



**Flamur Ismaili**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3254-7126>

PhD Department of International Relations, Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, Türkiye,  
flamur.ismaili1992@gmail.com

**Erdal Bayar**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1726-7989>

Van Yüzüncüyıl University, Erciş Faculty of Business Administration, Türkiye, Uluslararası  
İlişkiler Bölümü, Türkiye, erdalbayar@yyu.edu.tr.

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## Riding Samuel Huntington's Waves of Democracy: Unveiling the Middle East's Path and Egypt's Democratic Quest

### Abstract

This study explores the complex dynamics of democratization in the Middle East, with a particular focus on Egypt. Through an in-depth analysis of Egypt's political evolution, the paper examines the historical, social, and economic factors that have shaped its struggle for democratic governance. The research highlights the pivotal moments in Egypt's recent history, including the Arab Spring and its aftermath, to illustrate the challenges and opportunities faced by the country in its quest for democracy. By contextualizing Egypt's experience within the broader Middle Eastern landscape, the study provides insights into the region's unique political environment, the role of external influences, and the interplay between authoritarian legacies and democratic aspirations. The findings underscore the importance of addressing structural impediments, fostering inclusive political participation, and ensuring the protection of civil liberties to pave the way for sustainable democratization in Egypt and the wider Middle East.

**Keywords:** Samuel Huntington, Democratization, Egypt, Middle East, Political participation



## Samuel Huntington'ın Demokrasi Dalgaları Üzerine: Ortadoğu'nun Demokratik Yolu ve Mısır'ın Demokrasi Mücadelesi

### Öz

*Bu çalışma, özellikle Mısır'a odaklanarak Orta Doğu'daki demokratikleşmenin karmaşık dinamiklerini incelemektedir. Mısır'ın siyasi evrimini derinlemesine analiz eden çalışma, demokratik yönetim mücadelesini şekillendiren tarihi, sosyal ve ekonomik faktörleri incelemektedir. Araştırma, ülkenin demokrasi arayışında karşılaştığı zorlukları ve fırsatları göstermek için Arap Baharı ve sonrası da dahil olmak üzere Mısır'ın yakın tarihindeki önemli anları vurgulamaktadır. Mısır'ın deneyimini daha geniş Orta Doğu manzarası içinde bir bağlama oturtan çalışma, bölgenin kendine özgü siyasi ortamı, dış etkilerin rolü ve otoriter miraslar ile demokratik özlemler arasındaki etkileşim hakkında fikir vermektedir. Bulgular, Mısır'da ve daha geniş anlamda Orta Doğu'da sürdürülebilir demokratikleşmenin önünü açmak için yapısal engelleri ele almanın, kapsayıcı siyasi katılımı teşvik etmenin ve sivil özgürlüklerin korunmasını sağlamanın önemini vurgulamaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Samuel Huntington, Demokratikleşme, Mısır, Orta Doğu, Siyasi Katılım

### Introduction

Democracy, while widely advocated as a system of governance, is an intricate concept that defies a one-size-fits-all definition. At its core, democracy is characterized by popular participation, free and fair elections, and the protection of individual rights and liberties. However, its application and interpretation vary across regions, shaped by cultural, historical, and socio-political factors. In this paper, we begin by exploring the fundamental intricacies of defining democracy, examining the different frameworks and models that scholars have used to explain this evolving system. Understanding these complexities is key to contextualizing the broader discourse on democratization. Building on this foundation, we engage with Samuel Huntington's theory of Waves of Democracy, which outlines the historical ebb and flow of democratic governance globally. Huntington's model presents three distinct waves of democratization, each followed by periods of reversal or stagnation. This section delves into the underlying factors that contributed to the rise and decline of democracy over time, and the challenges that various countries have faced in maintaining democratic systems. Through this analysis, we aim to offer a nuanced understanding of democratization, one that acknowledges both progress and setbacks. The paper then shifts focus to the Middle East, a region often criticized for its lack of democratic governance. We provide a "report card" on democracy in the region, assessing the political landscape of various Middle Eastern countries and the efforts—or lack thereof—toward democratization. The discussion highlights the complex interplay of political, cultural, and economic factors that have hindered the widespread adoption of democracy. Additionally, we explore why democracy has struggled to take root in

the Middle East, examining historical legacies, authoritarianism, and external influences that have shaped the region's governance structures. In the final section, we take a detailed look at Egypt's political history as a case study of the broader Middle Eastern experience with democracy. By examining key periods, such as the Nasser era, the leadership of Anwar Sadat, and the long rule of Hosni Mubarak, we trace the trajectory of Egyptian politics and its fluctuating relationship with democratic principles. Each era brought different visions for Egypt's governance, from Nasser's socialism and pan-Arabism to Sadat's opening to the West, and Mubarak's authoritarian stability. Through this historical lens, we explore how Egypt's political landscape has evolved and what lessons can be drawn for the future of democracy in the region.

### **1.The Intricacies of Defining Democracy**

The word democracy is derived from the Greek words *demos* (people) and *kratos* (government) and literally means "government of the people". It emerged as the political system of some Greek city-states, especially Athens, in the mid-5th century BC (Dahl, 2015). Democracy, which was originally a political system in which the people, or rather citizens, directly participated in governance, has been practiced in many different ways over time. Historically, especially in most partial democracies and newly emerging democratic governments, the recognition of the right to citizenship has been subject to serious limitations. In these democracies, large sections of the population have been denied the right to vote and be elected on the basis of age, gender, class, race, tax payment, property ownership, literacy, etc. While the formation, participation and support of political organizations was a right granted only to limited social categories, most of these limitations have now been removed after long struggles, sometimes leading to bloody civil wars and international wars (Schmitter, 1995). In modern democracies, all citizens have the right to participate in the political system, provided they meet certain conditions.

