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Middle Eastern Beliefs about the Causal Linkages of Development to Freedom, Democracy, and Human Rights

ABSTRACT This paper investigates the extent to which people in five Middle Eastern countries endorse key beliefs of developmental idealism that associate development with freedom, democracy, and human rights. Developmental idealism is a set of beliefs concerning the desirability of development, the methods for achieving it, and its consequences. The literature suggests that these beliefs have diffused worldwide among elites and lay citizens and posits that when such beliefs are disseminated they become forces for social and economic changes. Although developmental idealism research has primarily examined family and demographic issues, developmental idealism has tremendous potential to influence other aspects of society. This paper extends knowledge by considering societal aspects not addressed previously in the developmental idealism literature: personal freedom, democracy, and human rights. Using survey data from Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, we investigate how publics of these countries associate development with these elements. We find that majorities believe development brings greater personal freedom, democracy, and human rights. Conversely, the data show that in four of the countries majorities believe more personal freedom contributes to development. These findings provide support for the idea that developmental idealism beliefs concerning freedom, democracy, and human rights have diffused to lay publics in these five Middle Eastern countries. We also find evidence of uniquely Islamic developmental models; a significant proportion of people in these countries believe that more religion will bring more development.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper we investigate the extent to which important causal beliefs within the developmental idealism (DI) cultural model are present in the opinions of publics in five Middle Eastern countries: Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. The DI causal beliefs of interest in this paper are that freedom, democracy, and human rights are causes of development and that development produces freedom, democracy, and human rights. We examine the hypothesis that these beliefs about the causes and consequences of development have been disseminated widely among ordinary people in these countries. Although it is important to investigate the worldwide prevalence of beliefs about the causes and consequences of development, we focus here on five countries in the Middle East.

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It is important to note that our goal is *not* to examine the empirical relationships that exist among development, freedom, democracy, and human rights. Those important issues have been examined extensively by others. Instead, we examine *beliefs* concerning such associations, namely that development is a cause of freedom, democracy, and human rights and also a consequence of them. We are interested in the prevalence of beliefs about the causes and consequences of development within general populations because the spread of such beliefs can bring both social change and cultural tensions and clashes.

DI is a transnational cultural model encompassing many beliefs and values concerning how development occurs and the social changes associated with development (Thornton 2001, 2005; Thornton, Dorius, and Swindle 2015). It defines as desirable a constellation of attributes perceived to be associated with development, including industrialization, urbanization, education, free markets, low fertility, equality, freedom, democracy, and human rights. DI endorses a world that is dynamic, describes the pathway to development, and specifies Northwest Europe and its overseas populations as possessing the good life that serves as a model of development for the rest of the world. More specifically, DI informs people that to become developed, societies must embrace a free market economy, low fertility, gender equality, freedom, democracy, and human rights, to name a few of the desired elements of DI. DI also postulates that development will foster these attributes.

We recognize that values are important elements of DI and that beliefs can affect values (Lai and Thornton 2015), but we do not consider values in this paper. We exclude values because there is already considerable research investigating people's *values*—including the related concepts of *preferences* and *tastes*. For example, there are extensive literatures about values concerning economic growth, democracy, freedom, gender equality, family size, and other aspects of life believed by many to be related to development (Azadarmaki and Moaddel 2002; Inglehart and Baker 2000; Inglehart and Norris 2003; Moaddel and Abdul-Latif 2007; Norris and Inglehart 2011, 2012). Our paper is not about values and their association with development; instead, it breaks new ground by investigating a different set of ideational elements: *causal beliefs* about the relationships among development and freedom, democracy, and human rights. Individuals need not value freedom, democracy, or human rights in order to espouse causal beliefs between those elements and development. Causal beliefs indicate how people think the world works, whereas values capture how they want the world to be.

Survey data indicate that many people in the disparate countries of Argentina, China, Egypt, Iran, Malawi, Nepal, and the United States believe that development is both a cause and an effect of many dimensions of family and demographic life, such as gender equality, mature marriage, the involvement of young couples in spouse selection, and low fertility (Abbasi-Shavazi, Nodoushan, and Thornton 2012; Binstock and Thornton 2007; Lai and Thornton 2015; Thornton, Dorius, and Swindle 2015; Thornton, Ghmire, and Mitchell 2012c; Thornton et al. 2012b, 2014). Survey data also demonstrate that the notion that societies are organized in developmental hierarchies is widely held by ordinary people in such diverse countries as Albania, Argentina, Bulgaria, China, Egypt, Hungary, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Malawi, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, and the United States (Csánóová 2013; Melegh et al. 2013; Thornton et al. 2012a). Empirical evidence of the widespread prevalence

of DI can also be found in an extensive body of ethnographic research, which finds that many developmental ideas are widely held at the grassroots in many international settings (Ahearn 2001; Allendorf 2013; Caldwell, Reddy, and Caldwell 1988; Dahl and Rabo 1992; Guneratne 1998; Osella and Osella 2006; Pigg 1992).

However, the evidence concerning the globalization of DI causal beliefs among ordinary people has primarily focused on family and demographic issues. We as yet know very little about the causal beliefs of ordinary people regarding the influence of development on other important matters such as markets, government, and freedom. We also know little concerning people's beliefs about the influence of such factors on development. This paper provides valuable new information to help fill this gap by examining the extent to which people in five Middle Eastern countries believe that development is a cause of freedom, democracy, and human rights (three factors that we refer to generally as FDR). Our paper also provides new insights into the extent to which people in these countries believe that freedom is a cause of development.

There are international surveys such as the World Values Survey that have measured values in many countries, but they have not measured beliefs concerning the causal connections among development, freedom, democracy, and human rights. Thus we designed and implemented new data collections between 2011 and 2013 that were the first we are aware of to measure causal beliefs concerning development and FDR. More specifically, we asked respondents about their beliefs concerning a) whether development increases or decreases FDR and b) whether personal freedom increases or decreases development.

We conceptualized and designed our data collections before the emergence of the political movements generally referred to as "the Arab Spring." However, as shown in table 1, the Arab Spring emerged the month before we began our data collection, and, consequently, our data collections occurred as the Arab Spring was occurring. Survey context can be important in all survey data collections, and we cannot know the effects of the timing of our surveys on respondent answers. What we have is a snapshot of beliefs regarding the causal connections between development and FDR at one time point—with the hope that future surveys will ascertain the stability of such beliefs.

We have three main goals in our analyses of these new data. The first is to examine the extent to which people in these five countries believe that development causes FDR and that freedom causes development. The second is to examine how the prevalence of DI causal beliefs relative to FDR compares to the prevalence of DI causal beliefs concerning family issues—beliefs that previous research has shown to be widely disseminated. The third is to examine the extent to which DI causal beliefs vary by respondent education, gender, and age.

