Did Egypt’s post-uprising crime wave increase support for authoritarian rule?

Caroline Abadeer
Independent Researcher
Alexandra Domike Blackman
Cornell University
Lisa Blaydes
Stanford University
Scott Williamson
Bocconi University

Abstract
Countries transitioning from autocracy to democracy often struggle to maintain law and order. Yet relatively little is known about how increasing crime rates impact public support for authoritarian leadership during a transition. We find an empirical relationship between rising 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 also analyze survey data which shows that Egyptians who were highly concerned about crime were more likely to express support for a ‘strong leader’ as well as for military rule, even after controlling for a broad set of covariates. This research illustrates how instability triggered by political transitions can have negative implications for democratic consolidation.

Keywords
authoritarianism, crime, democratization, Egypt

On 23 February 2012, presidential hopeful and former Muslim Brotherhood leader Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh was attacked in Cairo. Newspapers reported that masked men stole Aboul Fotouh’s car, injuring him during the robbery. 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. Egypt’s experience with crime during its democratic transition was not atypical; increases in violent crime often accompany periods of political change (e.g. Fox & Hoelscher, 2012; Duran-Martinez, 2015; Deglow, 2016; Berg & Carranza, 2018). In fact, democratization frequently involves a weakening of status quo institutions, which can introduce forms of lawlessness and criminality (LaFree & Tseloni, 2006; Savelsberg & 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. While the relationship is modest – an increase of roughly two percentage points – the closeness of the election suggests that rising crime may have been influential for the outcome.

We also examine survey data to explore whether the relationship between rising crime and support for
authoritarian governance finds 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. We replicate these findings using the Survey of Young People in Egypt (SYPE) panel survey to show that, in 2013, youth more concerned about security were less likely to prioritize democracy and human rights, after taking account of respondents’ pre-2011 political beliefs. Finally, we draw on 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 Taken together, these findings are consistent with the argument that increases in crime can undermine support for democracy.

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, Magaloni & Diaz-Cayeros, 2016) and trust in the government (Cammett, Diwan & Vartanova, 2020) to political participation (Bateson, 2012; Trejo & Ley, 2012; Ley, 2018) and interpersonal trust (Corbacho, Philipp & Ruiz-Vega, 2015).2 Our research highlights how transitions can be undermined by the public’s concerns about instability when the political opening leads to rising crime.

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 & Robertson, 2003; Bellin, 2004). Under the pre-revolutionary Mubarak regime, Egypt represented an influential example of resilient authoritarianism (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 Middle East. 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.

Violence in transition

Crime and democratization tend to go hand-in-hand from an empirical perspective (Savelsberg & 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 that show a correlation between weakly institutionalized democracies and levels of violent crime (Fox & Hoelscher, 2012; Lafree & Tseloni, 2006), as well as case studies of transitioning countries such as Mexico (Kalyvas, 2015; Grillo, 2012; Trejo & Ley, 2020; Villarreal, 2002).

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, Peterson & Winter 1991; Davis & Silver, 2003; Bateson, 2012; Rocco, Vieno & Russo, 2014). Consistent with these findings, other research shows that individuals victimized by crime are less likely to trust or be satisfied with democracy (Blanco, 2013; Blanco & Ruiz, 2013; Carreras, 2013; Ceobanu, Wood & Ribeiro, 2010; Fernandez & Kuenzi, 2010) or more likely to support authoritarian governance (Hou & Quek, 2019). While these studies are not focused on the transitional period in particular, they do suggest a dynamic whereby individuals affected by rapidly changing crime rates become less likely to support democratic institutions.3 This relationship between criminal violence and support for authoritarian governance can also manifest in voting for parties and politicians less committed to democratic values. Concerns about crime are often correlated with support for parties or candidates who demonstrate authoritarian tendencies (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1994; Holland, 2013; Pepinsky, 2017; Rydgren & Ruth, 2011).

