

Did Egypt's Post-Uprising Crime Wave Increase Support for Authoritarian Rule?

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Abstract

Countries transitioning from autocracy to democracy often struggle to maintain law and order. Yet relatively little is known about how changes in levels of crime impact public support for authoritarian rule. We find an empirical relationship between increasing crime and support for authoritarian leadership in Egypt following the 2011 Uprisings. Analysis of original crime data from Egypt suggests that electoral districts exposed to larger year-on-year changes in localized patterns of crime were more likely to vote for the “strongman” candidate in Egypt’s first, and only, free and fair presidential election in 2012. We validate these findings with survey evidence which shows that Egyptians who were highly concerned about crime were more likely to express support for a strong leader over democracy as well as for military rule, even after controlling for a broad set of covariates. This research illustrates how founding elections that occur during a period of rising personal insecurity risk becoming referenda on order and stability, with negative implications for the consolidation of democratic institutions.

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On February 23, 2012, presidential hopeful and former Muslim Brotherhood leader Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh was attacked as he returned to Cairo following a public event. Newspapers reported that three masked men stole Aboul Fotouh’s car, and that, during the robbery, he was injured. This incident was notable not only for its prominent victim, but also because it reflected a broader pattern of rising social violence in Egypt following the 2011 Uprisings. Robberies, carjackings, and homicides were accompanied by a palpable increase in public anxiety, leading television commentators, politicians, and journalists to draw attention to Egypt’s crisis of personal security. Yet, Egypt’s experience with crime during its democratic transition was not atypical; increases in violent crime often accompany periods of political change (Fox and Hoelscher 2012; Duran-Martinez 2015; Deglow 2016; Berg and Carranza 2018). In fact, democratization frequently involves a weakening of status quo institutions, a process that can introduce forms of lawlessness and criminality (LaFree and Tseloni 2006; Savelsberg and McElrath 2014).

What are the political consequences of rising crime during periods of nascent democratic transition? We use evidence from Egypt to argue that crime increased popular support for authoritarian modes of governance, undermining democratic progress. Using an original, district-level dataset of reported crimes before and after the 2011 Uprisings, we show that districts with larger increases in crime were more likely to support Ahmed Shafiq, a “strongman” candidate who embodied a restoration of the old regime’s autocracy, in the 2012 presidential election. Indeed, absent this marked increase in crime, Shafiq may not have earned enough votes to secure a place in the run-off election against Mohammed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood.

To validate our district-level findings about the impact of increasing crime on support for authoritarian rule, we also examine survey data to explore the extent to which the mechanisms that we have described find support at the individual level. Using data from the Pew Global Attitudes Project, we show that the Egyptians who were most concerned with law and order were also more supportive of strongman rule prior to the 2012 presidential election, even after taking into account a variety of demographic and other factors. We also use data from the Afrobarometer to demonstrate that Egyptians who were more concerned with crime in March 2013 were also more likely to express support for army rule, just months before a “popular-participatory” veto coup ended Egypt’s short-lived democratic transition.¹

Our findings contribute to a growing literature on the political implications of crime. Scholars have shown that lawlessness can affect outcomes ranging from approval ratings of national leaders (Romero et al. 2016) to political participation (Bateson 2012; Trelles and Carreras 2012; Ley 2018) and interpersonal trust (Corbacho et al. 2015).² Our research highlights the need to investigate further the political determinants and consequences of crime, particularly in places where crime rates are changing rapidly, as is the case in many transitioning countries.

¹We adopt the terminology used by Jomet (2018) who describes the 2013 military coup in this way.

²Crime can also, in turn, be affected by political dynamics, including the strategies adopted to fight it (Calderon et al. 2015) and the institutional structure of the state (Kalyvas 2015).

Furthermore, this study deepens our understanding of a particularly important case where democratic transition ended in failure. Egypt is the most populous country in a region noted for its democracy deficit (e.g., Stepan and Robertson 2003; Bellin 2004). Under the pre-revolutionary Mubarak regime, Egypt represented an influential example of resilient authoritarianism (e.g., Blaydes 2011). As a result, Egypt’s transition held implications for the possibility of democratization across the Arab world. The collapse of Egypt’s nascent democratic transition heralded a sharp shift against the prospect of a successful democratic wave in the region (Boukhars et al. 2014; Nugent and Brooke 2018). By demonstrating how rising crime increased support for authoritarian modes of governance, we shed light on one channel that may have contributed to the lack of democratic consolidation in Egypt.

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. The next section reviews the existing literature on societal crime and its implications for democratic transitions. The section which follows provides background on Egypt’s post-transition wave of criminality. Next, we discuss our original dataset of changing crime rates and present results demonstrating that districts with larger increases in criminality were also more likely to vote for Ahmed Shafiq — the “strongman” candidate — in the 2012 presidential election. After that, we present evidence at the individual level linking concern about crime with support for authoritarian leadership. A final section concludes with a discussion of our findings and their implications for democratic transitions.

Violence in Transition

Crime and democratization tend to go hand-in-hand from an empirical perspective (Savelsberg and McElrath 2014). Transitions to democracy often occur after revolutions or civil wars, and the disruptive process of restructuring political institutions may reduce state capacity, facilitating opportunities for criminal activity. This pattern is supported by cross-national studies. For example, Fox and Hoelscher (2012) use data from more than 120 countries to show that weakly institutionalized democracies are associated with higher levels of violent crime. Lafree and Tseloni (2006) find similar results with cross-national, time-series data from 44 countries over a fifty-year period.

Evidence from case studies also points to an empirical relationship between crime and democratization. Research has shown that Mexico’s transition from authoritarian rule to democracy contributed to a dramatic increase in crime (Kalyvas 2015). Although there are a variety of explanations for why crime increased in this context, most accounts emphasize the disruption of existing political institutions (Villarreal 2002) and a reduction in the capacity of security forces (Grillo 2012; Trejo and Ley 2013).