We recognize that it would be interesting to compare the extent of DI beliefs in the five countries in our study—both among themselves and with other places. However, comparisons across countries are outside the scope of this paper and must await future research.

We also recognize that causal beliefs about FDR and development are likely important for behavior and social structures, but we do not evaluate the effects of these DI causal beliefs on the behavior of individuals or on the actual levels of development, freedom, democracy, and human rights in any country. This issue is of great interest but lies beyond the scope of this paper.

TABLE 1. Arab Spring Event Time Line Relative to Data Collection Months for Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Egypt, and Turkey

Mo./Yr.	Country	Event	Iraq	SA	Lebanon	Egypt	Turkey
12/10	Tunisia	Nationwide protests following street vendor's self-immolation in protest of his unpermitted fruit cart seizure.					
1/11	Tunisia	Violent protests followed by fleeing of authoritarian president to Saudi Arabia.					
	Egypt	Tahrir Square protests demanding resignation of Mubarak.					
2/11	Yemen	Mass protests against ruling president.					
	Egypt	Resignation of Mubarak; temporary transfer of powers to military.					
	Bahrain	Mass protests followed by military crackdown by king with assistance from SA.					
	Libya	Protests begin in Benghazi, followed by armed uprising against Muammar el-Qaddafi.					
3/11	Syria	Protesters call for political freedom in city of Deraa. Quickly spreads to other cities. Government responds with violent crackdown.					
	Libya	Western coalition intervenes in conflict, staging airstrikes against Qaddafi's troops, turning the tide in favor of the protesters.					
4/11							
5/11							
6/11							
7/11							
8/11	Libya	Rebel troops enter the capital and Qaddafi goes into hiding.					
9/11							
10/11	Libya	Qaddafi found and killed by mob.					
	Tunisia	In first election since Arab Spring revolts began, Tunisians elect a moderate Islamist party.					
11/11	Yemen	President resigns.					
12/11							
1/12	Egypt	Islamist parties win 70% of seats in first parliamentary election since Mubarak's ouster.					
2/12-5/12							

(continued)

TABLE 1. Arab Spring Event Time Line Relative to Data Collection Months for Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Egypt, and Turkey (*continued*)

Mo./Yr.	Country	Event	Iraq	SA	Lebanon	Egypt	Turkey
6/12	Egypt	Mubarak tried and found guilty on charges of accessory to and attempted murder of 2011 protesters. Sentenced to life in prison. Islamic group Muslim Brotherhood candidate wins first democratic presidential election.					
7/12-10/12							
11/12	Egypt	President issues decree giving himself broad new powers, including placing himself above the authority of the courts.					
12/12-3/13							
4/13							
5/13							
6/13	Syria	UN announces death toll in continuing conflict has topped 90,000 and >1 million Syrians are refugees. Opposition forces becoming more fractured and dominated by extremist groups, many with connections to Al Qaeda.					
7/13	Egypt	Military coup removes president from office and detains him in secret location, triggering weeks of protests.					

Notes: Dark shading indicates data collection months for each sample country; lighter shading indicates months (events) preceding data collection months for each sample country. SA = Saudi Arabia. Time line events are according to the *New York Times* ("Timeline" 2013).

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Cultural Models of Development

Developmental idealism is a cultural model concerning societal development that shapes the perspectives of policy makers and public opinion. Cultural models, or ideational frameworks, are interrelated attitudes, beliefs, and values "about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved" (Erikson and Tedin 2001:64). Models provide beliefs and values that shape people's understanding of the world and orientation toward it and prescribe mechanisms for achieving personal and societal goals (Johnson-Hanks et al. 2011; Sewell 1992; Swidler 1986). DI is one such cultural model that is centered on development and its relationship to other dimensions of life (Thornton 2001, 2005). DI can have powerful influences on people's decision making and behavior (Allendorf and Thornton 2015).

Many ideas of DI can be traced back to the Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the writings of philosophers, social scientists, and policy makers of the nineteenth

century (Nisbet 1969; Sanderson 1990; Thornton 2005; Thornton et al. 2015). The scholars and policy makers of those eras promulgated worldviews and beliefs about the causes and consequences of development. As one would expect, there emerged and still exists a range of views on the exact specification of beliefs about the causes and consequences of development within DI. As Thornton et al. (2015) state, “DI is similar to other cultural models such as Chinese culture or American culture, which exist in different formats across geography and history. . . . The notion that the DI cultural model varies across places, times, and individuals is similar to the idea proposed by Eisenstadt (2000) of alternate modernities. Sometimes the differences between DI versions are fairly small and other times more substantial” (p. 285).

Despite the varying strands of DI beliefs diffused across individuals and groups, we argue that there is a dominant strand of DI that has been disseminated widely to scholars, political leaders, development agencies, and policy makers around the world, permeating the agendas of many governmental and nongovernmental organizations (Thornton et al. 2015). It is the causal beliefs about development within this dominant strand of DI that constitute the focus of this paper. As we discuss below, that dominant strand of DI indicates that development increases FDR and that FDR increases development. Our paper’s key hypothesis is that the DI cultural model and its beliefs about the causes and consequences of development have penetrated local culture in the Middle East.

The Dominant Model of the Development-FDR Nexus

We now discuss the main elements and historical background of this dominant strand of DI concerning the causal relations among development and FDR. We also discuss some alternative modernities, especially as they might contradict and diminish beliefs in the dominant strand of DI.

The dominant developmental models of philosophers, social scientists, and policy makers for the past two centuries have depicted the world as a dynamic place with societies evolving at different speeds from low to high development (Nisbet 1969; Sanderson 1990; Thornton et al. 2015). Northwest Europe and its overseas populations in North America and Australasia have been portrayed at the apex of development, with other populations seen as distributed at various lower levels along the developmental scale. This model has proposed that movement from low to high development produces low fertility, equality, mature marriage, free markets, freedom, democracy, and human rights. Causality in this model has also been said to move in the opposite direction, with development being a consequence of free markets, low fertility, equality, mature marriage, freedom, democracy, and human rights.

More specifically, theory and public policy have posited strong positive relationships between FDR and development, and those themes have continued to characterize much of the academic and policy literatures of at least the last century. For example, modernization theorist Rostow (1971) argued that democracy, including the freedom of expression and political representation, is essential for societies to progress through “stages of growth.” Since the 1980s, many development economists have argued that poor countries can best achieve economic growth through market liberalization (e.g., Bhagwati 2002, 2004; Wolf 2004).

This idea gained mainstream acceptance at development organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, leading to the “Washington Consensus” in the 1990s, “aid for trade” policies since the 2000s, and the promotion of free trade today. Within this school of thought, democracy and human rights are believed to occur as a result of economic growth (Williamson 1990). At the United Nations and many other international organizations, the primary perspective is one of “human development,” which posits that there are links between development and freedom, democracy, and human rights (Nussbaum 1997, 2000; Sen 1981, 1999, 2005). Additional approaches to development, including participatory development (Chambers 1997; Hickey and Mohan 2005) and rights-based development (Häusermann 1998; Sano 2000), also feature explicit links between development and FDR (Bollen 1979; Burkhart and Lewis-Beck 1994; Wejnert 2005).