The level of support for authoritarian governance has important implications for transitional periods when nascent democratic institutions are vulnerable to collapse without 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 antidemocratic elites (Casper

1 We adopt the terminology used by Jumet (2018) who describes the 2013 military coup in this way.
2 Crime 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).
3 There is also evidence that political exclusion is associated with subsequent increases in violence. For evidence from Egypt, see Brooke & Nugent (2020).
& Tyson, 2014; Johnson & Thyne, 2018), as occurred in Egypt in 2013. Voting for authoritarian political leaders may also undermine democratic institutions from within before they can be consolidated (Lust & Waldner, 2015; Mainwaring & Perez-Linan, 2013). As a result, if rising social instability during the transition strengthens support for 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, whereby persistent mobilizations may undermine democratic consolidation by weakening institutions and reducing public support for democracy (Diamond, 1994; Hipsher, 1996; Ketchley & El-Rayyes, 2021; El-Mallakh, 2020).

In general, however, research on transitions has focused on structural preconditions for democracy (e.g. Huntington, 1968; Lipset, 1959) or the decisions of elite actors (e.g. O’Donnell, Schmitter & Whitehead, 1986; Przeworski, 1991). Consequently, the impact of social dynamics that may be unleashed by the transition itself – such as crime waves – have gone understudied. There is little evidence regarding how crime relates to support for authoritarianism during transitional periods. To evaluate this question, we examine Egypt’s short-lived democratic transition. The following section provides background information on Egypt and outlines hypotheses about the relationship between crime and authoritarianism in this context.

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 1 per 100,000 people in 2010 (Daragahi, 2013).4 After the 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 100,000 people (Daragahi, 2013; UNODC, 2014).5

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 I illustrates the extent of the crime increase by displaying data on crime reports compiled from influential Egyptian newspapers.6 From 2010 to 2011, the number of crimes reported in the papers increased by 122%. This rise was driven primarily by incidents of thuggery and theft, which increased by a dramatic 176%.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table I. Crime increases in Egypt, 2010–11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All crime incidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thuggery and theft incidents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Al-Ahram and Al-Masry Al-Youm news reports.

Watan, 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2011; Daily News Egypt, 2012; Mohsen, 2012; Aboul Gheit, 2013). Table I illustrates the extent of the crime increase by displaying data on crime reports compiled from influential Egyptian newspapers.6 From 2010 to 2011, the number of crimes reported in the papers increased by 122%. This rise was driven primarily by incidents of thuggery and theft, which increased by a dramatic 176%.7

Many of these crimes also involved significant violence; incidents involving fatalities rose by 71%. In March 2011, for instance, a man in Qena governorate was fatally stabbed in a dispute over money (Al-Samakouri & Hamdi, 2011). Another violent murder occurred in Giza governorate in May 2011, when two brothers stabbed a young Tuk-Tuk driver 22 times and hung his naked body in the street (Abdelradi & Abdelatif, 2011). Stories of robbery also featured prominently. For instance, in September 2011, Al-Masry Al-Youm reported that several individuals were arrested in a stolen car after a robbery of a factory in Sharqa (Al-Dasouki, 2011).

These rising crime rates, combined with extensive press attention, negatively impacted Egyptians’ perceptions of their safety. Only 17% of Egyptians reported feeling unsafe walking alone at night prior to the 2011 uprisings, but that increased to approximately 40% in the months to follow (Hellyer, 2011). The Survey of Young People in Egypt (SYPE), a panel survey of more than 10,000 Egyptians aged 10–29, also confirms these changes. In the survey wave implemented after 2011, 62% of respondents stated the lack of security was the foremost threat to the country in the period after the 2011 uprisings (Population Council, 2011; Roushdy & Sieverding, 2015).

6 The data, and how they were collected, are discussed in more detail in the analysis section of the article.

7 In 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. We recognize this as a limitation of our newspaper data.
A major driver of these increases in crime was that police largely abandoned the streets following their defeat by protesters during the uprisings (Ketchley, 2017). Security institutions outside of the military were demoralized during the transitional period (Sayigh, 2015), and there was a widespread perception among Egyptians that security forces deliberately refrained from policing crime as revenge against the revolutionary movement (Brumberg & Sallam, 2012). With the police absent, vigilante justice spread, exacerbating insecurity. Mobs beat suspected criminals to death in at least 17 documented incidents, and political organizations, like the Islamic Group, organized informal community policing forces to restore law and order (Arrott, 2013; Revkin & Auf, 2013). It was not until August 2013, after the military seized power, that Egyptian security forces reasserted their dominance in the public sphere.

