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*The Arab Barometer uses in-depth public opinion surveys to track attitudes in Arab countries with respect to pluralism, freedom, conceptions of governance and democracy, civic and political participation, social and religious values. Survey waves were carried out in 2006-08 and in 2010-11. This third wave, conducted in 2013, puts in perspective deep trends beyond the turbulence of daily events. See more at [www.arabbarometer.org](http://www.arabbarometer.org) and [www.arab-reform.net](http://www.arab-reform.net).*

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**September 2014**

## **Searching for Stability: The Arab Barometer Surveys a Divided Libya**

**Fathi Ali & Michael Robbins\***

The security situation in Libya has deteriorated dramatically in recent months while elected officials have failed to make serious progress in addressing Libya's myriad of political, economic and social problems. The recent increase in violence has its roots in the nature of Libya's transition and the system inherited from the regime led by Muammar Gaddafi. Ordinary Libyans are also part of the story – as they were in 2011 – and will continue to define the course of events. Thus, the beliefs and attitudes of the Libyan public are crucial to understanding current events in the country.

Soon before the recent upsurge in fighting between militias, the Arab Barometer conducted a nationally representative public opinion survey. It was conducted in April 2014 as part of the third wave of Arab Barometer surveys covering 12 countries and was the first time the Arab Barometer had surveyed Libyans. The survey provides insight on political beliefs and attitudes, democratization, political Islam, and international relations.

The survey reveals that citizens are keenly aware of the problems facing their country and nearly half have faced significant losses since the uprisings began in 2011. However, the survey shows that Libyans are more than twice as likely to feel a sense of victory (34%) from the Arab spring as a sense of loss (16%). As such, Libya finds itself at a crossroads and desperately needs bold political leadership to build viable and functioning state institutions.

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The survey reveals that Libyans have low levels of trust in political institutions, including just 13% who trusted the General National Congress. Trust is substantially higher in the national armed forces (53%) and the police (49%) – neither of which currently exist – suggesting that Libyans are projecting hope onto institutions that could bring peace and security.

Despite low faith in political institutions, Libyans remain committed to democracy with 69% saying it remains the best system. At the same time, Libyans worry about many potential problems often associated with democracy, including 62% who say that their fellow citizens are not prepared for democratic governance.

Although two-thirds of Libyans do not support a political party, the Arab Barometer makes clear that partisanship represents a major source of division. At the time of the survey, Libyans who supported the Muslim-Brotherhood-affiliated Justice and Construction Party were more likely to have confidence in political institutions than those with no party or who support the National Forces Alliance.

Libyans make clear that they desire a constitution that guarantees key political, economic and social rights, but there is no clear agreement about the direction Libya's ongoing transition should take. When asked about a wide variety of potential political systems ranging from democracy to systems without parliament and elections, at most about a quarter of Libyans say any specific option is appropriate for their country. Meanwhile, majorities of Libyans say they should be made both in accordance with sharia (87%) and the wishes of the people (74%), leaving it unclear what basis should be used in cases where the two are contradictory.

Additionally, the survey shows that most Libyans have a positive view of the U.S. and favor stronger relations with America in the future. Fully half say that the U.S. has made a positive contribution to democracy in their country to date. Even more favor building strong economic (59%) and security (56%) relations in the future. Nevertheless, Libyans do not see a clear role for the U.S. across the Arab world. When asked about the most positive policy the U.S. can pursue for the region, 54% say the U.S. should simply not interfere.

In regards to regional actors, Libyans generally favor stronger security relations with countries that are not seen as supporting the activities of Islamist actors in their country. More than half favor stronger relations with Tunisia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, compared to fewer than a third who say the same about Iran and Qatar. Again, partisanship is a driving factor with supporters of the Justice and Construction Party more likely to favor relations with Iran and Qatar than members of the National Forces Alliance.

