



# Women and Gender in Middle East Politics

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## **The Project on Middle East Political Science**

The Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS) is a collaborative network that aims to increase the impact of political scientists specializing in the study of the Middle East in the public sphere and in the academic community. POMEPS, directed by Marc Lynch, is based at the Institute for Middle East Studies at the George Washington University and is supported by Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Henry Luce Foundation. For more information, see <http://www.pomeps.org>.

The barriers to women's political participation in the Middle East have long preoccupied scholars and analysts. The Arab uprisings of early 2011 disrupted virtually every dimension of Arab politics and societies, forcing a systematic re-evaluation of many long-held political science theories and assumptions. The place of women in politics and the public sphere were no exception.

The divergent experiences of the Arab uprisings and their aftermath have allowed political scientists to take a fresh look at many of these important questions. New data sources and a diversity of cases have energized the community of scholars focused on women's public political participation. A Project on Middle East Political Science workshop in March brought together an interdisciplinary group of more than a dozen such scholars to critically examine these questions. The complete collection is now available for free download [here](#).

Women were highly visible participants in the Arab uprisings of 2011, from the demonstrators at the front lines of Tahrir Square in Egypt to Nobel Prize winner Tawakkol Karman, the face of the revolution in Yemen. Women's physical participation in those protests, as Sherine Hafez has observed, became a major site of contention, with narratives of emancipation clashing with experiences of mass public sexual harassment and the gendered exercise of state violence in the form of so-called "virginity tests."

The transitions that followed those uprisings posed particularly fierce challenges to women. The early electoral successes of Islamist parties in Egypt and Tunisia drove many feminists, liberals and Western media platforms to voice concern that the new governments would diminish women's rights and limit political freedoms. Those fears, as Ellen McLarney documents, escalated with the bitterly contentious negotiations of new constitutions.

Many advocates feared that other laws protecting women's rights, particularly within the family, might also be changed. Autocratic regimes strategically supported certain initiatives that – at least superficially – advanced women's rights. In Egypt, as Mervat Hatem notes, former first lady Suzanne Mubarak formed the National Council for Women in 2000 that helped pass several laws increasing women's and girls' rights in the following decade. Tunisia under former President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali was often held up as a beacon for Western-style women's empowerment in the region, as the regime focused international attention on women's rights legislation and away from its systematic repression – which as Hind Ahmed Zaki documents, included large-scale sexual abuse of female activists.

Some women's rights activists therefore worried that the democratic empowerment of conservative Islamists would come at the expense of their hard-won progress. Many worried that the new constitution created under the leadership of former president Mohamed Morsi in 2012 would roll back some of these advances. They were not reassured that, as Ellen McLarney describes, many of the contested sections describing women's role in the family and society actually originate – some verbatim – in Nasser-era "secular" constitutions and even have roots in the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

Such politicization of women's rights was nothing new, of course. As Sherine Hafez describes, both autocratic regimes and democratically elected Islamist governments alike have manipulated the language of women's rights and utilized female bodies to justify and promote their political goals.

But women's activism, like most other forms of political mobilization in the wake of the 2011 uprisings, could not be as easily contained and appropriated as before. Samira Ibrahim sued the military for the sexual assault of its "virginity tests" and, though she was dismissed by Egyptian military leadership as "not like your daughter or mine," eventually succeeded in revoking the practice.

Despite regional authoritarian backsliding as former ruling elites regain power, women's social organization and political mobilization continue to impact the region. Vickie Langohr illustrates how new forms of activism and large-scale expansion of satellite media have begun to change the public discourse around sexual violence in Egypt. Hind Ahmed Zaki describes the Truth and Dignity Commission in Tunisia, which has given women the opportunity to tell their stories of systematic state sexual violence under the Ben Ali regime – although not, as yet, to win prosecution of their abusers.

A wide-ranging political science literature on the challenges facing women's political participation has highlighted variables such as Islamist movements, discourses of nationalism and citizenship, patterns of state development, and cultural norms of patriarchy. But these broad claims often fail to account for disparities in women's experiences not only among different states but also sub-nationally. The scholars in the POMEPS workshop have taken advantage of new data sources, new organizations and campaigns and variation to highlight the diversity of the experience of women across the region.