Certain strands of thought on development are less enthusiastic about the proposition that development brings FDR, including proponents of dependency (Frank 1969), world system (Wallerstein 1974, 1991), and postdevelopment (Escobar 1995; Sachs 1992) theories. Some critics of mainstream development theory claim that it is precisely a lack of emphasis on FDR as a prerequisite to development that has brought about what they perceive to be dismal results in the global effort to “end poverty” (e.g., Easterly 2006, 2014; Moyo 2009). Others point to “East Asian Tigers” like South Korea as historical evidence that development has occurred because of restrictions on FDR (Chang 2002). Across all theoretical perspectives, however, disputes are not over whether there is a relationship between development and FDR but over the nature of the relationship. Development and FDR are intertwined in virtually all contemporary development theories.

We argue that beliefs about positive causal connections between development and FDR have been disseminated via many channels to Middle Eastern publics: from the world’s policy and academic elites to national leaders, community elites, and on to the general public. Diffusion mechanisms include the United Nations, foreign aid programs, governmental and non-governmental organizations, the mass media, and educational institutions (Thornton et al. 2015). Nation-states around the world have adopted a wide variety of institutional practices that are promoted as essential for development, including human rights and democratic governance (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2005; Meyer et al. 1997; Tsutsui and Wotipka 2004).

The DI disseminated through these means exerts influence on many dimensions of life at multiple levels of social reality, from the individual to entire societies and the world at large. DI’s dissemination and acceptance have contributed to greater popular support for freedom in personal affairs, which scholars have linked to dramatic increases in divorce, premarital sex, nonmarital cohabitation, and unmarried childbearing in numerous places (Aghajanian and Thompson 2013; Cammack and Heaton 2011; Esteve, Lesthaeghe, and Lopez-Gay 2012; Lesthaeghe 2010; Thornton 2005; Thornton and Philipov 2009). DI has also helped drive the international movement toward gender equality, small families, and mature ages at marriage (Dorius and Alwin 2010; Ortega 2014; Paxton, Hughes, and Green 2006; Thornton et al. 2012b).

Although DI causal beliefs about FDR and development are often rejected when first introduced, they are often accepted with additional time and reinforcement, though rarely wholesale. Typically, the adoption of DI beliefs involves the mixing of local (particular)

culture with global (general) developmental culture into hybrid models of development, which become forces for social change. We recognize that alternative development models may dampen or even reverse beliefs concerning positive causal relations between development and FDR. We know, for example, that the Marxist developmental model promulgated in the former Soviet Union and other state socialist societies emphasized a dictatorship of the proletariat rather than freedom and democracy. We also know that several countries in eastern Asia followed a protectionist, state-driven, capitalist model, teaching their citizens that national development should take precedence over individual freedom (Chang 2002).

There is a growing recognition of uniquely Islamic developmental models, which in some ways decouple development from freedom, democracy, and human rights. According to the Islamic Development Bank (2006), the main development challenges of Muslim-majority countries include “sustainable economic growth,” “good governance,” and “human development.” Partnership with the UN, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund is outlined as necessary and helpful, particularly with respect to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In this respect, Islamic models of development generally share many goals with dominant development models.

At the same time, many Islamic developmental models emphasize Islamic religious ideals. Some Islamic academics and policy makers integrate Islamic principles into pre-existing theories of development, and often incorporate some of the principles of FDR into Islamic developmental models, not because FDR principles are tacitly accepted, but because they are rationalized as having deep roots in Islamic philosophy and law (Bayat 2007). Similarly, the concepts of empowerment, freedom, and individuality are deemed to be desirable, though typically only in “Islamic forms” (Hasso 2009). One example of this fine distinction is the avoidance of “democracy” and “secular politics” in the official vision of the Islamic Development Bank (2006), but the adoption of the global buzzphrase “good governance.” This is noteworthy because it reflects a distinctly Islamic model of development, a model that in most respects is very similar to dominant developmental models, yet different in its association with FDR.

Lived Experience of FDR and Development in the Middle East

We recognize that the causal beliefs people have about development and FDR may be affected by the empirical relationships between development and FDR that people observe firsthand or hear about. People’s beliefs about the causal relationships between FDR and development may be reinforced by knowledge of a positive cross-sectional correlation between national levels of development and country-level measures of FDR. We present here evidence regarding such relationships. Our intent is not to evaluate the cause-and-effect relationships between development and FDR in the real world but to recognize that such empirical relationships may weaken or strengthen people’s beliefs about a relationship between development and FDR. That is, our focus in this paper is on people’s causal beliefs about the relations between development and FDR and not on the actual relationships in the real world, but we talk about the actual relationships because these may influence people’s beliefs.

The real-world correlation between development and FDR can be seen in figure 1, where we show the international cross-sectional association between the UN’s Human Development

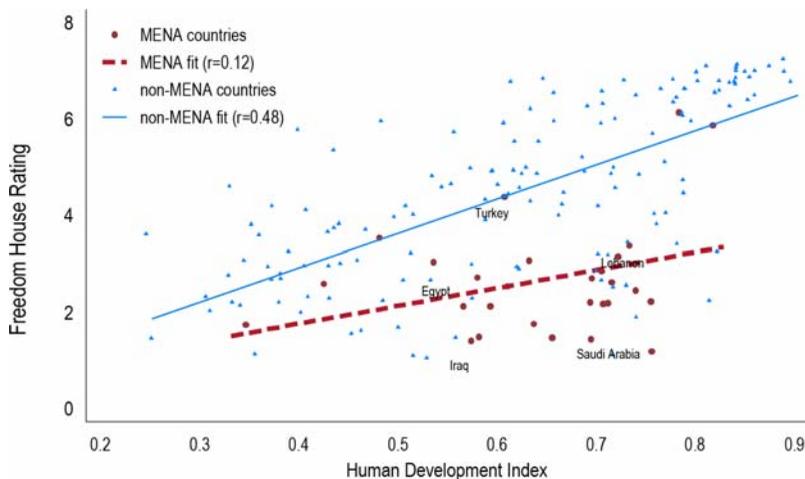


FIGURE 1. Development and Freedom in the MENA and the World

Note: Observations are countries. MENA = Middle East and North Africa. Estimates for each country are the average HDI and Freedom House scores for all measurements from 1980 to 2007. The Human Development Index is a composite index ranging from low to high development (0–1) and includes national measures of income, education, and life expectancy. The Freedom House score ranges from least free to most free (0–7).

