The 2011 Uprising in Egypt was a momentous event in Egyptian history and historiography, and one that changed the direction of my research. I was educated professionally to push against an overwhelming presence of politics in the analysis of the Middle East and to focus instead on the culture, economy and society of the region. Moreover, as an economic historian by training, and though I have been teaching the political economy of the Middle East for many years, changes in the ‘substructure’ often took priority over the political ‘superstructure’ in my research. Prior to 2011, I had studied the consumption and production of tobacco in Egyptian markets. I had also engaged with research on how the oil-boom of the 1970s and the early 1980s transformed Egypt’s consumer society. The 2011 Uprising caught me and most researchers in the field by surprise, and led me to change course. In what turned out to be my next book, *The Rise of the Egyptian Middle Class: Socio-Economic Mobility and Public Discontent from Nasser to Sadat*, I turned to politics, class politics in particular, in studying the impact that the oil-boom, intertwined with President Sadat’s liberal Open Door policy, had on Egyptian society. It was in this book that I also began to explore the class history of the Egyptian social contract.

The present book is in some respects a sequel to *The Rise of the Egyptian Middle Class*. The book expands the scope of analysis of the Egyptian social contract and its timeframe, from the period since semi-independence under a
newly established liberal monarchy (1922) until the 2011 Uprising. As such, it picks up from an earlier point in time than most previous studies of the social contract in Egypt and it emphasises persistence over time, where past analysis often saw ruptures or new beginnings. *The Egyptian Social Contract* sets a broad framework for the study of the 2011 Uprising as a protest against both the breakup of the old Nasserite social contract – the effendi (local middle class) social contract discussed in this book – and the failure to bring a new social contract to Egypt.

The book reconnects a mostly lost thread in Egyptian socio-political history in that it explores why and how state–middle class relations shaped politics and society in the long run. For reasons discussed in the book, previous analysis of the so-called ‘populist-authoritarian’ social contract often downplayed the centrality of this class in shaping the social contract. The book offers this class-based analysis of the social contract through the study of two key and sometimes contradictory terms and causes for action – ‘social reform’ and ‘social justice’ – and how they shaped the social contract. The purpose of the first was to alleviate poverty, ignorance and disease among the lower classes – or the poor, mostly peasants and workers – in Egypt. The aim of the second was to secure equity and equality of opportunity for a growing middle class of mostly urban, educated and often state-employed Egyptians. Both terms were at the core of shifting state–society relations and Egypt’s course of socio-economic development, and were therefore at the centre of the formulation, and later change, of Egypt’s social contract.

*The Egyptian Social Contract* traces the establishment of a liberal social contract and its conservative tenets of social reform under the monarchy. It follows the transition from social reform to social justice in the period between the mid-1930s and the 1952 Free Officers revolution, a transition that was both explicitly and implicitly lobbied for by an expanding middle class. The book later investigates the social contract in Nasser’s effendi state, when social justice, including mobility into the middle class and this class’s social reproduction, took centre stage. The last part of the book discusses Egypt’s economic liberalisation under President Sadat and its neoliberalisation under President Mubarak, focusing on the tortuous search for a new social contract that would bring social reform back to the poor at the expense of social justice to the large, struggling middle class.
The book discusses changing ideas and ideologies embodied in the Egyptian social contract, as expressed in political pronouncements, constitutions and development plans. It follows state legislation and budgeting and the history of state institutions responsible for implementing the welfare state in Egypt and for forming its politics, and hence, the political economy of the social contract. The book further focuses on how public discourse – often a discourse led by middle-class intellectuals – shaped and reshaped this social contract over time. It pays less attention to the lived social contract – how it was manifested in the quotidian lives of middle-class Egyptians and, indeed, of other social classes. Future detailed social histories of the Egyptian social contract are still required.

An Israel Science Foundation grant (No. 404/17) sponsored the research and writing stages that led to this book. I have benefited much from taking on board the five reviews received.