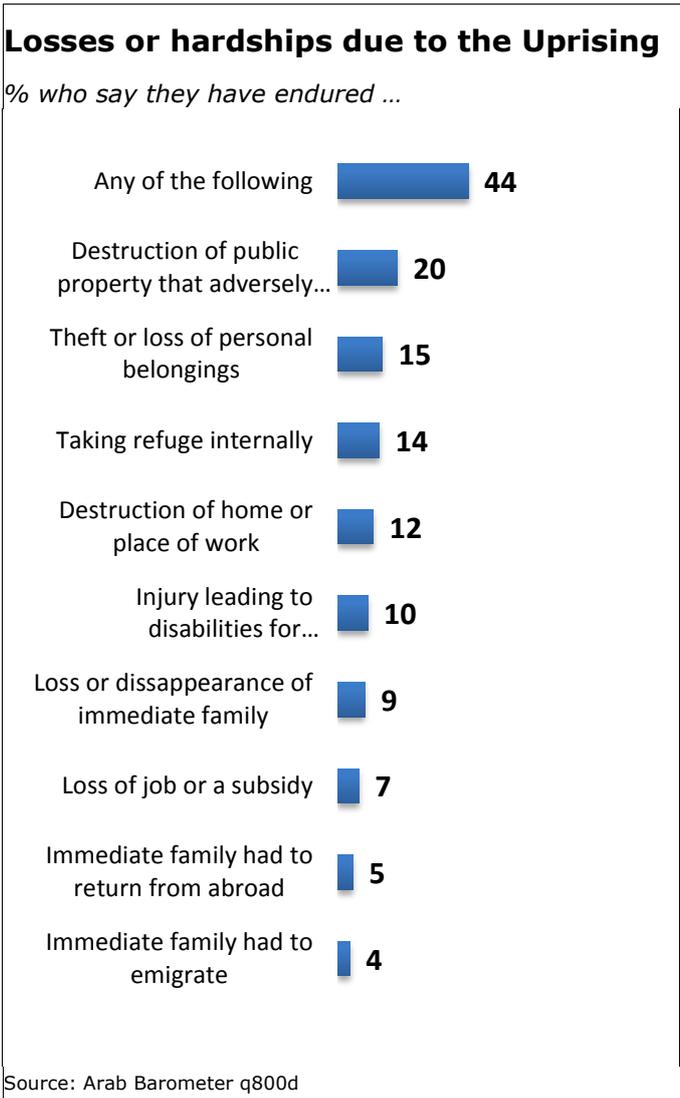
# Assessments of the Arab Spring

Fully one-third of Libyans report that they participated in demonstrations in 2011 or 2012. Participation rates were 11 points higher in Eastern Libya than in Western Libya and men were 34 points more likely than women to have demonstrated. Protesters were also more likely to be between 18-29 and to have at least a secondary education.

Many Libyans have suffered direct losses as a result of the Arab Spring. Nearly half (45%)

report having endured a significant negative outcome as a result of the transition. The most common occurrence reported is the destruction of public property, which has adversely affected citizens (21%). Additionally, 15 percent report suffering theft or the loss of personal belongings, 14 percent say they took internal refuge as a result of conflict, and 12 percent suffered the destruction of their home or workplace.

The negative effects of the uprisings have been felt more-or-less equally throughout society. Libyans in both east and west are about equally likely to report enduring a significant loss as a result of the Arab spring, as are men and women, those more and less educated, and those younger and older. Unsurprisingly, those who directly participated in the uprisings are somewhat more likely (eight points) to have endured a negative outcome.



Despite the negative outcomes many have suffered, just 15 percent of Libyans say they feel a general sense of loss as a result of the Arab spring. By comparison, fully a third (34%) say they feel a sense of victory while four-in-ten say their feelings are hard to describe. Perhaps surprisingly, Libyans are as likely to feel a sense of victory from the Arab Spring as Tunisians, and significantly more likely than Yemenis (21%) or Egyptians (13%).<sup>1</sup>

Libyans who demonstrated are significantly more likely to feel a sense of victory (24 points) compared to those who did not. Libyans 50 and older – who lived under the Gadhafi regime

<sup>1</sup> Surveys in Egypt, Yemen and Tunisia were carried out in 2013.

the longest – are about 10 points more likely than Libyans ages 18-29 and 30-49 to feel a sense of victory.

## Few Libyans Support Existing Political Parties

Partisanship remains very low in Libya

with two-thirds of Libyans (68%) saying they support no party. Among those who are party supporters, the vast majority favor either the National Forces Alliance (18%) or the Justice and Construction Party (9%). Additionally, two percent support other parties.

Libyans living in the east are far more likely than those in the west to support a political party. The primary difference is that support for the National Forces Alliance is about twice as high in the east (30%) as in the west (14%). However, support for Justice and Construction is similar in both parts regions, with 11 percent favoring it in the east compared with eight percent in the west.

Meanwhile, younger and older Libyans are about as likely to support either of the two major parties. There are also no significant differences in party support among those who participated in the Arab Spring and those who did not.

Not only is partisanship low, but it does not appear that it is likely to increase in the near future given that few Libyans trust either of the two political parties. Roughly two-in-ten (21%) Libyans say they trust the National Forces Alliance compared with just 14 percent who trust the Justice and Construction Party.

Unsurprisingly, similar differences in trust are found for the parties as in partisanship in general. Libyans living in the east are 12 points more likely to trust the National Forces Alliance (29%) compared with in the west of the country (17%), while there is no regional difference in levels of trust for the Justice and Construction Party.