Research on the political effects of criminality suggests that transitional crime waves may complicate prospects for successful democratization. A large body of literature argues that threat activates authoritarian attitudes, increases acceptance of strongman politics, and decreases support for democracy and civil liberties (Sales 1973; Doty et al. 1991; Davis and Silver 2003; Bateson 2012; Roccato et al. 2014). Consistent with these findings, Fernandez and Kuenzi (2010) use survey data from Latin America and Africa to show that individuals

victimized by crime are less likely to express support for democratic institutions. Similarly, Ceobanu et al. (2010) and Carreras (2013) find that crime victims in Latin America are less satisfied with democratic governance, while Hou and Quek (2018) demonstrate that Chinese citizens exposed to violent crime are more supportive of authoritarian governance in China.³ While these studies are not particularly focused on the democratic transition period, they do suggest a dynamic whereby individuals affected by rapidly changing crime rates become less likely to support democratic institutions.

This relationship between criminal violence and support for authoritarian governance can also manifest in voting for parties and politicians less committed to democracy. Concerns about crime are typically correlated with support for right-wing parties or candidates who often demonstrate authoritarian tendencies (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994; Rydegren and Ruth 2011).⁴ In the case of El Salvador, Holland (2013) finds that the conservative Nationalist Republican Alliance increased its electoral support by emphasizing crime and security issues at a time when leftist parties were making significant gains elsewhere in Latin America. Likewise, Pepinsky (2017) identifies a recent trend of “voting against disorder” and increased support for strongman candidates in several Southeast Asian countries.

The level of support for authoritarian governance has particularly important implications during transitional periods, when nascent democratic institutions are vulnerable to collapse in the absence of a strong public commitment to the new political system (Diamond 1999). For instance, popular challenges to the transitional government can signal the feasibility of a military coup to anti-democratic elites (Casper and Tyson 2014; Johnson and Thyne 2016), as occurred in Egypt in 2013. On the other hand, voting for authoritarian parties or political leaders may undermine democratic institutions from within before they can be consolidated (Lust and Waldner 2015; Mainwaring and Perez-Linan 2013). As a result, if rising social instability during the transition strengthens support for a return to authoritarian governance, it should complicate prospects for the consolidation of democracy. Scholars have noted a similar danger with regards to ongoing political instability during transitional periods; persistent mobilizations may undermine democratic consolidation by weakening institutions and reducing public support for democracy (Diamond 1994; Hipsher 1996; Ketchley and El-Rayyes 2019).

In general, however, existing literature on democratic transitions has focused on structural preconditions for democracy (e.g., Huntington 1968; Lipset 1959) or the decisions of elite actors during the process of democratic transition (e.g., O’Donnell et al. 1986; Przeworski 1991). Consequently, the impact of social dynamics that may be unleashed by the transition itself — such as crime waves — have gone understudied. We address this gap by

³Blanco and Ruiz (2013) show that crime negatively affects trust in democracy in Colombia, and Blanco (2013) finds a similar relationship in Mexico. Political participation is a necessary feature of democracy, and some authors do find evidence that crime victimization makes people more likely to be politically active (e.g., Bateson 2012). However, other scholars also find that participation in civic life can be widespread but does not necessarily indicate support for full democracy (Berman 1997; Jamal 2007).

⁴While not all right-wing parties are anti-democratic, these parties are more likely to exhibit authoritarian tendencies and advocate policies that violate civil liberties in response to security concerns (Altemeyer 1988).

evaluating whether rising social instability strengthened popular support for authoritarian modes of governance during Egypt’s short-lived democratic transition.

Insecurity in Post-Mubarak Egypt

Under the authoritarian regime of Hosni Mubarak, Egypt was relatively safe by global standards, with a homicide rate of less than one per every 100,000 people in 2010 (Daragahi 2013).⁵ After the protest uprisings of January 2011, however, Egypt’s crime rate rose significantly. According to Ministry of the Interior data released to the *Financial Times*, the homicide rate in 2012 was nearly 2.5 per every 100,000 people (Daragahi 2013; UNODC 2014).⁶

Table 1: *Crime Increases in Egypt, 2010-2011*

	2010	2011	% Δ
All Crime Incidents	1,764	3,912	122%
Homicide Incidents	762	1,302	71%
Thuggery and Theft Incidents	1,171	3,228	176%
Other Crime Incidents	593	684	15%

Source: *Al-Ahram & Al-Masry Al-Youm* news reports.

This atmosphere of instability was widely discussed in the Egyptian, Arab, and international press (e.g., Al-Watan 2011; Kirkpatrick 2011; Daily News Egypt 2012; Mohsen 2012; Aboul Gheit 2013). Table 1 illustrates the extent of this increase by displaying data on crime reports compiled from influential Egyptian newspapers.⁷ From 2010 to 2011, the number of crimes reported in the papers increased by 122 percent. This rise was driven primarily by incidents of thuggery and theft, which increased by a dramatic 176 percent.⁸

⁵Fish (2011) finds that Muslim-majority countries have much lower than expected levels of violent crime than otherwise comparable non-Muslim countries. He reports that Egypt at the time of the analysis had one of the lowest rates of intentional homicide in the world at 0.4 per 100,000 people (a fraction of the rate found in Brazil, Kenya, Peru, Russia or Philippines).

⁶Official crime statistics, particularly at the local level, are unfortunately not available from Egypt’s Ministry of the Interior.

⁷The data, and how it was collected, are discussed in more detail in the analysis section of the paper. The “other” crimes category includes a variety of other types including crimes of passion, honor killings, revenge killings and domestic violence as well as anti-regime criminal activities, crimes motivated by sectarian identity and electoral crimes.

⁸In countries with a long legacy of authoritarianism and dominance by the security services, there are important questions regarding which crimes get reported to the police and are covered by major newspapers. Using several survey experiments in Moscow, Buckley et al. (2016) show that crime severity and the identity of the perpetrator are strong predictors of crime reporting in more autocratic environments.

Many of these crimes also involved significant violence; incidents involving fatalities rose by 71 percent. In March 2011, for instance, a man in Qena governorate was stabbed repeatedly by three others “until they were sure he was no longer living” in a dispute over money (Al-Samakouri and Hamdi 2011). Another violent murder occurred in Giza governorate in May 2011, when two brothers stabbed a young Tuk-Tuk driver twenty-two times after a dispute, and then hung his naked body in the street (Abdelradi and Abdelatif 2011). Stories of robbery also featured prominently. In September 2011, *Al-Masry Al-Youm* reported that several individuals were arrested in a stolen car after an armed robbery of a factory in Sharqia governorate (Al-Dasouki 2011). The paper also reported the arrest of a gang of thieves in Cairo, who specialized in stealing new cars and selling them with forged papers (Geith 2011).

