

Reexamining the autocratic bargain: the effect of insecurity on political values

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Where have the revolutionaries gone?

- If the social contract was an autocratic bargain, then why is it that:
 - Revolutions occurred when economies were doing rather well?
 - Autocratic restorations ongoing when economies at a low?
- We look at the effect of insecurity on political values
- We argue that autocratic bargains are (or have become) unstable in MENA (without touching on the onset of social movements):
 - Grievances (measure by Trust in Government) fluctuate with economic insecurity, as in other autocracies
 - But democratic aspirations have also risen when economy was good, and fallen when bad.

Plan

1. Empirics: How do Trust Government (grievances), & Commitment to Democracy (aspirations), relate to state of the economy?
 - within MENA over time,
 - comparatively at a global level.
2. Implications for understanding Arab Spring and aftermath
3. Implications for longer term political economy

1. Empirics

- Data: Time series using Arab Barometer 2007-16; WVS6 around 2015 for cross-country work.
- Trust Government (TG): "How much do you trust government"?(WVS and AB)
- Commitment to Democracy (CtD):
 - WVS: choice between “democracy” and “strong man” in a menu of items
 - AB: (i) “Under a democratic system, the country’s economic performance is weak”; (ii) “Democratic regimes are indecisive and full of problems”; and (iii) “Democratic systems are not effective at maintaining order and stability”.
- Economic Security (ES)
 - AB: "Evaluate the current economic situation in your country? "
 - WVS: "worrying about losing job, giving children an education"

Empirical results

Trust in Government:

- Depends largely on country level ES , but also on personal level of ES;
- Falls with education and income.