## Libyans Dissatisfied with State of their Country

Although few Libyans feel a sense of loss from the Arab spring, few are satisfied with the state of their country. Even before the current crisis, armed militias battled for control of many parts of the country. Libyans demonstrate a clear fear about this ongoing instability with more than half (54%) saying that their personal security is *not* ensured. Moreover, there is a widespread perception that conditions are deteriorating, as nearly half (44%) say their sense of personal security is worse than a year earlier. Libyans living in both the east and west of the country are about as likely to say their personal security is not ensured. However, the situation has declined to a greater extent in eastern Libya where nearly 57% say that the



security situation is worse than a year ago compared with four-in-ten who say the same in Western Libya.<sup>2</sup>

Libyans are also concerned about their economic situation. Just four-in-ten say the economic situation is good or very good, but there are clear regional differences. Those living in Eastern Libya are 10 points more likely than those in Western Libya to rate the economic situation favorably (46% vs. 36%). Meanwhile, Libyans ages 50 and older (46%) are more likely to say the economic situation is good or very good than are those who are 30-49 (39%) or 18-29 (37%).

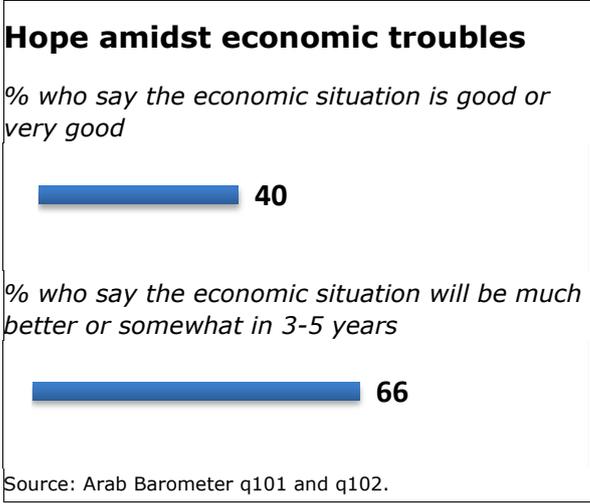
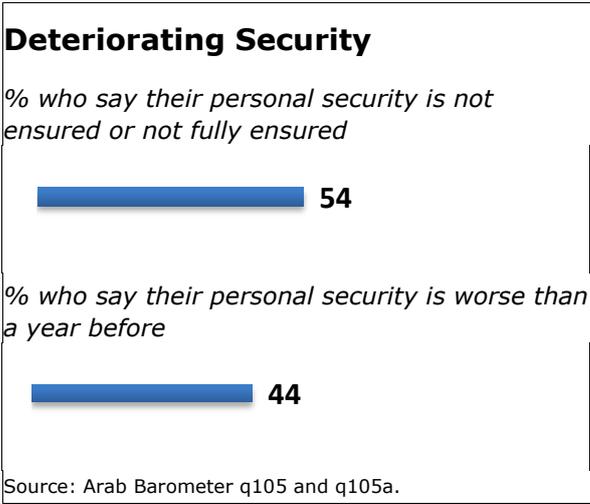
Despite the country’s widespread challenges, most Libyans are optimistic that economic conditions will improve in the near future. Fully two-thirds (66%) predict that the economy will be somewhat better or much better in the next three to five years. Eastern Libyans are again 10 points more likely than those in the West to say the economy will improve (72% vs. 62%), while those 50 and older (76%) are more optimistic than Libyans who are 30-49 (65%) or 18-29 (61%).

### Low Standing of Political Institutions

The weakness of Libyan institutions has contributed to the ongoing violence plaguing the country. Members of the cabinet and, formerly, the General National Congress have strong ties to certain militias, effectively outsourcing security to these groups due to a lack of alternatives. Moreover, the inability of political institutions to come together to stem the slide into violence has contributed to the onset of the most recent increase in violence.

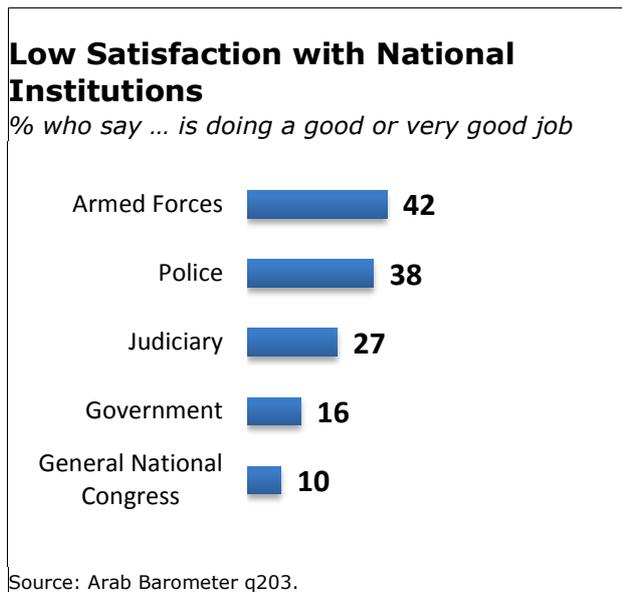
It comes as little surprise that Libyans rate political institutions very poorly. Elected bodies have the lowest favorability. Fewer than two-in-ten (16%) say that the government is doing a good or very good job compared with only 10 percent who say the same about the General National Congress.