Unsurprisingly, these rising crime rates, combined with extensive press attention, negatively impacted Egyptians’ perceptions of their safety. Whereas only 17 percent of Egyptians reported feeling unsafe walking alone at night prior to the 2011 Uprisings, that increased to approximately 40 percent in the months to follow (Hellyer 2011). The Survey of Young People in Egypt (SYPE), a panel survey of more than 15,000 Egyptians aged 10-29, also tracks these changes. Between the first wave in 2009 and the second in 2013/2014, the percent of respondents reporting that they were victims of assault increased four-fold.⁹ Moreover, in the second wave, 62 percent of respondents stated the lack of security was the foremost threat to the country post-revolution (Population Council 2011, Roushdy and Sieverding 2015).

It is widely accepted that Egypt’s increase in crime was due primarily to the police largely abandoning the streets following Mubarak’s ouster. During the 2011 Uprisings, protesters attacked local police stations and members of the security forces, many of whom fled from their posts (Ketchley 2017). As a result, security institutions outside the military were defeated and demoralized during much of the transition (Sayigh 2015). There was also a widespread perception among Egyptians that security forces deliberately refrained from policing crime after the transition as revenge against the revolutionary movement (Brumberg and Sallam 2012). The result was that from early 2011 until July 2013, the police continued to maintain a relatively light presence in the streets (Tarek 2013).¹⁰ With the police absent, vigilante justice spread, exacerbating insecurity and instability. Mobs beat suspected criminals to death in at least seventeen documented incidents, and political organizations, like the Islamic Group, organized informal community policing forces to restore law and order (Arrott 2013; Revkin and Auf 2013).¹¹ It was not until August 2013, after the military seized power, that Egyptian security forces reasserted their dominance in the public sphere.

⁹In 2009, only 0.06 percent reported experiencing a physical assault in the last 12 months, while in 2013/2014, 0.26 percent reported experiencing a physical assault in the last year.

¹⁰There were a few prominent cases of clashes between the security forces and protesters, such as the Mohammed Mahmoud Street incident in November 2011 (BBC 2012b). However, the overall police presence in most localities decreased.

¹¹However, these groups only made matters worse, igniting fears they would be used to enforce strict interpretations of Islamic Law or to punish Egyptians aligned with political movements opposed to Islamism (Revkin and Auf 2013).

Rising crime was a major political issue and was widely discussed in the months leading up to Egypt’s first free and fair presidential election, which took place in two rounds during May and June of 2012. Twelve candidates competed in the first round; they represented diverse interests and political coalitions, including the Muslim Brotherhood, liberals, leftists, Salafist Islamists, and the military. While most positioned themselves as defenders of the democratic revolution and ran on the promise of a “new Egypt,” one candidate, Ahmed Shafiq, was notable for his close ties to the Mubarak regime and his emphasis on restoring autocratic modes of governance (Black 2012; Greene 2012). Shafiq — a former commander of Egypt’s Air Force and the last prime minister before Mubarak’s February 2011 resignation — made it clear that ending the crime wave and reestablishing law and order was central to his platform (Fadel 2012; Knell 2012). In April 2012, one month before the first round, the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* noted that one of Shafiq’s three “winning cards” was his promise “to end a perceived state of lawlessness in the country within 30 days from the start of his presidency” (Fathi 2012). Shafiq stated openly that he would accomplish this goal by governing with a strong hand.

To the surprise of many observers, Shafiq successfully secured second place in the election’s first round, barely edging out several other prominent candidates who identified more strongly with the revolutionary spirit of the 2011 Uprisings. While his victory was not just about crime, Abadeer et al. (2018) show that patterns of voter participation in the 2012 election were consistent with ideological and issue-based voting — particularly in the first round — suggesting that concerns about growing lawlessness may have contributed to Shafiq’s surprise showing. In the second round of the election, Shafiq continued to position himself as the strongman candidate, emphasizing that he would end “unrest” quickly by using “executions” and “brutal force,” and promising he would implement constitutional provisions to preserve the military’s influence over the political process (Carlstrom 2012). By contrast, his competitor in the second round, Mohammed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood, attempted to cast himself as the democratic candidate who would protect the revolution from resurgent authoritarianism (Spencer 2012). Shafiq lost only narrowly to Morsi, who won 51.7 percent of the vote.

The election proved destabilizing to Egypt’s transition. Perhaps emboldened by the closeness of the race, the military delayed announcement of the official results and negotiated limits to the new president’s powers (Kirkpatrick 2012), constraining Morsi’s ability to deal effectively with the country’s substantial political challenges. In addition, the competition between Morsi and Shafiq alienated many Egyptian voters aligned with the country’s revolutionary camp, who felt unrepresented by either candidate (Abadeer et al. 2018). As instability continued to worsen during Morsi’s presidency, even liberal elements previously opposed to military rule began advocating for the armed forces to intervene, with some explicitly citing rising crime as justification (Birnbaum 2013). With cover from mass mobilizations indicating substantial opposition to Morsi’s government, the military overthrew Morsi in July 2013, eliminating prospects for a successful democratic transition in Egypt and ushering in a period of severe repression under the autocratic government of Defense

Minister and eventual President, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi (Dunne and Williamson 2014; Truex and Tavana 2018).¹²

Rising Crime and Vote Choice

To evaluate the impact of rising crime on Egypt’s transition, we first explore the extent to which changes in crime rates were associated with voting for Ahmed Shafiq, whose candidacy embodied the authoritarian tendencies of the former regime, and whose strong electoral showing may have contributed to an unstable period of political transition. In order to systematically examine this relationship, we have constructed an original measure of crime and compiled district-level voting data from the 2012 presidential election. We assess whether districts that experienced larger increases in crime after the protest uprisings demonstrated higher rates of support for Shafiq in the first and second rounds of the presidential election.

Crime and Electoral Data

Our dependent variables in this analysis — Shafiq’s vote share in the first and second rounds of the presidential election — are taken from official statistics released by Egypt’s Supreme Committee for Elections.¹³ In order to incorporate demographic control variables, we matched the 2006 census districts with the electoral districts (i.e., *qism/markaz*) using electoral lists published by the Egyptian government.¹⁴ We were able to link approximately 94 percent of the districts through matching by name, so our final data includes 328 district-observations.¹⁵ The districts, which are akin to U.S. counties, are nested within Egypt’s twenty-seven governorates, which are akin to states.

