CHAPTER 28

Clientelism in MENA elections

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Abstract

While there is a consensus that MENA politics is highly clientelistic, few researchers have looked at the extent and nature of clientelism involving average citizens. This chapter seeks to fill this gap. First, we analyse existing public opinion and expert data from various projects to determine the extent of clientelism in MENA elections. These data confirm that MENA electoral politics are highly clientelistic. They also suggest that the nature of clientelism in the MENA is tilted in the direction of collective and relational strategies rather than vote-buying. The most clientelistic countries in the MENA appear to be those at intermediate levels of polyarchy. Second, we present data from an original survey on demand for different forms of clientelism in Tunisia. We show that Tunisians clearly prefer collective forms of clientelism – where local public goods are exchanged for blocks of votes – compared to individual forms of clientelism and relate this finding to differences in social stigma attached to these types. Last, we investigate how demand for clientelism relates to demand for democracy. We find that respondents with high demand for clientelism also tend to be those indicating that the type of political regime does not matter to them and that they would be willing to give up democracy for better services. These respondents also tend to have higher trust in politicians. This suggests a circle where autocratic politicians deliver goods in exchange for support, are appreciated by citizens for this service, who, in turn are indifferent to the nature of the political regime. We conclude by outlining future avenues for research on clientelism in the MENA. We argue that these lie in experimental research to better measure the extent and drivers of clientelism and in ethnographic research to understand the perceptions and everyday experiences citizens have with clientelistic exchanges.

Introduction

MENA elections are often described as clientelistic affairs and void of programmatic appeals. Because elections in many countries are either uncompetitive (e.g. Egypt under Mubarak and again under al-Sisi or Tunisia pre-transition) or have no bearing on core policy-making (e.g. Morocco or Jordan), parties are organisationally weak and few invest in party manifestoes or concrete policy proposals (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009; Lust-Okar 2006). As Lust-Okar (2006: 459) argues 'in authoritarian elections, the distribution of state resources trumps by far any role of elections as arenas for contests over the executive or critical policies'. In this context, it

makes sense for voters to demand clientelistic benefits – both individual and collective – in return for their vote.

Indeed, there is a general sense that politics in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is essentially clientelistic. Beyond the autocratic setting, two factors contribute to this perception. First, the so-called Arab social contract (El-Haddad 2020) in which MENA post-independence regimes exchanged public sector jobs, education, and healthcare for political acquiescence and loyalty from their citizens, is a clientelist bargain in nature. Second, many studies document the pervasive role of mediation/ connections (*wasta*) to access jobs and services (Benstead et al. 2019; Harris et al. 2017).

As a result, much work on the region mentions clientelism and patronage. It is then surprising that actual research on clientelism in MENA *elections* is much rarer than in other world regions such as Latin America or South-East Asia.[1] Instead, most MENA work mentioning clientelism either studies phenomena that are not in line with the generally accepted definition of political clientelism as the exchange of particularistic benefits for *political* support (Stokes 2007b; Kincaid et al. forthcoming; Pellicer et al. 2020) or focuses on clientelism at the elite level, emphasizing the role of 'patronage networks (Ruiz de Elvira et al. 2018; Heydemann (2004).[2] As a result, these types of study cannot shed much light on how much clientelism matters for voter mobilization and support in electoral contests.

Research that explicitly addresses political clientelism in the context of MENA *elections* mostly focuses on Turkey (Güneş-Ayata, 1994; Yildirim, 2020). Outside Turkey, it is limited to a few contributions such as the work by Lust (2009; 2006) on competitive clientelism in Jordan, Blaydes (2006) and Corstange on vote-buying (2016, 2012) in Egypt, Lebanon and Yemen, or Pellicer and Wegner (2013) on electoral rules and clientelism in Morocco. In addition, there are several findings on clientelism in elections that emerge from studies where it is not the actual focus. For example, there are some studies describing how clientelistic goods are exchanged or at least requested during electoral campaigns (Shehata 2008), discussing clientelism in the context of charity organizations run by Islamist movements

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[1] For Latin America, see Nichter and Peress (2017); Nichter and Nunnari (2019) or Stokes et al. (2013), for South East Asia, see Berenschot (2018); Berenschot and Aspinall (2020) or Aspinall and Sukmajati (2016), among many others.