For instance, as Lindsay Benstead points out, countries with almost identical – and relatively high – proportions of women in the formal labor force (like Yemen, Libya, Tunisia and Morocco) have personal status laws that range from the most progressive to some of the most conservative in the region.

As performance on various indicators of gender equity differs dramatically even within individual countries, suggesting that undifferentiated arguments about patriarchy as an explanatory variable without considering intersections of class, privilege, or ethnicity are of limited value. Similarly, Scott Weiner's examination of patriarchy and tribal relations in Kuwait and Oman finds that while kinship relations are highly politically salient in Kuwait, and likely have facilitated its very low levels of female representation in parliament, it was actually the highest-ranked Arab country in the 2014 Global Gender Gap Report.

In contrast, Morocco has one of the most progressive personal status laws in the region and boasts one of the largest percentages of women in parliament, but the gap between male and female literacy in Morocco is second only to that of Yemen among 20 Arab countries. Zakia Salime's examination of rural women known as the Sulaliyyates fighting for access to tribal land in Morocco illuminates how specific links in tribal communities between women's subordination in the family and the public sphere work in a country with wide variations in performance on typical indicators of patriarchy.

This lack of congruence among different indicators of discrimination leads Benstead to suggest that instead of using patriarchy as a blanket term, political scientists would be better served by learning from feminist theory, particularly Deniz Kandiyoti's conception of a "patriarchal bargain." In such a bargain, women's status across a variety of fields is dependent on the outcome of their negotiations with men, and thus in the same society outcomes on various indicators of discrimination can vary widely.

While more research is needed to determine how these indicators impact political discrimination, there is consensus about how to improve political representation. Broad cross-national research, such as that by Aili Marie Tripp and Alice Kang, has demonstrated the efficacy of gender quotas. Not only do quotas increase political representation, but per Benstead's argument, they also improve female citizens' access to governmental resources. And although some argue that Western pressure for such quotas would only undermine their prospects, Sarah Bush and Amaney Jamal found little evidence for such an effect on popular perceptions.

Although cynics might assume that women in Arab parliaments are merely a form of window dressing, Marwa Shalaby notes that while women make up 17 percent of the Moroccan parliament, they asked 58 percent of the total questions there. However, women MPs in Jordan, Kuwait and Morocco focused very little attention on issues explicitly related to women's and children's rights, instead prioritizing issues like the economy and education. Given the significant limitations on women's rights within the family, especially in Jordan and Kuwait, how do we explain female MPs' relative lack of attention to this issue?

Perhaps women MPs, like their male colleagues, have made a rational decision that they are best served by using their positions to work in areas where they can deliver services to their constituents. Mona Tajali shows how – often despite rather than because of their leaders' intentions – Islamic parties in Iran and Turkey have actually created space for women, who may not otherwise be politically engaged, to rise to political office. In Iran, the political networks established by women during the 2009 Green Movement contributed to their electoral success in the 2016 parliamentary elections. There are now more women in the its parliament than clerics, and it will be interesting to track how these representatives agendas compare with their Arab counterparts.

Women's rights and political aspirations are inextricably interwoven with other political struggles, shaped by local context more than by supposedly immutable cultural patterns. The research highlighted in POMEPS Studies 19 demonstrates the vibrancy of new scholarly efforts to examine the changing political horizons of women in the Middle East.

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## **Reexamining patriarchy, gender, and Islam**

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# Conceptualizing and Measuring Patriarchy: The Importance of Feminist Theory

*By Lindsay J. Benstead, Portland State University*

Why do we know so little about gender and politics in the Middle East? Most obviously, few women were elected to office in the Arab world until recently, limiting the study of women in formal politics. In Morocco, the first female was elected to the lower house in 1993, while in Saudi Arabia, women first ran for office—in municipal elections—in 2015. Systematic data on politics has also been historically scant, making the study of women's informal participation, such as voting and civil society activities, also difficult. The Middle East tends to contribute less to comparative politics than have other regions, and so, it is unsurprising that little is known about a sometimes marginalized, though sizeable area of political science—gender and politics—in the Arab region.