To construct a district-level measure of violent crime rates, we create an original dataset on locally reported violent crimes across Egypt.¹⁶ A critical first step was to establish baseline levels of criminal violence for all electoral and administrative units. Because our primary interest is in *changing* rates, rather than absolute levels, these data allow us to evaluate the dynamic effects of the rapid increases in criminality. The crime data are drawn from reports on criminal incidents from two prominent and long-running Egyptian newspapers,

¹²It is certainly possible that the military would have seized power even if there had been no crime wave following the transition, but research indicates that military coups become more likely when incumbent governments face political polarization and mass mobilization (Johnson and Thyne 2018; Staniland 2008). The remainder of this paper provides evidence that crime increases contributed to these outcomes in Egypt.

¹³Supreme Committee for Elections, Presidential Elections Official Site, 2012. This organization is also referred to as the High Elections Commission, the High Electoral Commission, or some variant thereof. See: <http://pres2012.elections.eg/>.

¹⁴The 2006 census data is the most recent year for which district-level demographic data is available. It is unlikely that districts changed in fundamental ways between 2006 and 2012, in part because internal migration in Egypt is relatively low by international standards (Herrera and Badr 2012).

¹⁵In the 2006 census, there are a total of 346 districts. There are 351 electoral districts in the 2012 presidential election. We matched the districts by hand because of administrative and name changes.

¹⁶We adopted this approach because other potential sources (e.g., police reports) are not available to researchers in Egypt.

Al-Ahram and *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, both of which are published in Arabic. While *Al-Ahram* is government-published and considered by many to be Egypt’s paper of record, *Al-Masry Al-Youm* is the most widely read privately-owned daily newspaper in Egypt. Both papers contained daily reports on criminal activity from across the country.

More than 5,600 violent crimes were identified from the daily newspapers between January 2010 until December 2011.¹⁷ For each incident, we note the number of victims injured and the number of people killed, and we classify the type of crime. Most crimes are classified as incidents of thuggery and theft, though other types of crime took place, including sectarian violence, honor crimes, and electoral violence.¹⁸ We then matched each incident to a census district.¹⁹

We use these newspaper reports to generate a crime count for each district. We then calculate the annual district-level crime rate for 2010 and 2011. The crime rate is measured as the number of crimes per 100,000 people for each district. Next, we calculate the change in the local crime rate by subtracting the 2010 rate of a district from the 2011 rate of the same district.²⁰ Because this continuous measure includes some districts with especially large crime increases, we account for outliers by also creating a binary variable for whether a district experienced an increase above or below the median. The binary and continuous measures provide our independent variables for the analysis.²¹

¹⁷When there was overlap in reporting across the papers, crime incidents were not double counted, but noted as being recorded in both papers.

¹⁸See the codebook for further descriptions of the categories of violence.

¹⁹The incidents were matched to census districts by name. When only a neighborhood or other location description was reported in the newspaper, geographic coordinates were used to identify the appropriate district.

²⁰The Supplemental Appendix (Section 4) contains maps of crime rates and changes in these rates across Egyptian governorates for 2010 and 2011. While the analysis is conducted at the district-level, we display the rates at the governorate-level because the districts are too small to visualize the variation at the national level. The Appendix also contains maps of changes in crime rates within the Egyptian governorates of Sohag and Assiut over this period, demonstrating the significant variation in these changes that is evident across districts within a single governorate.

²¹We are able to validate our crime data with survey data from the fifth wave of the Afrobarometer, which was conducted in 2013 and asked respondents about their fear of and exposure to crime. Specifically, respondents were asked if they feared crime in their own homes, if they felt unsafe walking in their neighborhoods, if crime was one of the three most important issues facing the country, and whether they had been robbed in the past year. Respondents were also asked if they had been assaulted, but these numbers were too low to provide a useful validation check. We use Afrobarometer’s geocoded data to assign respondents to each district and then assessed the correlation between responses to these measures and our own crime data. We observe small but positive correlations between the district crime increases from 2010 to 2011 and survey respondents’ fear of and exposure to crime in 2013. For the binary crime measure, the correlations with Afrobarometer outcomes were as follows: fear crime in home (0.05); unsafe (0.05); crime important (0.09); robbed (0.09). For the continuous measure: fear crime in home (0.02); unsafe (0.01); crime important (0.07); and robbed (0.02). Given the 15-month gap between the survey and the endpoint for the data that we have collected, these consistently positive correlations should increase confidence that our data reflects local-level changes in crime.

Empirical Strategy

We estimate the relationship between changing crime rates on a district’s support for Ahmed Shafiq using OLS regressions. Standard errors are clustered at the parliamentary electoral district ($n = 46$) to handle the possibility of correlated error terms within the clusters. To account for socioeconomic differences across districts that may correlate with voting and crime patterns in 2012, we incorporate a number of demographic control variables constructed from census data. One concern is that crime increased more in less well-off areas, because private or public security may have been more limited (or more likely to decline during the upheaval), and therefore less likely to deter would-be criminals. These areas might also have been more likely to vote for a candidate like Shafiq, if they were motivated by patronage-based appeals linked to the former ruling party. We attempt to account for this bias with several control variables that reflect district-level economic development. These include the percentage of the population that is urban, has no formal education, attained a bachelor’s degree or higher, are unemployed, and are unmarried.

We also control for the percentage of the population that qualifies as youth and the percentage of the district population that is male, since these groups are more prone to criminal violence and may have been inclined toward particular political movements.²² Furthermore, we control for the district’s turnout percentage during the 2011 parliamentary elections.²³ A table with summary statistics for all variables is included in the Supplemental Appendix (Table A.1).

One potential concern regarding the use of these data may be related to reporting bias. Because we base our crime data on news reports, it is possible that certain areas — for instance, wealthier or more central, populous districts — would receive greater attention. Since we are measuring changes within a district over time, reporting biases are unlikely to be a major concern given the extent to which these biases are fixed or slow changing. In addition, the number of reports in our data is extensive for a two year period, and these reports demonstrate broad geographic coverage. However, we also include control variables to address the most important ways in which reporting bias might be expected to relate both to crime reports and voting behavior. Smaller districts that are further from Cairo may have received less coverage and been less supportive of Shafiq, so we control for the kilometer distance from Cairo (logged) and the district population (logged). In addition, if poorer districts receive less coverage, the control variables discussed previously for urbanization, education, and unemployment should account for this potential source of bias.²⁴ Finally, we include governorate fixed effects in all models to control for additional unobserved hetero-

²²The SYPE reflects this gender imbalance, with male respondents reporting higher involvement in physical altercations than females.