[2] For example, *wasta* does not imply that there is an exchange of jobs and services for *political* support as in clientelism in the same way as clientelism is distinct from gaining access to jobs and services through bribe-paying.

(Clark 2004) or of voting behaviour more generally (Pellicer and Wegner 2014; Wegner and Cavatorta 2019).

So how much of a role does clientelism really play in MENA elections? What forms does it take and what do citizens think about it? This chapter seeks to address these questions by drawing on existing expert and opinion surveys as well as on our own project on the demand side of clientelism in Tunisia.

HOW MUCH CLIENTELISM IS THERE IN MENA ELECTORAL POLITICS?

The extent and types of clientelism

Recent research on clientelism has settled on a set of core types of clientelism that differ in the kinds of goods that are exchanged, the relationship between patrons and clients, as well as in the trade-offs they imply for citizens (Pellicer et al. 2020). In vote-buying, votes are exchanged for money and small gifts during electoral campaigns or on election day. In relational clientelism, citizens exchange different forms of political support (voting, campaigning, attending rallies) with politicians for access to social policy benefits (e.g., public work programs) and general assistance in more iterative exchanges during and outside electoral campaigns. In collective clientelism, citizens exchange a block of votes for local public goods, in exchanges that are typically brokered by a community leader.

Four different recent datasets can shed some light on the prevalence of these types of clientelism in the MENA. Table 1 below lists the datasets, the types of clientelism, and the countries that were included in the survey. What all datasets have in common is that they target the *supply-side* of clientelism, that is, they ask about party investment in clientelism and clientelistic offers to citizens. The Varieties of Democracy (V-DEM) dataset is the most extensive survey and includes fifteen MENA countries (Coppedge 2021). It is also the only survey that includes two variables on clientelism, one about vote-buying and one about the type of party linkages, differentiating programmatic linkages from collective clientelism and particularistic clientelism (akin to relational forms). The other three surveys all include smaller – and only partially overlapping – sets of countries and focus on one type of clientelism only: vote-buying in the Afrobarometer (Afrobarometer Round 6) and the Electoral Integrity Project (EIP) (Norris and Grömping 2019), party linkages in the Democratic Accountability and Linkages Project (DALP). Importantly, three of these surveys are expert surveys: this implies that they might reflect not only local knowledge about clientelism but also established perceptions of politics in the MENA as clientelist.

Table 1. Data on clientelism in the MENA

| Dataset	Country name	Variables	Type of survey
V-Dem	Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Syria, Turkey, Yemen	Vote-buying & type of party linkages (programmatic, collective clientelism, relational clientelism)	Expert
DALP 2008	Morocco, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon	Clientelistic effort of parties	Expert
Afrobarometer R6	Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt	Offers of vote-buying	Public opinion
Electoral Integrity	Morocco, Iran, Kuwait, Syria, Jordan, Algeria	Extent of bribes in latest elections	Expert

Figure 1 below plots the prevalence of vote-buying with the extent of clientelistic party-voter linkages from these different surveys. The left panel shows the V-Dem Data only whereas the right panel plots the data from the other surveys.[3] The left panel reveals several interesting insights about the level and nature of clientelism in the MENA. First, most of the countries are in the top right quadrant, which suggests that electoral politics in the MENA is indeed highly clientelistic. Second, parties tend to be below the 45-degree line, which indicates that the nature of clientelism in the MENA is more tilted in the direction of collective and relational strategies rather than vote-buying. Third, there is no obvious pattern in the data: countries with particularly high levels of clientelism include more and less competitive systems as well as monarchies and republics. We will return to this issue below.