Ratings of the judiciary are also very low, although somewhat higher than for the government and General National Congress. About a quarter (27%) rate its performance positively.



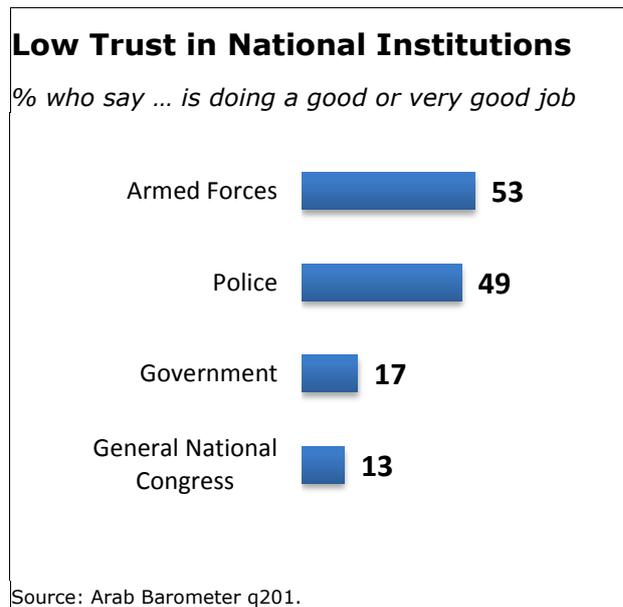
<sup>2</sup> Eastern Libya refers to historic Cyrenaica while Western Libya is historic Tripolitania and excludes the Fezzan.

Partisanship plays a key role in ratings of national institutions. When the survey was carried out in April the General National Congress was dominated by Islamists. Unsurprisingly, Libyans who support the Justice and Construction Party were substantially more likely to rate government institutions positively compared with other Libyans. For example, 24% of Justice and Construction supporters rated the performance of parliament favorably compared with seven percent of those who support the National Forces Alliance or no party. Additionally, about half of Justice and Construction supporters (51%) rated the judiciary favorably compared with just 29% of National Forces Alliance supporters and 22% who support no party.



#### *Trust in Institutions*

Very few Libyans trust national political institutions. Only about two-in-ten (17%) trust the government to a medium or large extent. Meanwhile, just 13 percent say that the same about the General National Congress.



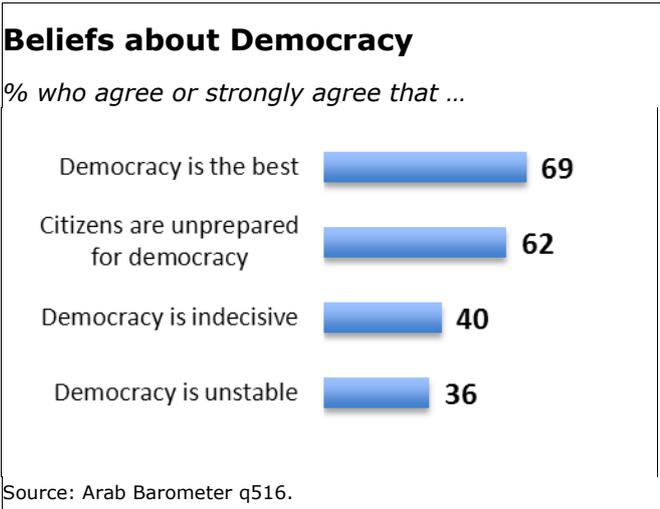
Partisanship is somewhat linked to trust in existing political institutions. At the time of the survey, supporters of Justice and Construction (27%) were substantially more likely to trust the government compared with those who support the National Forces Alliance (20%) or support no party (15%). Similarly, those who favor Justice and Construction were more likely to trust the General National Congress (21%) than those who support the National Forces Alliance (12%) or no party (11%).

Levels of trust in the armed forces and the police are substantially higher. About half say they trust the national army (53%) and the police (49%) to a great or medium extent. Yet, neither of these two institutions actually exists. Rival militias control Libya instead of a national army and de facto they perform the security measures normally assigned to the police.