There is no unanimous definition of democracy, nor is there a single form of democratic practice. Countries give democracy a unique shape depending on their socio-economic conditions, established state structure and political practices. For this reason, different practices of democracies and, in parallel, different effects of these practices emerge. However, it is still possible to say that there are certain characteristics that are meant by modern democracy. Considering the many definitions of democracy, it is possible to say that the definitions are similar. Modern political democracy is "...a form of government in which those who govern are held publicly accountable for their actions by citizens acting indirectly,

through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives (Philippe and Schmitter, 1995) democracy can be defined as "the institutional arrangements for making political decisions. According to another frequently cited definition, "institutional arrangements for making political decisions, in which individuals acquire decision-making power as a result of a competitive effort to win the support of the public" constitute the basis of democracy (Schumpeter, 1943). There is no doubt that the organization of free elections is crucial for democratic regimes, but regular elections that are administered impartially and in which votes are honestly counted do not by themselves guarantee the existence of democracy. Some thinkers have argued that the mere fact of elections is sufficient for the existence of democracy, even if only certain parties and candidates are elected or even if a large part of the population cannot freely participate. Terry Karl has called this idea electoralism. He argues that electoralism is wrong because it privileges elections over other aspects of democracy and ignores the fact that multi-party elections - even if competitive and non-predetermined in their outcome - exclude a significant part of the population from contesting power, defending and advancing their interests. Electoralism also fails to take into account that important decision-making arenas may remain outside the control of elected public officials (Dahl, 2003) Fareed Zakaria argues that when democratically elected governments are re-elected, they often ignore the constitutional limits of their powers and deprive their citizens of their fundamental rights and freedoms. He calls this phenomenon, which he claims is on the rise internationally, illiberal democracy (Zakaria, 1997). The new way of thinking about democracy is rooted in modern societies, so the new idea of democracy did not emerge until the 19th century. Although its beginnings can be traced back to the Renaissance, during the period between the Renaissance and the 19th century, ideas about democracy took shape in the context of the development of modern, industrial-capitalist societies (Sorensen, 1993). In this period, there have been many quite different contributions to the debates on democracy. However, this study will not include these debates as they do not constitute the main axis of our study. Defining democracy as a political system, Robert A. Dahl suggests that a democratic system should include the following elements;

1. Freedom to form and join organizations
2. Freedom of expression
3. Right to vote
4. The right of political leaders to compete for votes and support
5. Bringing qualified/qualified people into management
6. Alternative sources of information

7. Free and fair elections

8. Institutions that determine government policy are dependent on votes or other forms of disclosure

If these conditions are met, political democracy emerges. Although some authors refer to this as liberal democracy, Robert A. Dahl argues that since there is no country that satisfactorily and completely fulfills the above requirements, the existing systems are polyarchies (Robert Alan Dahl, 2003). Robert A. Dahl reserved the label of democracy for the ideal type of country that fully meets the above conditions and does not yet exist (Sorensen, 1993) The above-mentioned eight pillars encompass the three fundamental dimensions of political democracy: contestation (political competition), participation, and civil and political freedoms (Sorensen, 1993).

## **2. Samuel Huntington's Waves of Democracy: The Complexities of Democratization**

Democratization, in short, means the expansion of democracy within a country or worldwide. According to Robert A. Dahl, democratization has two main dimensions: liberalization and participation. Public and political freedoms need to be ensured both to expand participation in political processes within the country and to ensure fair and honest democratic elections (Sorensen, 1993). In this way, countries will make progress towards full democracy. We can say that democratic regimes are increasing today, at least in terms of numbers, while authoritarian regimes are decreasing. But does this provide us with sufficient evidence that democratization is a long-term, global trend that is "fundamentally irreversible"? (Huntington, 2010). Although democratization is portrayed as an inevitable and irreversible process according to Tocqueville, history has also witnessed what Samuel Huntington calls a "reverse wave" and some countries governed by a democratic regime have become authoritarian.

While there are authors who argue that democracy is on the rise globally, there are also authors who are concerned about the qualities of newly established "democratic" regimes and argue that democratization is not moving in an upward trend as it is believed to be (Saxer, 2009). In his book *The Third Wave*, Samuel Huntington argues that democratization has occurred in waves throughout history and that democracy has spread in this way. According to Samuel Huntington, we are currently in the third wave of democratization. The first long wave of democratization covers a period of about a century between 1828 and 1926 (Huntington, 2010). Huntington used criteria for democracy for the period in question that

give the appearance of a very weak democratization when compared to today's criteria. Considering the conditions of the period, we can say that the criteria set as minimum conditions are reasonable. The two criteria set by Jonathan Sunshine for 19th century political systems to be characterized as democratic under the conditions of the period are as follows: "1. 50% of adult males having the right to vote, or 2. A responsible executive, elected by the people in general elections, which must maintain the support of a majority in an elected parliament (Huntington, 2010, p. 28-29). During this period of democratization, democratic institutions gradually developed in many countries under the influence of the American and French Revolutions. In the historical period between 1922 and 1942, which Huntington identifies as the First Reverse Wave period, it was observed that some, but not all, of the countries that had previously been democracies returned to non-democratic modes of governance. Taking Mussolini's March on Rome as the starting point of this period, Huntington points out that military coups took place in Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in less than three years after this event (Huntington, 2010). Stating that the second wave of democratization took place between 1943 and 1962, Huntington called the period in question the "Second Short Wave of Democratization". Although this wave started with many countries turning towards democratic governments during the Second World War, it did not last as long as the first one. In the late 1950s, when regime changes took on an explicitly authoritarian outlook, the period that Huntington characterizes as the second reverse wave began (Huntington, 2010). The reverse wave, which continued until the mid-1970s, gave way to the third wave of democratization. Today, we are in the third wave. In short, the following historical periods have been identified for the three waves of democratization and the two reverse waves Huntington claims.