The right panel generally confirms these basic insights. However, it also suggests some important limitations. First, a few countries change their position in the plot. For example, the EIP data considers vote-buying in Morocco to be far more pervasive, whereas the DALP data

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[3] Because the other surveys only have either vote-buying (Afro Barometer, Electoral Integrity Project) or linkages (DALP), the right panel uses the DALP variables to add the respective missing information in order to plot the data in the two-dimensional space (for example, the Afro Barometer has only a vote-buying variable, so the graph uses the V-Dem linkage information for the country to supply an x-coordinate)

considers that linkages in Israel and Turkey are substantially more clientelistic than V-Dem. Second, according to Afrobarometer, the only one of these datasets that is not based on experts, there is considerably less vote-buying than according to the expert surveys.[4] These differences are, of course, partly the result of different types of measurements in the surveys, but they also highlight that measuring the extent of clientelism is generally difficult. This implies that we should not give too much weight to specific differences between countries but focus on the overall picture. This overall picture shows that first, there is quite a lot of clientelism in MENA elections and second, it is less geared toward vote-buying but more toward collective or relational forms.

Figure 1. Clientelistic linkages and vote buying in the MENA

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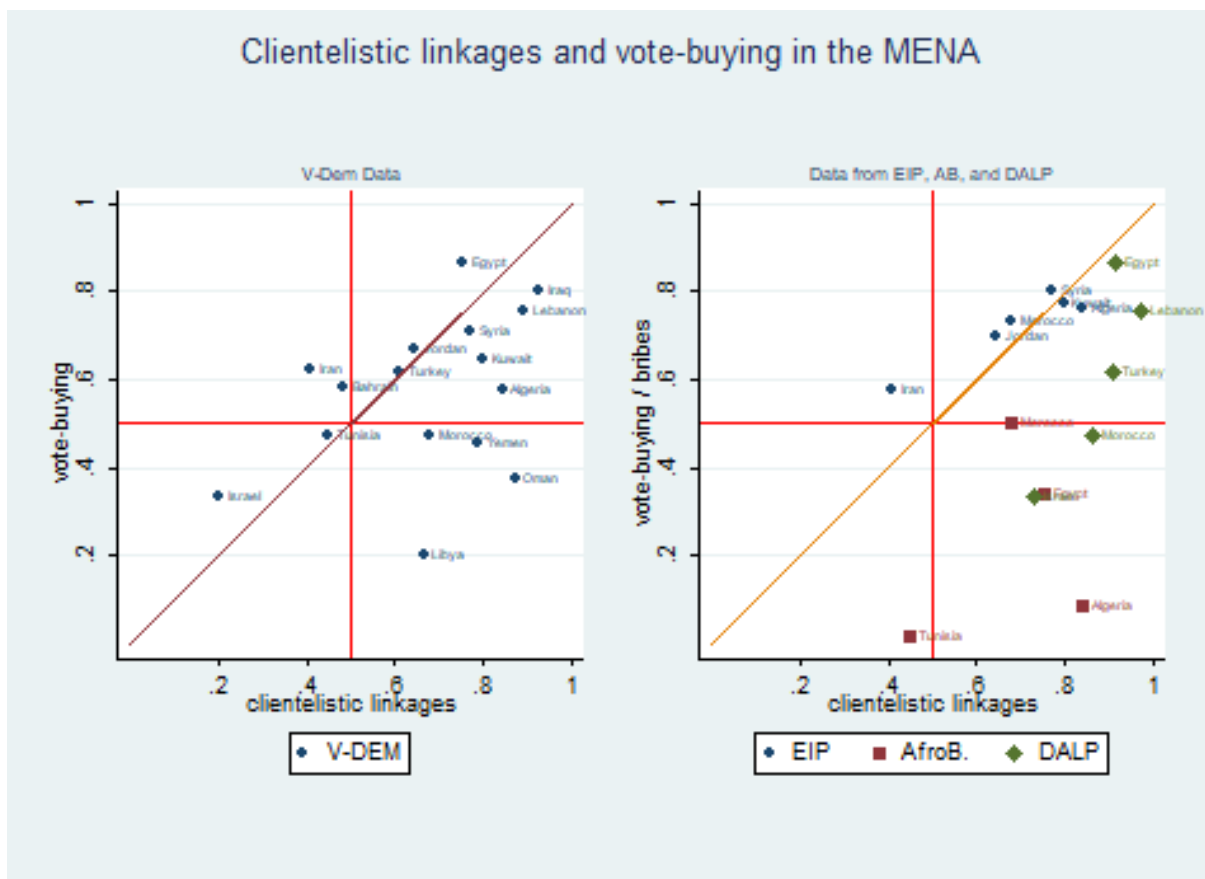
[4] The numbers indicated in the graph show the share of respondents who indicated offers divided by the turnout in the election preceding the survey. We use this measure to account for the fact that brokers typically target likely votes with offers (Szwarcberg 2015; Brusco et al. 2004) These lower levels of clientelism according to Afro Barometer might at least partly result from social desirability bias which might be rather high in the MENA. In a list experiment in Lebanon, Corstange (2010) finds that the twice as many people admit to vote-selling when asked with a list experiment, compared to asked directly.