²³This variable allows us to account for the possibility that greater political activity earlier in the transition is related both to rising crime and voter behavior, and it also enables us to control for the strength of patronage networks associated with Islamist parties, which may have weakened the intensity of social breakdown while also contributing to voting for Islamist candidates (Brooke 2019; Masoud 2014). Turnout was calculated as the percentage of voters out of all eligible voters.

²⁴Likewise, if media coverage had focused on more politically active areas, and these areas also happened to support Shafiq, the parliamentary turnout figures should mitigate concerns with this dynamic.

geneity at the regional level. In addition to helping with reporting bias that might be related to the newspapers viewing certain governorates as less politically, economically, and socially important, the fixed effects also address potential regional confounders such as stronger patronage networks, historical support for certain political movements or the former ruling party, the presence of Christian minorities, or geographic features that facilitate violence.

Analysis

The main results are displayed in Table 2. Columns 1 through 3 use the binary crime increase measure as the independent variable, and columns 4 through 6 use the continuous measure. The dependent variable in columns 1 and 4 is Shafiq’s district-level percentage of the vote in the first round of the election. For columns 2 and 5, the dependent variable is Shafiq’s district-level, vote percentage advantage over Morsi in the first round. In columns 3 and 6, the dependent variable is Shafiq’s district-level percentage of the vote in the second round of the election, in which Morsi was the only other candidate.²⁵

The results demonstrate a consistent and positive relationship between an increase in crime rates and support for Ahmed Shafiq in both rounds of the election. The binary measure shows that in districts exposed to above-median crime increases, Shafiq’s vote share rises by 1.5 percentage points on average in the first round, by 3.0 percentage points relative to Morsi in the first round, and by 2.6 percentage points in the second round. With the continuous measure, a typical within-governorate shift in the crime rate increase (an increase of 22 incidents per 100,000 people) is correlated with a 1.4 percentage point increase in Shafiq’s vote share in the first round, a 2.4 percentage point increase against Morsi in the first round, and a 1.5 percentage point increase in the second round.²⁶ As reported in the Supplemental Appendix (Section 3, Table A.11), this relationship is negative for Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood candidate, and does not hold for Hamdeen Sabahi, a prominent leftist opposition figure who came in a close third in the first round.²⁷ While the effect of crime on voting may seem substantively small, this difference is large enough that it could have been decisive in putting Shafiq into the run-off rather than Sabahi, the third place candidate.²⁸ Additionally, it may have also weakened Morsi’s popular mandate after the second round of voting.

A possible alternative explanation would be that Shafiq’s campaign invested more resources in mobilizing voters in specific districts affected by rising crime rates because these districts aligned with his campaign platform of restoring law and order. While this explanation would not be entirely inconsistent with our argument, it is unlikely. The candidate

²⁵The full set of covariates are included for all of the models displayed here, but naive models are presented in Section 2 of the Supplemental Appendix (Table A.4).

²⁶We calculate this typical within-governorate shift by residualizing the independent variable with respect to the governorate-fixed effects and estimating the standard deviation (Mummolo and Peterson 2018).

²⁷This finding is not surprising; neither Morsi nor Sabahi had a military background nor ties to the Mubarak regime like Shafiq to plausibly demonstrate an ability to serve as strongmen leaders. In addition, in their presidential campaigns Morsi and Sabahi did not devote as much attention to the issue of law and order.

²⁸Shafiq won 23.4 percent of the vote in the first round, while Sabahi received 20.7 percent of the vote.

Table 2: *Correlates of Shafiq Vote Share in Presidential Election Rounds 1 & 2*

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Shafiq Vote	Shafiq vs.	Shafiq Vote	Shafiq Vote	Shafiq vs.	Shafiq Vote
	Share R1	Morsi R1	Share R2	Share R1	Morsi R1	Share R2
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Crime Increase Above Median	1.475* (0.847)	3.044** (1.403)	2.603** (1.227)			
Change in Crime Rate				0.064* (0.033)	0.110** (0.056)	0.068 (0.043)
LN(Pop)	1.327** (0.671)	2.277** (1.052)	1.076 (0.733)	1.673*** (0.604)	2.861*** (0.976)	1.424* (0.802)
Pct. Urban	-0.007 (0.023)	0.038 (0.032)	0.006 (0.023)	-0.001 (0.023)	0.051 (0.032)	0.017 (0.024)
Pct. No Formal Education	-0.065 (0.074)	-0.115 (0.149)	-0.015 (0.097)	-0.043 (0.079)	-0.076 (0.160)	0.013 (0.096)
Pct. University Education	-0.239** (0.101)	0.130 (0.168)	-0.160* (0.095)	-0.246** (0.103)	0.121 (0.173)	-0.160* (0.096)
Pct. Unmarried	-0.368** (0.176)	-0.419 (0.297)	-0.720*** (0.246)	-0.327* (0.175)	-0.354 (0.302)	-0.689*** (0.256)
Pct. Under 16	-0.917*** (0.324)	-1.545*** (0.403)	-1.573*** (0.333)	-0.933*** (0.323)	-1.580*** (0.402)	-1.605*** (0.335)
Pct. Male	-0.320 (0.272)	-0.941* (0.505)	-0.996*** (0.327)	-0.348 (0.276)	-0.987* (0.515)	-1.020*** (0.329)
Pct. Unemployed	0.270* (0.149)	0.254 (0.227)	0.333** (0.135)	0.246* (0.147)	0.207 (0.226)	0.293** (0.136)
LN(Distance from Cairo)	-2.913 (1.824)	-1.471 (3.042)	0.494 (2.034)	-3.197* (1.850)	-1.887 (3.142)	0.330 (2.077)
Turnout (2011 elections)	-0.271*** (0.094)	-0.495*** (0.134)	-0.288*** (0.068)	-0.265*** (0.090)	-0.481*** (0.127)	-0.274*** (0.064)
Constant	87.702*** (31.878)	159.260*** (49.822)	163.563*** (36.697)	84.653*** (32.154)	153.783*** (51.018)	159.815*** (37.997)
Governorate FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	305	305	305	305	305	305
Adjusted R ²	0.707	0.721	0.718	0.708	0.721	0.714

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
SEs clustered by parliamentary electoral district

nomination period closed on April 8, 2012 with candidacies subject to review until April 15. Ten candidates were disqualified in mid-April, and Shafiq’s candidacy was under review until April 25, only weeks before the first round election in May (BBC 2012a).²⁹ Given this chaotic situation and the relatively short campaign period (21 days total), as well as the paucity of locally accessible data on crime, it does not seem plausible that his campaign would have been capable of investing in such sophisticated targeting.