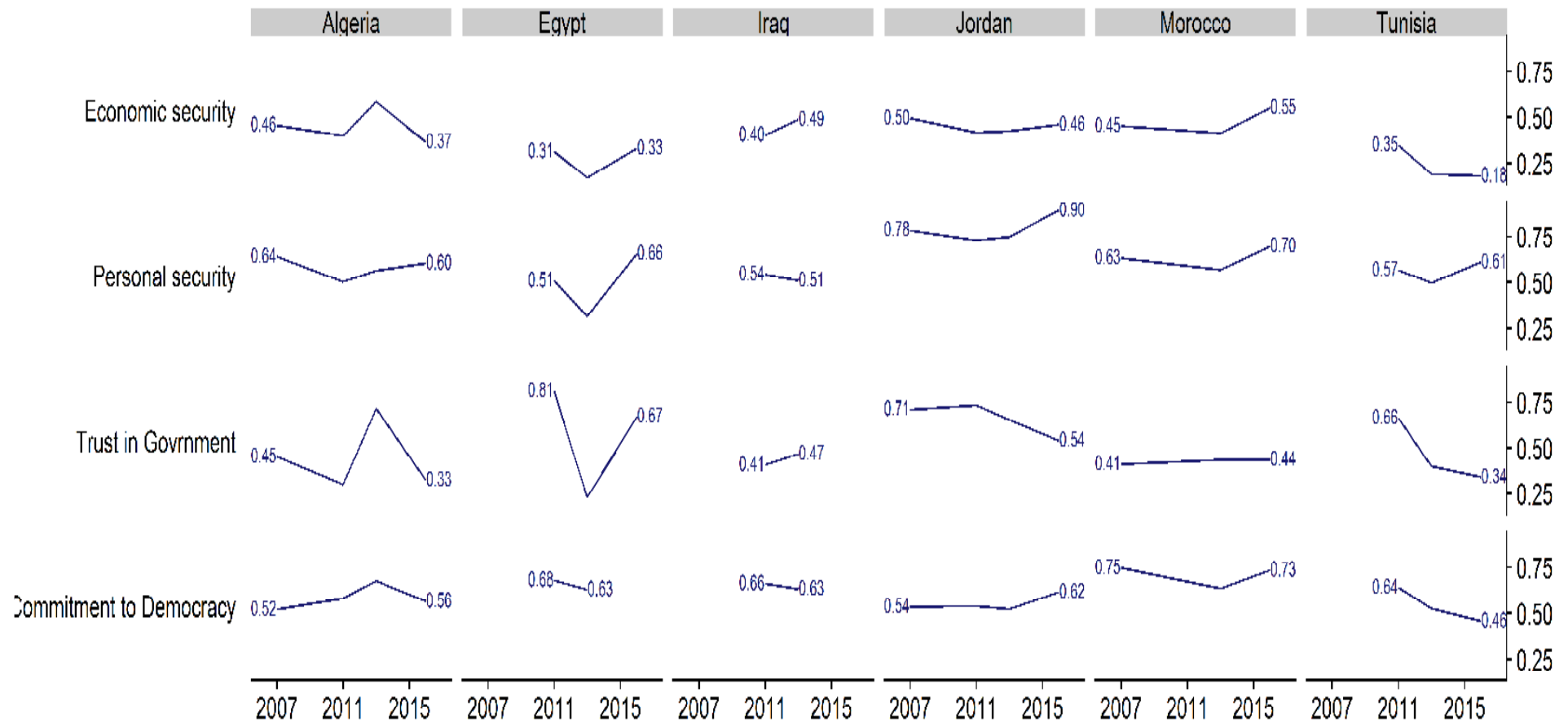
Commitment to democracy

- Depends only on Country level ES
- Rises with education and income

	Democratic approval	Trust government
Economic Security: individual	0.032	0.591***
Economic Security: country/time	0.554***	1.830***