Figure 2 below further investigates if there is a relationship between the degree of polyarchy and the prevalence of vote-buying and clientelistic linkages in MENA countries. The left panel plots polyarchy and clientelistic linkages and polyarchy and vote-buying. For clientelistic linkages, the data shows an inverted U-pattern, suggesting that at low and high levels of polyarchy, we tend to see less clientelism whereas the most clientelistic activity from parties exists at intermediate levels of polyarchy (for MENA standards) in countries such as Algeria, Kuwait, Jordan, or Morocco.[5] For vote-buying, there does not seem to be much of a relationship, with the possible exception that the most democratic countries in the region, Israel and Tunisia, tend to experience less vote-buying than others.

Figure 2. Polyarchy and Clientelism
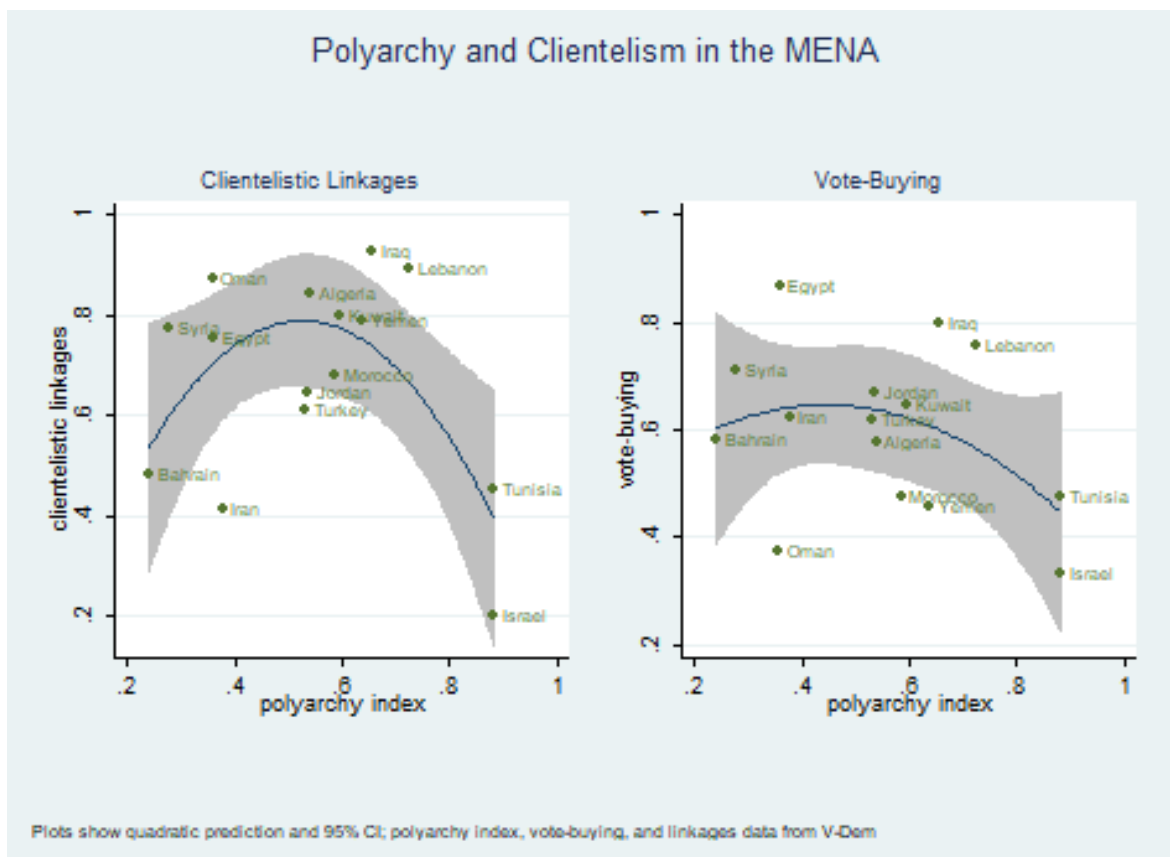
In both panels, the confidence interval is large as there are few observations and the findings should be taken with caution. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the findings for