*Table 1.*

-The first long wave of democratization.....	1828-1926
-The first reverse wave.....	1922-1942
-Second short wave of democratization.....	1943-1962
-Second reverse wave.....	1958-1975
-Third wave of democratization.....	1974-

account the periods in question, gives the impression that there is a fluctuation between the periods. (See Table 1.) The number of countries with a population of less than 1 million,

which Huntington did not take into account when creating the table, is 151 for 1973. In 1990, when Huntington published his study, 165 countries were evaluated by Freedom House. In Freedom House's study, which covers the period between 1973 and 2014 and categorizes countries as "free", "partly free" and "not free", the number of countries in the "free" and "partly free" categories has increased while the number of "not free" countries has decreased. In 1973, out of 151 countries in the world, 44 (29%) were free countries, 42 (28%) were partially free countries, while 65 (43%) countries were in the category of non-free countries. According to 2014 data, out of 195 countries in the world, 89 (46%) countries are free, 55 (28%) countries are partially free and 51 (26%) countries are not free. (House, 2015) As can be seen, there is a decline in the number of authoritarian regimes and their proportion in all countries. The adoption of democracy by more and more countries, in short, the process of democratization, continues. However, a closer look at the picture presented by Freedom House reveals that the number and proportion of authoritarian regimes have fluctuated sharply in some years. For example, in 1992, 38 (21%) countries in the world were categorized as not free, which was the lowest point, while in 1993, just one year later, the number of not free countries had risen to 55 (29%). Similarly, the number of non-free countries rose from 51 (30%) in 1987 to 68 (41%) within a year. Although it is not possible to consider such breaks as reverse waves due to their lack of continuity, we can make sense of them as they show that the process of democratization is not an inevitable process and that the possibility of reverse waves is always present.

### **3.The Middle East's Report Card On Democracy**

In the category of "hybrid regimes", which lies between democratic countries and authoritarian regimes and has some characteristics from both categories, Turkey ranked 89th, Palestine 93rd, and Iraq 111th, three Middle Eastern countries that were slightly above the authoritarianism line. The other 16 countries in the region were categorized as authoritarian regimes. According to the 2010 democracy rankings, Kuwait ranked 114th, Morocco 116th, Jordan 117th, Bahrain 122nd, Algeria 125th, Qatar 137th, Egypt 138th, Oman 143rd, Tunisia 144th, Yemen 146th, United Arab Emirates 148th, Syria 152nd, Libya 158th, and Saudi Arabia 160th (Index, 2010). According to Freedom House's 2010 assessments, it can be concluded that the countries of the Middle East and North Africa are in a very bad situation in terms of freedoms, political and civil rights, as only Israel was categorized as a "free" country in the region. Lebanon, Morocco and Kuwait were rated as "partly free", while other countries in the region were rated as "not free". Libya, on the other hand, was categorized as the "worst

of the worst" in terms of freedom, political and civil rights (Freedom House, 2010). Freedom House's 2015 report shows that the region has not made progress in terms of political and civil rights. On the contrary, while Libya, the only country in the region to be categorized as "the worst of the worst" in 2010, was no longer in this category, by 2015 there were only two countries in the region (Syria and Saudi Arabia). With Tunisia's entry into the free country category, the number of free countries in the region has increased to two (Israel and Tunisia), while the status of other countries has not changed (Freedom House, 2010). When we look at the democracy ranking of the countries in the region in 2014, we see that while there is no country in the region that can be categorized as a "full democracy", Israel, which has the highest ranking in the region, ranks 36th and is considered as an "imperfect democracy". Tunisia, which follows Israel in the ranking, only ranks 70th and is the only other "imperfect democracy" in the region. Among other countries in the region, Turkey and Lebanon, which are categorized as "hybrid regimes", share the 98th place with the same average score. Of the last two countries in the region that are not categorized as authoritarian regimes, Palestine ranked 106th and Iraq 111th. All other regimes in the North Africa and Middle East region are ranked in the "authoritarian regimes" category. Morocco 116th, Algeria 117th, Libya 119th, Kuwait 120th, Jordan 121st, Qatar 136th, Egypt 138th, Oman 139th, Bahrain 147th, Yemen 149th, United Arab Emirates 152nd, Iran 158th, Saudi Arabia 161st, and Syria 163rd, showing that the region lags far behind in terms of democracy (Freedom House, 2010). Even a century after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, North Africa and the Middle East region has not made much progress in the field of democracy. Even in Turkey, the only Muslim country in the region where democracy has lasted for a long time, it has not been easy for democracy to get back on track, and the democratic process has often been interrupted by military coups and memorandums. Although there are many reasons why democracy is less widespread in the Middle East than in many other parts of the world, explaining the reasons for this requires a very comprehensive study, this study will only make some brief remarks on the lesser spread of democracy in the Middle East.

#### **4. Why Is Democracy Not Widespread in the Middle East?**

It has been argued that the Middle East is a very different cultural geography compared to Europe and that these differences constitute an exceptionality in terms of the historical development of the Middle East region. The difference of the Middle East region has often been described as a contrast to the high cultural values of Europe (Demirtaş, 2014). Studies attempting to explain the reasons for the prevalence of authoritarianism in the Middle East have generally focused on the relationship between Islam and democracy, traditional social



relations and political culture, and the rentier state theory. A brief review of these explanations will be useful to understand what kind of obstacles stand in the way of democratization in the Middle East.

