Trust In Political Institutions, Voting Turnout and Protest: Evidence from Tunisia, Lebanon, Algeria, Iraq, Egypt

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Abstract:

How does trust in different political institutions influence political participation, including voting turnout and protest? Trust in political institutions is essential in studying political participation, including voting and protest, by overcoming collective action problems and exchanging information and resources necessary for political engagement. This paper explores trust in different political institutions and its different impacts on voting turnout and protest in the context of less democratic states. This paper finds that trust in government and police tends to be less associated with protest than voting. In contrast, trust in civil society organizations tends to be highly associated with protest than voting. While trust in the judiciary tends to be related to protest and voting.

This paper presents results using cross-sectional survey data from the Arab Barometer for Tunisia, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, and Algeria during 2010 – 2011, showing a strong relationship between trust among different political institutions and political participation, including voting turnout and protests in weak democratic systems.

Keywords: Political Trust, Political Institutions, Voting Turnout, Protest, Authoritarian Politics.

Introduction:

In comparative politics, there is a debate about the relationship between political trust and political participation. This paper explores how trust in political institutions explains political participation by examining two forms of political participation in non-democratic settings. The first is voting turnout, and the second is protest. How does trust in different political institutions shape political participation, including voting turnout and protest in less democratic states?

One group of scholars argues that political trust is necessary for political participation[1]. This group of scholars argues that for citizens to participate in politics, they need to have a minimum prerequisite positive attitude and trust toward the political system and its institutions[2].

Another group of scholars argues that when political trust diminishes, citizens participate in politics to challenge the existing elites through various means, including social movements[3]. This group of scholars emphasizes the role of distrust in the political system as a motivation to challenge decision-makers through unconventional political participation[4], such as protests.

On the other hand, another group of scholars argue that individual political participation, whether protest or voting turnout, is primarily explained through the role of political resources, including political efficacy [5]. Political efficacy is the individual perception that their political action can impact the political process; the individual perception that political change is possible and that individuals can be part of this change plays a major role in understanding political engagement and participation[6]. This group of scholars argues that individual electoral participation is a function of political efficacy [7].

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[1] Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1965). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations, an Analytic Study*. Little, Brown; Fraser, J. (1970). The Mistrustful-Efficacious Hypothesis and Political Participation. *The Journal of Politics*, *32*(2), 444–449. https://doi.org/10.2307/2128662 ; Gamson, W. A. (1968b). *Stable Unrepresentation in American Society*. *12*(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/000276426801200203 ; Putnam, R. (1994). *Making Democracy Work*. Princeton University Press

[2] Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1965). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations, an Analytic Study*. Little, Brown

[3] Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist*, *37*(2), 122–147. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.37.2.122 ; Gamson, W. A. (1968a). *Power and Discontent*; Gamson, W. A. (1975). *Strategy of Social Protest*. Thomson Learning EMEA, Limited; Levi, M., & Stoker, L. (2000). Political trust and trustworthiness. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *3*, 475–508.

[4] This paper defines unconventional political participation, such as social movements, including protest, as a function of response to dissatisfaction with the existing political system. This definition is based on Barnes, S. H., & Kaase, M. (1979). *Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies*. Sage Publications.

[5] Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Harvard University Press.

[6] Campbell, A., Gurin, G., & E. Miller, W. (1954). *The Voter Decides.*

[7] Campbell, A., Gurin, G., & E. Miller, W. (1954). *The Voter Decides.*

Hence, the question is, what is the relationship between these three main political debates on political efficacy, political trust/distrust, and political participation, including protest and voting turnout, and why is this relationship important to explore?

The relationship between political trust and political participation - is particularly important to explore in less democratic countries because protest and voting are two different forms of political engagement that operate differently in less democratic countries. Hence, these different forms of political engagements – protest and voting – can signal how well the relationship is between individuals and different political institutions, which might inform us about the extent to which a country is democratic, representative, and responsive to the people [8].

Specifically, whether an individual protests or votes can indicate how well the relationship is between the individual and the political institutions. Suppose individuals trust their government and its political institutions. In that case, they are less likely to protest, particularly in less democratic countries where protest tends to be associated with political violence and many other risks compared to voting[9]. Whereas if individuals distrust their government and are upset with the government's performance, they are likely to engage in contentious political actions such as protest because these actions might be seen as more effective in bringing political change compared to vote[10] . Hence, this project can inform us about the relationship between individuals and the different political institutions by looking at political trust and political participation to explore the extent to which this country is democratic or less democratic, as well as the performance of the political system and its institutions.

Therefore, the main contribution of this paper is to explain and present the association between three key political debates – trust/distrust in political institutions, protest/voting, and political efficacy - to help examine and evaluate individual relationships with various political institutions.

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[8] Besley, T., & Persson, T. (2009). Repression or Civil War? *American Economic Review*, *99*(2), 292–297. https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.99.2.292

[9] Svolik, M. W. (2012). *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge University Press.

[10] Boulding, C. (2010). NGOs and Political Participation in Weak Democracies: Subnational Evidence on Protest and Voter Turnout from Bolivia. *The Journal of Politics*, *72*(2), 456–468. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022381609990922 ; Campbell, A., Gurin, G., & E. Miller, W. (1954). *The Voter Decides*.

Although a great deal of scholarly research has explored political trust and political participation in democracies[11] , and non-democracies, one critically important issue remains to be addressed.

In particular, we lack a sufficient understanding of how trust in different political institutions influences different kinds of political engagement. Most preceding studies established the general relationship between trust in political institutions and political engagement, where high trust in political institutions suggests high political engagement[12]. However, the effect of trust in different political institutions on specific form of political participation, such as protest and voting, has yet to be explored in the literature, particularly in less democratic countries and in the context of Middle Eastern countries.

In this article, I explore how trust among several political institutions impacts voting turnout and protest. I examine each outcome – protest and vote – in a separate model across five states in the Middle East, with political trust segregated among different political institutions such as the government, political parties, armed forces, civil society organizations, judiciary, and police.

I hypothesize that political trust's impact on political participation is not absolute, where more trust in political institutions leads to high political engagement. Instead, I argue that the impact of political trust on political participation, including voting turnout and protest, depends on the specific political institution, where trust in political institutions such as NGOs tends to increase protest. In contrast, distrust in government tends to decrease voting turnout due to political efficacy, which is the individual perception that certain political actions might be more effective than others in bringing profound political change[13].

Therefore, I argue that the impact of political trust on political participation depends on the political institution and context[14].

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[11] Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1965). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations, an Analytic Study*. Little, Brown; Putnam, R. (1994). *Making Democracy Work*. Greenwood Publishing Group; Verba, S., Nie, N., & Kim, J. (1978). *Participation and Political Equality: A Seven Nation Comparison*. Cambridge University Press; Campbell, A., Gurin, G., & E. Miller, W. (1954). *The Voter Decides*; Dalton, R. J., & Weldon, S. (2010). Germans Divided? Political Culture in a United Germany. *German Politics*, *19*(1), 9–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/09644001003588390 ; Freitag, M., & Bühlmann, M. (2009). Crafting Trust: The Role of Political Institutions in a Comparative Perspective. Comparative Political Studies, 42(12), 1537–1566. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009332151 ;

[12] Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1965). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations, an Analytic Study*. Little, Brown; Putnam, R. (1994). *Making Democracy Work*. Greenwood Publishing Group.

[13] Political efficacy is the individual perception that their political action can have an impact on the political process; the individual perception that political change is possible and that individuals can be part of this change plays a major in understanding political engagement and participation (Campbell et al., 1954).

[14] McAdam, D., Tarrow, S., & Tilly, C. (2001). *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511805431

The main factor that explains the variations in individual political participation– voting or protest – is the concept of political efficacy, which is the individual perception of the extent to which pursuing a particular political action is likely to produce positive and meaningful outcomes compared to another[15]. Mainly, distrust in government and its political institutions tends to increase political actions such as protests because individuals perceive that these actions are more powerful and effective in producing real change compared to voting, particularly in the context of less democratic settings [16]. This is particularly the case in less democratic settings, where individuals distrust the government's capacity to handle elections in a transparency and integrity manner. Hence, they are less likely to vote and more likely to protest[17] .

Consequently, the main argument in this paper is that there is an association between political trust and political participation where trust in some political institutions might increase protest but decrease voting turnout and vice versa because of individual perception of which political action is likely to bring serious change compared to another. In the context of less democratic settings, protest might be more effective in producing real changes than voting, which might be seen as ineffective[18]. This study shows that trust in each political institution can lead to different forms of political participation, including protest and voting turnout, depending on the political institution and the context[19].