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[5] The polyarchy index ranges from 0 (full absence of polyarchy) to 1 (full presence of polyarchy. Empirically, MENA countries degree of polyarchy ranges mostly between 0.3. and 0.7. Intermediate levels of polyarchy in the MENA are thus around 0.5 of the index.

clientelistic linkages are in line with the general literature on corruption, which shows that an inverted U-shaped relationship exists between democracy and corruption (McMann et al. 2017). Similarly, one can argue that clientelism makes little sense when elections are rigged to an extent that investing in clientelism has few returns; it becomes more appealing as elections become more transparent, and again less when elections are free and fair.

The nature of party linkages in the MENA

V-Dem and DALP allow looking a bit more closely into the nature of party linkages in the MENA. V-Dem provides an ordinal ranking of strategies, differentiating between programmatic linkages, collective clientelism, and individual clientelistic strategies whereas DALP provides more information about the type of voters targeted by clientelistic offers.

Table 2 below displays the V-DEM ordinal ranking of strategies. This information suggests that the most common way in which parties link with voters in the MENA is by promising local public goods (such as schools, clinics, paved roads or footpaths, and the like) to areas where supporters live (collective clientelism) or by helping individual voters in exchange for support (individual clientelism).

Shehata's (2008) and Lust-Okar's (2006) work illustrates how collective and individual clientelism functions in the MENA. Shehata describes a parliamentary campaign in Egypt focusing on the appeals made in neighbourhood campaign meetings. In these meetings, candidates focused on the number of jobs they had found for people from the constituency during the last term in office as well as the local public goods brought to the districts, including education centers and trash removal. Individual good provision had clear features of relational clientelism, where goods are provided to supporters not just during election time but over the duration of the term (Nichter 2018). Lust-Okar (2006) shows that a core expectation of Jordanian voters is that MPs provide jobs for constituents and generally help them accessing state resources. To be able to help with this, voters expect MPs to have good relations with the government, rather than criticising it or attempting to hold it accountable for programmatic goods. Lust-Okar and Shehata's work also shows that rather than politicians targeting voters with clientelistic goods, it is the voters themselves that demand such services and threaten not to vote for MPs who do not deliver on particularistic goods, pushing MPs into what Nichter and Peress (2017) describe in Latin America as 'request fulfilling'.

Table 2. Dominant Linkage Types in the MENA according to V-Dem

Linkage type	Countries
individual and collective clientelism	Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Syria, Yemen
Collective clientelism	Jordan, Morocco, Libya
Mixed collective clientelism and programmatic	Bahrain, Iran, Tunisia, Turkey,
Programmatic	Israel

Last, table 3 shows who, according to DALP experts, is targeted by clientelism in the MENA. One of the core findings of the literature on clientelism is that it is mostly targeted at poor voters (Stokes et al. 2013). These patterns broadly appear in the MENA data. The rich are the least likely to be targeted by clientelistic offers than the middle class, which, in turn, is less likely to be targeted than the poor.