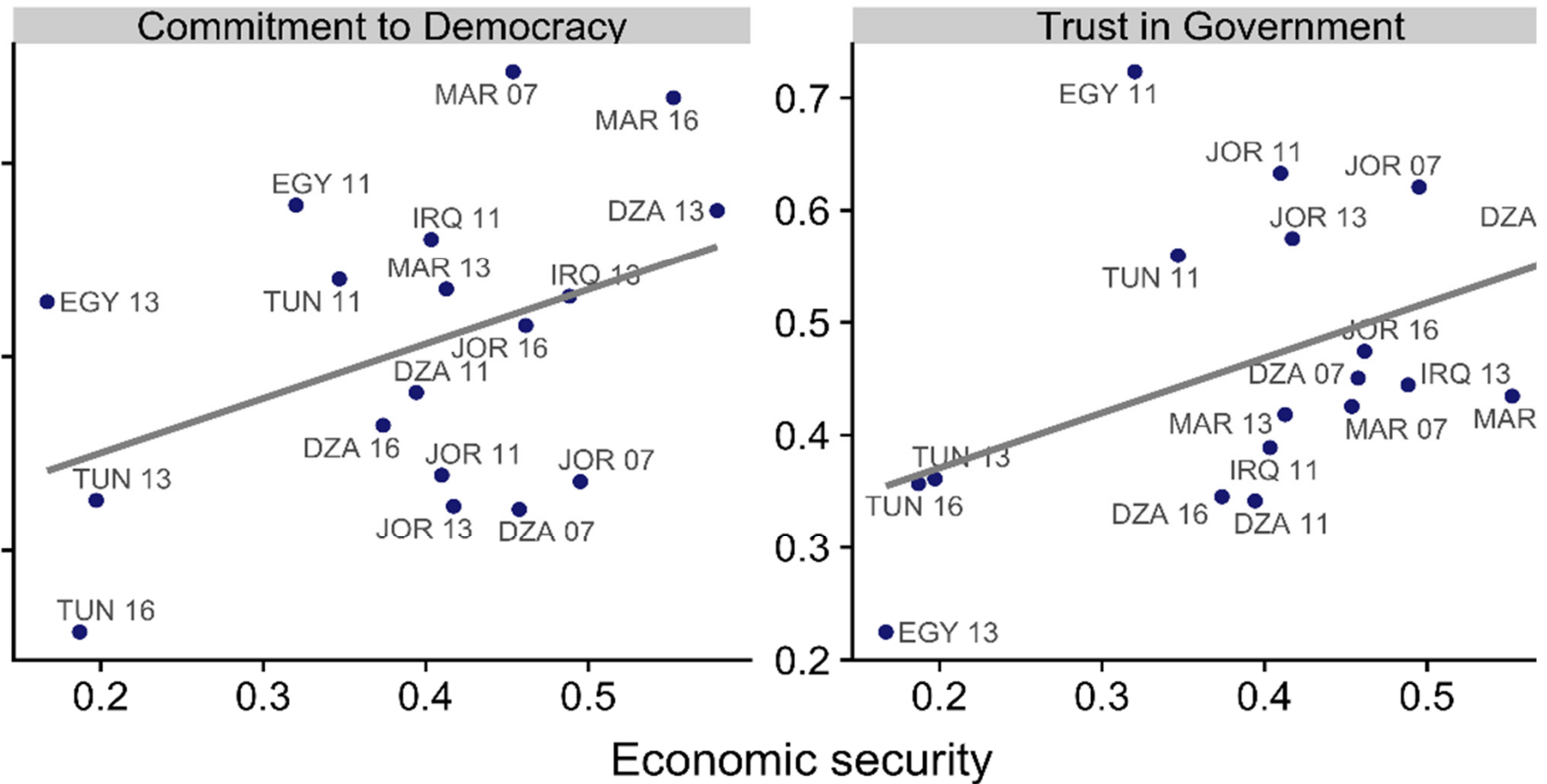
Note: OLS using all data in AB 2008-2016, with country FE, and controls for personal characteristics. For economic security, individual-level variables are measured as deviations from the country mean, and at the country level, in absolute terms.