Trust in political institutions and between community members is the core component of the social capital theory and an essential element for the social, economic, and political development of communities [20]. A higher rate of social trust in communities and political institutions tends to lead to

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[15] Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist*, *37*(2), 122–147. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.37.2.122 ; Easton, D. (1965). *A Framework for Political Analysis;* Gamson, W. A. (1968). *Power and Discontent*; Gamson, W. A. (1975). *Strategy of Social Protest*. Thomson Learning EMEA, Limited.

[16] Abravanel, M. D., & Busch, R. J. (1975). Political Competence, Political Trust, and the Action Orientations of University. *The Journal of Politics*, *37*(1), 57–82. https://doi.org/10.2307/2128891 ; Jackson, J. S. (1973). Alienation and Black Political Participation. *The Journal of Politics*, *35*(4), 849–885. https://doi.org/10.2307/2129212 ; Muller, E. N. (1977). Behavioral Correlates of Political Support. *American Political Science Review*, *71*(2), 454–467. https://doi.org/10.2307/1978341 ; Pierce, R., & Converse, P. E. (1989). ATTITUDINAL ROOTS OF POPULAR PROTEST: THE FRENCH UPHEAVAL OF MAY 1968. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, *1*(3), 221–241. https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/1.3.221 ; Sears, O. D., & McConahay, J. B. (1973). *The politics of violence: The new urban Blacks and the Watts riot*; Shingles, R. D. (1981). Black Consciousness and Political Participation: The Missing Link. *The American Political Science Review*, *75*(1), 76–91. https://doi.org/10.2307/1962160

[17] Boulding, C. (2010). NGOs and Political Participation in Weak Democracies: Subnational Evidence on Protest and Voter Turnout from Bolivia. *The Journal of Politics*, *72*(2), 456–468. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022381609990922

[18] Boulding, C. (2010). NGOs and Political Participation in Weak Democracies: Subnational Evidence on Protest and Voter Turnout from Bolivia. *The Journal of Politics*, *72*(2), 456–468. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022381609990922

[19] McAdam, D., Tarrow, S., & Tilly, C. (2001). *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511805431

[20] Putnam, R. (1994). *Making Democracy Work*. Greenwood Publishing Group

a higher rate of political engagement and economic development[21]. Also, political participation is necessary to ensure a stable, representative, and consolidated democratic political system[22] . Thus, the relationship between political trust and political participation is endogenous, with a high substantive correlation between both.

In less democratic contexts, individuals tend to distrust political institutions, such as the government, for different reasons, including the government's and the regime's political and economic performance[23]. As the level of trust in the existing governmental political institutions decreases, individuals tend to perceive that their vote is less likely to bring political change or accountability to the system, given the political manipulation strategies that the incumbent employs to secure its election success[24]. As a result, individuals are more likely to engage in political actions such as protests and demonstrations that might seem more effective, especially in less democratic contexts [25]. This is partially a stereotype in authoritarian regimes, where citizens often have varying levels of trust across different institutions[26].

This paper examines how trust in different political institutions affects different kinds of political participation, including voting and protest. Specifically, this paper studies the variation in trust in different political institutions, including the government, the judiciary, police, armed forces, and civil society organizations, and how it impacts protest and voting turnout in the context of poorly performing democracies. Using cross-national survey data from the Arab Barometer for Lebanon,

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[21] Fukuyama, F. (1995). Social Capital and the Global Economy. *Foreign Affairs*, *74*, 89 ; Herreros, F., & Criado, H. (2008). The State and the Development of Social Trust. *International Political Science Review*, *29*(1), 53–71. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512107083447 ; Newton, K. (2001). Trust, Social Capital, Civil Society, and Democracy. *International Political Science Review*, *22*(2), 201–214. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512101222004 ; Uslaner, E. M. (2002). *The Moral Foundations of Trust*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511614934

[22] Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1965). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations, an Analytic Study*. Little, Brown; Putnam, R. (1994). *Making Democracy Work*. Greenwood Publishing Group; Verba, S., Nie, N., & Kim, J. (1978). *Participation and Political Equality: A Seven Nation Comparison*. Cambridge University Press.

[23] Norris, P. (1999). *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government*. OUP Oxford

[24] Boulding, C. (2010). NGOs and Political Participation in Weak Democracies: Subnational Evidence on Protest and Voter Turnout from Bolivia. *The Journal of Politics*, *72*(2), 456–468. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022381609990922; Boulding, C. (2014). *NGOs, Political Protest, and Civil Society*. Cambridge University Press; Campbell, A., Gurin, G., & E. Miller, W. (1954). *The Voter Decides*.

[25] Boulding, C. (2014). *NGOs, Political Protest, and Civil Society*. Cambridge University Press; Gingerich, D. W. (2009). Corruption and Political Decay: Evidence from Bolivia. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, *4*(1), 1–34. https://doi.org/10.1561/100.00008003

[26] Gandhi, J. (2008). *Political Institutions under Dictatorship*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511510090 ; Svolik, M. W. (2012). *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge University Press.

Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, and Algeria during the Arab Spring 2010-2011, this paper tests the relationship between trust in different political institutions and its impact on political participation, including protest, and voting turnout [27].

Studying the relationship between political trust and political participation in five different Middle Eastern states, which have variations in the political, social, and economic structure of their institutions and community level during the Arab Spring, has several benefits. First, these states are different in their democratic rate, where some states might be more democratic than others. Such variation offers the opportunity to explore the puzzling question among different political regimes with different levels of democracy. Second, exploring the relationship between trust and political participation during the Arab Spring is an ideal political context to examine how trust in different political institutions affects political participation among five Middle Eastern states during high mass frustration and mass engagement against the regime. The results show that trust in different political institutions suggests different outcomes in political participation. For instance, trust in government decreases protests and increases voting turnout. On the other hand, trust in civil society organizations tends to increase protest and reduce voting turnout in less democratic settings[28].

This article is organized as follows. First, I explore the literature on why political trust matters for political participation. Then, the next section lays out this paper's theoretical argument and the hypotheses. In the following section, I present the data and the research design where I conduct an empirical testing to study the association between trust in political institutions and political participation using cross-national survey data from the Arab Barometer for 2010-2011. In the last section of this article, I conclude with the implications of this article and future research.

Why Do Political Trust or Distrust Matter for Political Participation?

Political trust plays a vital role in connecting individuals to political institutions to maintain political representation through mechanisms embedded in political participation, including voting turnout[29]. The scholarship on the influence of trust or distrust in political institutions on political participation is divided between two major scholarly arguments.

One group of scholars argues that trust is an essential element for political participation, compared to distrust. This means that individuals who trust the political system are more likely to

[27] This paper approaches voting turnout and protest as different forms of political participation (Norris, 2002).
[28] Boulding, C. (2010). NGOs and Political Participation in Weak Democracies: Subnational Evidence on Protest and Voter Turnout from Bolivia. *The Journal of Politics*, *72*(2), 456–468. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022381609990922
[29] Bianco, W. (1994). *Trust: Representatives and Constituents*. University of Michigan Press.

participate in politics, including voting, compared to those who distrust the system. This is because distrust among community members due to alienation can reduce political engagement, negatively impacting the political system[30]. For instance, scholars have argued that for a long time, the decline in voter turnout happened while there was a decline in trust in political institutions in the US.

The argument that individuals who trust the political system are more likely to cast their vote compared to those who distrust it has stimulated much political research that disagrees that distrust in the political system leads to less political engagement, at least in voting. Scholars argue that trust or distrust in political institutions does not necessarily cause different rates of political participation, emphasizing that this is not a causal relationship[31]. Other scholars have argued that trust in the political system is not associated with more political participation, such as voting and campaign activities, or being interested in public affairs in general [32].

Another group of scholars argues that distrust in the political system stimulates political participation among individuals who perceive that political action can and has the power to make a political change: political efficacy[33].

Later research studies the impact of distrust in the system and political efficacy on political participation, including voting and campaign activities[34]. This study examines political participation at different levels of trust and efficacy but does not consider other factors that affect political participation.

Further research found that high distrust and alienation against political institutions and political elites can spur protest and social movement activities, and scholars found a relationship between distrust and political participation, including protest or the approval of protest participation.