What is particularly interesting for the nature of clientelism is the specific pattern this takes in the MENA. In the MENA, the big drop in targeting is not between the poor and the middle class, as observed in Latin America (Brusco et al. 2004; Stokes 2005) or Sub-Saharan Africa (Jensen and Justesen 2014), but between the middle class and the rich insofar as the poor and middle classed are almost equally targeted with offers of clientelism. This suggests that the nature of electoral clientelism in the MENA is distinctive, as it appears to involve better-off socio-economic groups than in other world regions.[6]

Table 3. Targeting of different types of voters according to DALP

country	poor	middle	rich
Egypt	0.7	0.5	0.2
Israel	0.6	0.6	0.3
Lebanon	0.8	0.7	0.5

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[6] This matches with Corstange's (2012) findings on Lebanon. He also observes that better-off groups are targeted with offers of vote-buying.

| Morocco | 0.7 | 0.6 | 0.4 |
| Turkey | 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.2 |

CLIENTELISM AND ELECTIONS IN TUNISIA

In the context of our research project on the 'Demand Side of Clientelism', we conducted several surveys in Tunisia. Different from the data presented so far and that focus on the supply side of clientelism in MENA elections, our project looks at citizen perspectives on clientelism. We present some insights here from two surveys, one that taps into demand for clientelism alongside other attitudinal aspects, and a second that looks at moral evaluations of clientelism. Both surveys were conducted in 2019 (the first in February, the second in November and December).[7] Both targeted mostly poor rural and urban communities in Tunisia. We draw on findings from this project to explore at the following three questions: 1) How much demand is there for different forms of clientelism in Tunisia? 2) What are social norms around different forms of clientelism? 3) How does clientelism relate to support for democracy and trust?

Demand for clientelism & the role of social norms

We begin with presenting demand for three forms of clientelism from the 2019 survey, as described above: vote-buying, relational clientelism, and collective clientelism. The questions were asked as hypothetical questions. For each type, the respondents were presented with a scenario where the terms of the exchange were spelt out: 70 TD in exchange for your vote (vote buying), help when you need it in exchange for campaigning for the candidate (relational clientelism), and local public goods in exchange for a block of votes (collective clientelism). After each scenario, the respondent was asked how likely they were to vote for the candidate proposing the respective deal on a scale from 1-10. In table 4 below, we show the share of respondents that indicated a likelihood above 5 for voting for the candidate.[8] In addition, we asked respondents if they have experienced such a form of clientelism.

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[7] Both surveys use face-to-face interviews and data-entry on tablets. We designed the surveys to be representative of the respective locality. We assigned enumerators a starting point in an enumeration area who then selected households with a random walk. The enumerators selected individual respondents in the household with a Kish grid. For the first survey, the sample size is only three hundred respondents in each country, but as each respondents evaluates six exchanges, our data contain around 1900 evaluations of clientelism by country. The sample size of the second survey was 1200 respondents in Tunisia.

[8] The answers to these questions are very polarized with most respondents indicating either a 1 (not at all likely) or 10 (extremely likely) so that looking at the shares of 10 (relative to 1) does not change the picture much (4.4 for vote-buying; 9.7 for collective, and 21% for relational).

The results show a clear ranking in demand, with about a quarter of respondents expressing demand for collective clientelism, 12% for relational clientelism and only 5% for vote-buying. These differences are mirrored by the forms of clientelism respondents indicated having experienced in the past and by a behavioural measure of clientelism included in the survey. The numbers of demand and experience shown in the table are probably lower than in reality given that respondents might be reluctant to indicate demand or admit to experiences of clientelism. However, they do indicate that preferences for clientelism have a clear hierarchy, where there is more demand for exchanges with more valuable goods whereas outright vote selling is less appealing and indeed offered. They also suggest that demand for clientelism might be higher than actual offers by politicians and parties.

Table 4. Demand for different types of clientelism in Tunisia

	Hypothetical demand	Experienced	Behavioral
Vote Buying	5.0%	3.6%	9.3%
Relational clientelism	12.7%	8.1 %	
Collective clientelism	26.5%	22.7%	26.7%

Source: Data from the "Demand Side of Clientelism" Project

Our survey also included an open text question asking about the exact nature of the goods that were offered when respondents indicated that they had experienced a particular form of clientelism. For vote buying, the typical offer was between 20 and 70 TD. For relational clientelism, politicians tended to offer jobs or help with housing improvements and for collective clientelism, the most common goods were streetlights and roads, housing, and jobs for the community.