We conduct several additional analyses to assess the robustness of the results. We review these checks here and report the results in Section 2 of the Supplemental Appendix (Tables A.5 through A.10). First, we implement checks related to the potential for measurement error in our data. We drop all crimes where the articles were unclear about the number of victims who were killed, and we drop all crimes for which the district-level locations were ambiguous. Second, we implement checks to ensure that our results are driven by increasing crime and not increasing political violence or protests. We drop crimes that resulted in more than 50 victims, since such events were more likely to indicate political violence, and we drop all crimes that occurred in January and February of 2011, because these were the months in which the protest uprisings took place.³⁰ Third, we rerun the analysis after dropping all districts in Cairo and Giza, to demonstrate that the results are not driven purely by reporting bias related to violence or political instability in the capital city. We also report results for the relationship between homicide increases and support for Shafiq, because these crimes would have been particularly visible and threatening to local residents. Results for these robustness checks are generally consistent with our findings reported in the paper, demonstrating a relationship between increases in crime and rates of voting for Shafiq in both rounds of the election.

Attitudinal Support for Authoritarian Governance

This section provides further evidence for the relationship between rising crime and support for authoritarianism during Egypt’s transition using survey data from the Pew Global Attitudes Project (GAP) and the Afrobarometer. We rely on the Pew GAP data to show that respondents who were more sensitive to law and order concerns were more supportive of strongman rule just prior to the 2012 presidential election, even after controlling for a variety of demographic and other factors. We interpret these patterns as consistent with our claim that rising crime contributed to higher vote shares for Shafiq in the presidential election. Next, we turn to data from the Afrobarometer to demonstrate that Egyptians with more fear of and exposure to crime in 2013 voiced more support for army rule three months before the coup that ended Egypt’s democratic transition. By indicating that increasing crime may have strengthened the public’s desire for military’s intervention, this pattern is also

²⁹Shafiq was briefly disqualified from the race by a law that sought to bar Mubarak-era officials from competing (Fadel 2012).

³⁰For this check, we also drop January and February 2010 to facilitate the comparison of crime rates between the years.

consistent with our broader argument that crime weakened Egypt’s transition by increasing popular support for authoritarian modes of governance.

Survey Data and Empirical Strategy

Our Pew data comes from a GAP survey conducted between March 19 and April 10, 2012, less than two months before the first round of the presidential election but prior to the confirmation of the eligible presidential candidates and the campaign period (BBC 2012a). The Afrobarometer data is taken from their fifth wave survey of Egypt, which was implemented between March 8 and March 19, 2013. This fieldwork occurred four months before the July 3 coup that ended Egypt’s transition, and approximately one month before Egyptian activists began collecting signatures calling for President Morsi to resign, which helped to trigger the coup. We rely on these different surveys due to their timing and the inclusion of relevant questions. Both surveys involved face-to-face interviews with nationally representative samples of Egyptians over the age of 18: Pew had a sample of 1,000 and the Afrobarometer a sample of 1,200. Both samples were acquired with stratified cluster sampling.³¹

Our dependent variable for the Pew data is constructed from a question about whether Egypt should “rely on a democratic form of government to solve [the] country’s problems” or, “rely on a leader with a strong hand to solve [the] country’s problems.”³² We construct a dummy variable for “strong leader” support as our primary outcome variable of interest. The variable takes the value of 1 if the person preferred the strong leader to democratic government.³³ Given Shafiq’s positioning of himself as the strongman candidate who would restore authoritarian modes of governance, this variable relates clearly to the choice that Egyptians voters would soon face in the presidential election.

The independent variable for the Pew data is an individual’s level of concern about law and order. Respondents were asked to evaluate how important it is that “law and order be maintained.”³⁴ Possible responses to this question were on a four-point scale: “very important,” “somewhat important,” “not too important,” and “not important at all.” We create an indicator variable for whether the respondent is above the mean regarding concern for law and order; respondents above the mean are coded as *High* concern for law and

³¹Pew used a multi-stage cluster sample stratified by governorates and proportional to population size and urban/rural population (Pew 2012). Further details on the sampling methodology and survey instruments are available on the Pew website: <http://www.pewglobal.org/2012/05/08/egyptians-remain-optimistic-embrace-democracy-and-religion-in-political-life/>. The Afrobarometer used stratification by governorates and urban-rural locations, with clusters selected by probability proportionate to population size. Further information is available on the Afrobarometer website: <https://www.afrobarometer.org/countries/egypt-0>.

³²This is question Q71. This question explicitly forces respondents to choose between democracy and strongman rule; importantly, Jamal and Tessler (2008) show that support for democracy and support for strongman rule are negatively correlated even when respondents are not forced to choose between the two.

³³Of the 1,000 respondents surveyed, 611 chose democracy, 333 chose strong leader, and 56 answered Refuse or Don’t Know.

³⁴This is question Q115i.

order and all others are coded as *Low*.³⁵ Since there is no question specifically about crime victimization or concern about crime in the survey, this question provides the closest measure of the respondents’ degree of concern about crime. We believe this proxy is reasonable because the political discourse on law and order was closely linked to rising crime during the transition, as evidenced by Shafiq’s rhetoric during the campaign.