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[30] Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1965). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations, an Analytic Study*. Little, Brown; Finifter, A. W. (1970). Dimensions of Political Alienation. *American Political Science Review*, *64*(2), 389–410. https://doi.org/10.2307/1953840 ; Stokes, D. E. (1962). Party Loyalty and the Likelihood of Deviating Elections. *The Journal of Politics*, *24*(4), 689–702. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381600016182

[31] Miller, W. E. (1980). Disinterest, disaffection, and participation in presidential politics. *Political Behavior*, *2*(1), 7–32. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00989754

[32] Rosenstone, S. J., & Hansen, J. M. (1993). *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America*. Macmillan Publishing Company.

[33] Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist*, *37*(2), 122–147. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.37.2.122; Easton, D. (1965). *A Framework for Political Analysis*. Prentice-Hall ; Gamson, W. A. (1968a). *Power and Discontent*; Gamson, W. A. (1975). *Strategy of Social Protest*. Thomson Learning EMEA, Limited.

[34] Fraser, J. (1970). The Mistrustful-Efficacious Hypothesis and Political Participation. *The Journal of Politics*, *32*(2), 444–449. https://doi.org/10.2307/2128662 ; Hawkins, B. W., Marando, V. L., & Taylor, G. A. (1971). Efficacy, Mistrust, and Political Participation: Findings from Additional Data and Indicators. *The Journal of Politics*, *33*(4), 1130–1136. https://doi.org/10.2307/2128424

Researchers found evidence that applies inside and outside the US example during the 1960s and 1970, where distrust in the existing political institution as well as alienation stimulated mass protest[35].

Regarding the relationship between distrust and mass protest, the empirical findings appear weak when including control variables, raising concerns about the measurement questions for distrust and alienation. Some scholars argue that only regime-oriented measures of alienation are associated with protest rather than an incumbent-oriented measure of distrust [36].

In previous research, unconventional political actions were observed, such as social movements and mass protests, whereas conventional political actions were usually voting activities, including voting and campaign activities[37]. Recent researchers have considered these unconventional political actions, such as protests, as more conventional ones[38], and research on political participation and trust or distrust become dependent on this categorization between conventional versus unconventional political participation.

Other scholars argue that distrust can cause protests and voting turnout only if it is accompanied by political efficacy as long as these political activities aim to influence the policy process[39]. Similarly, other scholars underscore the importance of differentiating between elite-directed political participation, which aims to express political positions and preferences, such as voting, and political participation, such as protest, which is more citizen-directed and instrumental.

In addition to the literature on political trust and political participation, other relevant literature is related to the origin of political trust and its relationship with political participation. The institutional theory contends that political institutions contribute to developing interpersonal trust between

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[35] Abravanel, M. D., & Busch, R. J. (1975). Political Competence, Political Trust, and the Action Orientations of University. *The Journal of Politics*, *37*(1), 57–82. https://doi.org/10.2307/2128891; Jackson, J. S. (1973). Alienation and Black Political Participation. *The Journal of Politics*, *35*(4), 849–885. https://doi.org/10.2307/2129212 ; Muller, E. N. (1977). Behavioral Correlates of Political Support. *American Political Science Review*, *71*(2), 454–467. https://doi.org/10.2307/1978341 ; Pierce, R., & Converse, P. E. (1989). ATTITUDINAL ROOTS OF POPULAR PROTEST: THE FRENCH UPHEAVAL OF MAY 1968*. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, *1*(3), 221–241. https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/1.3.221 ; Sears, O. D., & McConahay, J. B. (1973). *The politics of violence: The new urban Blacks and the Watts riot*.

[36] Citrin, J. (1974). Comment: The Political Relevance of Trust in Government. *The American Political Science Review*, *68*(3), 973–988. https://doi.org/10.2307/1959141; Citrin, J. (1977). Political Alienation as a Social Indicator: Attitudes and Action. *Social Indicators Research*, *4*(4), 381–419. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27521839 ; Muller, E. N., Jukam, T. O., & Seligson, M. A. (1982). Diffuse Political Support and Antisystem Political Behavior: A Comparative Analysis. *American Journal of Political Science*, *26*(2), 240–264. https://doi.org/10.2307/2111038

[37] Campbell, A., Gurin, G., & E. Miller, W. (1954). The Voter Decides.

[38] Kaase, M., & Newton, K. (1995). *Beliefs in Government*. OUP/European Science Foundation.

[39] Shingles, R. D. (1981). Black Consciousness and Political Participation: The Missing Link. *The American Political Science Review*, *75*(1), 76–91. https://doi.org/10.2307/1962160

individuals conditional on people's perception of political institutions and their performance[40]. This theory emphasizes the expected utility of an institution's performance. Thus, trust in the institution is the consequence of institutional performance. Then, trust in institutions increases the generalized level of trust between individuals[41], which increases political participation and engagement in the community in existing democracies[42].

Cultural theory argues that institutional trust is an extended addition of trust that can later impact political institutions, thereby conditioning institutional performance capabilities[43]. This means that in communities with high social capital, including a high generalized level of trust between members through engagement in civil society organizations or community groups, these levels of social trust tend to lead to high political participation and engagement as well as trust in institutions[44]. Thus, the increase in social capital, including a generalized level of trust, tends to increase social and political engagement and participation and lead to better political and institutional outcomes, including political trust[45].

The literature on the relationship and the origin of trust/distrust in political institutions and political participation involves complex interactions and probabilities. Distrust in the political institutions and the regime can cause high political participation, but only in specific conditions for specific groups of individuals and within specific political activities. For instance, scholars have argued that the different types of political activities individuals might engage in depend on the variations in trust in the political institutions and the system[46].

The scholarship on political trust and political participation created confusion because scholars have approached these concepts in absolute terms. In addition, the literature on political trust and political participation has mixed findings about the effect of political trust on participation because

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[40] Freitag, M., & Bühlmann, M. (2009). Crafting Trust: The Role of Political Institutions in a Comparative Perspective. *Comparative Political Studies*, *42*(12), 1537–1566. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009332151; Coleman, J. (1990). *Foundations of Social Theory:* Belknap Press; Dasgupta, P. (1988). Trust as a Commodity. In *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations* (pp. 49–72); Hetherington, M. J. (1998). The Political Relevance of Political Trust. *American Political Science Review*, *92*(4), 791–808. https://doi.org/10.2307/2586304

[41] Freitag, M., & Bühlmann, M. (2009). Crafting Trust: The Role of Political Institutions in a Comparative Perspective. *Comparative Political Studies*, *42*(12), 1537–1566. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009332151

[42] Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1965). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations, an Analytic Study.* Little, Brown

[43] Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1965). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations, an Analytic Study*. Little, Brown; Inglehart, R. (1997). Modernization, postmodernization and changing perceptions of risk. *International Review of Sociology*; Putnam, R. (1994). *Making Democracy Work*. Greenwood Publishing Group

[44] Putnam, R. (1994). *Making Democracy Work*. Greenwood Publishing Group

[45] Putnam, R. (1994). *Making Democracy Work*. Greenwood Publishing Group

[46] Gamson, W. A. (1968a). *Power and Discontent.*

scholars have failed to disaggregate how trust in different institutions affects different kinds of political participation. For instance, one group argues that political trust is a necessary element for political participation, including voting turnout[47], while another group argues that political distrust stimulates political engagement only if there is political efficacy[48]. Instead, in this research, I examine political trust across different political institutions and its impact on political participation, particularly voting turnout and protest, which are the two most common forms of political engagement. The goal of this research is to study the association and the connection between trust in different political institutions and political participation.

Trust in Political Institutions Impacts Different Forms of Political Participation:

The argument that distrust in political institutions is correlated with lower political engagements, particularly voting activities[49], does not take into consideration the political context where the relationship between political trust and political participation takes place as well as the different impact each political institution has on a different form of political participation. The fact that in the United States between the 1960s and 1970s, voting turnout dropped simultaneously while distrust in political institutions increased does not suggest that this relationship applies to other states, particularly less democratic states that have different institutional and social structural factors compared to the United States. This paper aims to fill this gap in the existing literature on trust/distrust in political institutions and political participation, particularly in less democratic states.

I argue that in less democratic states, trust in different political institutions, including the government, civil society organizations, the police, and the judiciary, is correlated with different rates of political engagement, including protest and voting turnout, depending on the specific political institution, the political context, and as long as individuals want to influence the policy process and perceive that their political action can make a difference in the system[50].