Overall, these findings echo the findings of Lust and Shehata for Egypt and Jordan where jobs and community infrastructure were also the most sought-after goods. At the same time, the results also suggest that clientelism is less dominant in Tunisia than in other countries, a finding that matches those of the Afrobarometer and V-Dem above. The needs of people are likely to be important drivers of these preferences. Clearly, in a middle-income country with

little extreme poverty such as Tunisia, small handouts at election time are not considered valuable by most people. In contrast, promises of individual or community level jobs and improvements are much more attractive.

Additionally, research suggests that moral evaluations of clientelism matter for its attractiveness (Gonzalez Ocantos et al. 2014; Mares and Young 2019; Pellicer and Wegner 2021). When citizens find clientelism morally acceptable, there is no stigma attached to engaging in a form of clientelism and vice-versa. In our work, we find that the different types of clientelism do indeed carry different forms of social stigma in Tunisia. Tunisians evaluate vote-buying most unfavourably by far and collective clientelism most positively (Pellicer and Wegner 2021). Vote-buying is clearly perceived to be unacceptable (a value of 3 on a scale from 1-10, where 10 is 'totally acceptable' and 1 is 'totally unacceptable') whereas collective clientelism is borderline acceptable. In an open text follow up on why an exchange was evaluated as unacceptable, almost 50% of the times the depicted exchange was said to be an abuse of citizens, 20% that it was corruption, and around 15% that it showed opportunistic behaviour by politicians. This suggests that citizens who are critical of clientelism partly feel that it violates the dignity of voters and partly that it was operating in a grey zone, suggesting illegal practices and self-interested politicians.

Overall, these findings suggest that there is a high stigma and little admitted demand for individual forms of clientelism (vote-buying and relational) relative to collective forms.

Demand for Clientelism and Demand for Democracy

Clientelism is generally perceived to be undemocratic. As Stokes (2007a) shows, clientelism violates several important principles of democracy, such as equality of the vote. Clientelism erodes political accountability and the influence of poorer voters, as they give up political rights in exchange for access to benefits. These features might have consequences for attitudes toward democracy. Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007) note that, at the country level, absence of programmatic party competition is associated with cynical and disenchanted attitudes toward democratic institutions. Such a mechanism is problematic as clientelism erodes demand for democracy, which in turn, allows clientelism and, in the case of the MENA, authoritarianism to persist.

Our survey contains standard indicators from the Barometer series about trust in politicians and support for democracy.[9] Investigating how they relate to demand for different types of clientelism yields some interesting results.

Table 5 shows OLS regressions of demand for different forms of clientelism on the two different measures of support for democracy (one measures willingness to give up democracy for service delivery and the second measures that the type of regime does not matter to the respondent) and trust in politicians. In line with the findings reported by Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007) at the country level, individual demand for clientelism is associated with less support for democracy. Respondents who are more willing to give up democracy for service delivery or believe that the kind of government does not matter tend to have higher demand for clientelism. This is the strongest for relational clientelism, a type of clientelism that involves repeated interactions between patrons and clients that extend beyond electoral campaigns.

At the same time trust in politicians appears to be positively related to demand for clientelism, especially demand for relational clientelism and potentially collective clientelism.[10] This implies that those with higher demand for particularistic goods feel that politicians are more reliable than those who are not willing to engage in clientelistic exchanges.

Table 5. Support for democracy, trust and demand for clientelism

	(1) Demand Relational CL	(2) Demand Relational CL	(3) Demand Collective CL	(4) Demand Collective CL	(5) Demand VB CL	(6) Demand VB CL
give up democracy for service delivery	0.791***		0.690***		0.317**	
	(0.164)		(0.203)		(0.116)	
Kind of regime does		0.562**		0.231		0.249*

[9] For democracy we use two questions: First, "If a non-elected government or leader could impose law and order, and deliver houses and jobs, how willing or unwilling would you be to give up regular elections and live under such a government?". Second, we ask for the which of three statements is closest to the respondents' own opinion. A. Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government   B. In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable. C. For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have. The first question measures a trade-off between democracy and the delivery of goods whereas the third statement in the second question measures disinterest in the political system. For trust, we use agreement with the statement "Generally speaking, most politicians can be trusted".