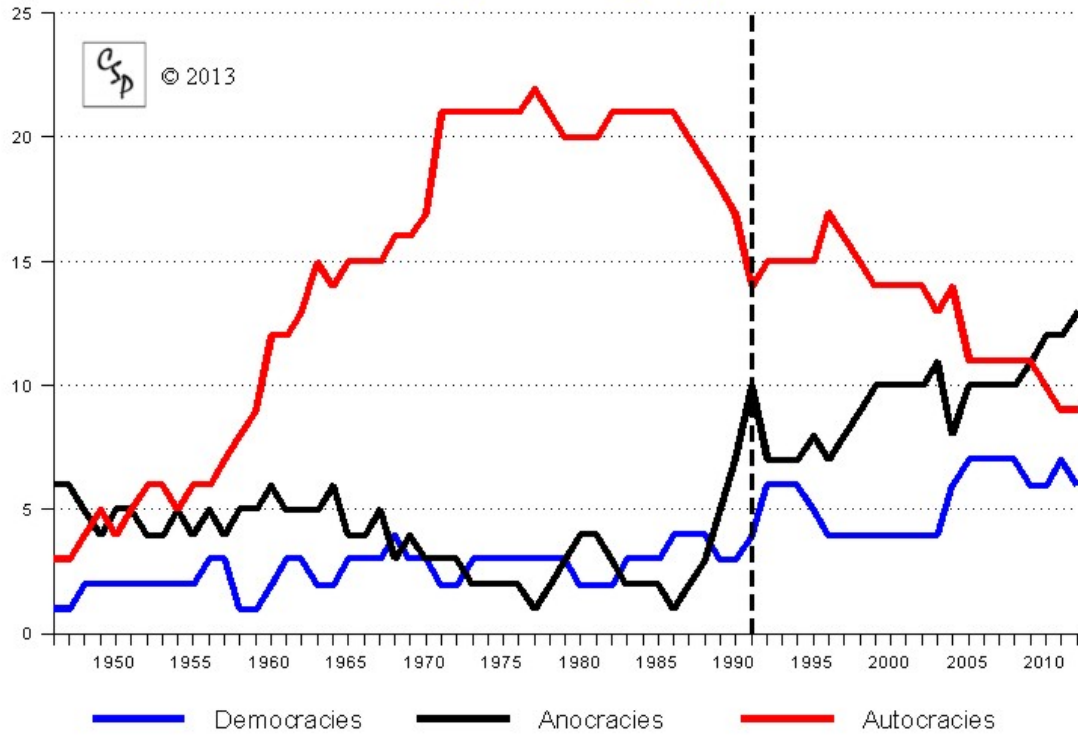
There is hardly a consensus on whether Islam poses an obstacle to the spread of democracy in the Middle East. However, it would be appropriate to mention the results of some studies that have gained a place in the literature. Elie Kedourie, in his book *Democracy and Arab Political Culture* (1992), argues that concepts such as popular sovereignty, equal suffrage, the rule of law, secularism, etc., which are the foundations of democracy in the western sense, are completely alien to Islamic political culture and therefore to Arab political culture (Demirtaş, 2014). He cites the failed attempts at transition to democracy in the Arab world as an example to support his argument. However, there are some problematic areas in Kedourie's analysis. First of all, it is worth noting that the principle of popular sovereignty, which is one of the fundamental values of Western political culture, was established after the historical, social, economic and cultural changes and transformations that Europe has experienced. Therefore, we can claim that social changes also transform political cultures. However, in his analysis, Kedourie generalizes without taking into account the fact that the examples he chose were selected from some events that took place in the first half of the 20th century and without taking into account the impact of the colonial experience of the region and the subsequent social and economic changes on political culture (Demirtaş, 2014). Accordingly, while we accept that the social and economic changes experienced in the Western world affect and transform political culture, we similarly conclude that the social and economic changes experienced by Middle Eastern societies do not transform political culture. Such an approach can be considered as an orientalist presupposition that eastern societies cannot develop/progress on their own. Another problem with Kedourie's analysis is that he assumes that there is a dominant uniform political culture in all of his selected examples. For as Gudrun Krämer has argued, "...the views of Islamic movements on issues such as democracy and pluralism are influenced not by a fixed Islamic doctrinal position but by the political context in which they operate." (Kramer) Moreover, according to Erdem Demirtaş, Alfred Stepan and Graeme Robertson examined the issue of Islam-democracy antagonism in terms of regular elections and political rights and concluded that "...religion has no meaningful role in explaining the lack of democracy in the Middle East" (Stepan and Robertson, 2003). Confucianism and Islam are the two cultures most frequently cited to support the claim that non-Western cultures are obstacles to democratization. In order to

understand the extent to which these cultures constitute obstacles to democratization, three important questions need to be answered. First, to what extent are traditional Confucian and Islamic values hostile to democracy? If they are hostile, to what extent do these cultures impede progress towards democracy? If they have hindered democratization, to what extent are they likely to continue to do so in the future? There is almost complete agreement in scholarly circles that Confucianism is either undemocratic or anti-democratic. Offsetting this is the existence of a merit-based system of promotion in this culture. However, this feature alone is not enough to call a system a democracy. As a matter of fact, in practice, it is observed that societies that are Confucian or influenced by Confucianism have a negative attitude towards democracy. This is because in these societies, individual rights exist to the extent that they are created by the state; it is not possible to say that there is a tradition of rights against the state (Stepan & Robertson, 2003).

According to Samuel Huntington, the case for "Islamic Democracy" is not as clear as that of Confucianism. Islamic culture contains elements that are both compatible and incompatible with democracy at the same time. In practice, Turkey is the only country in the Islamic world that has been able to maintain a democratic system for a long time. It is not possible to say that Turkey's experience with democracy has been smooth, as democracy in Turkey has been interrupted from time to time by military coups. Among the other Islamic countries, Pakistan has made three attempts at democracy, but none of these attempts have been long-lasting (Stepan & Robertson, 2003). While there are strong cultural barriers to democratization in Islamist and Confucian societies, it is difficult to argue that these barriers make democratic development impossible. First of all, it should be noted that similar claims have been made about Catholic culture in the past and have not been justified (Stepan & Robertson, 2003). Moreover, great cultural traditions such as Islam and Confucianism are very complex. There are elements compatible with democracy in every major culture, but there are also elements that are incompatible with democracy. Protestantism and Catholicism have elements that are incompatible with democracy. An important question for democratization is what elements of Islam and Confucianism are compatible with democracy and under what conditions the undemocratic elements in these cultures can be replaced. Finally, it should not be ignored that cultures are dynamic and not static. It can be observed that dominant beliefs and attitudes can change as cultures evolve (Stepan & Robertson, 2003). Therefore, we do not have enough evidence to think that a culture will forever maintain its undemocratic character. As a matter of fact, we observe that in countries in the Middle East region, which are much more authoritarian than other Islamic countries, authoritarianism has

visibly decreased in the period that Huntington claims as the third wave. Although we are still far from the desired points in terms of democracy, it is possible to talk about the existence of an improvement (See Table 2).