For the Afrobarometer data, our dependent variable asks “There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives: The army comes in to govern the country?” The question was answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly oppose to strongly support. With social and political instability continuing to increase during Morsi’s presidency in late 2012 and early 2013, some Egyptians began to speak openly of a return to military rule as the solution to these problems. Given this context at the time the survey was implemented, support for army rule provides an important alternative dependent variable that measures attitudes toward authoritarian governance in a way that has direct relevance to the immediate cause of the transition’s failure.³⁶

The Afrobarometer data also asks explicitly about crime, which we use for our independent variable. We rely on data about fear of crime in the home (on a 5-point scale); feeling unsafe in the neighborhood (on a 5-point scale); an indicator for viewing crime and security as one of the country’s three most important issues; and an indicator for having been robbed in the past year. We then conduct principal components analysis (PCA) with these questions and use the first component as an aggregate outcome variable measuring concern with crime.³⁷

Our approach to inference with both surveys involves controlling for a variety of demographic and other characteristics that previous research has linked to support for democracy in the Arab world (Tessler 2002; Jamal and Tessler 2008; Truex and Tavana 2019), and that might plausibly relate to concern with crime as well. We then assess whether our crime measures continue to demonstrate an additional effect on our outcome variables of support for strongman rule and army rule.³⁸ The control variables include respondent gender, age, income,³⁹ whether they had completed high school or above, employment status,⁴⁰ access to the internet, whether religion plays an important role in the respondent’s life, and whether they were Christian. We also include a binary measure of support for Egypt’s Muslim Broth-

³⁵The mean response is 3.6, thus those who respond that maintaining law and order is very important are coded as *High*.

³⁶Wave 5 of the Afrobarometer is the only survey during Egypt’s transition that asked respondents about their attitudes toward army rule.

³⁷The first component has an eigenvalue of 1.94 and explains 48 percent of the variance.

³⁸Summary statistics for all variables from the two surveys are included in the Supplemental Appendix (Section 1, Tables A.2 and A.3).

³⁹For Pew, we construct a “high income” indicator variable for those who report household income of greater than 1750 Egyptian pounds per month in 2012, based on ILO (2018) estimates of median income. We use a scale variable for relative income in the Afrobarometer.

⁴⁰We include dummy variables for both employed and unemployed. The omitted category is individuals not in the labor market, such as housewives and students.

erhood.⁴¹ Standard errors are clustered by governorate for Pew GAP, because lower-level units are not available for privacy reasons, and we use logistic regression for the analysis because of our binary dependent variable. In the Afrobarometer, standard errors are clustered by districts, and we use OLS regression for the analysis.

Analysis

The results are displayed in Table 3. Column 1 reports results from Pew, while column 2 reports results from the Afrobarometer. In both cases, the proxies for concern with crime are positively and significantly associated with higher levels of support for authoritarian governance. These relationships are shown graphically in Figure 1, with the left panel presenting the predicted probabilities for strongman support by degree of concern with law and order and the right panel illustrating predicted support for army rule across different values of the PCA variable.⁴² The predicted probabilities for strongman support show that approximately 35 percent of Egyptians with high levels of concern about law and order would support a strong leader over democracy, compared to approximately 26 percent of Egyptians with lower levels of concern that law and order be maintained. This difference of 9 percentage points reflects a substantively-meaningful one-third increase in support for strongman rule, which reinforces the plausibility of our argument that Egyptians fearful of rising crime were more likely to support Shafiq’s anti-democratic candidacy in the 2012 presidential election, even after controlling for a wide set of individual-level covariates.

For the Afrobarometer, moving from the minimum value of concern about crime to the maximum is associated with a shift of 0.42 points on the 5-point scale for attitudes toward army rule — an increase of nearly ten percent. Again, this empirical relationship exists after controlling for individual-level factors that are likely associated with support for military rule. Compared to the other variables, this relationship also appears to be substantively significant. It is larger than the relationship between education and support for army rule, as well as the relationship between being Christian and support for army rule — both of which might be expected to have an important impact on attitudes toward authoritarianism in Egypt (Masoud 2014; Yerkes 2016). In fact, the magnitude is similar to that of support for the Muslim Brotherhood, a variable with particular weight because of the threat posed by the army to Morsi’s presidency. Thus the results are consistent with the claim that rising crime undermined the transition by increasing support for a military coup against the country’s nascent democratic institutions.⁴³

⁴¹The Muslim Brotherhood is Egypt’s most prominent Islamist movement and was the main political opposition organization during the Hosni Mubarak era. See Hatab (2019) for more on how attitudes toward Islamists may have impacted disposition toward democracy.

⁴²We truncate the y-axis for the army rule outcome because 60 percent of the responses to this question fell between 2 and 4 on the 5-point scale.

⁴³In the Supplemental Appendix, we report additional analyses for both surveys. When governorate fixed effects are included, the Pew results remain unchanged and the Afrobarometer results actually strengthen. The Pew results also do not change if implementing a linear probability model or if using the ordinal measure of concern with law and order. In addition, three of the four individual crime variables from the PCA have

Table 3: *Correlates of Support for Authoritarian Governance*

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>	
	Strongman Leader	Army Rule
	(1)	(2)
Law and Order of “High” Importance	0.421*** (0.154)	
Concern for Crime (PCA)		0.087* (0.045)
Female	0.161 (0.235)	0.120 (0.112)
Age	0.004 (0.008)	0.003 (0.004)
Income	-0.093 (0.179)	-0.224*** (0.058)
Secondary Education or Higher	-0.318 (0.256)	-0.218** (0.092)
Employed	0.231 (0.187)	-0.040 (0.096)
Unemployed, but in Labor Market	1.104*** (0.323)	-0.018 (0.141)
Internet User	0.053 (0.276)	-0.252** (0.116)
Christian	0.252 (0.319)	0.350** (0.145)
Importance of Religion	0.263* (0.157)	0.357** (0.178)
Muslim Brotherhood Support	-0.026 (0.128)	-0.531*** (0.129)
Constant	-2.286*** (0.651)	2.510*** (0.739)
Observations	931	1,093
R ²		0.127
Adjusted R ²		0.118
Log Likelihood	-567.726	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,159.453	

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Cluster robust standard errors

