activities will ensue. The preliminary results also demonstrate that scholars should not only focus on the socio-economic grievances faced by citizens as a main cause for instability and contentious activities, but should also analyze other political and trust variables, which have an important impact on contentious participation. Regimes that are undergoing authoritarian reversals need further investigations, especially in regards to the rise of contentious activism and its relation to political trust. The case of Turkey here begins to sheds light on this relation, but more analyses should be conducted in other regimes for more generalizations.

"THEY MAY REVEAL THE SHORTCOMINGS OF THE GOVERNMENT"

STUDYING POLITICAL BEHAVIOR IN AN INCREASINGLY CLOSED REGION

By Yael Zeira, University of Mississippi

In 2011, ordinary citizens across the Middle East and North Africa took to the streets to demand greater freedom and accountability from their governments. Yet, even in the countries that saw the largest protests, most citizens did not participate. What explains individual participation in risky anti-regime resistance? Under which conditions will anti-regime movements achieve the wide participation necessary for their success? Answering these questions requires individual-level survey data on citizens' political behavior. Yet, due to the difficulties of data collection, few such surveys have been conducted. As a result, we know little about the drivers of mass participation—and, therefore, also about why unarmed protest occurs and succeeds—even in key cases like the first Palestinian intifadah. My recently released book, *The Revolution Within: State Institutions and Unarmed Resistance in Palestine* (2019), helps fill this gap by drawing on a unique survey of Palestinian participants and nonparticipants in unarmed resistance against Israeli occupation.[18] With an innovative design developed to mitigate common pitfalls of survey research in difficult environments, the survey suggests new methodological directions for MENA researchers working in an increasingly closed region.

Using surveys to study mass political behavior

The Arab uprisings brought questions regarding mass political behavior and attitudes to the forefront of comparative politics research on the Middle East. Long used to study political participation in advanced industrialized democracies, survey research offers several advantages for studying such questions. First, while surveys vary in their sample size, well-powered surveys typically include sample sizes of hundreds or thousands of citizens. Second, these surveys also typically include both participants and nonparticipants in anti-regime resistance or other political behaviors of interest—key to comparing the two groups and determining why their behavior differs. Third, and perhaps most critically, survey respondents are randomly selected from—and therefore reflect—a country's overall population. As a result, if properly designed, the inferences drawn from survey research can be generalized from the survey sample to the broader population of a country. Finally—as evidenced by the recent explosion in survey experiments in the MENA (see e.g. Corstange and Marinov 2012; Benstead, Jamal, and Lust 2015; Bush and Jamal 2015; Masoud, Jamal, and Nugent 2016; Shelef and Zeira 2017) and beyond—surveys can be easily combined with experiments, in-depth interviews, and other methods, complementing their traditional strengths.[19]

At the same time, survey researchers working in the MENA region face a number of challenges even when compared to researchers working in other developing regions. Due to the shrinking of civic and political space across much of the region, questions regarding the protection of survey respondents and the reliability of their answers have grown ever more acute. Survey researchers working in the MENA region typically require official approval from government actors (including, often informally, intelligence services), which is increasingly difficult to obtain. Even when granted, approval often comes at the cost of near-debilitating restrictions on the scope

of a research project. To share a personal anecdote from my early fieldwork in Jordan, my application to conduct a survey on the Palestinian national movement in Jordan—although strongly supported and aided by a local NGO—was returned saying I could not ask any questions about "Palestinian organizations": the main focus of my research. In a refreshingly forthright comment, the response also added that I would have to modify some of my questions about social services "as they may reveal the shortcomings of the government." Given the impossibility of conducting my research in Jordan, I narrowed the scope of my study to Palestine alone. As other scholars of the region well know, government restrictions and lack of access shape what we study, where we study, and how we study it.

Even when survey researchers receive official permission for their work or do not require it to conduct social science research, they—along with their research teams and subjects—are still vulnerable to repression and harassment. Surveys may be seized by state and nonstate actors alike, requiring special attention to the protection of subjects. As a result, survey respondents may be justifiably wary and even fearful of participating in even the most carefully designed survey research, resulting in survey non-response and potentially also causing social desirability bias (as subjects misreport illegal, unsanctioned, or officially disapproved behavior). These ethical and methodological challenges are particularly acute for MENA researchers working on sensitive topics, such as political conflict and violence or inter-group relations. In this case, researchers can often only gain access to subjects well after the conflict or events of interest are over, potentially resulting in recall bias. While these challenges are not unique to survey researchers alone—qualitative and other quantitative scholars also face them—the large scale and scope of survey research make it particularly visible and, therefore, vulnerable.