*Table 2. Regime Types in the Middle East Region: 1946-2012*  
(Polity IV Country Reports, Center for Systemic Peace).



Many states in the Middle East do not depend on the society as a source of revenue, but retain control over it as well, since most of their revenues come not from taxes but from outsourced trade (Eraslan, 2014). The rentier state distributes a significant portion of its income to the society, but the distribution is arbitrary rather than a concern to fulfill the requirements of the welfare state, and in the rentier state, where the aforementioned "rentier logic" prevails, the entire economy presents a hierarchical structure shaped according to the share of rent (Demirtaş, 2014). The fact that rentier states do not need tax revenues and therefore are not dependent on the people, according to researchers who draw on the European experience, leads to a lack of attention to the demands of the people and low representation. Many researchers argue that there is a positive correlation between the tax collection activities of the state and the demands for democratic representation. Accordingly, it is believed that in return for the cost of the taxes collected by the state (in return for the taxes paid by taxpayers), the public demands the right to political representation from the state. In fact, according to Luciani, the origin of democratic institutions lies in the state's need

to tax in order to sustain its activities (Luciani, 1994). However, authors who argue that it is difficult to establish a direct link between demands for democracy and taxation argue that state welfare expenditures may take precedence over the right to political representation for the people. Indeed, when we look at the public expenditures of rentier states, we can say that a large portion of the gross domestic product (GDP) is allocated to public expenditures. According to Luciani's data, Kuwait allocates 94.2%, Saudi Arabia 66.3% and Oman 55.5% of its GDP to public expenditures. Although the rentier state theory is generally perceived as a theory valid for the Middle East region, it is actually possible to find similar features in poor mineral exporting countries in different parts of the world (such as Nigeria, Malaysia, Indonesia, Mexico (Demirtaş, 2014). In short, an analysis of democracy in the Middle East through the rentier state theory would leave many missing points in need of explanation. We will not go into the debates on the rentier state and will be content with providing only this much information. As a result, there are some difficulties in explaining authoritarianism in the region through its cultural and social characteristics as well as its economic and political characteristics. Conflicting and even conflicting analyses lead to the emergence of new questions rather than answering them. There is still a need for explanations that are free from prejudices, supported by empirical data and have a theoretical basis.

### **5. A Brief Overview of Egyptian Political History**

After 1517, Egypt came under Ottoman rule and was left locally under the control of the Mamluks. This situation continued until 1798 when Egypt was occupied by France (Goldschmidt, 2007). However, the French advance in Egypt was not easy, as the Abu Khur-Aboukir naval battle, which took place after the occupation of Alexandria and Cairo, ended in a British victory and the French army under the future French emperor Napoléon Bonaparte lost contact with the homeland (Danişmend, 2011). In 1802, peace was established between the Ottoman Empire and France. After a vacuum of authority that lasted for about three years, this vacuum was filled with the appointment of Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Pasha as governor of Egypt in 1805 (Ari, 2005). The period of Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Pasha's governorship in Egypt constitutes an important turning point in Egyptian-Ottoman relations. Mehmet Ali Pasha, who increased his power in Egypt as a result of the reforms he realized, started a rebellion movement against the Ottoman Empire after a while and confronted the Ottomans with very serious difficulties (Goldschmidt, 2007). Mehmet Ali Pasha ensured that the governorship of Egypt was allocated to his clan, so after his death in 1849, Abbas Pasha, the son of his other son Tosun Pasha, became the governor of Egypt, since his eldest son İbrahim had died before him (Danişmend, 2011). Abbas Pasha (1849-1854) and his successor Sait Pasha (1854-1863)

were not as successful rulers as Mehmet Ali Pasha (Arı, 2005). The Suez Canal, the construction of which started during the reign of Sait Pasha (April 1859), would be completed and put into operation during the reign of Ismail Pasha, who succeeded him after his death. However, this investment, which significantly increased the economic value of Egypt, would cause the Egyptian government to face borrowing problems due to its significant cost. Ismail Pasha started to use the title and title of khedive (regent) in 1867. He also obtained from the Sultan the right to amend the law of succession to bind his descendants (Mansfield, 2011). In 1882, the British invaded Egypt on the pretext of an anti-Western protest in Alexandria and defeated Arabi's army at Tel el-Kebir. From this date onwards, it is possible to speak of a period of British de facto control that lasted until 1952. Britain declared that this occupation was temporary and did not specify a date when it would withdraw its forces. Britain, which had the intention of withdrawing its forces after the restoration of the administration in Egypt, maintained its military presence in Egypt despite the passage of many years and endeavored to preserve it (Arı, 2005). The 1895 Egyptian occupation of the Sudan, although led by the British, was mainly carried out by Egyptian troops on behalf of the khedive for Egypt. It was agreed to establish a joint British-Egyptian dominion in the Sudan, but Britons were appointed to senior administrative posts and the Khedive of Egypt always appointed a Briton to the office of governor-general on British advice. The administration of Sudan later became one of the most contentious issues between Britain and Egypt after Egypt's independence from Britain (Mansfield, 2011). Although the administration in Egypt was ostensibly in the hands of the khedives, the British governors and high commissioners had full control over the khedives. Therefore, the claim that the economic and political structure of Egypt was completely determined by Britain is not too far-fetched (Mansfield, 2011). After the death of the Egyptian Khedive Tawfiq Pasha, he was succeeded by his son Abbas II (1892-1914). During this period, Britain appointed Lord Baring (1883-1892), Lord Cromer (1892-1906), Sir Eldon Gorst (1907-1911) and Lord Kitchener (1911-1914) as governors of Egypt and exercised its control over Egypt through these individuals. In 1914, as the Ottoman Empire sided with the allied states in the First World War, Britain declared a protectorate regime in Egypt. (Mansfield, 2011) From 1914 onwards, the Khedives of Egypt started to use the title "Sultan". The Sultanate of Egypt was renamed the Kingdom of Egypt after the independence of the Egyptian state and Ahmed Fuad (1917-1936) used the title of King (Mansfield, 2011), (Arı, 2005). During the period assumed by Samuel Huntington as the first long wave of democratization (1828-1926), Egypt is generally considered to have been part of the Ottoman