The three reviewers of the manuscript for Edinburgh University Press made important comments that helped me refine the manuscript, as did the press’s selection committee. My graduate students, Atar David, Kaitlin Regina Wachsberger, Kassim Alsraiha and Shir Baruch, helped me formulate the ideas expressed in this book as I was advising them on their own research projects; they also helped me assemble sources for the project. Students in the seminars ‘Middle Class in the Middle East: Past, Present, Future(?)’ and ‘Towards a New Social Contract? State–society Relations in the Middle East, Past and Present’ further enabled me to think this project through. I warmly thank Ben Zarhi and Oded Marck for commenting on the manuscript at various stages.

This book gained much from the archival work previously undertaken at the Egyptian National Library and Archives, the American University in Cairo Library, the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo (NVIC) and the Centre d’études et de documentation économiques, juridiques et sociales (CEDEJ). I augmented the research for this book at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies (MDC) Library, and the MDC Arabic Press Archives, both at Tel-Aviv University; at the Roberta and Stanley Bogen Library and Documentation Center, the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University; the National Library of Israel; and the Zalman Aranne Central Library
at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, especially its Elie Kedourie Collection. The core writing of the manuscript took place while I was on sabbatical at the Middle East Centre in St Antony’s College, the University of Oxford – my academic home away from home. The Middle East Centre Library at St Antony’s College and the Oriental Institute Library in Oxford were very useful resources for this research. Under the influence of COVID-19, but also the spread of digitisation, significant amounts of research for the book took place online. The CEDEJ archive of digitised Egyptian press turned out to be an invaluable source for qualitative but also quantitative analysis of the press. The Bibliotheca Alexandrina offered me ample digital entry into relevant documents. Interlibrary loan services at my university and abroad were very useful in facilitating access to sources from around the globe.

I presented various parts of this project at seminars and in lectures in Israel at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute; in the UK, at the University of Oxford, the University of Cambridge, the University of Edinburgh and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS, University of London); in France, at L’École des hautes études en sciences sociales; and in the Netherlands at Radboud University. I also presented my work at various Middle East Studies Association (MESA) meetings, the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) meeting, and at meetings of the Middle East and Islamic Studies Association of Israel (MEISAI). In all these places, I benefited from the comments made by discussants and audience members.

While engaged in research and writing, I acquired much intellectual debt to many. Here, I acknowledge the various contributors in alphabetical order: Walter Armbrust, On Barak, Nathan Brown, Anthony Gorman, Israel Gershoni, Khaled Fahmy, Roel Meijer, Yoram Meital, David Parker, Elie Podeh, Haggai Ram, Eugene Rogan, Avi Rubin, Cyrus Schayegh and Robert Springborg. Roel Meijer sponsored an Erasmus+ training grant to Radboud University, where I had the pleasure of presenting my work in progress to his students. Many talks with him then and since were very fruitful in formulating my thoughts on citizenship and the social contract in Egypt. To many on this list, I will not be able to reciprocate their generosity and good advice. I will attempt similar academic generosity by extending it to others.
Emma House, the commissioning editor at Edinburgh University Press, made very useful suggestions for the book’s proposal that later found their way into the book. The Edinburgh University Press team – Eddie Clark, Louise Hutton, Isobel Birks – and their cover co-ordinator, Stephanie Derbyshire, were a pleasure to work with. Yonatan Mendel was indispensable in offering solutions regarding translation and transliteration of Arabic to English. I am much indebted to Deborah Schwartz, my editor, for her meticulous and timely service and her precision in choosing wordings and formulations that better reflected my thoughts. Many thanks to the copy-editor of the book, George MacBeth, and to the indexer, Angela Hall.

I have used a simplified International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES) system for the transliteration of Arabic words, and the IJMES Word List of commonly used words, in which all diacritical marks were omitted except for əyn and ٠امز. I have deferred to commonly used English spellings of Arabic places, names and titles. I have also deferred to the self-spelling of first and last names. I have kept the letter ٣يم in standard Arabic titles and names transliterated from written sources.