Index (HDI) and national indicators of freedom for 175 countries. The linear regression line summarizing this association indicates that the HDI and freedom indices are strongly and positively related. Additional analysis (not shown) finds similar relationships between HDI and indicators of democracy and human rights. Observations such as these would reinforce public perceptions of a relationship between development and FDR.¹

On the other hand, the realities of day-to-day living may influence people in the Middle East to doubt the existence of a positive relationship between development and FDR. Although the regression line between development and freedom for the 27 Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries in figure 1 is positive, it is weaker than for the world as a whole. Also, figure 1 shows that, in general, MENA countries have substantially lower levels of freedom than one might expect on the basis of their HDI scores. These observations suggest that the lived experience of many people in this region may diverge from what the standard developmental model states concerning development and FDR (Clague, Gleason, and Knack 2001).

Temporal trends in HDI and freedom *within* Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia do not support a positive association between HDI and freedom in these countries. As shown in figure 2, HDI has been high and/or rising for much of the last 30 years, but levels of freedom have been low and, in most instances, declining. Additional analysis (not shown), indicates similar relationships when the indicators are GDP per capita, educational attainment, democracy, and human rights. Thus the over-time, lived experience of people within these five study countries would suggest only weak or even negative relationships between FDR and development.

We hypothesize that the combination of views held by international academic and governmental leaders, along with many local leaders, concerning the causal beliefs

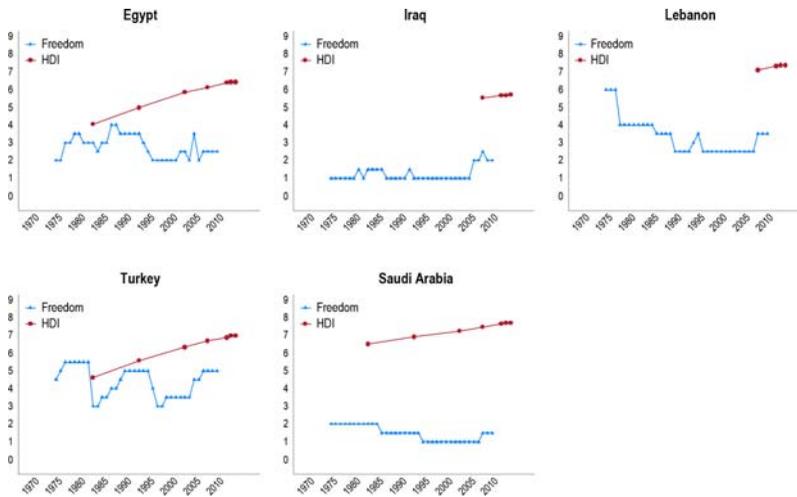


FIGURE 2. Trends in Human Development and Freedom
 Note: Variables rescaled to range from 1 to 10. HDI = Human Development Index. Within-country comparisons of levels of various dimensions are not strictly comparable but trends are comparable.

within DI that assume positive connections between FDR and development will be more powerful than the alternative models and the lived experiences of people in our study countries. That is, we expect the forces for beliefs in development as a positive cause and a consequence of FDR are stronger than the forces for belief in no relationship or an opposite relationship. This leads us to the general empirical hypothesis that the majority of publics in our study countries perceive development to be positively related to FDR. We also expect that people’s personal experiences and some contrarian views expressed by Middle Eastern elites about the relationship between development and FDR could limit the overall perceptions of positive relationships between development and FDR. Unfortunately, we cannot evaluate the individual forces producing the final distribution of causal beliefs.

DATA

Our individual-level data come from face-to-face hour-long structured interviews conducted between 2011 and 2013 with respondents living in Egypt (N = 3143), Iraq (N = 3000), Lebanon (N = 3143), Saudi Arabia (N = 2003), and Turkey (N = 3019). Each participating country implemented a multistage probability sample design that produced a nationally representative sample of adults ages 18 and older, stratified proportionally to the urban and rural areas of that country. Response rates for Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey were 93, 88, 61, 73, and 62 percent, respectively. The data are self-weighting for all countries but Saudi Arabia, where data are weighted to account for an oversample of one region. The samples include roughly equal proportions of men and women. The average ages of respondents in each country were 39.0 in Egypt, 36.2 in Iraq, 35.2 in Lebanon, 33.8 in Saudi Arabia, and 41.3 in Turkey. Between half and three-quarters of Egyptian, Lebanese, and Saudi respondents reported

completion of at least secondary-level education, as compared to around 40 percent of Iraqi and Turkish participants. Nearly all respondents in four of the five countries were Muslim; in Lebanon the distribution was more diverse—66 percent Muslim, 27 percent Christian, and 7 percent “none” or “some other religion.” The surveys were administered within the context of a larger project that was designed, in part, to measure public perceptions of the relationships among development, family, and society in the Middle East. The research team took care to standardize as many aspects of the project as possible within and across countries, including sampling specifications, questionnaire content, Arabic and Turkish language translation, interviewer training, quality control procedures, and data entry and harmonization.

We asked respondents to answer three sets of questions concerning development and several societal and family attributes, including FDR. Exact wordings and coding schemes for these questions are found in table 2. For the first question (section I), respondents were asked: “What if there were more restrictions on personal freedoms? Would that help make your country a little more developed, a lot more developed, a little less developed, or a lot less developed?” We did not ask respondents whether they thought that democracy or human rights would make their country more or less developed. Our second set of questions (section II) reversed the causal arrow and asked respondents how increases in development would affect several attributes, including three FDR and four family attributes. For both sets of questions, we coded the small number of respondents who reported “don’t know” into a separate category and analyzed this category along with the four answer categories given to respondents.

For the third set of measures, respondents were shown a list of five attributes that might increase in a country: more gender equality; more freedom of choice; more religiosity; more democracy; and more integrity in government. After viewing this list, respondents were asked to choose which of these attributes would have the greatest impact on making their country more developed and which would have the second greatest impact. Respondents in Saudi Arabia were not asked these questions.

By design we did not specify to respondents what we meant by *development*, *freedom*, *democracy*, *human rights*, *freedom of choice*, *religiosity*, and *integrity in government*. We also did not ask respondents to tell us what they meant by these terms. Evidence from other research indicates that people in the Middle East conceptualize development very similarly to the United Nations HDI, which is a composite of education, money, and health (Thornton et al. 2012a). Freedom, democracy, and human rights are broad concepts with multiple dimensions that can vary in their precise definition and meaning across groups and individuals. We do not believe that the meanings of these concepts among Middle Eastern publics exactly match the views of other publics, such as those in the United States. We also expect that the meaning of these terms can and do vary across people and groups, but, nevertheless, we believe that there are general meanings to such concepts. It is those general meanings that we address with these questions. Also, we recognize that responses to our questions may be affected by question order and historical timing, and we advocate for additional research on these issues.