Empire. With the occupation of 1882, it became a de facto protectorate of Britain. With the beginning of World War I in 1914, this status gained official status Marsot (2007, p. 47). The discontent and tension created by the British presence in Egypt and its influence on the administration soon turned into a nationalist wave. British authorities unilaterally declared Egyptian independence in 1922. The founding of the sovereign Kingdom of Egypt was confronted with numerous challenges. King Fuad, being an authoritarian, did not anticipate a constitution that would impose restrictions on his power or possess robust enforcement mechanism. In contrast, the members of the founding committee maintained a divergent perspective. The resulting document was a middle ground between the ideal and the actual; it was a flawed constitution, nevertheless the monarch declined to endorse a new constitution and received backing from the British government. The constitution conferred legislative authority upon the monarch and a two-chambered parliament. The monarch exercised the power to select and designate the prime minister, as well as to remove the government, prorogue, and suspend the parliament. As the president of the Senate, he also appointed two-fifths of its members. The monarch was thus granted excessive authority and utilized this authority to weaken the operation of the parliament; no chamber was deposed by a vote of no confidence, and similarly, no house remained in session for the designated duration. The monarch inevitably disbanded the parliament, opting to govern through persons lacking popular support and representing no political party, rather than through parties chosen by the people. Traditionally, government was mostly operational through decrees rather than through parliamentary actions (Marsot, 2007, p. 98-99). Saad Zaglul, who was influenced by Wilsonian principles in the post-World War I environment, thought that Egypt's independence could be achieved if he participated in the Paris talks and voiced the problems of the Egyptian people there. For this purpose, Saad Zaglul and his friends, who wanted to participate in the Paris talks by organizing a diplomatic delegation, faced the obstruction of the British High Commission and were deported to Malta on March 8, 1919 together with the leading members of the delegation. This event led to mass demonstrations throughout the country and the High Commissioner stepped back and released Saad Zaglul and his friends. The confirmation of the British mandate for Egypt at the Paris Peace Conference was a great disappointment for Egyptian nationalists (Mansfield, 2011; Ari, 2005). On February 28, 1922, Britain made a unilateral declaration on granting independence to Egypt. Accordingly, the defense of Egypt, the protection of the transportation routes of the British Empire, the protection of foreigners and minorities residing in Egypt and the continuation of British rule in Sudan were envisaged. Within this framework, the British occupation forces, advisors and other representatives

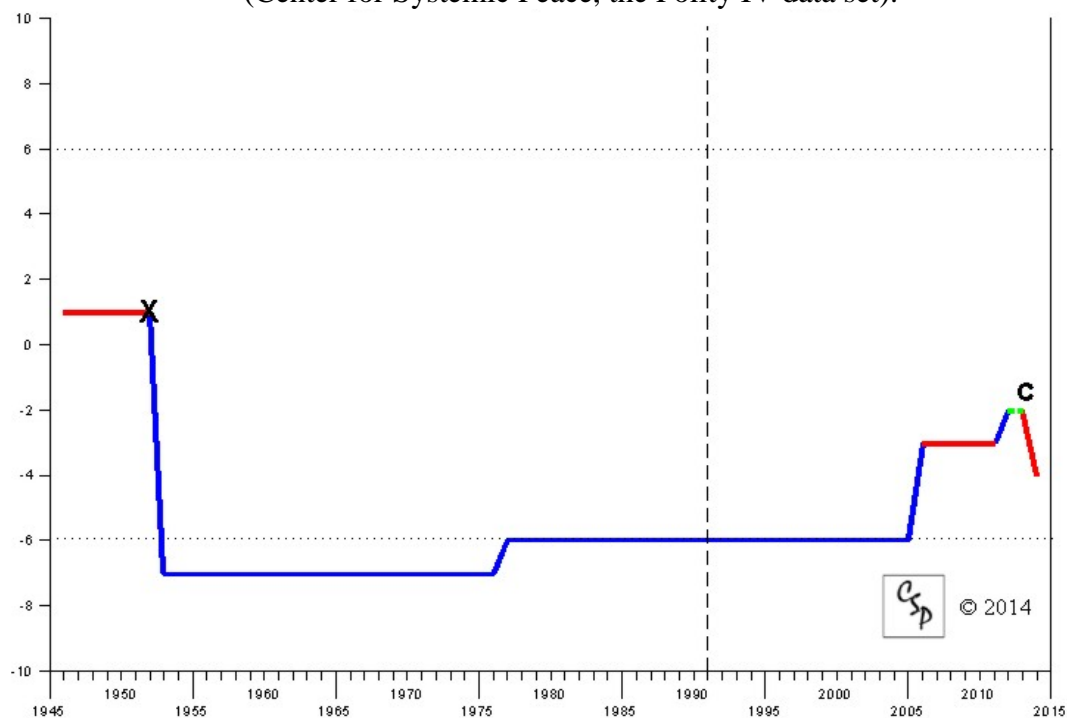
would remain in Egypt as they were (Mansfield, 2011; Arı, 2005). In accordance with the Constitution adopted by the British in 1923, elections were held in Egypt in January 1924. In the first elections held in "independent" Egypt, the Wafd party, which had become a political party in 1923, won the majority in the parliament and Saad Zaglul formed the government (Mansfield, 2011; Arı, 2005). Although Egypt was called "Independent" at this time, it was observed that Britain often intervened in Egyptian internal affairs. Therefore, it is difficult to claim that the Kingdom of Egypt was actually an independent state until 1952, when Egypt became fully independent from Britain. When analyzing the period between 1922 and 1952, Britain's influence over Egypt during this period must be taken into account. Consequently, Egypt was administered under a parliamentary system while its monarchy remained in power until 1952. While it is accurate to refer to Egypt as a Constitutional Monarchy from 1922 to 1952, it can be contended that the democratic elements of this government were lacking in strength. For instance, the 1930 constitutional framework clearly enlarged the king's prerogatives and resulted in a diminishment of power for the parliament. The monarch possessed the authority to reject any legislation and appoint the majority of senators, as opposed to the limited two-fifths criteria (Weipert-Fenner, 2020, p. 66-67). In this context, it seems more likely that the regime in Egypt between 1922 and 1952 was included in the "first reverse wave" claimed by Samuel Huntington.