In a working paper, Marwa Shalaby and I discuss these and other reasons the Middle East lags behind in its contribution to gender and politics literature. We also summarize insights from new avenues of research which are transforming the ways we think about gender relations within and beyond the Arab world. In this memo, I discuss another barrier: the need for improved conceptualization and measurement of patriarchy. I argue that political scientists under-conceptualize patriarchy and fail to draw on existing feminist theory.<sup>1</sup> By better engaging with feminist theorists such as Kandiyoti (1988), who conceptualized gender relations as a “patriarchal bargain,” and Sadiqi (2008), who distinguished private and public patriarchy, political scientists can better explain mechanisms promoting women's empowerment.

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1 From the Greek, “rule of the father.” In a patriarchal system, males have advantages in property, moral authority, and status. Women and girls unquestionably obey the authority of the male head, brothers, uncles, and male cousins, fulfil roles as wife and mother, and preserve the interests and honor of the family (Amawi 2007).

## Explaining Women's Empowerment

A number of theories have been proposed to explain why women achieve greater empowerment in some countries than others. These include cultural (e.g., Islam, Arab culture) and economic modernization theories (Inglehart and Norris 2003; Sharabi 1988), which see the Arab world as monolithic and draw on Islam and failed or stalled modernization to explain poor outcomes for women. Other theories tap oil (Ross 2008), militaries (Beck 2003), and tribes (Charrad 2001; Benstead 2015). Still, others examine institutions such as quotas (Bush and Gao 2013), the psychology of stereotyping, bias and role congruity theory (Benstead, Jamal, and Lust 2015; Benstead and Lust 2015), and the role of gendered social institutions and networks (Benstead 2016).

Yet, despite some growth in this literature, most individual research studies focus on a single dimension or measure of gender equality and thus do not yet sufficiently appreciate the extent to which patriarchy is a multi-dimensional concept with different causes and consequences. For example, Ross's (2008) important piece on women and Islam operationalizes patriarchy as the proportion of women in parliament. Kang's (2009) response to this piece shows that the link between oil and patriarchy decreases when controlling for quotas. Quotas are easily implemented—especially by authoritarian governments—and, as expected, are effective ways to increase women's formal representation. When used as a measure of patriarchy, the United States, where 19 percent of the Congress is female, is less equal than Algeria and Tunisia, where 32 percent and 31 percent of the lower house, respectively, is female. Oil may strengthen some dimensions of patriarchy, but not others. The extent to which this is the case needs to be better understood.

Indeed, feminists identify two dimensions of patriarchy — public and private. Private rights are women’s rights in marriage, divorce, mobility, and inheritance (i.e., the Shari’a regime), while public rights concern access to public spheres such as education and politics (Sadiqi 2008). Yet, these dimensions are often not distinguished in political science literature. At times, measures of patriarchal attitudes are scaled without adequate discussion of this dimensionality. In the past, this was not problematic, because there were few survey questions about gender. The World Values Survey asked its first question about women and politics in 1981 and has since has asked three about equal rights in work, politics, and education. Norris (2011) and Alexander and Welzel (2011) have written extensively on attitudes toward gender equality and tended to scale these three items on politics, education, and the labor force to create a dependent variable. They find a high Cronbach’s

alpha of .65 and are justified in scaling these questions, in part because the items tap into public patriarchy.

However, as surveys expand into the Arab world and include many more questions about women and gender — especially on private rights — there is greater danger of lumping indicators of multiple dimensions into a single, unreliable scale. For example, as shown in Table 1, correlations between the seven gender-related items included in the Arab Barometer (Wave 1) never exceed .58 and in many cases are substantially lower. My work on interviewer effects suggests conflict over public roles and rights are driven by gender relations, while disagreement about private rights is largely explained by religious orientations (Benstead 2014a, b). Yet, it is important to separate these dimensions in order to understand what causes support for equality.