TABLE 2. Individual-level Measures of Developmental Idealism

I. Social Change Causes Development*

Now we are going to talk about something different—what might happen to (STUDY SITE COUNTRY) if some things about (STUDY SITE COUNTRY)'s everyday life changed. For each of the following things, please tell me whether you think it would help make (STUDY SITE COUNTRY) more developed or help make (STUDY SITE COUNTRY) less developed?

- a. If restrictions on personal freedom increase? Would that help make (STUDY SITE COUNTRY) a lot more developed, a little more developed, **a little less developed, or a lot less developed?**

II. Development Causes Social Change*

Some people think that (STUDY SITE COUNTRY) will become more developed in the future. Let's talk about what things would increase and what things would decrease if (STUDY SITE COUNTRY) became more developed. If (STUDY SITE COUNTRY) became more developed would:

- a. personal freedom **increase a lot, increase a little**, decrease a little, or decrease a lot?
- b. democracy **increase a lot, increase a little**, decrease a little, or decrease a lot?
- c. respect for human rights **increase a lot, increase a little**, decrease a little, or decrease a lot?
- d. equality between women and men **increase a lot, increase a little**, decrease a little, or decrease a lot?
- e. parents choosing who their children marry increase a lot, increase a little, **decrease a little, or decrease a lot?**
- f. the number of children couples have increase a lot, increase a little, **decrease a little, or decrease a lot?**
- g. age at marriage **increase a lot, increase a little**, decrease a little, or decrease a lot?

III. What Would Help to Make the Country More Developed

We have been talking about making (STUDY SITE COUNTRY) more developed. Which one of these five things would help the most to make (STUDY SITE COUNTRY) more developed:

- a. More democracy
- b. More freedom of choice over one's own life
- c. More religiosity
- d. More gender equality
- e. More integrity in government officials

Which one would help second most to make (STUDY SITE COUNTRY) more developed?

(Same choices as above)

*Bolted response categories are coded as developmental thinking in figures 3 and 4. Nonbolted and "Don't Know" response categories are coded as nondevelopmental thinking in figures 3 and 4.

RESULTS

Belief in Individual Freedom as a Cause of Development

We first discuss results using the question concerning respondent beliefs about the effects of a reduction in personal freedom on development (section I of table 2). Figure 3 shows for each country the percentage distribution of respondent beliefs about the effects of restricting personal freedoms on development in their country. Categories are listed from left to right from those strongly *rejecting* the DI belief (stating that *less* freedom would *increase* development a lot) to those strongly *endorsing* the DI belief (stating that *less* freedom would *decrease*

What if there were more restrictions on personal freedoms? Would that help make your country a little more developed, a lot more developed, a little less developed, or a lot less developed?

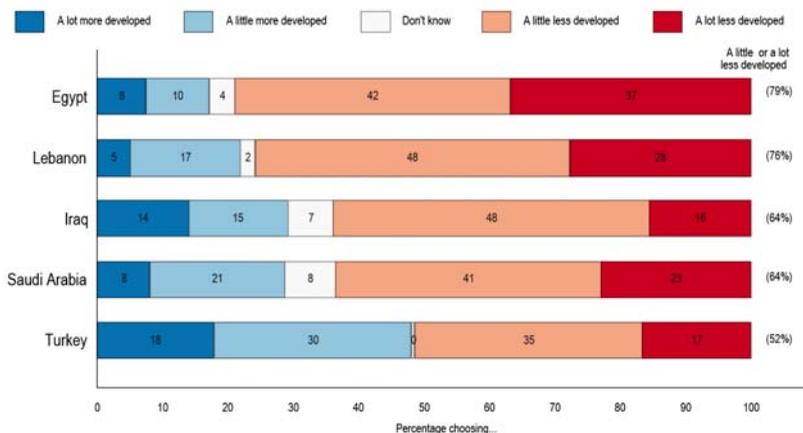


FIGURE 3. The Consequence, for Development, of Restrictions on Personal Freedoms

Note: Percentages in marginal parentheses report the “DI response” and are the sum of “A little less developed” and “A lot less developed” response categories. Parenthetical totals may vary slightly from response category percentages due to rounding. Countries are sorted from highest to lowest prevalence of DI response.

development a lot). Countries are sorted from high to low according to the prevalence of DI beliefs. In addition to the distribution across all five response categories, we indicate in the far-right column the percentage saying that restricting personal freedoms would lower development a lot or a little (the DI response).

Fewer than 30 percent of respondents in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia believed restrictions on personal freedom would cause *more* development in their country. A majority of respondents in each country, ranging from 52 percent in Turkey to 79 percent in Egypt, reported that restrictions on personal freedom would make their country *less* developed. In each country, the modal belief was that restrictions on personal freedom would make the society “a little less” developed. In each country except Turkey, the second most common causal belief was that restrictions on personal freedom would make the country “a lot less” developed. Respondents in Turkey were more evenly divided about the consequences of personal freedom on development, with only a slight majority (52 percent) reporting that restrictions on personal freedom would cause their country to become less developed.

Belief in Development as a Cause of FDR

We next consider the distribution of beliefs about the effects of development on FDR (section II of table 2), which we report in figure 4. As in the previous figure, we order the responses reported in figure 4 so that the degree of endorsement of DI increases from left to right, and the percentage endorsing DI (either a little or a lot) is shown in the far-right column. Bars are sorted from high to low on the prevalence of DI beliefs, by country and measure.

The data support our hypothesis that most people in these Middle Eastern countries viewed development as a force for increasing each item of FDR. The strength of the

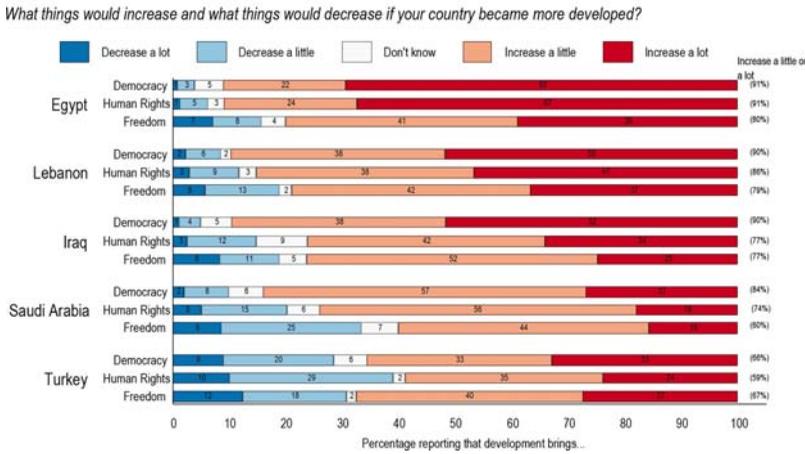


FIGURE 4. The Consequence, for Freedom, Democracy, and Human Rights, of Development
 Note: The original question wording for “Freedom” referred to “restrictions on freedom”. Responses to this question were reverse coded to match the developmental idealism scales of “Democracy” and “Human Rights”. Percentages in marginal parentheses report the “DI response” and are the sum of “Increase a little” and “Increase a lot” response categories. Parenthetical totals may vary slightly from response category percentages due to rounding. Countries are sorted from highest to lowest prevalence of DI response.

association between development and FDR varied to some degree—in some countries respondents thought more development would bring “a lot more” FDR and in others they thought it would bring “a little more” FDR—but in all countries strong majorities believed that more development would cause more freedom, democracy, and human rights in their country.