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[47] Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1965). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations, an Analytic Study*. Little, Brown; Finifter, A. W. (1970). Dimensions of Political Alienation. *American Political Science Review*, *64*(2), 389–410. https://doi.org/10.2307/1953840 ; Stokes, D. E. (1962). Party Loyalty and the Likelihood of Deviating Elections. *The Journal of Politics*, *24*(4), 689–702. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381600016182

[48] Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist*, *37*(2), 122–147. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.37.2.122; Easton, D. (1965). *A Framework for Political Analysis*. Prentice-Hall; Gamson, W. A. (1968a). *Power and Discontent*; Gamson, W. A. (1975). *Strategy of Social Protest*. Thomson Learning EMEA, Limited.

[49] Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1965). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations, an Analytic Study*. Little, Brown; Finifter, A. W. (1970). Dimensions of Political Alienation. *American Political Science Review*, *64*(2), 389–410. https://doi.org/10.2307/1953840; Stokes, D. E. (1962). Party Loyalty and the Likelihood of Deviating Elections. *The Journal of Politics*, *24*(4), 689–702. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381600016182

[50] Shingles, R. D. (1981). Black Consciousness and Political Participation: The Missing Link. *The American Political Science Review*, *75*(1), 76–91. https://doi.org/10.2307/1962160

In less democratic states, where the government and the police tend to have poor economic and political performance, citizens tend to distrust these institutions[51]. Distrusting the government and the police results from citizens' evaluation of their political and economic performance. Thus, citizens perceive their vote as less likely to make political change because they distrust the existing institutions and their performance[52]. As a result, citizens are more likely to resort to alternative political means to express their political preferences and dissatisfaction with the government's performance, including protest[53].

Therefore, I argue the increase in trust in government is associated with more voting turnout and less protest, and vice versa.

H1: The increase in trust in the government tends to correlate with a decrease in protest and an increase in voting turnout.

Also, in less democratic states, the police exercise control over the masses and usually commit a range of discrimination, violation, and oppression of the opposition or any group that challenges the regime and the government[54]. The result is growing mass political, social, and mass grievances and further distrust of the police as an institution that is supposed to foster a safe and secure political and social environment[55]. Therefore, in less democratic states, the public perceives the police as a mechanism to safeguard the regime and the government against any attempt for a political change. The result is further distrust of the police, which increases the probability of protests against these actions of intimidation, oppression, and violence.

H2: The decrease in trust in the police tends to correlate with an increase in protest.

In addition, in less democratic states, civil society organizations with substantial membership can be a source of political challenge to the existing government and regime and impose constraints on

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[51] Coleman, J. (1990). *Foundations of Social Theory:* Belknap Press; Dasgupta, P. (1988). Trust as a Commodity. In *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations* (pp. 49–72); Hetherington, M. J. (1998). The Political Relevance of Political Trust. *American Political Science Review*, *92*(4), 791–808. https://doi.org/10.2307/2586304

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[54] Gandhi, J. (2008). *Political Institutions under Dictatorship*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511510090; Svolik, M. W. (2012). *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge University Press; Svolik, M. W. (2012). *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge University Press.

[55] Gurr, T. R. (1970). *Why Men Rebel.* Princeton University Press. https://www-taylorfrancis-com.colorado.idm.oclc.org/books/mono/10.4324/9781315631073/men-rebel-ted-robert-gurr

the authoritarian regime and the government[56]. As a result, the regime and the government often impose restrictions on the operations of the opposition group, making it harder for them to operate[57]. In these conditions, individuals tend to trust civil society organizations, knowing that these institutions challenge the government and regime with poor economic and political performance and exercise all forms of intimidation and threats.

As a result, individuals are more likely to perceive that casting their vote is less likely to produce significant political change because the incumbent uses political manipulation and fraud strategies to change the election results to secure its success, as well as the incumbent uses threat and intimidation to control the mass[58]. Instead, individuals are likely to resort to alternative means to express their frustration and grievances, including protest, especially with high membership in civic society organizations[59].

Thus, in less democratic states, individuals tend to trust civic society organizations and are likely to engage in protest to express their dissatisfaction with the existing system [60].

H3: The increase in trust in civil society organizations correlates with an increase in protest.

Furthermore, in less democratic states that are not entirely authoritarian or democratic, more likely hybrid regimes[61] , individuals are likely to trust the judiciary, especially when the opposition political party controls the judiciary rather than the incumbent political party. This is because individuals perceive that they are more likely to receive fair treatment and impartial judgment in case they are arrested during protests or if they express dissatisfaction with the election results. Thus, I

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[56] Jamal, A. (2007). *Barriers to Democracy: The Other Side of Social Capital in Palestine and the Arab World*. Princeton University Press.

[57] Blaydes, L. (2010). *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt*. Cambridge University Press; Jamal, A. (2007). *Barriers to Democracy: The Other Side of Social Capital in Palestine and the Arab World*. Princeton University Press.

[58] Beaulieu, E., & Hyde, S. D. (2009). In the Shadow of Democracy Promotion: Strategic Manipulation, International Observers, and Election Boycotts. *Comparative Political Studies*, *42*(3), 392–415. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414008325571; Boulding, C. (2010). NGOs and Political Participation in Weak Democracies: Subnational Evidence on Protest and Voter Turnout from Bolivia. *The Journal of Politics*, *72*(2), 456–468. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022381609990922

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[60] Boulding, C. (2010). NGOs and Political Participation in Weak Democracies: Subnational Evidence on Protest and Voter Turnout from Bolivia. *The Journal of Politics*, *72*(2), 456–468. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022381609990922; Gamson, W. A. (1968a). *Power and Discontent*.

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argue that more trust in judiciary institutions is correlated with more protest activities and high voting turnout.

H4: The increase in trust in the judiciary tends to correlate with an increase in protest and voting turnout.

Data and Research Design:

I test these hypotheses using cross-sectional survey data from the Arab Barometer for five different Middle Eastern states: Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, and Algeria for 2010-2011[62]. I estimated two sets of logistic regression models with country-fixed effects across five states to test the effect of trust in different political institutions on voting turnout and protest during 2010-2011, a very specific political time to study these questions: the Arab Spring. In the first logit model, voting turnout is the dependent variable, and in the second logit model, the dependent variable is participating in a protest. Given the scholarship on political trust, political behavior, including voting turnout and protest, and the political context of these Middle Eastern states, I expect a strong relationship between trust in institutions and political behavior, including voting turnout and protest. Specifically, I expect that trust in different political institutions impacts different political behaviors, including protest and voting turnout.

Second, for further evidence of the effect of political trust on political behavior, I test this relationship in five different Middle Eastern states: Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, and Algeria for 2010-2011. In addition, I explore two primary forms of political behavior: voting turnout and participating in protests. Also, I test these hypotheses during the Arab Spring, a critical political time in Middle Eastern politics. Exploring the relationship between political trust and voting behavior during the Arab Spring allows us to examine how the variation in political trust across different political institutions suggests different political behavior against the political regime during regime instability.[63]

[62] The reason I only chose these countries is because the survey questions that I chose to test the hypotheses were only asked in these five countries.

[63] The Arab Spring is a series of mass protests across various Middle Eastern states against the dictatorship regimes whose corrupt economic and political policies have led to serious economic and political consequences on the entire region, including high unemployment and poverty rates and oppression of political and civil rights. The Arab Spring started in Tunisia in 2010 and quickly spread throughout the region, including Egypt, Algeria, and Lebanon. The movement led to serious regime change in many states, but only Tunisia has experienced serious attempts to transition to a democratic system.

Trust in Political Institutions:

Data on trust in political institutions were collected and coded from the survey conducted by the Arab Barometer team between 2010-2011 in Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, Algeria, and Iraq. The questions on the level of political trust are specific to each political institution, including the armed forces, civil society, government, police, parties, and judiciary. The answers on trust in different political institutions are coded as a categorical variable, with respondents having five options to choose from related to different levels of political trust across each political institution, ranging from; I absolutely do not trust it to I trust it to a great extent. The number of observations for trust in political institutions ranges from 5,428 observations for trust in civil society organizations to 6,125 observations for trust in armed forces across five Middle Eastern states. The wording of the questions on the extent to which individuals trust these different political institutions is the same across these five states. Also, the multiple-choice options for the questions on trust in different political institutions given to the survey respondents are the same in these five states.