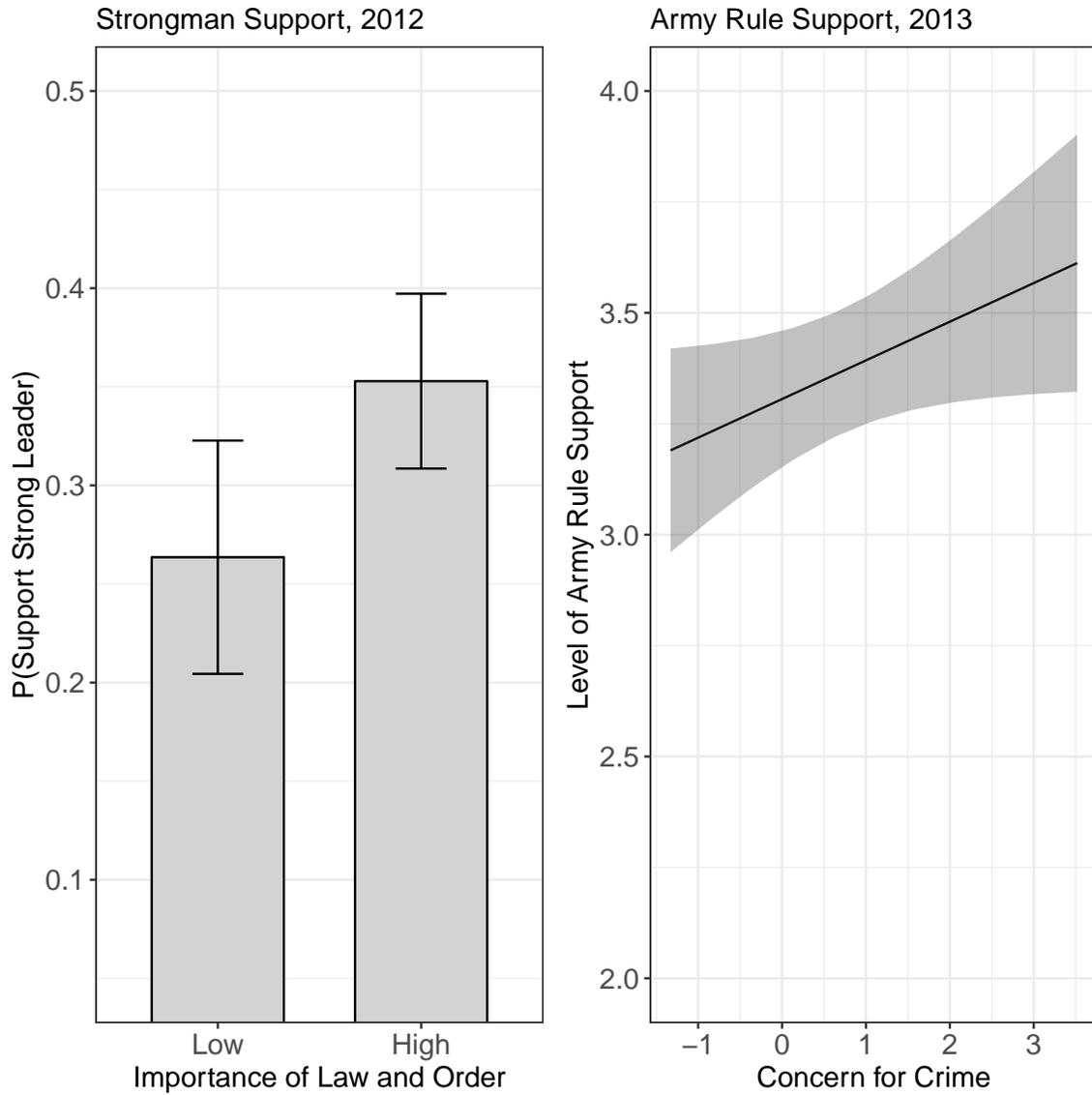


Figure 1: *The left panel reports predicted probabilities of support for a “leader with a strong hand to solve [the] country’s problems” over “a democratic form of government” using Pew GAP data from 2012. The right panel reports predicted values of support for a system where the “army comes in to govern” using Afrobarometer data from 2013.*

Discussion

In established democracies, well-functioning political institutions and effective rule of law can help stabilize otherwise politically volatile situations by providing mechanisms for power sharing, dispute resolution, and accountability. When state institutions are weak or emerging, however, citizens may feel skeptical about the likely success or benefits of democratic political change. This is particularly true when citizens are fearful for their personal safety from criminal violence. Crime produces feelings of personal insecurity, which can impact a variety of political behaviors. And because violent crime rates tend to increase in transitional democracies (LaFree and Tseloni 2006; Savelsberg and McElrath 2014), public anxiety about crime exposure can hinder processes of democratization.

In this paper, we have explored the significant political consequences of rising crime in Egypt during its transitional period following the resignation of Hosni Mubarak. Our empirical contributions are threefold. First, we find that areas exposed to the largest increases in year-on-year crime following the 2011 Uprisings were more likely to support the strongman presidential candidate, Ahmed Shafiq, in both rounds of Egypt's first, and only, free and fair presidential election.

Second, we provide survey evidence linking concern about law and order to support for strongman leadership during the transitional period, bolstering the plausibility of a relationship between crime increases and higher vote shares for Shafiq in the 2012 presidential election. This finding is robust to the inclusion of a broad set of first-order covariates that previous studies have suggested correlate with support for democracy. Taken together, these first two empirical results suggest that growing lawlessness bolstered support for the *ancien régime* political candidate, forcing an electoral showdown in the final round of the presidential election between Ahmed Shafiq and Mohammed Morsi. In this context, Egyptians who had been enthusiastic proponents of political change in the wake of the 2011 Uprisings were left to choose between two candidates, neither of whom represented the revolutionary spirit of the protests.

Finally, we demonstrate that Egyptians with greater concerns about crime were significantly more likely to endorse army rule, just three months before a military coup ended the country's transition toward democracy. Again, these results are robust to the inclusion of a variety of control variables. This finding suggests that rising crime may have contributed to growing popular support for military intervention, which provided then Defense Minister Sisi with the justification to overthrow Morsi, re-entrenching authoritarian governance.

From a scholarly perspective, our findings suggest that the relationship between crime and support for autocratic leadership can change quickly during political upheaval when crime rates increase rapidly. Thus, anxiety about violent crime can undermine processes of democratization before rule of law and political accountability have an opportunity to become institutionalized. These results also contribute to our understanding of political developments during Egypt's short-lived democratic transition, namely the political and

a significant relationship with army rule on their own, suggesting a robust relationship between crime and support for authoritarian governance.

electoral consequences of rising crime. As scholars increasingly consider the drivers and impacts of crime waves, our study consequently contributes to this growing body of work on the political implications of crime (Bateson 2012; Calderon et al. 2015; Romero et al. 2016) and underscores the importance of continued research on the politics of criminal violence.

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