Rising crime was a major political issue in the months leading up to Egypt’s first free and fair presidential election, which took place in two rounds during May and June 2012. In the first round there were 12 candidates; they represented diverse interests and coalitions, including the Muslim Brotherhood, liberals, leftists, Salafi 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 authoritarian governance (Black, 2012; Greene, 2012). Shafiq—a former air force commander and the last prime minister before Mubarak’s resignation—made it clear that ending the crime wave and re-establishing law and order was central to his platform (Fadel, 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 secured second place in the election’s first round, barely edging out several prominent candidates who identified more strongly with the revolutionary spirit of the 2011 uprisings. 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 (Spencer, 2012). Shafiq lost only narrowly to Morsi, who won 51.7% of the vote.

The election contributed to the destabilization of Egypt’s transition. The military delayed announcement of the official results and negotiated limits to the new president’s powers (Kirkpatrick, 2012), constraining Morsi’s ability to address 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, Blackman & Williamson, 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 and ushering in a period of severe repression under the new military-led regime (Dunne & Williamson, 2014).

To what extent did rising crime contribute to these outcomes? We evaluate this question by analyzing the relationship between rising crime and various outcomes indicating support for authoritarian governance—including at key moments of the transition. First, we assess the relationship between crime and support for the strongman candidate of the 2012 presidential election, Ahmed Shafiq, given that the success of his openly antidemocratic presidential candidacy weakened the transition. Specifically, we examine the following hypotheses:

H1: Shafiq’s vote share was higher in districts exposed to larger increases in crime.

H2: Directly ahead of the 2012 election, support for an authoritarian leader was stronger among those Egyptians more concerned with crime.

Second, we consider whether crime was linked to popular support for military rule. The 2013 coup, which ended the transition, may have been less feasible with weaker popular support. If crime during the transitional...
period contributed to this outcome, we would expect the following:

\textit{H3:} Directly ahead of the military coup, support for army rule was stronger among those Egyptians more concerned with crime.

Finally, we also test whether crime was related to views of democracy more broadly during this period, since rising crime may have undermining the prospects for successful democratization by weakening the public’s commitment to their new democratic institutions. If this was the case, we would expect that:

\textit{H4:} Egyptians more concerned with crime during the transitional period were less likely to value democracy.

We test H1 with original data on localized crime and voting for Shafiq. We test H2, H3, and H4 with survey data from Pew Global Attitudes Project (GAP), the Afrobarometer, and SYPE, respectively. Our research design and results are discussed below.

**Rising crime and vote choice**

To evaluate H1, we 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 during the first year of the transition 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 election – are taken from official statistics released by Egypt’s Supreme Committee for Elections.\footnote{See Supreme Committee for Elections (2012). This organization is also referred to as the High Elections Commission or some variant thereof.} 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.\footnote{The most recent year for which district-level demographic data are available is 2006, a census year (CAPMAS, 2006). It is unlikely that districts changed in fundamental ways between 2006 and 2012, in part because internal migration in Egypt is low by international standards (Herrera & Badr, 2012).} We were able to link approximately 94% of the districts through matching by name, so our final data include 328 district-observations.\footnote{In 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.} The districts are nested within Egypt’s 27 governorates.

To construct a district-level measure of violent crime rates, we collected an original dataset of locally reported violent crimes across Egypt in 2010 and 2011.\footnote{We adopted this approach because other potential sources (e.g. police reports) are not available to researchers in Egypt. Our measure includes homicides, as well as incidents without fatalities.} 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, \textit{Al-Ahram} and \textit{Al-Masry Al-Youm}, both of which are published in Arabic. While \textit{Al-Ahram} is government-published and considered by many to be Egypt’s paper of record, \textit{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 and December 2011.\footnote{When there was overlap in reporting across the papers, crime incidents were not double-counted, but noted as recorded in both papers.} 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. We then match each incident to a census district.\footnote{The incidents were matched to districts by name. When only a neighborhood or other location description was reported in the newspaper, we used geographic coordinates to identify the district.}

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.\footnote{The Online appendix contains maps of changes in crime rates within the Egyptian governorates of Beheira and Sohag over this period in order to demonstrate the significant variation in the change in crime rate that is evident across districts within a single governorate.} 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 are used as independent variables for the analysis.