Political Participation: Protest

Data on political participation, particularly on protest, is collected from the survey conducted by the Arab Barometer team between 2010 and 2011 in Tunisia, Lebanon, Algeria, Iraq, and Egypt. In Egypt, researchers asked respondents if they had participated in protests against former president Hosni Mubarak; in Tunisia, they asked respondents if they participated in protests against former president Ben Ali; and in Algeria, Lebanon, and Iraq, they asked respondents if they participated in a protest, march, or sit-in. The answers on whether the respondents participated in protest activities are coded as a binary variable, with respondents having two options to choose from related to whether they participated in a protest, including yes if they participated or no if they did not participate. The number of observations for the protest variable is 6,180 observations across these five Middle Eastern states.

Political Participation: Voting Turnout

Data on political participation, particularly on voting turnout, is collected from the survey conducted by the Arab Barometer team between 2010 and 2011 in Tunisia, Lebanon, Algeria, Iraq, and Egypt. The wording of the question on voting turnout is the same across these five states. Specifically, the survey asks respondents in each of these five states whether they voted in the last parliamentary election that was held. Also, the answer options for the question on voting turnout given to the survey respondents are the same in these five states: Yes or No. Then, the variable voting

turnout is coded as a binary variable. The number of observations for the voting turnout variable is 6,211 observations across these five Middle Eastern states.

Control Variables:

Both estimated models on protest and voting turnout include controls for socioeconomic and political variables, including if the respondent lives in rural or urban areas, the respondent's gender including female or male, the respondent's age, if the respondent is a member in a political party, respondent work status, including whether the respondent work or not and finally the respondent educational level. These socioeconomic and political variables affect the outcome's variable of interest: political behavior, including voting turnout and protest. Thus, I controlled for these socioeconomic and political factors to ensure that these variables would not become confounding factors in both models. Thus, I kept these control variables constant in both models.

Protest Results:

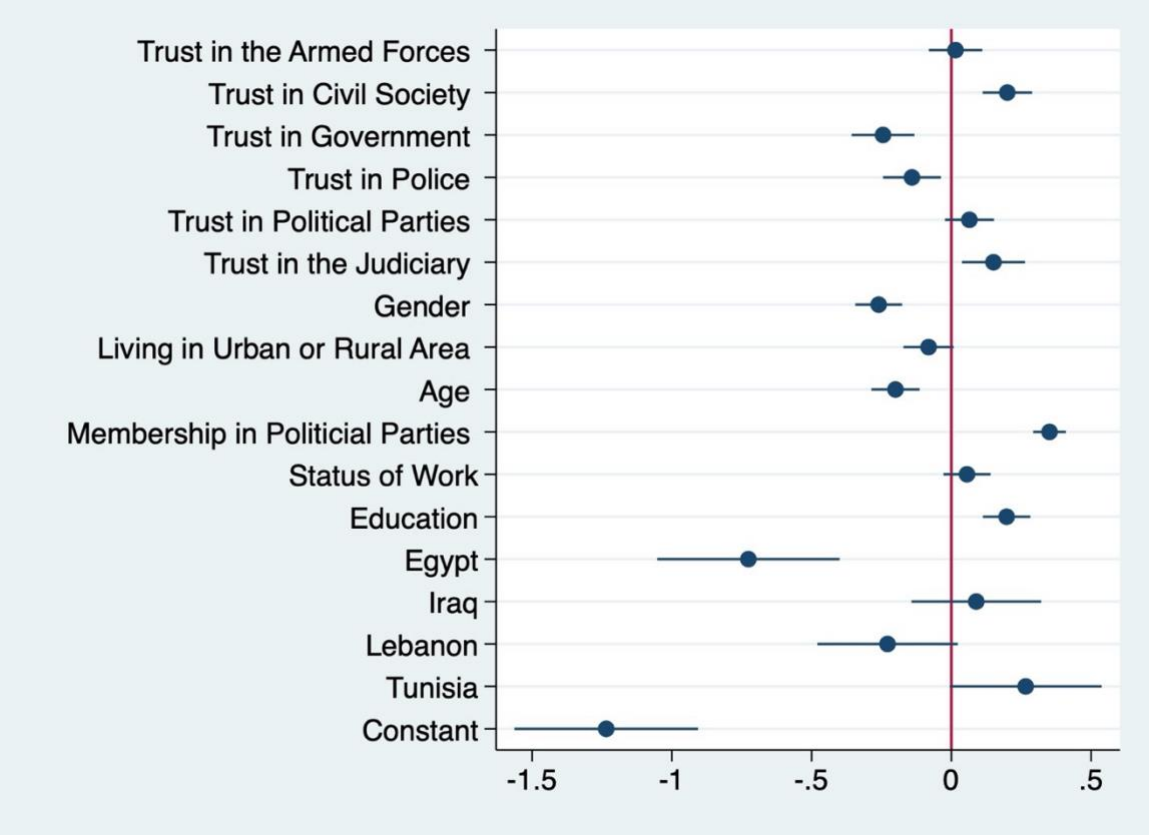

Figure 1 Coefficient plots for The Impact of Political Trust on Protest

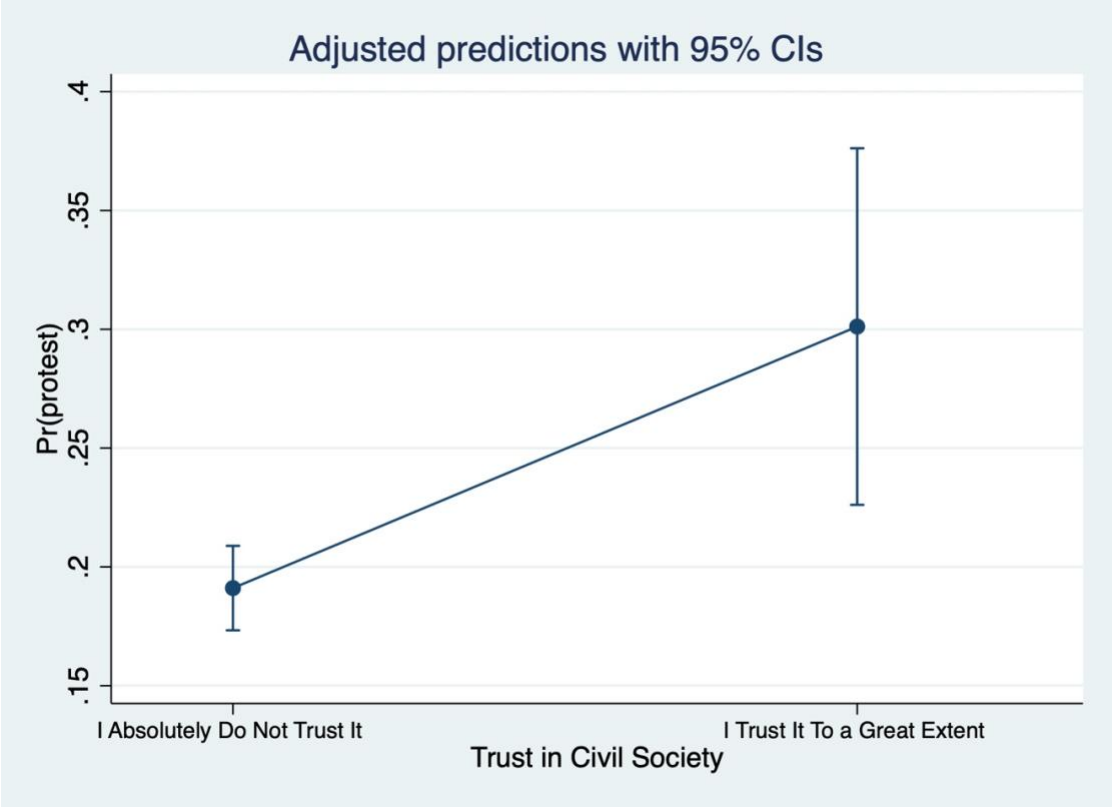

Figure 2 The Impact of Trust in Civil Society on The Predicted Probability of Protest