Arab Spring dynamics



Source: own design based on the regression results presented in the paper

Values and ES (AB 2007/2016)



Source: own design based on the regression results presented in the paper

Observations

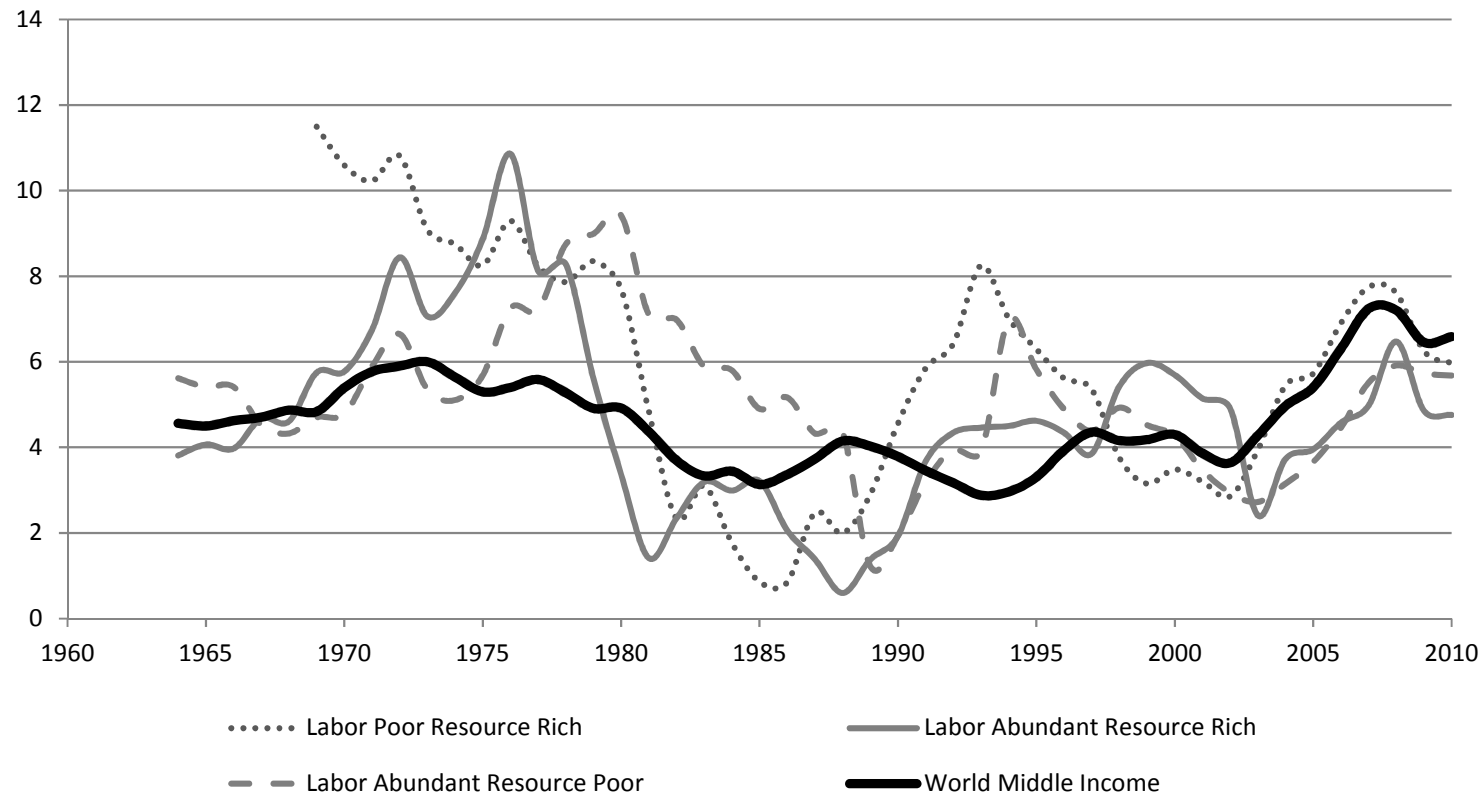
- Egypt, Tunisia: lots of action
 - Start with high ES and moderately high TG, CTD
 - ES collapses: “revolutions” very destabilizing
 - ES and TG comes back only in Egypt (CtD unknown)
- Morocco, Jordan: less, but similar action
 - Morocco higher on CtD, lower on TG than Jordan
 - May explain differentiated strategies
- Oil countries: path follows oil prices (which allowed extra spending and arise in TG)

questions

- Arab Spring occurred when ES relatively high – a revolution of dignity more than hunger
 - MC had rising CtD: moved away from autocratic bargain (Diwan 2013)
 - But TG was also *relatively* high (outside marginal areas), weakening the social movements.
- After the AS, ES and TG recovered in Egypt but not in Tunisia
 - Tunisia: Messy democracy, taxing early on
 - Egypt: recovery does not seem durable (pre-maxi devaluation)
- Why does CtD fall when ES declines?
 - Liberals shift to support autocracy if they fear that PI will win the day (Lust 2011)
 - Liberals on the “right” fear more redistribution and taxes.

Long Term Dynamics

Annual GDP growth rates, 1960-2010 (% , 5yr avg.)