The fact that non-existent institutions are by far the most trusted, signals the vast gap between the hopes of Libyans and their current existence. Libyans, likely imagining these forces' existence, have significant levels of hope. These two institutions represent important components of efforts to achieve security in the country and it appears that if they could be formed, they might be a unifying force.

### Libyans Want Democracy...

Although Libya's transition has been anything but smooth and Libyans have lost faith in their existing political institutions, support for democracy remains high, suggesting that Libyans have not given up hope for political reform. The survey reveals that seven-in-ten (69%) Libyans agree that democracy, despite its problems, is the best political system. Those living in both eastern and western Libya are about as likely to say democracy is the best system, as are men and women and Libyans of different ages.



However, Libyans with a secondary degree or above are 17 points more likely than those without a high school education to favor democracy (74% vs. 57%). Additionally, those who participated in the 2011 protests are eight points more likely than those who did not to support democracy (75% vs. 67%).

Despite significant instability in their country, Libyans are not necessarily willing to trade their liberty for the promise of security. Six-in-ten (61%) agree that a lack of respect for human rights and democracy in the name of maintaining security is justified to a limited extent or not at all.

Nevertheless, many Libyans worry about some of the problems that are often associated with democracy. Four-in-ten agree or strongly agree that democracy is indecisive. Similarly, more than a third (36%) say democracy is not good at maintaining order. Libyans who did not protest during the uprising are nine points more likely than those who did protest to hold these two viewpoints about democracy.

However, by far Libyans' greatest concern about democracy is that citizens in their society are not prepared for democratic governance; nearly two-thirds (62%) agree or strongly agree that their fellow citizens are not ready for democracy. This widespread concern likely reflects the deep divisions in Libyan society, with many citizens worried about the potential for those with alternative points of view to gain power. Notably, Libyans with a secondary education or above are 17 points more likely than those without a high school degree to say their compatriots are unprepared for democracy (66% vs. 49%). Libyans fifty and older (55%) are

somewhat less likely to hold this view than those 18-29 (65%) and 30-49 (63%) and men are nine points more likely than women (66% vs. 57%). Additionally, those who protested in the Libyan uprisings are 9 points more likely than those who did not to say citizens are unprepared. In other words, the educated and revolutionary elite are among the groups that most fear the potential outcomes of a democratic system, likely reflecting fears about the type of government the less educated or opponents of the revolution might favor for their country.

**Citizens Unprepared for Democracy**

*% who agree or strongly agree*

<b>Education</b>	<b>Secondary and above</b>	<b>Less than secondary</b>	<b>Difference</b>
	66	49	+15
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Difference</b>
	66	57	+9
<b>Age</b>	<b>18-50</b>	<b>50+</b>	<b>Difference</b>
	64	55	+9
<b>Protested</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Difference</b>
	69	60	+9

Arab Barometer q5165

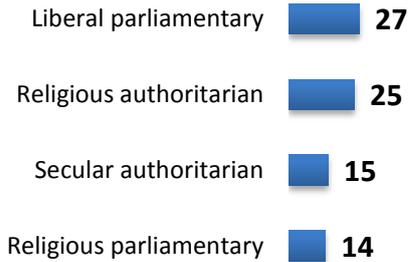
Notably, partisanship is unrelated to attitudes or concerns about democracy. Libyans who support no party do not differ from those who support a party. Moreover, those who support Justice and Construction are about equally likely as those who support the National Forces Alliance to say democracy is the best system and to share concerns about certain features of this political system.

**...But Have no Preferred System**

Libyans favor democracy, but do not have a clear preference for a specific type of governing system. When asked the degree to which a parliamentary system in which nationalist, left wing, right wing, and Islamist parties compete in elections is suitable for their country, about one quarter (27%) say it is appropriate or very appropriate. Those with at least a secondary degree are eight points more likely than those without to favor a liberal parliamentary system, while those who protested in the uprisings are 13 points more likely to express support for a parliamentary system than those who did not.

**Preferred Political System**

*% who say ... system is appropriate or very appropriate*



Source: Arab Barometer q518.

A system that restricts elections to candidates from religious parties – similar to the Iranian system – is less popular. Just 14 percent rate this form of government as appropriate or very appropriate.