#### **6. Egypt During the Nasser Era: A Historical Perspective**

According to Samuel Huntington, the weakening of authoritarian regimes after World War II and the victory of the Allied Powers caused the collapse of authoritarian systems. This provided an opportunity for the establishment of new democratic regimes in Europe and Asia, especially with the collapse of fascist regimes. In addition, anti-colonialist movements gained momentum and many countries gained independence. Some of these countries turned to democratic regimes after gaining their independence. Huntington, who also included the dynamics of the Cold War and the effects of economic growth in these factors, claimed that a wave of democratization took place until the 1960s. When the political developments in Egypt are evaluated, although the collapse of the undemocratic Constitutional Monarchy regime in Egypt seemed like a positive step towards democratization, it was soon understood that the new regime did not give enough importance to democracy. The single-party regime established by Gamal Abdel Nasser brought the struggle between elites in the administration of the country to an inter-institutional dimension (Weipert-Fenner, 2020, p. 79-82). In this context, the regime between 1968 and 1975 in Egypt is more suitable to be evaluated within

the "second reverse wave" claimed by Samuel Huntington. At the beginning of 1953, despite the opposition of Mohamed Najib, Gamal Abdel Nasser ordered the closure of all political parties in the country. James Jankovski argues that there were two processes in Egypt between mid-1952 and the end of 1954. First, the Revolutionary Command Council's gradual marginalization and elimination of the political forces in the country and the concentration of power in its own hands, and second, Gamal Abdel Nasser's increasing dominant role within the Revolutionary Command Council and his rise from the first among equals to a position of supremacy over the other members of the council (Goldschmidt, 2008). In early 1956, a new constitution was drafted and approved by the Revolutionary Command Council. In addition, a new single party called the National Union was established and a referendum was held for both the adoption of the constitution and the presidential election. With the election of Nasser as president, the Revolutionary Command Council was dissolved. In the elections held on June 3, 1957, two women candidates managed to be elected to parliament and became the first female parliamentarians in the Arab world (Hala, 2003). However, this positive step taken in the name of democratic participation could not be taken too far. According to Polity IV, the Nasser era was characterized by an autocratic regime in Egypt.

*Table 3. Authority Trends in Egypt 1946-2013*  
 (Center for Systemic Peace, the Polity IV data set).



Founded in 1958 by Egypt and Syria, the United Arab Republic, which Egypt and Syria decided to unite politically as a result of referendums held in both countries, could not last long and ended on September 28, 1961 after the coup d'état in Syria. Nasser's idea of Arab



Socialism was also effective in the emergence of this situation (Goldschmidt, 2008). Despite Syria's secession from the United Arab Republic, Egypt continued to use this name until 1971. From 1961 until his death in 1970, Nasser maintained the idea of Arab Socialism (a mixture of Arab nationalism and Socialism) and put democracy on the back burner in the unitary, socialist republic he built. In Egypt, where political participation was limited due to the one-party regime, elections were held for local, regional and national Arab Socialist Union councils and the Egyptian national assembly was reorganized with the new constitution adopted in 1964 (Goldschmidt, 2008). Since the 1969 elections, in addition to the elected parliamentarians, some deputies have been selected by the president when necessary. In these elections, 10 people were appointed as deputies by Nasser. This is due to the new constitution that stipulates that at least 50% of the deputies in the parliamentary elections must be farmers or workers (Hala, 2003). In short, we cannot say that Egypt did not perform very well in terms of democracy under Nasser.

### **7. Egypt under Anwar Sadat**

Following Nasser's death and Anwar Sadat's assumption of power, a new chapter began in Egypt's economic development paradigm. Under Sadat's leadership, Egypt endeavored to reintegrate private capital into the economy, diminish the state's involvement in the economy, and steer the economy in a new direction through a sequence of open-up measures (Tür, 2011, p. 189). For this modernization to work, the economy needs to grow, which can't happen without funding from other countries. The industry should be opened up to the rest of the world in this case. The government should play less of a part in the business, and the private sector should get stronger. However, the *infitah* did not work. In fact, the *infitah* was a huge letdown when it was seen as a long-term plan for restructuring that included building up the justice system and making sure that people could get jobs (Tür, 2011, p. 190). During the initial years of his presidency, Anwar al-Sadat consistently enhanced the function of parliament as a fundamental source of support, resulting in an increasing level of activity inside the assembly. Once al-Sadat gained increased authority following the strategic triumph of 1973 and implemented his contentious *infitah* reforms, he came to the realization that he was unable to exert complete control over the institution as he had desired. The contentiousness of his relationship with the parliament escalated, especially following the bread riots of 1977. Subsequently, public opposition to some policies was directed towards parliament, prompting al-Sadat to implement interinstitutional restructuring aimed at undermining it. Given the ongoing nature of the struggle at the time of al-Sadat's assassination

in October 1981, it is challenging to determine if the first empowering changes implemented by parliament would have inadvertently eroded al-Sadat's legitimacy and ultimately led to the downfall of his government (Weipert-Fenner, 2020, p. 71).