The percentage of Egyptian, Lebanese, and Iraqi respondents with this DI causal belief exceeded 75 percent for all three items. With the exception of personal freedom, four-fifths or more endorsed each of the three DI items in Egypt and Lebanon; moreover, at least 90 percent of all respondents in Egypt, Lebanon, and Iraq believed that increased democracy was a consequence of development. More than 70 percent of respondents in Saudi Arabia reported the belief that development increases democracy and human rights, and 60 percent positively associated development with personal freedom. The majority of respondents in Turkey believed development increases all three items of FDR, yet in general the percentage of respondents reporting this was lower than for the other four countries. Nevertheless, the data are strongly consistent with our hypothesis that most people in each country believe that development leads to increased FDR.

There are some differences in the distribution of responses across the substantive dimensions of freedom, democracy, and human rights. Of the three dimensions, democracy was seen as the most affected by development among respondents in each country. In Egypt, the percentage who said that development causes democracy was essentially tied with the percentage saying it increased human rights. Although large numbers in each country said that development increased freedom, in Egypt, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia this was endorsed less than the belief that development caused democracy and human rights, and in Turkey the belief that development caused freedom was expressed slightly more than the belief that development caused democracy. In addition, in Iraq freedom tied with human

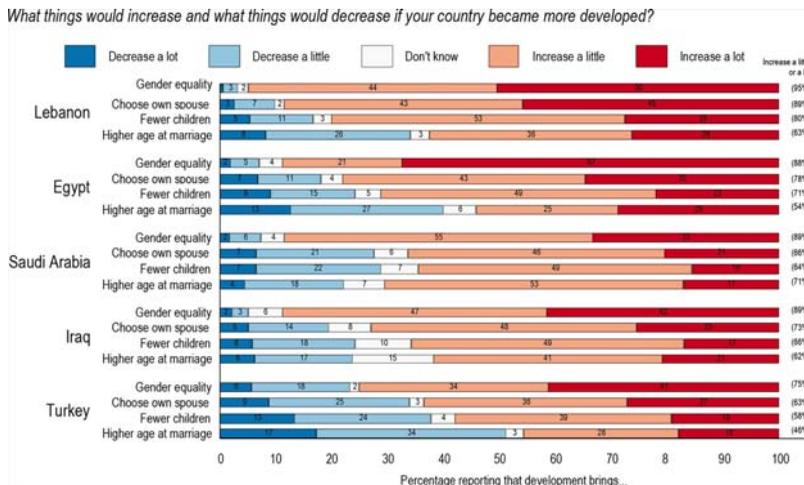


FIGURE 5. The Consequence, for Family Attributes, of Development

Note: The original question wording for “Choose own spouse” and “Fewer children” referred to “Number of children” and “Parents choose spouse”, respectively. Responses to these questions were reverse coded to match the DI scales of ‘Gender equality’ and ‘Age at marriage’. Percentages in marginal parentheses report the “DI response” and are the sum of “Increase a little” and “Increase a lot” response categories. Countries and bars are sorted from highest to lowest prevalence of DI response.

rights in being seen as the least positively affected by development, whereas in Turkey the belief that development increased human rights was endorsed the least.

Comparisons with Causal Beliefs Concerning Development and Family Issues

We noted earlier that research has examined whether people around the world associate development with family attributes. That research shows that there is a substantial association in public opinion between development and family attributes as predicted by the DI cultural model. This raises the question of whether the dissemination of DI concerning FDR has been as great as the spread of DI concerning family issues. Previous research concerning the spread of DI in respect to causal beliefs about development and family matters provides a comparative framework to evaluate the extent of the dissemination of DI relative to causal beliefs about development and FDR.

For this reason, we compare the reported causal beliefs of individuals in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey regarding FDR with their reported causal beliefs regarding changes in gender equality, spouse choice, fertility, and age at first marriage (section II of table 2). In figure 5 we report the percentage distribution of responses on the four family items in each country. We also report in the margins of figure 5 the percentage stating the DI position that development reduces fertility and increases gender equality, self-choice of spouse, and older age at marriage.

A comparison of figures 4 and 5 shows that the range of answers for the family DI questions was generally consistent with the range of DI answers for the FDR questions. With the exception of the age-at-marriage question in Egypt and Turkey, where roughly half of respondents gave the DI answer, endorsement of DI for the four family items ranged from 58 to 95 percent, which is very similar to the level of endorsement of DI for FDR. Gender

equality was the only family attribute that three-fourths or more in each country said would increase with more development; however, this three-quarters threshold was also reached for spouse choice in Egypt and Lebanon (and 73 percent said so in Iraq). Thus endorsement of DI causal beliefs regarding FDR was on par with endorsement of DI regarding gender equality and, to a lesser extent, spouse choice. In Egypt, Iraq, and Lebanon, support for DI causal beliefs regarding FDR was actually higher than support for DI causal beliefs regarding fertility and age at marriage. This comparison illustrates the exceptionally high prevalence of DI causal beliefs regarding FDR in these countries.

Comparing Beliefs in Possible Causes of Development

To this point, we have focused on the prevalence and strength of DI causal beliefs concerning FDR and family matters. We now consider how respondents ranked various societal attributes for achieving development. As we mentioned earlier, we presented respondents with five attributes—gender equality, freedom of choice, religiosity, democracy, and integrity in government—that might help further development in their countries. We asked respondents to identify the first and second most efficacious things for making their countries more developed (section III of table 2). The first and second choices of respondents from Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, and Turkey are displayed in figure 6.