Libyans are also not in favor a system without an effective parliament or elections. Only 14 percent say that a political system governed by a strong authority without elections would be appropriate or very appropriate for their country. Meanwhile, one quarter say the same about

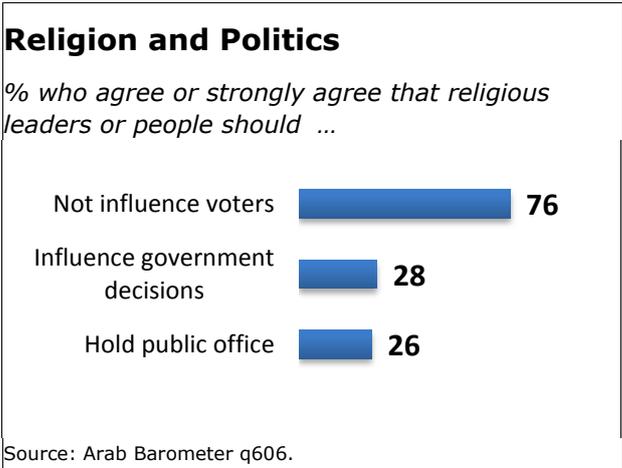
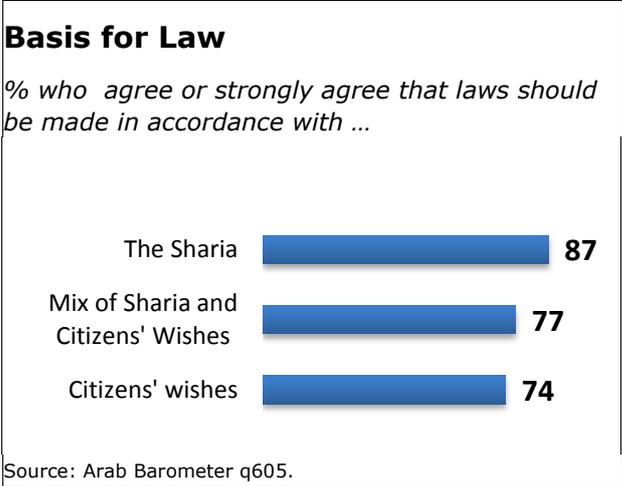
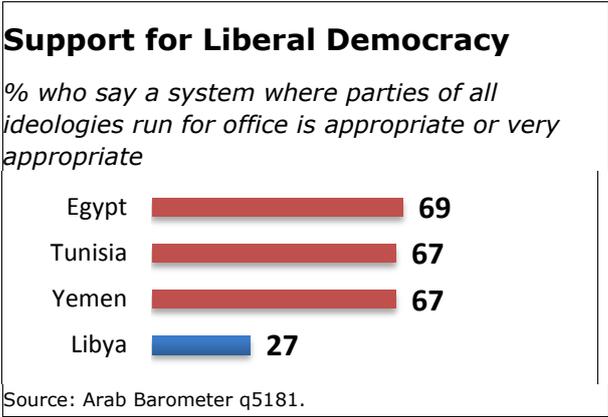
a system governed by Islamic law without political parties or elections.

Perhaps due to their concerns about democracy, Libyans stand out from other countries in their desired political system. While about two-thirds of Egyptians, Tunisians and Yemenis want a democracy where parties of all backgrounds and ideologies participate in elections, only about a quarter of Libyans say the same.

As a basis for making law, Libyans support a system that implements both the will of the people and sharia. About three-quarters (74%) say that laws should be made in accordance with the wishes of citizens while nearly nine-in-ten (87%) say laws should follow sharia. The vast majority (77%) also agree that laws should be made in accordance with the will of the people in some areas and the sharia in others.

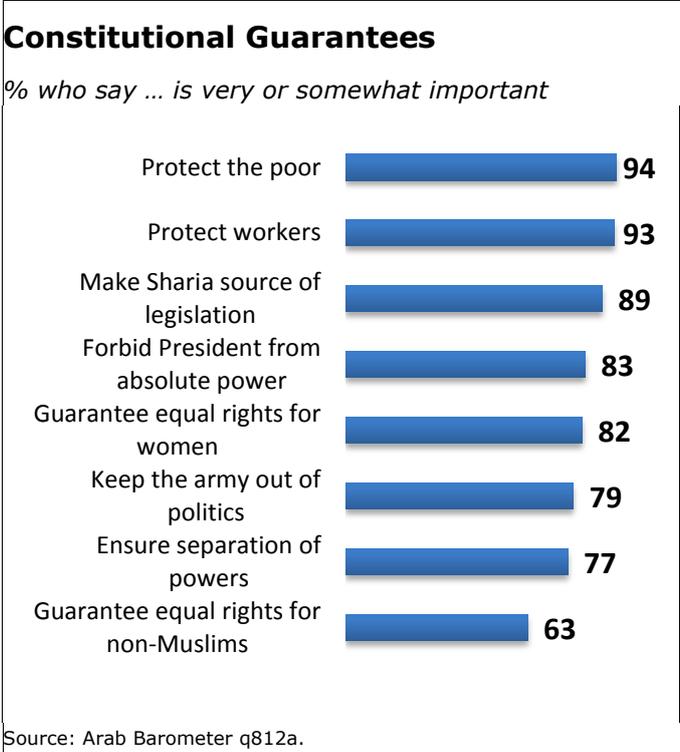
Partisanship is not strongly linked to Libyans' preferences about lawmaking. Libyans who support no party are about as likely as those who support Justice and Construction or the National Forces Alliance to say that religion should be made according to people's wishes, sharia or a mix of the two.