Surveying Palestinians and recalling the past

The survey that provides the main evidence for my book, *The Revolution Within,* was designed to mitigate and address these challenges. In order to explain the puzzle of participation in unarmed protest against repressive regimes—in this case, Palestinian protest against the Israeli occupation—the book drew on a randomized survey of nearly 650 participants and nonparticipants in Palestinian resistance in the Occupied Territories. This survey—the first large-scale survey of participants in Palestinian resistance and one of only a few such surveys carried out worldwide—was conducted in 68 localities across the West Bank, including Palestinian cities, towns, villages, and refugee camps. The response rate for the survey was 68 percent. A local Palestinian NGO, Al-Maqdese for Society Development, assisted with hiring survey enumerators and other logistics, and I trained survey enumerators—mostly newly minted Palestinian college graduates—in survey administration and ethics.[20]

My survey was carefully designed in order to protect respondents and mitigate two key methodological challenges—social desirability bias and recall bias—that I faced in my survey and other survey researchers working in the MENA also commonly confront. Social desirability bias refers to the common desire to present oneself in a favorable light, which may lead respondents to overreport socially approved behaviors and underreport disapproved ones. In the case of my survey, social desirability concerns could lead Palestinian respondents to falsely report participation in anti-occupation protests—a strongly socially-approved behavior. At the same time, because such behavior is officially illegal under Israeli law, other respondents may have feared reporting even long-past participation. Recall bias, in turn, refers to the inability to accurately and completely remember past events and behaviors. Reducing the possibility of such bias was also an important concern for my study, a quasi-historical study focusing on the first Palestinian intifadah and the decade leading up to the uprising (1978 to 1989). However, because recall bias increases sharply as little as two years after an event of interest and subsequently levels off (Groves et al. 2011, 213-18),[21] it potentially affects a much wider number of studies and is an underappreciated problem in survey research both in and out of the MENA.

Self-administration and life-history calendars

To protect respondents and guard against these concerns, all political participation questions on the survey were thus *self-administered* by respondents. Self-administration is the gold standard for collecting sensitive individual-level data that cannot be collected using group-level methods like list experiments (Corstange2009, Groves et al. 2011).[22] Using techniques first developed by Alexandra Scacco (2012) in her innovative study of riot participation,[23] the survey was administered in such a way that interviewers and/or outside parties could not view respondents' answers to sensitive questions or link them to other characteristics of respondents. Specifically, the survey questions were divided into two questionnaires—the main questionnaire and a separate questionnaire containing all sensitive questions about participation—which were linked by a random number known to me alone. The respondent completed the "sensitive" questionnaire by himself while the survey enumerator waited in a separate room and then placed it into a separate envelope from the main questionnaire, which also contained other respondents' sensitive questionnaires. All answer choices were also numbered in such a way to allow any illiterate respondents to complete the survey independently in response to the enumerator's verbal instructions. Thus, for all respondents, the enumerator did not view the respondent's answers to sensitive questions and could not link these answers to other characteristics of the respondent recorded in the main survey questionnaire. Importantly, this approach also prevents any third parties from linking sensitive survey responses to particular respondents. Thus, even if state security forces or other actors detain survey enumerators—as when the Palestinian police briefly detained one of my survey teams—they are unable to link sensitive political information to respondents either directly or indirectly.

> ***"Life history calendars improve recall by better reflecting the processes that people use to retrieve autobiographical memory.***

To alleviate the possibility of recall bias, my survey also used an innovative design called a life history calendar or event history calendar (LHC). LHCs improve recall by better reflecting the processes that people use to retrieve autobiographical memory. For example, many people tend to remember past events chronologically, working forward in time from less recent events to more recent ones. LHCs have a calendar-like design that better reflects this chronological process: for each survey question, the years (or other time periods) are listed horizontally across the page. This encourages respondents to recall events chronologically as well as to remember how different events during the same time period relate to one another ("parallel retrieval"), increasing the chance that they will accurately and completely remember them. For example, for a question about income, respondents can remember their yearly income by working forward in time from their starting income at their job, as well as by relating their income to contemporaneous changes in their occupational status (e.g. becoming a manager). This life history calendar design out-performed a standard survey questionnaire in an experimental comparison of the two (Belli et al., 2001), and it has been widely used in public health and other fields (although not, to my knowledge, in political science until now).[24] At the same time, like any other tool, it has some important tradeoffs. Namely, LHCs increase the length of the survey and so also increase the risk of respondent fatigue, survey non-completion, and/or survey non-response. For this reason, they are probably best used in surveys where past recall is more likely to be compromised, whether due to the recency of the events studied or their salience, as well as for shorter instruments. Similarly, they are also more appropriate for studying past events and behaviors rather than attitudes, which are more strongly shaped by present-day considerations. Despite these tradeoffs, the use of LHCs offers survey researchers in the MENA—who are often unable to conduct contemporaneous surveys due to access restrictions—with a promising new tool for improving the reliability of their research.

Integrating into and resisting the state

Drawing on these methodological advances, *The Revolution Within* systematically analyzes the drivers of Palestinian participation in unarmed resistance to Israeli occupation. The book's main finding is that, among groups with high anti-regime grievances and low internal organizational strength, integration into state institutions—schools, prisons, and courts—paradoxically makes individuals more likely to resist the state. Integration into state-controlled schools increased the probability of participation in unarmed resistance to Israeli occupation by as much as 13 percentage points—larger than the within-sample effects of socioeconomic status and other key predictors in the literature—and exposure to prisons and courts also significantly increased this probability. Importantly, integration into these institutions was also associated with larger and more diverse social networks, which provide individuals with greater access to political information. In contrast, it was not consistently associated with exposure to nationalist media or other indicators of anti-occupation grievances. These results suggest that, in contexts where anti-regime grievances already run high, integration into state institutions promotes participation through informational and organizational advantages that make people better able, rather than more willing, to protest. In pointing to these unintended advantages of state institutions for collective action, the book thus helps to explain the onset of mass mobilization in organizationally underdeveloped, and therefore under-predicted, cases.