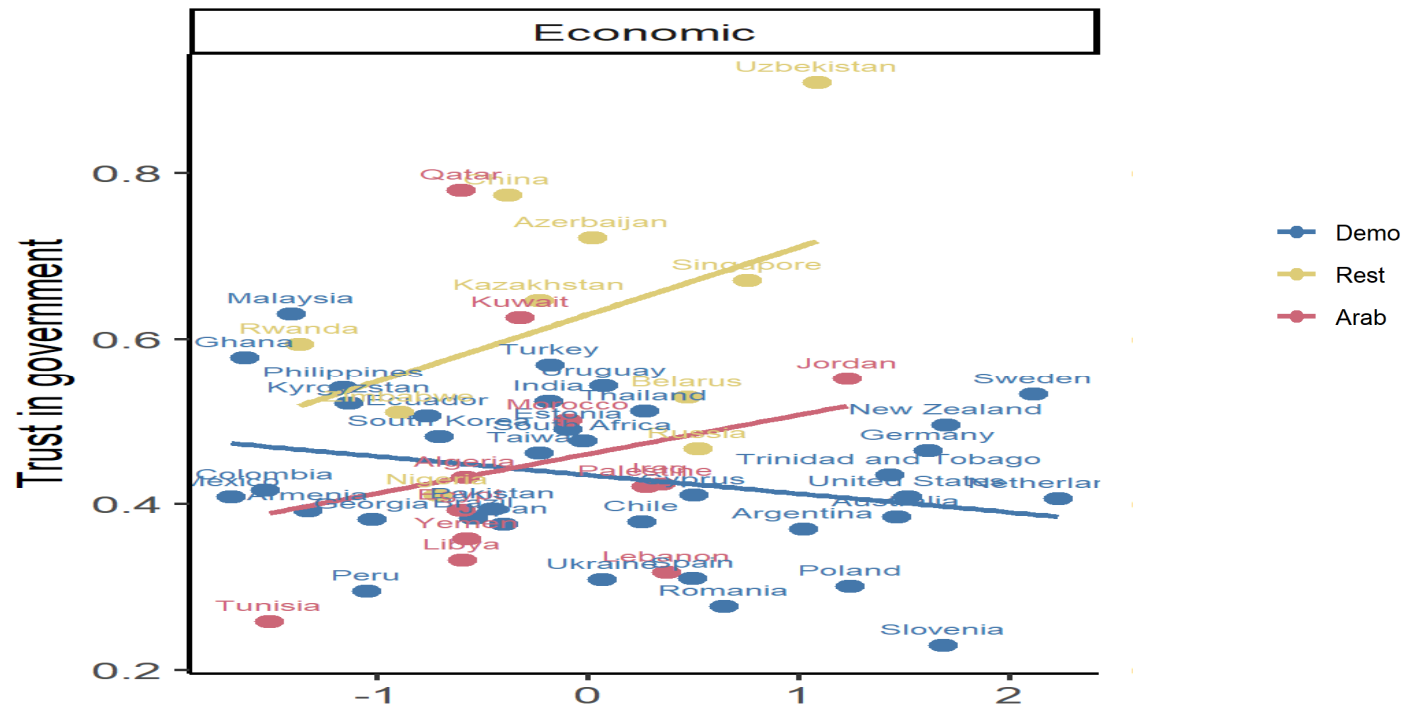
Source: own design based on the regression results presented in the paper

Changing political tensions ..

- When economy was bad (1980s-2000):
 - TG low -> repression of the poor (and rise in PI).
 - CtD low -> autocratic bargain. Fear of PI helped. Gave regimes resilience
- When economy improved (modestly) in 2000s:
 - TG rose, and more so in countries that could afford generous populism (Algeria, Iraq), stabilizing the bargain for a while; reduced pressure on regimes.
 - CtD rose, creating new pressures -> attempts to neutralize MC wt subsidies.
- When ES declined after the AS of 2011:
 - CtD fell -> autocratic restoration
 - TG fell -> repression on the rise (esp. of PI)