Yet, Libyans do not favor a greater role for religious leaders in politics despite their strong desire for a political system that is in accordance with sharia. Three-quarters agree or strongly agree that religious leaders should *not* influence the decisions of voters, only a quarter (26%) believe it would be better if more religious people hold elected office, and fewer than three-in-ten (28%) want religious leaders to have influence over decisions of government.



Regardless of partisanship, Libyans hold similar attitudes on political Islam. The only substantial difference is that those who support the National Forces Alliance are nine points more likely than supporters of Justice and Construction to say religious leaders should not influence decisions of voters. On all other counts, those with no party are about as likely as supporters of the two main parties to favor a role for religion in the political process.

In designing a constitution, Libyans favor a document with broad political and social protections that is based upon sharia. More than nine-in-ten favor including articles in the constitution that protect the rights of the poor (94%) and workers' rights (93%), while 89% favor a constitution based on sharia. Meanwhile, about eight-in-ten want the constitution to prevent the president from achieving absolute power (83%), to guarantee equal rights between men and women (82%), and to keep the army out of politics. Additionally, three-quarters (77%) say the document should guarantee the separation of powers, while more than six-in-ten believe it should ensure equal rights between Muslims and non-Muslims.



### International Relations

#### United States

Libyans have favorable views of the role the U.S. has played in their country and want stronger relations in the future, but are less sure about what the role America should play across the region. Generally, Libyans who took part in the protests and have higher levels of education are more likely to have positive views of the U.S., as are men and those who are over fifty years of age.

Half of Libyans believe that the influence of the U.S. on the development of democracy in their country has been positive or very positive while 19 percent say it has been neutral. By comparison, just two-in-ten (21%) say it has been negative or very negative. Not all Libyans are equally likely to hold these views, however. Citizens who demonstrated in the uprisings are 20 points more likely than those who did not to say the U.S. has played a positive role in Libya's democratic development. Similarly, those with at least a secondary education are 10 points more likely to have positive assessments of the U.S. role.

Not only are many Libyans pleased with the U.S. role to date, but they also want their country's relations with the U.S. to become stronger in the years to come. Six-in-ten (59%) favor stronger economic relations with the U.S. while 56% say the same about future security relations. Once again, Libyans who participated in the uprisings (25 and 24 points, respectively) and those with a higher level of education (17 and 10 points) are more likely to favor stronger economic and security relations with the U.S. Additionally, Libyans who are 50 and older (10 and seven points) as well as men (18 and 19 points) are the most likely to favor strengthening relations with the U.S.

Libyans differ in their views of the U.S. by party affiliation, however. Supporters of the Justice and Construction Party are substantially less likely to favor stronger relations with the U.S. Only 47% favor stronger security relations with the U.S. compared with 61% among supporters of the National Forces Alliance and 58% of those who do not support a party. Meanwhile, those who favor Justice and Construction

(52%) are also less likely than supporters of the National Forces Alliance (64%) and those without a favored party (61%) to desire stronger economic relations with the U.S.

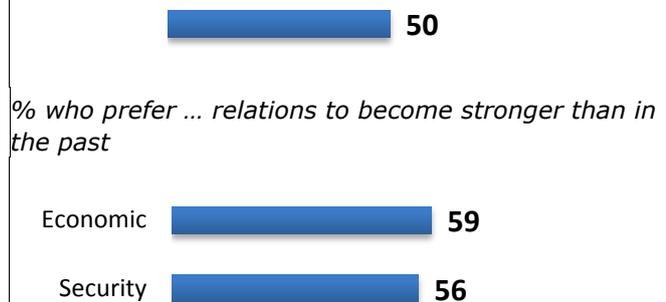
Although most Libyans favor stronger ties with the U.S., they also believe that the most positive thing that the U.S. can do for the region as a whole is to not interfere. Slightly more than half (54%) hold this view, compared with about one-in-ten who say the U.S. should promote economic development (12%), promote democracy (11%), or solve the Arab-Israeli conflict (11%).