**Empirical strategy**

We estimate the relationship between changing crime rates on a district’s support for Ahmed Shafiq using OLS. We estimate the following model, where \( K_i \) is the districts’ change in crime rate between 2010 and 2011, \( Z_i \) is a vector of district-level controls, and \( g \) is a vector of governorate fixed effects:

\[
\text{Shafiq Support} = \alpha + \beta K_i + \beta Z_i + \gamma g + \epsilon
\]

Standard errors are clustered at the parliamentary electoral district (\( N = 46 \)) to address the possibility of correlated error terms within the clusters. To account for socio-economic 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 account for this bias with several control variables that reflect district-level economic development, including 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 also have been inclined toward particular political movements.\(^{16}\)

Furthermore, we control for the district’s turnout percentage during the 2011 parliamentary elections. This 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 mitigated the intensity of social breakdown while also contributing to voting for Islamist candidates (Brooke, 2019; Masoud, 2014). Summary statistics for all variables are included in the Online appendix (Table A.1).

One potential concern regarding the use of the crime data may be related to reporting bias. Because we collect our crime data from 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 since these biases are likely 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. Likewise, if media coverage had focused on more politically active areas, the parliamentary electoral turnout figures should mitigate this concern.

Finally, we include governorate fixed effects in all models to control for additional unobserved heterogeneity at the regional level. In addition to helping with reporting bias that might be related to the newspapers viewing certain governorates as less politically 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, higher concentrations of Christian minorities, or geographic features that facilitate violence.

**Results**

The main results are displayed in Table II. 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.\textsuperscript{17}

The results demonstrate a 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 is 1.5 percentage points higher on average in the first round, 3.0 percentage points higher relative to Morsi in the first round, and 2.6 percentage points higher 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.\textsuperscript{18} As reported in the Online appendix, 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. While the effect of

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Correlates of Shafiq vote share in presidential election rounds 1 and 2}
\begin{tabular}{lccccccc}
\hline
 & Shafiq vote share R1 & Shafiq vs. Morsi R1 & Shafiq vote share R2 & Shafiq vs. Morsi R2 & Shafiq vote share R1 & Shafiq vs. Morsi R1 & Shafiq vote share R2 \\
 & (1) & (2) & (3) & (4) & (5) & (6) & \\
\hline
Crime increase above median (2011–2010) & 1.475\textsuperscript{1} & 3.044* & 2.603* & 0.064\textsuperscript{1} & 0.110* & 0.068 \\
 & (0.847) & (1.403) & (1.227) & (0.333) & (0.056) & (0.043) \\
Change in crime rate (2011–2010) & 1.327* & 2.277* & 1.076 & 1.673** & 2.861** & 1.424\textsuperscript{1} \\
 & (0.671) & (1.052) & (0.733) & (0.604) & (0.976) & (0.802) \\
Ln(Pop.) & −0.007 & 0.038 & 0.006 & −0.001 & 0.051 & 0.017 \\
 & (0.023) & (0.032) & (0.023) & (0.023) & (0.032) & (0.024) \\
Pct. urban & −0.065 & −0.115 & −0.015 & −0.043 & −0.076 & 0.013 \\
 & (0.074) & (0.149) & (0.097) & (0.079) & (0.160) & (0.096) \\
Pct. no formal education & −0.239* & 0.130 & −0.160\textsuperscript{1} & −0.246* & 0.121 & −0.160\textsuperscript{1} \\
 & (0.101) & (0.168) & (0.095) & (0.103) & (0.173) & (0.096) \\
Pct. university education & −0.368* & −0.419 & −0.720\textsuperscript{**} & −0.327\textsuperscript{**} & −0.354 & −0.689** \\
 & (0.176) & (0.297) & (0.246) & (0.175) & (0.302) & (0.256) \\
Pct. unmarried & −0.917*** & −1.545*** & −1.573*** & −0.933*** & −1.580*** & −1.605*** \\
 & (0.324) & (0.403) & (0.333) & (0.323) & (0.402) & (0.335) \\
Pct. male & −0.320 & −0.941\textsuperscript{**} & −0.996\textsuperscript{**} & −0.348 & −0.987\textsuperscript{**} & −1.020** \\
 & (0.272) & (0.505) & (0.327) & (0.276) & (0.515) & (0.329) \\
Pct. unemployed & 0.270\textsuperscript{1} & 0.254 & 0.333* & 0.246\textsuperscript{1} & 0.207 & 0.293* \\
 & (0.149) & (0.227) & (0.135) & (0.147) & (0.226) & (0.136) \\
Ln(distance from Cairo) & −2.913 & −1.471 & 0.494 & −3.197\textsuperscript{1} & −1.887 & 0.330 \\
 & (1.824) & (3.042) & (2.034) & (1.850) & (3.142) & (2.077) \\
Turnout (2011 elections) & −0.271*** & −0.495*** & −0.288*** & −0.265** & −0.481*** & −0.274*** \\
 & (0.094) & (0.134) & (0.068) & (0.090) & (0.127) & (0.064) \\
Constant & 87.702** & 159.260** & 163.563*** & 84.653** & 153.783** & 159.815*** \\
 & (31.878) & (49.822) & (36.697) & (32.154) & (51.018) & (37.997) \\
Governorate FE & Yes & Yes & Yes & Yes & Yes & Yes \\
Observations & 305 & 305 & 305 & 305 & 305 & 305 \\
Adjusted R\textsuperscript{2} & 0.707 & 0.721 & 0.718 & 0.708 & 0.721 & 0.714 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{1}p < 0.1; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001. SEs clustered by parliamentary electoral district.