TG – global comparisons

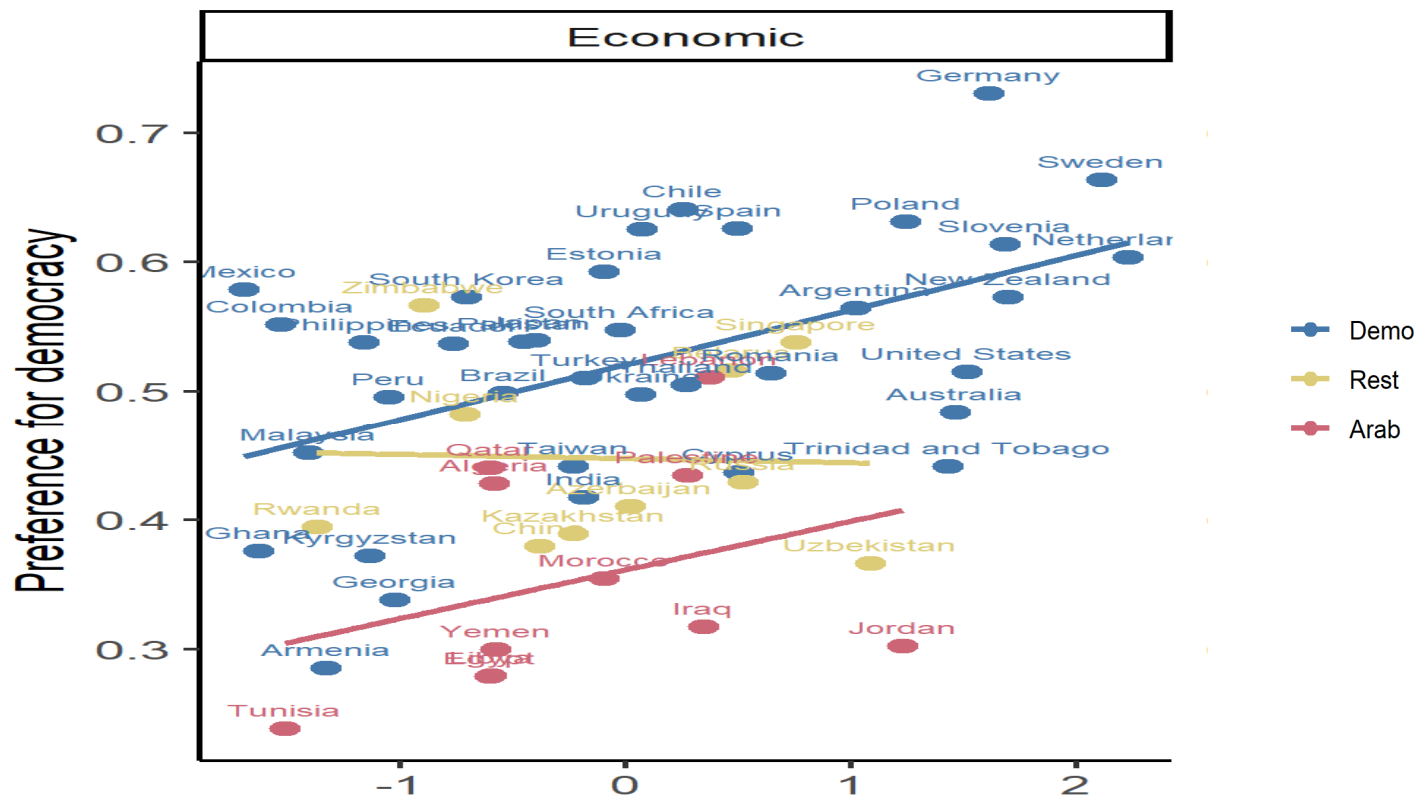
- MENA countries like autocracies around the word
- Autocrats rises and fall with ES



Source: own design based on the regression results presented in the paper

CtD – global comparison

- MENA countries like democracies around the world
- Non-democratic populisms rise with economic insecurity



Source: own design based on the regression results presented in the paper

Global comparison

- MENA like LDC autocracies on TG
 - Patronage politics and clientelism,
 - Especially strong where rents high.
- MENA like democracies on CtD
 - Elite behavior, closeness to Europe.
- Autocratic paradox:
 - Autocratic bargains unstable: Good economics -> CtD rise, disrupting the bargain
 - To stabilize the bargain, need repression of “elites”, which often weakens the economy, and lowers TG, leading to new sources of instability from below

Concluding thoughts

Questions from Algeria and Sudan

- For both: regime military trying to replace autocrat; but use of divide-and-rule strategies by army not working
 - In spite of bad economy (esp. in Sudan), CtD seems high (and TG is low)
 - Is it because Islamists unlikely to take power?
- There seems also to be some learning from other regional experiences
 - The CtD/Insecurity relation may end up transitory, rather than structural.