Anwar Sadat, who took power after Nasser's death, was slightly more democratic than Nasser during his 10 years in office. Although he continued to implement the Nasser-era electoral systems in the first years of his rule, his easing of political pressure on the opposition created a relatively more participatory environment (Verdani, 2011). In the 1971 parliamentary elections, a single-party system was again applied, while in the 1976 elections, multi-party elections were held for the first time after a long interval (Goldschmidt, 2008). Table 3. shows that the implementation of multiparty elections may have played a role in the slight increase in Egyptian democracy after 1975. Egypt now has a multi-party government, which sounds like a good thing for democracy on paper, but there are problems with how it works in real life. Having more than one political party has been allowed as long as they don't question the government too much. For instance, the Tagammu Party was severely crushed and pushed to the edges of politics when it spoke out against al-Sadat's economic liberalization policies (Weipert-Fenner, 2020, p. 88). In 1979, a quota of 30 women deputies was introduced in the parliamentary elections through legal regulations. Thus, the representation of women in parliament increased from around 0.57-1% to 9%. In the 1984 elections, this rate was realized as 8.25% (Hala, 2003). It is impossible to claim that there was no repression of political opponents during Anwar Sadat's reign, as his sitting at the table with Israel and signing the Camp David Accords provoked serious reactions within the country. More than 1,500 of his opponents, including clerics, intellectuals and political leaders, were sent to prison because they felt that he had betrayed the Arab cause (Goldschmidt, 2008). His 1981 assassination in an attack can also be read as a reflection of Camp David. Once analysed using Samuel Huntington's perspective, it becomes evident that Egypt did not participate in the democratisation movement during the Anwar Sadat era either. Furthermore, despite the establishment of a multi-party legislative assembly, the functioning of the separation of powers failed to align with democratic principles.

#### **8. Egypt During the Hosni Mubarak Era: Political Landscape and Legacy**

After the assassination of Anwar Sadat, Hosni Mubarak assumed the presidency of Egypt and the country lived under a state of emergency. Starting in October 1981, the "state of emergency" was extended every three years until the end of the Mubarak era (The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, 2008). The period in question did not have a very good record in terms of human rights. In 2010, one of the demands of the masses who took to the

streets against the Egyptian regime was "lifting the state of emergency (Küçükkeleş, 2011). In the 1984 parliamentary elections, a party list system and an 8% threshold were applied. Two of the 5 parties participating in the elections agreed on a common list and participated in the elections together. The turnout in the elections was very low, although it was announced as 43%, it is claimed that it was actually 23% (Hala, 2003). In the 1987 elections, since independent candidates were allowed to run, a large number of independent candidates competed in the elections, more than half of the 3,592 candidates were independents. In 1990, the number of candidates running in the elections amounted to 2,676 (for 444 seats). The reasons for the significant drop in the number of candidates compared to the previous elections were the boycott of the elections by some opposition groups and the incomplete establishment of a candidate-centered system (Hala, 2003). In the 1995 and 2000 elections, the candidate-centered electoral system was slightly modified to allow for electoral alliances between independent candidates and parties. Turnout in the elections was 50 percent and 25 percent respectively. It is argued that there are many reasons for the low levels of voter turnout. Accordingly, despite the implementation of different electoral systems, the low turnout rate was attributed to the low literacy rate and the lack of trust in the election results, government promises and the integrity of the elections (Hala, 2003). By 2011, large masses of people began to express their discontent with the oppressive practices, failed governance and poor economic conditions of the Mubarak era by pouring out in the squares with the spark lit by the Arab Awakening that started in Tunisia. The fall of the 30-year rule of Hosni Mubarak in a short period of time caused both surprise and joy among the people. However, this social movement, called the January 25 Revolution, failed to bring democracy to Egypt, as the revolution was interrupted by a coup d'état. On July 3, 2013, Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi was ousted by a military coup, which led to the loss of some small improvements for democracy in Egypt (see Table 3).

During the Hosni Mubarak era, Egypt also faced problems with democratization, and Hosni Mubarak tried to govern the country in many ways similar to his predecessors. If the approach put forward by Samuel Huntington is continued, we can claim that this period is also in a reverse wave. Because it is claimed that there has been a tendency towards authoritarianism all over the world since the early 2000s (Repucci and Slipowitz, 2022). It is possible to understand that Egypt is not an exception to this tendency with the military coup that took place in 2013.

## Conclusion

Democracy in its current scope emerged in the Western world after long struggles and social economic transformations. In the Middle East region, which has a different political culture, it would be too optimistic to expect states with a 50-60 year history of independence to make great progress in democracy. Many obstacles, both cultural and economic, indicate that it is too early for such a development. It is true that the region has not reached the desired level of democracy, but it is hard to argue that no progress has been made. Indeed, as seen above, many organizations that analyze democracy/autocracy show that democracy is gaining popularity worldwide and that democratic practices are increasing in the Middle East region, albeit to a lesser extent than in the rest of the world. The most recent positive development is that in a highly authoritarian kingdom like Saudi Arabia, women gained the right to vote and participate in the 2015 elections, which is a small step for democracy, but it can be considered positive. Contrary to Tocqueville's claim, the global rise of democracy does not mean that it is an irreversible process. Regardless of the political culture and internal political structure of countries, it is always possible to experience what Huntington calls a "reverse wave". Therefore, even if the form of government is democracy, there is always the possibility of backsliding/authoritarianization in countries where the system has not yet been internalized. Countries that are considered to have established democracy should not be excluded from this possibility either, as the serious turmoil, social and economic crises that countries are experiencing can push them to some points they do not want to go. The rise of fascist regimes in Europe can be evaluated in this context. Claims that Eastern cultures are not suitable for democracy and that their economic structure legitimizes authoritarian regimes, although explanatory to a certain extent, are false because they lead us to the conclusion that the Middle East region will forever be ruled by anti-democratic regimes. Empirical evidence shows that there is an improvement in democracy in the Middle East region compared to the past. Moreover, the Arab Awakening has shown that the peoples of the region are dissatisfied with living under these authoritarian regimes and are demanding democracy (or rather a voice) at various levels. Changing the established political culture in the region will certainly not happen in a short period of time, but the Arab Awakening provides clues about the direction of change. In short, the process of democracy development in the Middle East may be slow and painful, but we do not think that there is any reason to make pessimistic futurist comments. Potential future research could explore if the increasing trend of authoritarianism in the international system since the start of the 21st century can be referred to as the fourth

reverse wave, building upon Samuel Huntington's theory. The Arab Spring and the processes that followed can be analyzed in this context.

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