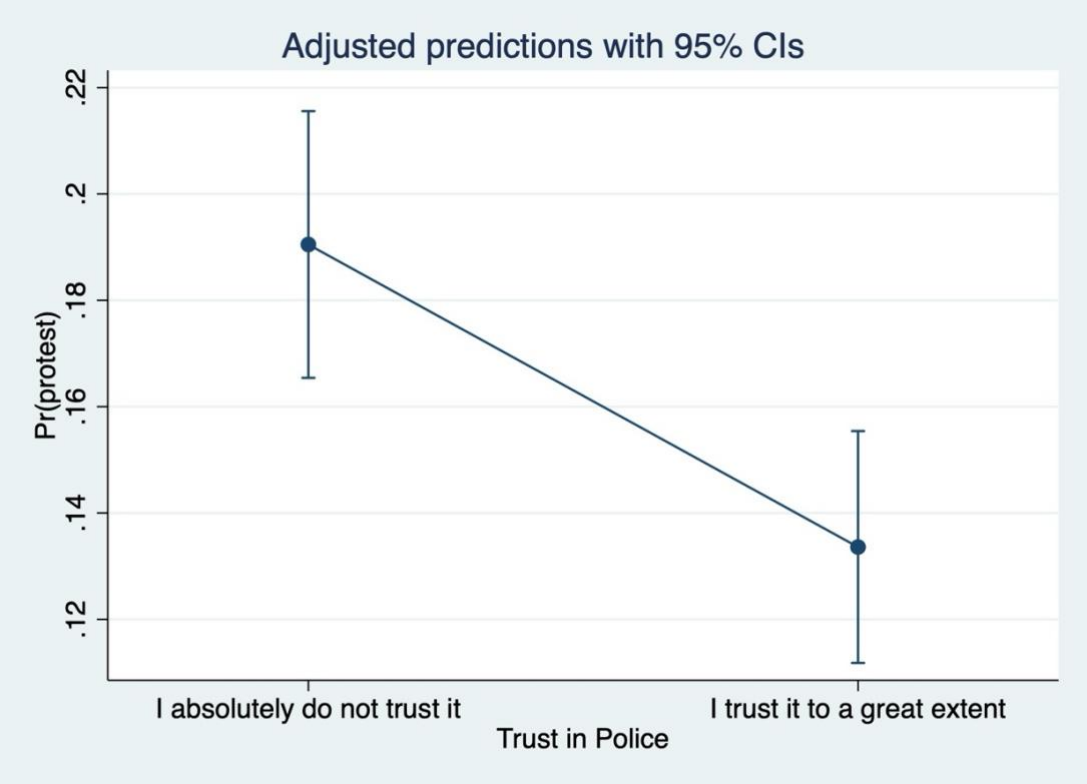

Figure 3: The Impact of Trust in Police on the Predicted Probability of Protest

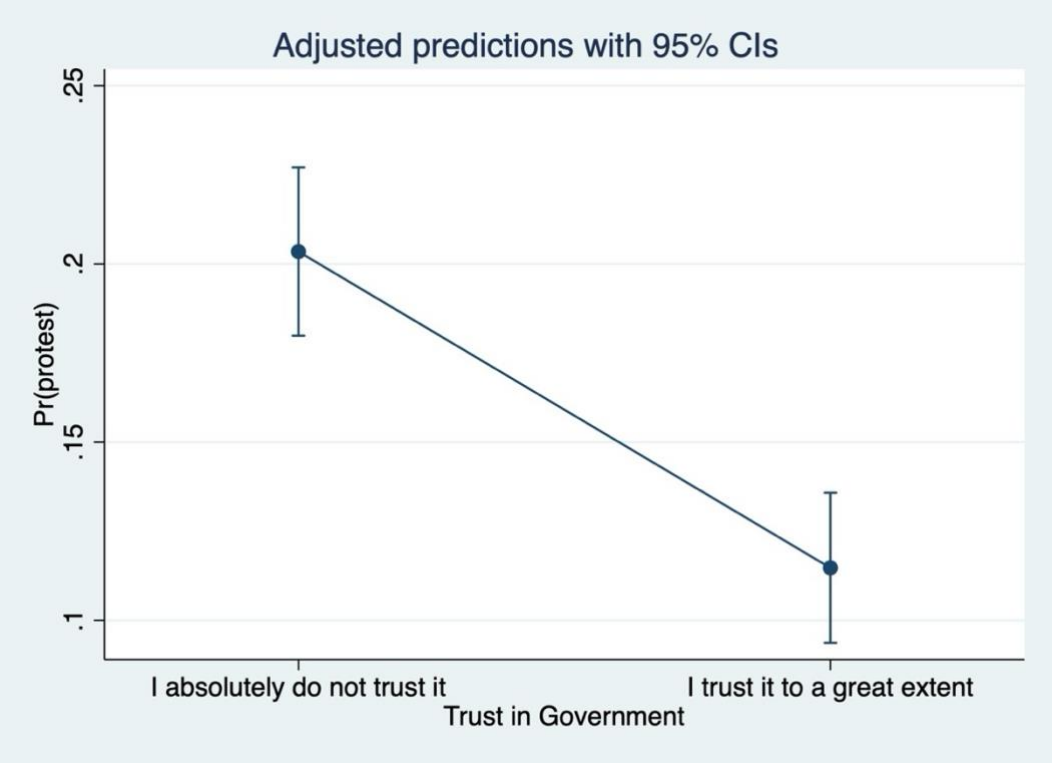

Figure 4: The Impact of Trust in Government on The Predicted Probability of Protest

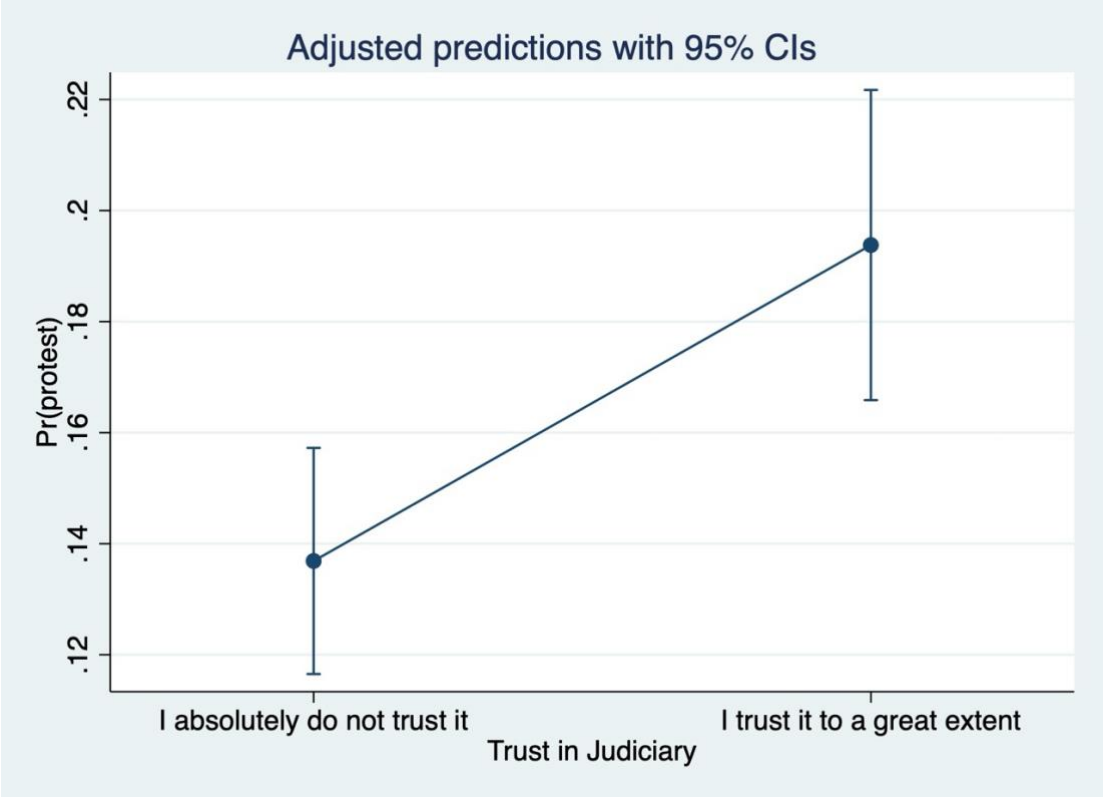

Figure 3 The Impact of Trust in Judiciary on the Predicted Probability of Protest

To test the relationship and the effect of trust across different political institutions on the probability of protest, I ran the logistic regression model with fixed effects to examine the statistical relationship between primary predictors of trust in political institutions and the outcome variable of interest protest. Then, to examine the effect of each political institution on the probability of protest, I ran the predicted probability of protest across trust in specific institutions.