\textsuperscript{17} The full set of covariates are included for all of the models displayed here, but naïve models are presented in Section 2 of the Online appendix (Table A.5).

\textsuperscript{18} We calculate this typical within-governorate shift by residualizing the independent variable with respect to the governorate-fixed effects and estimating the standard deviation (Mummolo & Peterson, 2018).
crime on voting may seem substantively small, this difference is large enough that it could have been decisive in putting Shafiq into the presidential run-off rather than Sabahi, the third-place candidate. Additionally, it may have also weakened Morsi’s popular mandate after the second round of voting.

A possible alternative explanation is 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 nomination period closed on 8 April 2012, with candidacies subject to review until 15 April. Ten candidates were disqualified in mid-April, and Shafiq’s candidacy was under review until 25 April, only weeks before the first-round election in May (BBC, 2012). Given this chaotic situation and the relatively short campaign period (21 days total), as well as the paucity of 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 Online appendix (Tables A.5 through A.12). 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. 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. While some of the crime coefficients in these models lose significance, they remain positive and of similar magnitude, indicating a modest but consistent relationship between crime increases and Shafiq vote share in the 2012 elections.

Attitudinal support for authoritarian governance

This section provides analysis of H2, H3, and H4 using survey data from the Pew GAP, the Afrobarometer, and the Survey of Young People in Egypt (SYPE). Using the Pew GAP data, we show that respondents who were more concerned about law and order were more supportive of strongman rule just prior to the 2012 presidential election, consistent with H2. We then turn to data from the Afrobarometer to provide support for H3, demonstrating that Egyptians with more fear of and exposure to crime in 2013 voiced more support for army rule three months before the 2013 coup. Finally, we test H4 with the SYPE panel data, which enables us to show a negative correlation between concern about crime and prioritization of democracy while controlling for pre-2011 uprisings and political attitudes. These patterns are consistent with our argument that rising crime weakened the transition by increasing popular acceptance of authoritarian governance generally and at key moments during this transitional period.

Survey data and empirical strategy

Our Pew data come from a GAP survey conducted between 19 March and 10 April 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. The Afrobarometer data are taken from their fifth wave survey of Egypt, which was implemented between 8 March and 19 March 2013, three months before the military coup. The first wave of the SYPE was conducted in 2009 and the second wave in 2013 and 2014. We rely on these different surveys due to their timing and the inclusion of relevant questions.

Both the Pew and Afrobarometer surveys involved face-to-face interviews with a nationally representative sample of Egyptians over the age of 18. The Pew sample includes 1,000 Egyptians, and the Afrobarometer includes 1,200. The SYPE panel involved face-to-face interviews with a nationally representative sample of 10,000 respondents between the ages of 10 and 29.

---

19 Shafiq won 23.4% of the vote in the first round, while Sabahi received 20.7% of the vote.
20 For this check, we also drop January and February 2010 to facilitate the comparison of crime rates between the years.
21 Pew used a multistage cluster sample stratified by governorates and proportional to population size and urban/rural population (Pew Research Center, 2012). Further details on the sampling methodology and survey instruments are available on the Pew
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’. We construct a dummy variable for ‘strong leader’ support as our primary outcome variable of interest, which takes the value of 1 if the person preferred the strong leader.\(^{22}\) Given Shafiq’s positioning of himself as the strongman candidate, this variable relates clearly to the choice that Egyptian voters would soon face in the presidential election.