[10] We find a similar result in the survey on moral evaluations of clientelism where trust in politicians is strongly associated with finding clientelistic exchanges more acceptable (Pellicer and Wegner 2021).

not matter to me						
	(0.175)		(0.220)		(0.123)	
Trust in politicians	0.486**	0.510**	0.361	0.369	0.142	0.135
	(0.188)	(0.190)	(0.232)	(0.238)	(0.133)	(0.134)
Observations	1155	1121	1155	1121	1155	1121

Standard errors in parentheses. Controls: education and gender.

$^{*} p < 0.05,$ $^{**} p < 0.01,$ $^{***} p < 0.001$

These findings suggest that, in the MENA, demanding clientelism is potentially incompatible with demand for democracy – instead, citizens make the system work for them through clientelism. Citizens that feel positively about clientelism also feel positively about the politicians that deliver it to them. This suggests a circle where autocratic politicians deliver goods in exchange for support and are appreciated by citizens for this service. Demand for democracy and demand for clientelism seem to be antagonistic in the MENA.

FUTURE RESEARCH: HOW DOES CLIENTELISM WORK IN THE MENA?

The data presented in this chapter confirm the generally held view that politics in the MENA is mostly clientelistic. Electoral appeals appear to be made with either collective or individual clientelistic offers in most countries, especially in those at intermediate levels of electoral competition.

What remains an open question are the mechanisms of clientelism in elections. Whereas much focus is on elite level patronage networks or the role of *wasta*, we know much less on how clientelism works at the citizen and party level. The expert surveys presented in this chapter might partly be driven by commonly held view that clientelism is ubiquitous in the MENA, without offering specific empirical details that would allow us to know who does what, how, and why. This impression is, for example, suggested by answers to a question in the DALP that asks the experts which goods MENA parties are using when targeting voters. The possible goods are consumer goods, jobs, access to social policies, preferential access to government contracts or lax "interpretation" of regulations. DALP MENA expert answer that parties use all these goods *in equal measure* for generating political support. This is highly unlikely. The first three types of goods are goods that are valuable for ordinary citizens,

whereas the other types are relevant for companies or entrepreneurs. Likewise, the latter type of goods is only accessible for parties in government. This suggests that experts might communicate a general impression that all these goods are used "a great deal" without making (or being able to make) a distinction and report on nuances.

This does not mean that the experts are necessarily wrong. It suggests, however, that how clientelism in elections works in practice in the MENA remains to some extent an open question that has not been satisfactorily answered. We believe that there are two potential ways of addressing this issue. The first is to use methods that get better at the prevalence of and preferences for clientelism in the MENA in surveys. One option are list experiments that allow to measure truthful answers to sensitive questions. This method has been successfully used by Corstange (2010) to measure the prevalence of vote-buying in Lebanon. One problem with this method is that it is difficult to use to measure more complex forms of clientelism such as relational (with repeated interactions) or collective (involving a community-level exchange) clientelism. Another option that we pursued in our project is to develop a behavioural measure of preferences for different types of clientelism. We offered respondents money at the end of the survey and asked them to make a choice between selling us our vote in the survey, put that money to a charity in the community (collective clientelism) or a charity at the province level (programmatic voting). While this does not capture the prevalence of clientelism, this method allows us to measure demand more accurately, irrespective of supply. In addition, conjoint experiments can help addressing how demand and evaluations depend on varying features of clientelism.

The second approach to learn more about the nature and mechanisms of clientelism would be ethnographic research. Although there is a lot of good qualitative work on MENA politics, much of it engages with elites, for example, the work on Islamist parties by Schwedler (2006), Wegner (2011), or Wickham (2002). In contrast, for our meta-analysis of ethnographic work on clientelism from the client perspective, we were unable to find suitable work on the MENA whereas there was an oversupply for countries in other world regions, such as Argentina or Indonesia (Pellicer et al. 2020). Work of the type of Auyero (1999, 2000) for Argentina, Gay (1999) for Brazil, or Arghiros (2001) on Thailand would be extremely useful to move away from the standard wisdom on clientelism in the MENA to a more sound empirical base.

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