The Revolution Within provides fine-grained survey data on high-risk political participation that are not usually available to scholars. Like most survey-based research in the region, however, the bulk of its evidence is drawn from a single case, the Palestinian Territories, and its findings have not yet been systematically tested in other contexts. Yet if we want to develop general explanations and learn general lessons about phenomena that we care about, we need *comparative* survey data. The Arab Barometer initiative co-founded by Amaney Jamal and Mark Tessler has made great strides towards this goal, providing researchers with high-quality longitudinal survey data on Arab public opinion across the region, including some countries previously closed off to survey research. Yet the vast majority of survey work, including much of the cutting-edge research being done by Ph.D. students and junior scholars, is still done in a single country and not subsequently replicated. As a result, it is difficult to assess how the context of a particular study may affect its findings, make sense of contradictory findings when they do exist, and draw reliable inferences about the conditions under which our theories will or will not hold. These challenges are not unique to the Middle East and are being recognized and addressed by scholars in other regions, most explicitly through the Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP) network's Metaketa Initiative, which seeks to create more generalizable knowledge by funding and coordinating multiple studies on the same theme across countries. While survey researchers in the Middle East may ultimately arrive at a different model for doing so than this one, improving the external validity of survey research in the MENA represents perhaps the biggest opportunity and challenge for such research going forward.

In conclusion, the Arab uprisings, as well as the more recent protests in Algeria, Lebanon, and Sudan, have brought questions regarding mass attitudes and behavior and survey techniques designed to answer them to the forefront of research in Middle East politics. Yet, despite the flourishing of survey research on the Middle East and an increasingly mature survey infrastructure in the region, survey researchers within the MENA face arguably greater challenges than ever before. Drawing on *The Revolution Within,* this essay has proposed novel tools to meet two of the main challenges, social desirability bias and recall bias. In doing so, it hopes to provide new ways forward for researchers asking sensitive questions in an increasingly closed and difficult environment.

ENDNOTES

Gengler notes:

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Sika notes:

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[6] Eric Uslaner, "The Study of Trust," in *The Oxford Handbook of Social and Political Trust*, by Eric Uslaner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018): 3-13.
[7] Jack Citrin and Laura Stoker, "Political Trust in a Cynical Age," *Annual Review of Political Science* vol. 21 (2018): 49-70; William Mishler and Richard Rose, "What are the Origins of Political Trust? Testing Instituttional and Cultural Theories in Post-communist Societies," *Comparative Political Studies* 34, no. 1 (2001): 30-62. 2001).
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[9] Mark Beissinger, ""Conventional" and "Virtual" Civil Societies in Autocratic Regimes," *Comparative Politics* vol. 49, no. 3 (2017):. 351-372.
[10] Johannes Gerschewski, "The Three Pillars of Stability: Legitimation, Repression and Co-opation in Autocratic Regimes," *Democratization* vol. 20, no. 1 (2013): 38-57.
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[12] See for instance Joshua Stacher, "Fragmenting States, New Regimes: Militarized State Violence and Transition in the Middle East," *Democratization* vol. 22, no. 15 (2015): 259-275.
[13] For more information on the project see: https://uni-tuebingen.de/en/faculties/faculty-of-economics-and-social-sciences/subjects/department-of-social-sciences/ifp/institute-of-political-science/people/middle-east-and-comparative-politics-professor-schlumberger/projects-and-services/arab-youth-from-engagement-to-inclusion-vw/project-description/
[14] For more information on the project see: https://www.iai.it/en/ricerche/power2youth-freedom-dignity-and-justice
[15] The research design and the implementation of the survey study was conducted by the Fafo Research Foundation in Norway. For more information on the survey results and methodology please see: http://power2youth.iai.it/survey.html
[16] For a full regression table, please email the author at: nadinesika@aucegypt.edu
[17] Johannes Gerschewski, op.cit; Mark Lichbach, "Deterrence or Escalation? The Puzzle of Aggregate Studies of Repression and Dissent," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 31, no. 2 (1987): 266-297.

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[20] While the Palestinian Territories does have well-established and regarded survey firms, perhaps the best-known firm, the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR), does not generally accept commissioned research from outside scholars. Due to the international presence and interest in the Occupied Territories, hiring a survey firm is also often prohibitively expensive for Ph.D. students and junior scholars. As such, working with Al-Maqdese, I put together my own survey team and did much of the logistical and administrative work typically carried out by a survey firm myself.
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[23] Scacco, Alexandra. "Anatomy of a Riot: participation in ethnic violence in Nigeria." *Book Manuscript, New York University* (2012).
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