The independent variable for the Pew data measures how strongly respondents felt that ‘law and order be maintained’.\(^{23}\) Possible responses to this question were on a four-point scale. 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 order and all others are coded as Low.\(^{24}\) Since there is no question specifically about crime in the survey, this question provides the closest measure of the respondents’ 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.

For the Afrobarometer, our dependent variable asks whether respondents approve or disapprove of the army ‘[coming] in to govern the country?’ The question is answered on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly oppose to strongly support. Because the survey was implemented just prior to the 2013 popular-participatory veto coup, support for army rule provides a useful measure of support for authoritarianism that has direct relevance to the immediate cause of the transition’s failure.\(^{25}\)

The Afrobarometer asks explicitly about crime, which we use for our independent variable. We rely on data about fear of crime in the home (on a five-point scale); feeling unsafe in the neighborhood (on a five-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 conduct principal components analysis (PCA) to combine these questions into a single outcome variable with reduced measurement error, following standard practice in using the first component as our measure of concern with crime. This component has an eigenvalue of 1.94 and explains 48% of the variance, suggesting its utility as an aggregated outcome.\(^{26}\) Higher values indicate higher concern about crime.

For the SYPE, our dependent variable is whether the respondent lists ‘democracy and human rights’ as the first priority for Egypt in the future. In this case, the pro-democratic response is coded as 1 and 0 otherwise. The independent variable is whether the respondent names ‘lack of security’ as the most important threat to the country.

Our approach to inference involves controlling for a variety of demographic and other characteristics that previous research has linked to support for democracy in the Arab world (e.g. Tessler, 2002; Jamal & Tessler, 2008) 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 low prioritization of democratic norms.\(^{27}\) The control variables include respondent gender, age, income, whether they had completed high school or above, employment status, access to the internet, whether religion plays an important role in the respondent’s life, and whether they are Muslim or Christian. For the Pew and Afrobarometer surveys, we also include a binary measure of support for the Muslim Brotherhood.

One additional advantage of the SYPE is that we are able to control for several of the respondents’ pre-2011 political attitudes, such as political interest, perception of corruption in public institutions, generalized trust, democratic attitudes, and exposure to police violence for all respondents (except for those aged 10 to 14 in 2009 who

---

\(^{22}\) See the Online appendix for additional information.

\(^{23}\) Summary statistics for all variables from the three surveys are included in the Online appendix (Section 1, Tables A.2, A.3, and A.4).

\(^{24}\) Of the 1,000 respondents, 611 chose democracy, 333 chose strong leader, and 56 answered Refuse or Don’t Know.

\(^{25}\) This is question Q115i.

\(^{26}\) The mean response is 3.6; thus those who respond that maintaining law and order is very important are coded as High.

\(^{27}\) Wave 5 of the Afrobarometer is the only survey during Egypt’s transition that asked respondents about their attitudes toward army rule.
were not asked about politics in that survey wave). While precisely the same independent and dependent variable measures are not available in 2009 and 2013, we are able to exploit the panel structure of the survey for additional confidence in our results.

We cluster standard errors by the lowest available geographic unit for each survey. For Pew, this is the governorate; for Afrobarometer, it is the district; and for SYPE, it is the primary sampling unit (PSU). For estimation, we use logistic regression for the Pew and SYPE data because of the binary outcome measure, and we use OLS regression with the continuous outcome in the Afrobarometer data.

**Results**

The results are displayed in Tables III and IV. Column 1 of Table III reports results from Pew, and column 2 reports results from the Afrobarometer. Table IV reports the panel results from SYPE. In the Pew and Afrobarometer surveys, the proxies for concern with crime are associated with higher levels of support for authoritarian governance. And, in the SYPE survey, a higher concern

