,586
	Saudi Arabia	Consultative Council	4	other		151	151	30	19.87	28,287,855	187,337
	Syria	People's Assembly	4	Majority	Jan-13	250	250	30	12	22,399,254**	89,597
	Tunisia	National Constituent Assembly	1	Proportional	Oct-11	217	217	58	26.73	10,777,500	49,666
	United Arab Emirates	Federal National Council	4	Majority	Sep-11	40	40	7	17.5	9,205,651	230,141

Source: (International Parliamentary Union, 2013a, 2013b; United Nations, 2013)

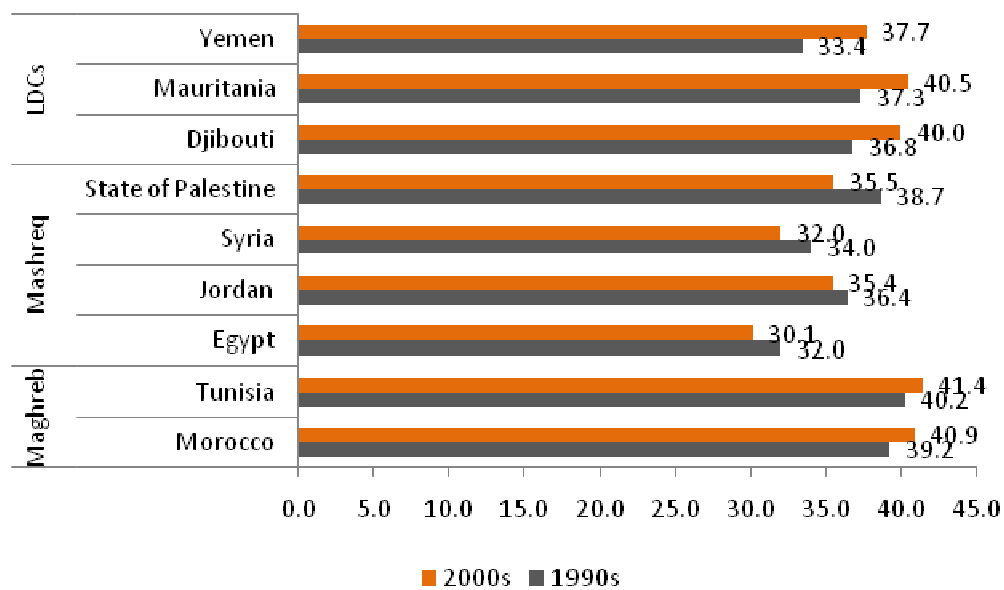
Notes: *Parliamentary data on Jordan: the numbers differ in the databases thus both figures are provided; **Population figures are adjusted for Syrian refugees;

Table 4: GDP per capita (current USD)

Country Name	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2011
Arab World	319	1,046	2,496	1,941	1,934	2,005	2,596	3,663	5,706	6,794
Algeria	354	971	2,251	2,622	2,452	1,476	1,794	3,112	4,567	5,244
Bahrain			8,584	8,759	8,582	10,463	12,489	18,571	18,184	
Egypt, Arab Rep.	214	285	510	685	759	969	1,476	1,209	2,698	2,781
Iraq	358	1,366	3,453	2,818			1,063	1,135	2,532	3,501
Jordan	424	753	1,816	1,936	1,268	1,604	1,764	2,326	4,370	4,666
Kuwait	3,816	11,410	20,799	12,311	8,827	16,703	19,434	35,688	45,437	62,664
Lebanon					963	3,384	4,612	5,394	8,781	9,413
Morocco	257	517	955	573	1,033	1,213	1,272	1,931	2,795	3,054
Oman	350	2,334	5,064	6,503	6,255	6,184	8,775	12,721	20,791	25,221
Qatar	2,784	15,431	35,331	16,721	15,537	16,231	30,053	52,425	72,398	92,501
Saudi Arabia	869	6,335	16,764	7,859	7,236	7,704	9,401	13,127	16,423	20,540
South Sudan									1,505	1,859
Sudan	142	282	380	529	468	459	359	691	1,488	1,435
Syrian Arab Republic	336	905	1,467	1,551	999	804	1,209	1,561	2,893	
Tunisia	281	772	1,370	1,158	1,507	2,013	2,245	3,219	4,207	4,350
United Arab Emirates		27,590	42,903	30,099	28,033	27,993	34,395	44,385	39,625	45,653
West Bank and Gaza						1,301	1,408	1,209		
Yemen, Rep.					473	281	544	811	1,291	1,361

Source: (The World Bank, 2013)

Figure 4: Gini index of inequality across Arab countries



Source: ESCWA estimates based on The World Bank 2012

Box 4: Recommendations for emerging political parties

- Develop clear, detailed programs that go beyond stating what the party is against and define what it is for, addressing society's real economic and social needs.
- Design programs through extensive consultations with constituents rather than relying on the advice of small groups of experts.
- Abandon dated, ideological platforms and find new ways to package solutions to the challenges of creating jobs, ensuring economic mobility, establishing equality before the law, fighting corruption, and guaranteeing fairer and wider political representation.
- Promote educational policies that encourage pluralism, tolerance, respect for different points of view, and critical thinking.
- Develop real connections with the people, learning from Islamist parties that have built constituencies over decades by providing health, education, and other services.
- Define new and creative strategies to collect small but regular donations from a broad base of citizens.
- Convince members of the business community to more actively fund emerging political parties by demonstrating that a strong, independent, and stable party system is in their interests.
- Reduce the unsustainable emphasis on individual party leaders and personalities.
- Encourage the consolidation of secular political parties by focusing on "big-tent" politics.

Source: (Muasher, 2013)