Figure 6 shows that “governmental issues” was perceived as the most important factor for achieving development in all four countries. Of the five choices, democracy and integrity in government were perceived as the most important two. We interpret “integrity in government” to be a positive statement about the “absence of government corruption.” Respondents in Iraq and Lebanon identified integrity in government as one of the two most important factors, more than any other option given. Among Egyptians, integrity in government essentially tied with democracy as one of the two most important attributes

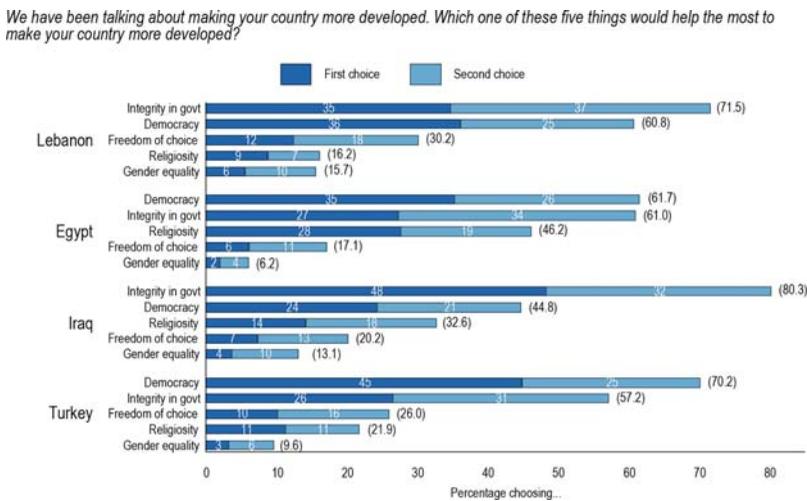


FIGURE 6. Percentage of People Who Believe Each Attribute Will Bring Development

Note: This question was not asked of respondents in Saudi Arabia. Percentages reported in marginal parentheses report the “DI response” and are the sum of first and second choices. Countries and bars are sorted from highest to lowest prevalence of DI response.

for bringing development. Turkish respondents chose democracy and integrity as the two most important items, but they indicated that government integrity was less important to development than democracy. Although democracy was endorsed less frequently than integrity in government as a cause of development in Iraq and Lebanon, between 45 and 61 percent of respondents in these countries endorsed democracy as one of the two most important determinants of development.

The great importance given to integrity in government is especially striking. The absence of corruption has been linked with development in the academic and policy literature (e.g., Collier 2000; Heidenheimer and Johnston 2002; Huntington 1965; UNODC 2004), and our results indicate that belief in this causal relationship has been broadly disseminated among publics in these Middle East countries. Irrespective of what academicians and policy people say about development and government integrity, there also have been cases of financial corruption in the recent histories of some countries, and respondents could be drawing on their experiences with such matters. Our data clearly suggest the importance of government integrity as a factor in development among the great majority of Egyptian, Iraqi, Lebanese, and Turkish citizens.

Many people rate both democracy and government integrity as more important influences on development than freedom of choice over one's own life. In fact, personal freedom was rated as one of the two most important factors by only 17 to 30 percent of respondents in the four countries. If we combine endorsement of personal freedom and democracy together as general indicators of freedom, we find huge endorsement of the belief that general freedom fosters development, again consistent with our hypotheses that many people believe development and freedom/democracy occur together.

Earlier we noted that very large percentages of people in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Turkey said that gender equality was highly related to development. Results reported in figure 6 demonstrate that when respondents were asked to contrast gender equality with freedom, religiosity, democracy, and integrity in government, very few endorsed gender equality as one of the two most important factors in bringing development. In fact, with just 6 to slightly less than 16 percent of respondents identifying it as one of the two most important factors facilitating development, gender equality was the least chosen factor in each country. This suggests that although gender equality is seen as related to development by large numbers of people, it is seen as a less important cause of development than other measured factors.

A fair percentage of respondents rated more religiosity as one of the two most important influences on development (Egypt = 46, Iraq = 33, Lebanon = 16, and Turkey = 22 percent). The prevalence of the belief that religiosity causes development is important for our theoretical framework because religious beliefs and values are often viewed as obstacles to development (Harrison 1985) or as increasingly vestigial attributes of modernity (Norris and Inglehart 2003). Yet substantial numbers, especially in Egypt and Iraq, endorsed more religiosity as one of the two most important factors facilitating development. This is consistent with the notion that opinion leaders in the Middle East who promote Islamic development models that intertwine religious ideals with mainstream development models are influencing some people's causal beliefs.

The lower proportion of people in Lebanon who reported religion as being an important factor in facilitating development is likely tied to the greater degree of religious diversity there. Islam is less predominant in Lebanon than in the other countries, and Islamic opinion leaders in Lebanon are likely to have less influence than they do in Egypt and Iraq, so we speculate that the preference of Islamic developmental models over mainstream developmental models is a less common occurrence in Lebanon.

The Distribution of Developmental Idealism Causal Beliefs across Population Subgroups

We now address our third motivating question: Do DI causal beliefs in a positive FDR-development relationship vary by social and demographic groups within countries? To answer this question, we examine beliefs by the respondent characteristics of education, gender, and age. For this analysis, we took a global perspective and created an additive index summing the responses to the four FDR questions reported in figures 3 and 4. For each question, responses were coded from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating strong rejection of DI causal beliefs and 5 indicating strong endorsement of DI causal beliefs (“don’t know” responses were coded 3). This additive index ranges from 4 to 20, and higher scores indicate stronger belief in a positive FDR-development relationship. We pooled the data from all five countries and report the mean scores for this scale by categories of education, gender, and age in figure 7.

The almost total absence of variation in beliefs in a positive FDR-development relationship by categories of education, gender, and age demonstrates the pervasiveness of such beliefs across important subnational groups. Among respondents with less than a secondary education, the mean score was 15.0. The mean score was 15.4 among those with a secondary education, for a difference of 0.4 between the two groups on the 16-point index. The 0.2 difference between male and female respondents was even smaller than

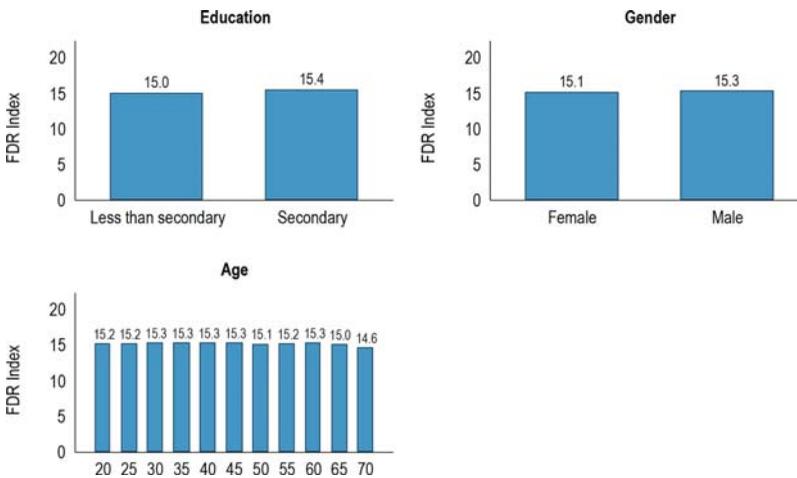


FIGURE 7. Prevalence of Developmental Thinking (FDR Index) by Education, Gender and Age
 Note: DI is here measured using the FDR index, a four-item additive index composed of questions reported in figures 3 and 4. Age was recoded into 5-year age intervals (e.g., 15–20=20; 21–25=25), with the upper value of each age interval reported above.

that observed for education. Age differences concerning beliefs were not meaningfully different either, varying by 0.3 or lower for every age group except the oldest (70+), which had an index score of 14.6. These results suggest not only that DI causal beliefs are high in the general public but that they are remarkably high and uniform across subpopulations.