---

**Table III. Correlates of support for authoritarian governance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable:</th>
<th>Support for strongman leader</th>
<th>Support for military leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance of law and order = High</td>
<td>0.421** (0.154)</td>
<td>0.087† (0.045)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for crime (PCA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.161 (0.235)</td>
<td>0.120 (0.112)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.004 (0.008)</td>
<td>0.003 (0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>−0.093 (0.179)</td>
<td>−0.224*** (0.058)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary education +</td>
<td>−0.318 (0.256)</td>
<td>−0.218* (0.092)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>0.231 (0.187)</td>
<td>−0.040 (0.096)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed, but in labor market</td>
<td>1.104*** (0.323)</td>
<td>−0.018 (0.141)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet user</td>
<td>0.053 (0.276)</td>
<td>−0.252* (0.116)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>−0.252 (0.319)</td>
<td>−0.350* (0.145)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of religion</td>
<td>0.263† (0.157)</td>
<td>0.357* (0.178)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MB support</td>
<td>−0.026 (0.128)</td>
<td>−0.531*** (0.129)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>−2.034** (0.639)</td>
<td>2.861*** (0.741)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>931</td>
<td>1,093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Pew</td>
<td>Afrobarometer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.127</td>
<td>0.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>Log likelihood</td>
<td>−567.726</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table IV. Correlates of prioritization of democracy</strong></th>
<th>Dependent variable: Prioritization of democracy &amp; human rights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security = biggest threat</td>
<td>−0.375** (0.130)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>−0.240 (0.159)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>−0.034 (0.021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES (2009)</td>
<td>0.106† (0.059)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary education + (2009)</td>
<td>0.625** (0.199)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed (2009)</td>
<td>−0.007 (0.165)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed (2009)</td>
<td>−0.662* (0.279)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>−0.481 (0.305)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity (2009)</td>
<td>0.304 (0.206)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic values index (2009)</td>
<td>−0.098 (0.060)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of corruption (2009)</td>
<td>0.009 (0.039)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalized trust (2009)</td>
<td>−0.031 (0.211)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in politics (2009)</td>
<td>0.059 (0.072)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to police violence (2009)</td>
<td>0.027 (0.318)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>−2.666*** (0.700)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>5,182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>SYPE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log likelihood</td>
<td>−995.996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akaike inf. crit.</td>
<td>2,021.992</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†p < 0.1; ‡p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001. Cluster robust standard errors.
for security is associated with lower prioritization of democracy. 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 showing the predicted probabilities of support for army rule. Figure 2 displays the predicted probabilities for the SYPE panel analysis.

The predicted probabilities for strongman support in the Pew data show that Egyptians with high levels of concern about law and order are more likely to support strongman rule over democracy than Egyptians with lower levels of concern that law and order be maintained. There is a difference of nine percentage points in probability of support for strongman rule between Egyptians with high levels of concern about law and order and those with low levels of concern. For the Afrobarometer, moving from the minimum value of the PCA crime measure to the maximum is associated with an increase of 0.42 points on the five-point scale for attitudes toward army rule. Finally, the results for the SYPE in Table IV indicate that stating that lack of security is the main threat facing the country is correlated with a two-percentage-point decrease in the probability that a respondent prioritizes democracy and human rights, controlling for pre-2011 political beliefs.

As with the election data, the magnitudes of these coefficients are modest but tell a consistent story. They indicate that concerns with crime and security were associated with increased support for strongman values and decreased support for democratic values at key moments of Egypt’s political transition, including the 2012 presidential election and in the lead-up to the veto coup in 2013. Given the fragility of Egypt’s transitional institutions, the patterns illustrated here provide further support for our argument that rising crime triggered by the transition made it less likely that democracy would successfully take root.

Discussion

In documenting a consistent empirical relationship between crime and support for authoritarianism during Egypt’s transition, our article has implications for both academics and practitioners focused on democratization. In 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 – particularly when citizens are fearful for their personal safety from criminal violence. Because violent crime rates tend to increase in transitional democracies (e.g. LaFree & Tseloni, 2006; Savelberg & McElrath, 2014), this suggests that public anxiety about crime and security may hinder
processes of democratization and reduce popular support for democracy. Nonetheless, until now, there has been little direct empirical evidence from transitional periods about whether crime can damage prospects for successful democratization. Our findings demonstrate that personal insecurity is associated with greater support for autocratic leadership during the initial process of democratization in Egypt. Thus, in a context of rapidly changing crime rates, anxiety about violent crime can undermine democratization before rule of law and political accountability have an opportunity to become institutionalized.

This finding relates to difficult questions about how to engage with the security sector during a democratic transition. On the one hand, major reform of security institutions may be the only way to secure justice for past abuses and to ensure acceptance of human rights practices going forward. On the other hand, disruptions to these institutions may increase their resistance to the new regime and reduce their willingness or ability to address crime. The possibility that disruptions to security institutions weaken popular support for democracy by increasing instability suggests an important reason for transitional authorities to approach security sector reform carefully. At the same time, if the security forces are deliberately fostering instability to undermine the transition – as arguably occurred in Egypt – decisive changes that enable a reformed security sector to return to addressing crime quickly may be necessary.