VARIABLES	Model 1
Protest	
Trust in Armed Forces	0.0150
	(0.0488)
Trust in Civil Society	0.200***
	(0.0452)
Trust in Government	-0.244***
	(0.0573)
Trust in Police	-0.141***
	(0.0528)
Trust in Political Parties	0.0648
	(0.0448)
Trust in Judiciary	0.151***
	(0.0576)
Gender	-0.260***
	(0.0428)
Urban or Rural	-0.0814*
	(0.0459)
Age	-0.200***
	(0.0440)
Membership in Political Party	0.351***
	(0.0299)
Work Status	0.0559
	(0.0430)
Education	0.198***
	(0.0434)
Egypt	-0.726***
	(0.167)
Iraq	0.0892
	(0.118)
Lebanon	-0.228*
	(0.128)
Tunisia	0.266*
	(0.139)
Constant	-1.235***
	(0.168)
Observations	5,000
Country FE	YES

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 1 The Impact of Political Trust on Protest

In this model, there is trust in five different political institutions, including trust in the armed forces, trust in civil society organizations, trust in police, trust in government trust, trust in parties, trust in the judiciary, and the primary outcomes variable of interest is participating in a protest. Across these five political institutions, only trust in four political institutions is statistically significant in explaining the probability of protest, including trust in civil society organizations, trust in government, trust in police, trust in the judiciary, trust in armed forces and political parties are not statistically significant (see Model 1, Table 1).

Trust in civil society organizations is statistically significant in explaining protest, whereas trust in civil society tends to increase protest (see Model 1, Table 1). This is particularly the case in poor-performing democracies, where citizens tend to perceive their political engagement and trust in civil society organizations as being more effective at challenging the dictator's policies and government than casting a vote. Primarily because in these poor-performing democracies, the incumbent tends to use various political manipulation and fraud strategies to manipulate the election results to secure its success (Beaulieu & Hyde, 2009; Boulding, 2010; Hyde, 2011). Therefore, an alternative way to achieve political change and challenge the dictator is through engagement and trusting civil society organizations.

Trust in government is statistically significant in explaining protest, where less trust in government tends to increase protest (see Model 1, Table 1). This is because, in less democratic states, the government performs poorly in economic, social, political, and civil liberties and rights, including maintaining fair elections. Therefore, individuals tend to distrust government policies and decisions and perceive their voting as ineffective in producing political and policy change. Consequently, they are more likely to protest rather than cast their vote as a form of political participation to voice their demands and express their concerns than voting (Boulding, 2010; Campbell et al., 1954; Verba et al., 1995b).

Trust in police is statistically significant in explaining protest, where less trust in police tends to increase protest (see Model 1, Table 1). This is because, in these states with poor democratic performance, the police tend to protect the dictator from opposition groups and parties that want to challenge the dictator's policies as well as from the mass using its secret policies to exercise all forms of violence, oppression, and intimidation (Svolik, 2012). The result is a less safe social and political environment, which increases social anger and frustration as well as grievances leading to social unrest, including protests (Gurr, 1970). This was the example of Tunisia and Egypt during the presidency of Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak, where both of them used their police and secret services to exercise all

forms of violence and oppression, including detaining opposition groups such as Muslim Brotherhood activists to eliminate the probability of them engaging in the political affairs of their country, including election.

Trust in the Judiciary is statistically significant in explaining protest, where more trust in the judiciary tends to increase protest (see Model 1, Table 1). This is because when individuals trust these institutions more, they are more likely to perceive that they will receive fair treatment and judgment as well as impartiality in case of being arrested during any form of political activity challenging the dictator and its political system or expressing their dissatisfaction with the result of the election. Therefore, in less democratic states, trust in the judiciary tends to be associated with more protest activities.

Voter Turnout Results:

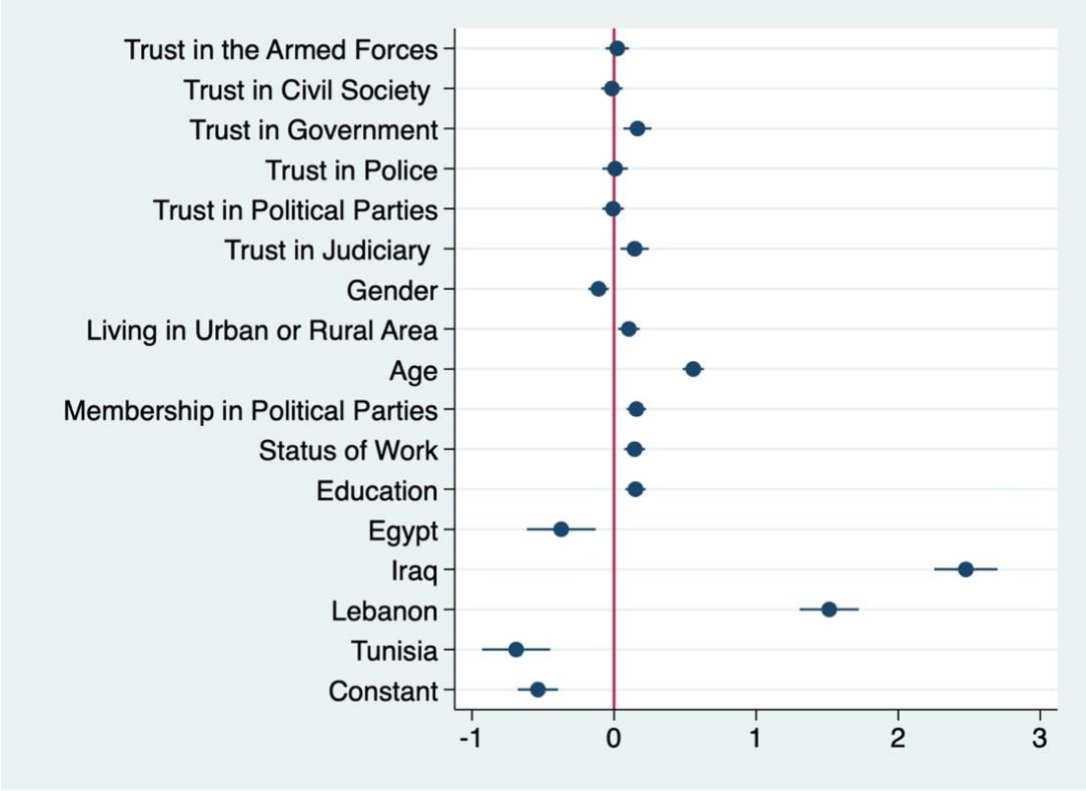

Figure 4 Coefficients Plot for The Impact of Political Trust on Voting

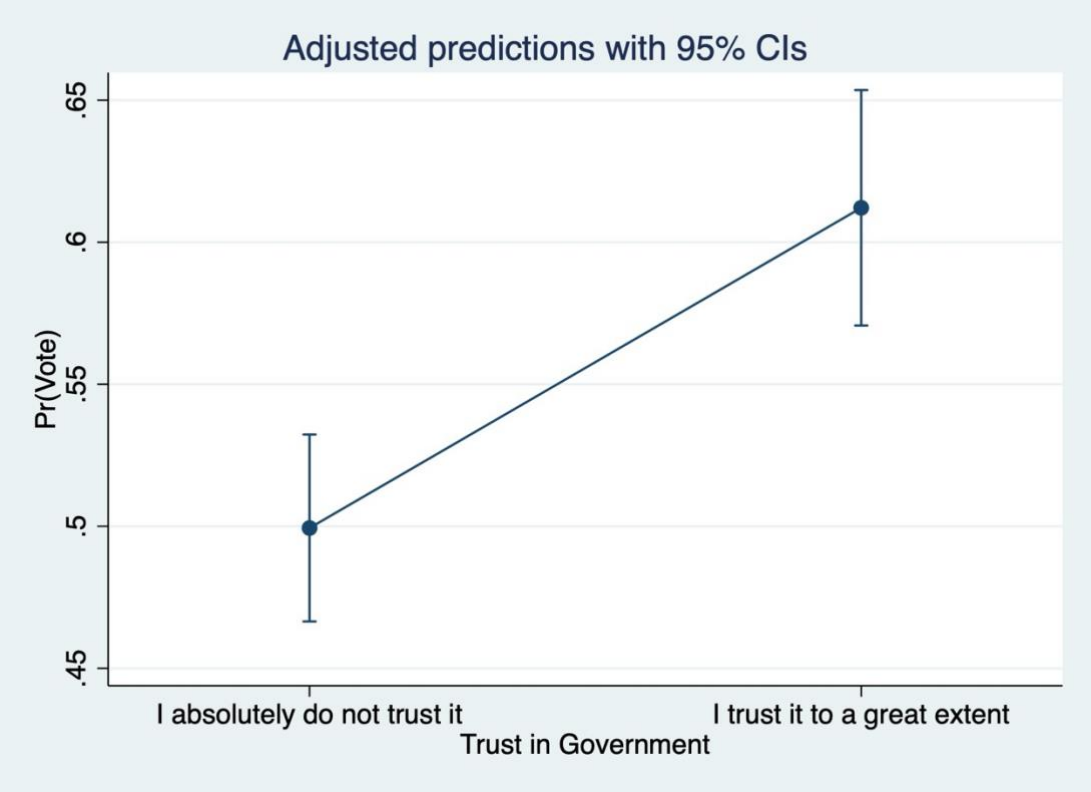

Figure 6 The Impact of Trust in Government on the Predicted Probability of Vote

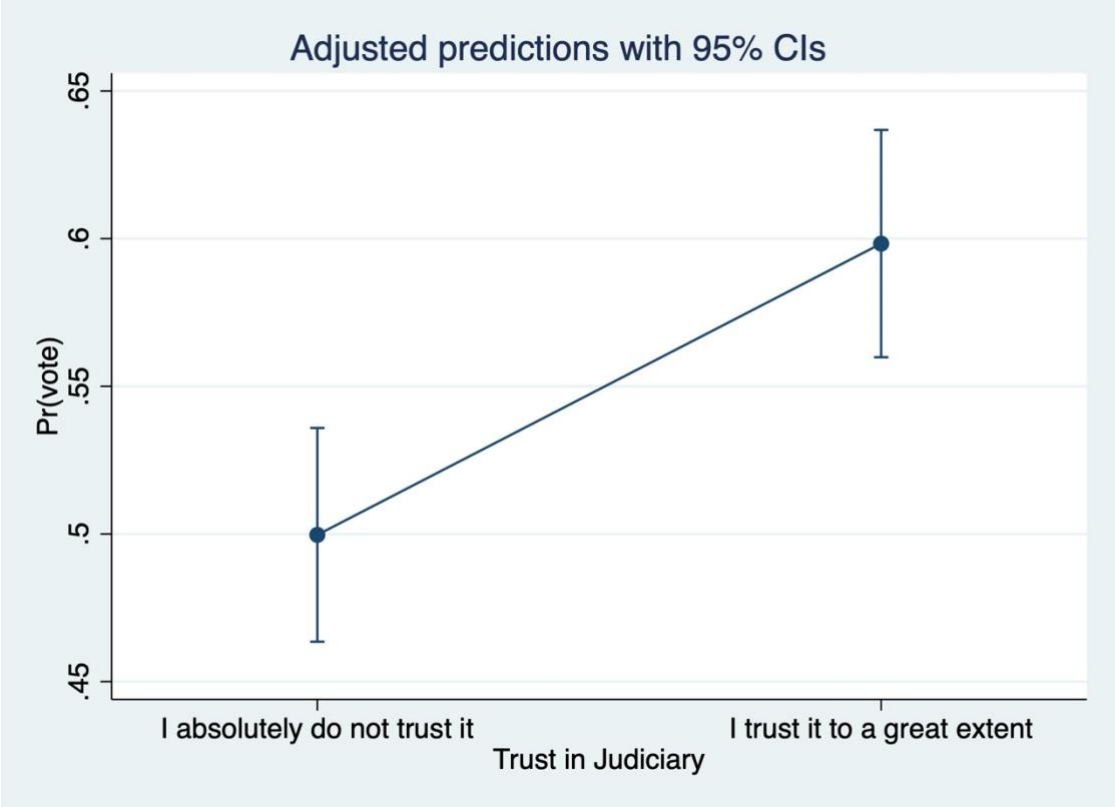

Figure 5 The Impact of Trust in Judiciary on the Predicted Probability of Vote

To test the relationship and the effect of trust across different political institutions on the probability of voting, I ran the logistic regression model to examine the statistical relationship between primary predictors of trust in political institutions and the outcome variable of interest voting. Then, to examine the effect of each political institution on the probability of protest, I ran the predicted probability of protest across trust in specific institutions.

VARIABLES	Model 2
Vote	
Trust in Armed Forces	0.0224
	(0.0422)
Trust in Civil Society	-0.0153
	(0.0383)
Trust in Government	0.165***
	(0.0507)
Trust in Police	0.00782
	(0.0459)
Trust in Political Parties	-0.00766
	(0.0386)
Trust in Judiciary	0.145***
	(0.0509)
Gender	-0.110***
	(0.0365)
Urban or Rural	0.104***
	(0.0386)
Age	0.557***
	(0.0380)
Membership in Political Party	0.157***
	(0.0350)
Work Status	0.145***
	(0.0374)
Education	0.151***
	(0.0366)
Egypt	-0.372***
	(0.124)
Iraq	2.476***
	(0.114)
Lebanon	1.514***
	(0.106)
Tunisia	-0.689***
	(0.122)
Constant	-0.536***
	(0.0722)
Observations	5,015
Country FE	YES

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 2 The Impact of Political Trust on Voting

In this second model, only two political institutions are statistically significant in explaining the probability of vote, including trust in government and trust in the judiciary (see Model 2).

Trust in government is statistically significant in explaining vote, where more trust in government tends to increase voting turnout (see Model 2, Figure 2). This is because when individual perceives that their vote is effective in producing political and policy change, they are more likely to use voting turnout to influence political decisions and policies (Boulding, 2010; Campbell et al., 1954; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995). In addition, individuals who tend to trust the government and have positive attitudes toward the government and its role are more likely to participate actively in politics (Almond and Verba, 1963; Putnam, 1994).

Trust in the judiciary is statistically significant in explaining voting turnout, where more trust in the judiciary tends to increase voting turnout (see Model 2, Figure 2). This is because when individuals trust these institutions more, they are more likely to be politically active, including participating in protests and casting their votes, especially when these institutions are autonomous and independent from the dictator's power. This is because individuals perceive that they will receive fair treatment if they are arrested during any form of political activity challenging the dictator and its political system or expressing their dissatisfaction with the election result. Therefore, in less democratic states, trust in the judiciary tends to be associated with more protest and voting turnout activities.

The main finding from both models is that trust across different political institutions is associated with different political behavior. Trust in government tends to reduce protest and increase voting turnout, while trust in police tends to reduce protest. In contrast, trust in civil society organizations tends to increase protest. While trust in the judiciary tends to increase protest and voting turnout.

Conclusion:

This paper examines the impact of political trust across several political institutions, including the government, police, civil society organizations, judiciary, political parties, and armed forces, on political participation, including protest and voting turnout in five Middle Eastern states during 2010 – 2011. This study presents evidence and good reason showing that trust in political institutions impacts political participation differently, including voting turnout and election.

This paper argues that the relationship between political trust and political participation is not absolute. Instead, the impact of trust in political institutions on political participation is a function of the political context where this relationship occurs and the specific institution that the individual trusts.

This paper presents results that show that in less democratic states, distrust in the government tends to increase protest activity and reduce voting turnout. In contrast, trust in civil society organizations tends to increase protest. On the other hand, trust in the judiciary institutions tends to increase both voting turnout and protest activities. Finally, distrust in the police increases protest, while trust in the police tends to reduce protest.

These findings are important for different reasons. First, the findings that political trust does not have an absolute relationship with high political engagement challenge core assumptions on their relationship, particularly in weak democracies. Second, instead of only examining political trust and political engagement in established democracies such as the United States and expecting the relationship between both to be absolute, I examine this relationship in the context of less democratic states that differ in their social, political, and economic structures from established democracies where the absolute relationship between political trust and political participation might hold. In less democratic states, trust in some institutions can strengthen political participation, such as protest, at the expense of another form of engagement, such as voting turnout.

Finally, and most importantly, the empirical findings contribute to our theories and understanding of how political trust works in less democratic states, emphasizing the importance of the political context when studying these questions. Specifically, this study contributes to understanding how political trust impacts and shapes different forms of political participation. This is particularly important because political trust and political participation play an important role in achieving stable, consolidated, and functioning democracy as well as achieving economic development. In comparative politics in specific and political science in general, we tend to consider the relationship between voting turnout and political trust as a direct, smooth relationship where more political trust suggests high political engagement. However, this relationship might not hold as expected in the context of less developed states. Instead, in these weak democracies, voting turnout and protest are complicated and complex decisions associated with the individual evaluations of its relationship with each specific political institution separately.