### *Regional actors*

There is broad variation in levels of support for strengthening security relations with other states. Multiple factors could account for these differences, but one potential explanation is linked to perceived levels of external support for Islamist actors in Libya such as the Muslim

### **U.S. Viewed Positively**

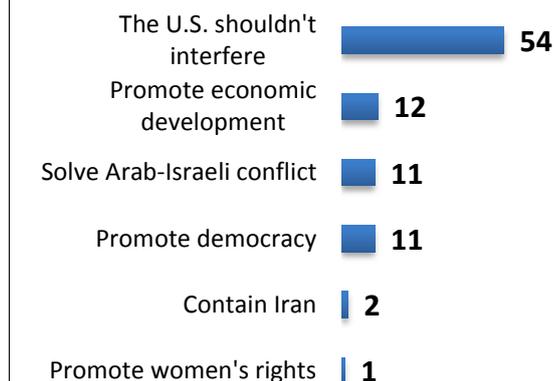
*% who say the U.S. role on the development of democracy has been very or somewhat positive*



Source: Arab Barometer q700, 700a, and q701.

### **The U.S. and the region**

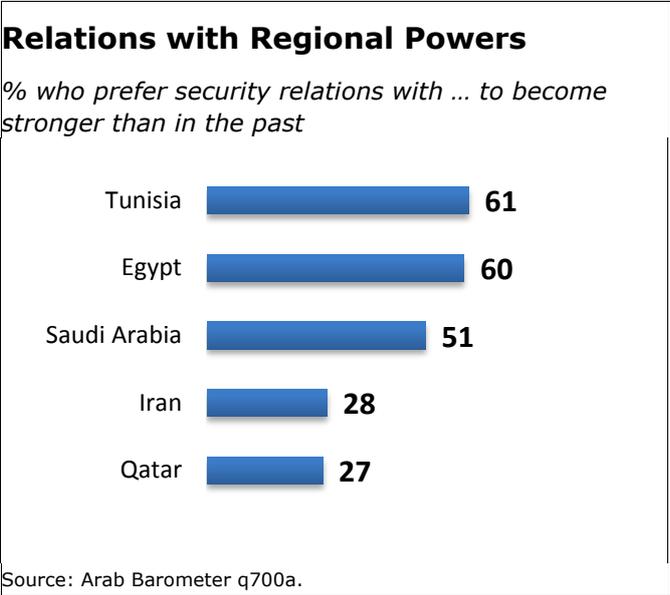
*% who say the most positive policy the U.S. can following in the Arab world is ...*



Source: Arab Barometer q713.

Brotherhood. Countries that are *not* widely perceived to be promoting Islamic actors in Libya tend to have higher support. Half or more Libyans support stronger relations with Tunisia (61%), Egypt (60%) and Saudi Arabia (51%). By contrast, fewer than a third want stronger relations with three countries seen as actively supporting Islamist groups: Iran (28%) and Qatar (27%).

Partisanship is linked with support for certain regional actors. Support for stronger security relations with Iran is higher among supporters of the Justice and Construction Party (37%) than among those who do not support a party (28%) and those who favor the National Forces Alliance (23%). Meanwhile, a desire for stronger security relations with Qatar is lower among supporters of the National Forces Alliance (17%) compared with those who favor Justice and Construction (33%) or no party (27%).



## **About the survey**

The survey represents a national probability sample design of adults 18 years and older. It was conducted face-to face in Arabic and covered all shabiyya (provinces) of the country. The survey was fielded between March 29 – April 18, 2014 and included 1,247 respondents. It was led by Dr. Fathi Ali of the Research & Consulting Center (RCC) at the University of Benghazi. Area probability sampling was employed with each shabiyya representing a separate strata. The sample was further stratified by urban-rural. Interviews were distributed across strata using probability proportional to size (PPS). Primary sampling units (PSUs) are mahallahs. Within each mahallah, households were randomly selected in clusters. At the final stage, respondents were selected within each household using a Kish grid. A total of 1053 respondents were interviewed in urban areas compared with 194 in rural areas. The survey include questions relating to economics; political institutions and attitudes; elections and parliament; the media; democracy; social, religious and cultural topics; and international affairs, and political developments related to the Arab Spring.

The full questionnaire for each wave and additional details about the surveys can be found on the Arab Barometer website [www.arabbarometer.org](http://www.arabbarometer.org).

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## **About ARI**

The Arab Reform Initiative (ARI) is a consortium of policy analysis institutes that mobilizes research capacity to advance knowledge and nurture home-grown programs for democratic reform in the Arab world. ARI seeks to generate, facilitate, and disseminate knowledge by and for Arab societies. In the quest to build free, just and democratic societies, ARI focuses on the current revolutionary processes in the Arab world, on the new patterns of interaction between political forces, governments and societies, on today's political, socio-economic and cultural transformations, and on social justice. It opens a space for diverse voices and brings in the key actors in the transformation processes at play: intellectuals, activists, women, civil society representatives, human rights groups, social movements, political parties, the private sector and the media. ARI produces policy research, supports networks of young scholars, convenes policy dialogues and organizes regional platforms on critical issues related to the transition processes. [www.arab-reform.net](http://www.arab-reform.net)

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