Our results also illustrate the importance of evaluating how sociological factors like crime may influence democratic transitions by shaping popular attitudes toward democracy. Much of the research on democratization studies the effects of pre-existing political institutions and the choices of political elites. In Egypt, for instance, the scholarly literature on the country’s democratic transition has emphasized decisions of the military, judiciary, activists, and Muslim Brotherhood (e.g. Bou Nassif, 2017; Hatab, 2017). While these actors and institutions undoubtedly played a key role, it is important for both academics and practitioners to consider how popular attitudes toward democracy may be influenced to sustain or undermine democratic consolidation.

The analysis has several limitations related to the context in which we conducted our research. Because of the difficulty of obtaining data on crime in Egypt, we are unable to validate our newspaper crime data with additional sources, and we are only able to establish correlations between concerns about crime and support for authoritarianism. Future research on the politics of crime in the Middle East should strive to acquire additional data and develop causally identified designs. The article also cannot speak directly to the mechanisms that may drive the relationship between crime and attitudes toward authoritarian governance during a political transition. Our results are consistent with fear of crime activating perceptions of insecurity and motivating a desire to return to ‘strong’, authoritarian leadership. However, it is also possible that individuals perceive rising crime as an indicator of poor performance by new democratic institutions, which increases their willingness to return to authoritarianism. Future research should focus on ascertaining which mechanisms matter most in transitional contexts.

Conclusion

In this article, we have explored the political consequences of rising crime in Egypt during its transitional period following the resignation of Hosni Mubarak. Our analysis indicates 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 2012 presidential election. Relatedly, we provide survey evidence linking concern about law and order to support for strongman leadership during the transition. Taken together, these empirical results suggest that growing lawlessness bolstered support for a strongman political candidate in Egypt’s first, and only, free and fair presidential election.

In addition, we find that Egyptians more concerned by crime were significantly more likely to endorse army rule just three months before a veto coup ended the country’s democratic transition, and we show that Egyptian youth with greater concerns about security were significantly less likely to prioritize democratic values in 2013, even controlling for pre-2011 political beliefs. These findings suggest that rising crime may have been one factor that contributed to growing popular support for military intervention in 2013. By providing evidence that rising crime was associated with weakened support for democracy during Egypt’s transition, the article contributes to a growing body of work on the political implications of crime (e.g. Bateson, 2012; Calderon et al., 2015; Romero, Magaloni & Diaz-Cayeros, 2016) and underscores the importance of continued research on the politics of criminal violence.
Replication data
The dataset, codebook, and do-files for the empirical analysis in this article, along with the Online appendix, can be found at http://www.prio.org/jpr/datasets. Analyses were conducted using R and Stata.

ORCID iDs
Alexandra Domike Blackman https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4542-1904
Lisa Blaydes https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3422-071X
Scott Williamson https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0769-6197

Acknowledgements
We thank Elizabeth Nugent, Killian Clarke, and several anonymous reviewers for their generous comments on earlier drafts of this project. All errors remain our own.

References
indeed/spotlight/egypt/2012/06/201261482158653237.html).


Mohsen, Rihab (2012) Baltji’ is a key figure in most of the Ramadan TV series. Al-Arabiya 6 June (https://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/06/05/218697.html).


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAROLINE ABADEER, b. 1989, MA in Political Science (Stanford University, 2018); research interests include economic development, diversity and inclusion, economic informality, the digital economy.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALEXANDRA DOMIKE BLACKMAN, b. 1987, PhD in Political Science (Stanford University, 2019); Assistant Professor of Government at Cornell University (2020– ); research interests include Middle East politics, electoral behavior, gender politics, religion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LISA BLAYDES, b. 1975, PhD in Political Science (UCLA, 2008); Professor of Political Science at Stanford University (2007– ); research interests include authoritarian politics and political economy of the Middle East.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCOTT WILLIAMSON, b. 1990, PhD in Political Science (Stanford University, 2020); Assistant Professor of Social and Political Sciences at Bocconi University (2021– ); research interests include authoritarianism, human rights, migration, Middle East politics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>