CONCLUSIONS

Using survey data from nationally representative samples in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, this research set out to document the extent to which people in the Middle East viewed personal freedom, democracy, and human rights as either a cause or a consequence of development. We hypothesized that the voluminous academic and policy literature and discourse, combined with the international cross-sectional correlation between development and FDR, would lead the majority of people in these countries to espouse belief in a positive association between development and FDR, even despite resistance to some aspects of DI. We hypothesized that these forces would be more powerful than the scholarly and policy literature discussing alternative development models and the fact that there is little over-time association between development and FDR in the Middle East.

Analysis confirmed that on most dimensions people in these five countries perceived strong causal associations between development and FDR. Although we cannot know from our data which forces produced the belief that development and FDR are intertwined, we can conclude that, overall, the forces producing these causal beliefs are stronger than those producing the opposite causal beliefs that development and FDR are not positively intertwined. Also, the lack of data from outside the Middle East makes it impossible for us to compare causal beliefs in that region with causal beliefs in other regions. We advocate for more research on these issues.

Substantial majorities in all five countries reported believing that development brings greater personal freedom, democracy, and human rights. Similarly, in four of the five countries substantial majorities believed more personal freedom would increase development. Our research also demonstrates that beliefs in the causal connections between development and FDR are widely accepted within subcategories of the population in each country. Belief in causal connections between FDR and development did not appreciably vary by age, gender, and education.

Iraqi and Turkish respondents were more likely to view development as a cause of personal freedom rather than a consequence. Although our goal is to evaluate overall endorsement of DI causal beliefs in the five countries and not to make comparisons across countries, we offer some speculations about Iraq and Turkey. We also advocate for future research to examine systematically the reasons for these differences.

In the case of Iraq, the results may be related to the fact that the data were collected several years after the ouster of Saddam Hussein and the transition of political authority from foreign administrators to democratically elected leaders. The immediate effects of war, occupation, and radical political reforms likely weighed heavily on Iraqis' views. Regardless of the unique experience of the Iraqi public in recent years, they still reported a belief in the

relationship between development and FDR on par with the views reported in the other countries. Considering the magnitude of social change that the Iraqi public experienced in the years immediately prior to data collection, the strength of the beliefs among Iraqis regarding the relationship between development and FDR is stunning.

There are many possible explanations of the comparatively lower endorsement among Turkish respondents for the idea that FDR and development go together. One possibility is that the language and cultural differences between Turkey and the Arabic countries are relevant here. Also of possible relevance is the fact that Turkey has long been at the crossroads between Europe and the Middle East and has had more experience with democracy than the other countries. In addition, DI has been a very important element of Turkish public life for nearly a century, with many elements of it having been adopted as official government policy (Kavas 2015; Kavas and Thornton 2013). Such extensive experience with DI as public policy may have given the Turkish people more opportunities than others to see how the DI model was less successful than promised in bringing prosperity. Many of them may therefore be more skeptical of DI causal beliefs. In addition, the Turkey of today emerged out of the Ottoman Empire, which for centuries was one of the most powerful and important states in the region. It is possible that at least some Turkish citizens have idealized their historical roots in that empire, and this may have made them more skeptical of the causal beliefs of DI.

Public opinion in Turkey may also be affected by the country's recent experience with the European Union (EU). Public opinion polls in Turkey show that only 25 percent view the EU favorably and less than 40 percent want Turkey to join the EU (Pew Research Center 2014). These relatively low rates may be the result of the EU's reluctance to admit Turkey for so long. The EU's denial of admission may also have resulted in many Turks rejecting the idea that Western ideals as reflected in DI are necessary for Turkey's development. In addition, Turkey's economy seems to be doing well outside the EU, which may further weaken Turkish endorsement of DI.

The findings from this research not only provide further empirical support for the widespread prevalence of DI but also extend the literature on DI beyond family and demographic life to the political sphere. Previous research has shown that the great majority of people around the world believe there is an association between development and gender equality, age at marriage, fertility, and control over choice of spouse. Our research shows that the percentages of respondents expressing causal beliefs about development and FDR are as high as or higher than the percentages expressing causal beliefs about development and family matters.

Although we have shown that on most questions substantial majorities in these five countries reported belief in a positive association between development and FDR that is consistent with the ideas of mainline academic and policy discourse, we do not suggest that public opinion exactly matches elite opinion. And, as we discussed earlier, there are a variety of strands of thought among academic, governmental, and policy elites concerning how FDR and development are interrelated. We expect that public opinion lacks the kind of depth expressed in academic and policy literature, instead being vague and fuzzy. Nevertheless, such fuzzy causal beliefs can be powerful.

The close association between development and FDR in public opinion raises a conceptual issue: perhaps many people conflate FDR and development so closely that they see FDR as part of development, not just related to development. Although acceptance of this point of view presents issues of how to conceptualize the ideas, it would make the main conclusion of our paper even stronger. Instead of development and FDR being closely related in public opinion, as we have conceptualized it, FDR would be conceptualized as being as much a dimension of development as education and income. However, the fact that significant minorities do not see development and FDR to be related leads us to prefer to think of FDR and development as being related but distinct concepts, at least in many people's heads. Further research on how people conceptualize these issues would be helpful.

One of the more surprising findings of this research was that nearly half of respondents in Egypt and a third of respondents in Iraq reported believing that increased religiosity would bring more development. This finding also provides evidence that a substantial number of people in these countries have alternative or hybrid models of development that include religion as an influence on development. A promising line of future research would explore the ideational associations between religion and development more thoroughly.

The extent to which people espouse positive attitudes toward development and also believe that FDR causes development has important implications for the entire region, providing insights into some of the possible ideological underpinnings of political campaigns in the region (Hunter 2013). Since large numbers of people in each country want more development and also believe that good and democratic government is an essential determinant of development, it is possible that the idealism of the developmental model may serve as a motivating force for sociopolitical movements in support of more democratic governance in Middle Eastern countries. ■

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1. Scholars today know that drawing causal conclusions from cross-sectional data is problematic, but there is no reason to assume that people at the grassroots are aware of this. Our point is not that ordinary people are sophisticated social scientists who mentally fit regression lines to data, but we believe it likely that some have rough mental images of cross-sectional relationships that influence their views about such relationships. In any event, anyone with even a vague understanding of these observed cross-sectional correlations would find support for the developmental narrative propagated by international organizations and with cultural models espousing a positive association between FDR and development.