**Table 1. Correlations between gender-related items in the Arab Barometer**

	1. A woman can be a president or prime minister of a Muslim country.	2. A married woman can work outside the home if she wishes.	3. On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do.	4. A university education is more important for a boy than a girl.	5. Men and women should have equal job opportunities and wages.	6. Men and women should receive equal wages and salaries.	7. A woman can travel abroad by herself if she wishes.
1.	1.00						
2.	.46	1.00					
3.	-.32	-.17	1.00				
4.	-.18	-.28	.25	1.00			
5.	.43	.48	-.22	-.21	1.00		
6.	.29	.43	-.12	-.27	.58	1.00	
7.	.47	.43	-.33	-.20	.41	.31	1.00

Jamal and Tessler, “Arab Barometer. Wave 1.” <http://www.arabbarometer.org/>

The same is true of aggregate measures of gender equality, which often are not highly correlated. Table 2 lists common indicators of gender equality, where the most unequal cases for each indicator are highlighted in grey. The fact that we see a patchwork, rather than grey lines, indicates that outcomes for women in a case look very different depending on the measure of patriarchy. Countries with the most conservative family laws—Jordan, Libya, Palestine, and Yemen—do not always have lowest women’s labor force participation or formal political representation. Countries with poor social acceptance of women in government sometimes have high numbers of women in parliament (e.g., Algeria). According to the Gender Inequality Index (GII), which combines indicators of health, labor force

participation, and politics, Libya is the most gender equal of the eight countries, despite its conservative family law. Jordan has poor outcomes on all seven indicators. But, women in Jordan enjoy virtually equal access to services from parliamentarians, due to the political importance of tribes, which allow females to access services on the basis of an intersecting identity—ethnicity (Benstead 2016). At the same time, Charrad (2001) demonstrates that tribes create incentives for rulers to invoke conservative family codes. This suggests that the same factor—politically important tribes—can harm women on one dimension of rights (i.e., family law)—and empower them on another (i.e., access to clientelistic services).

**Table 2. Gender indicators by country**

	Private rights		Public rights				Summary
	Family code <sup>1</sup>	Number of gender rights <sup>2</sup>	Workforce	Politics			
			Women’s labor force participation <sup>3</sup>	% holding egalitarian views <sup>4</sup>	National parliamentary gender quota (most recent election) <sup>5</sup>	% women, House of Representatives and date of most recent election <sup>5</sup>	Gender Inequality Index (2014) <sup>6</sup>
<b>Algeria</b>	Moderate (3)	14	14.7%	25%	Legislated candidate quota	32% of 462 (2012)	.413
<b>Jordan</b>	Conservative (4)	10	15.6%	18%	Reserved seat quota	12% of 150 (2013)	.473
<b>Lebanon</b>	Varies by sect	5	22.0%	41%	None	3% of 128 (2009)	.385
<b>Libya</b>	Very conservative (5)	Not available	29.8%	25%	Legislated candidate quota	15% of 30 (2014)	.134
<b>Morocco</b>	Progressive (2)	18	25.9%	30%	Reserved seat quota	17% of 395 (2011)	.525
<b>Palestini an Territories</b>	Conservative (4)	7	14.7%	19%	Legislated candidate quota	13% of 132 (2006)	Not available
<b>Tunisia</b>	Very progressive (1)	12	25.3%	24%	Legislated candidate quota	31% of 217 (2014)	.240
<b>Yemen</b>	Very conservative (4)	8	24.8%	14%	None	0% of 301 (2003)	.744

<sup>1</sup> Author’s perceptions of the Personal Status Code.

<sup>2</sup> Domestic violence, constitution, harassment, property, work, and other. The Guardian. “Women’s Rights Country by County Interactive.” Last updated April 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/ng-interactive/2014/feb/04/womens-rights-country-by-country-interactive> cited from the World Bank. “Women, Business and the Law database.”

<sup>3</sup> All except Palestine: “World Statistics Pocketbook,” United Nations Statistics Division. Accessed August 12, 2015. <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=Morocco>. Palestine: MDG Achievement Fund. “Women’s Participation in the Palestinian Labour Force: 2010-2011.” Accessed August 12, 2015. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms\\_218024.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_218024.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> % disagreeing/strongly disagreeing. “Men make better political leaders.” Most recent wave of World Values Survey. Accessed February 28, 2016. <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>

<sup>5</sup> “Quota Project.” Accessed August 18, 2015. <http://www.quotaproject.org/aboutProject.cfm>

“Women in National Parliaments,” Inter-Parliamentary Union, House of Representatives, first election 2002 or later. Accessed August 12, 2015. <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif-arc.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Index of health, labor force, and political indicators. Higher value corresponds to higher inequality. United Nations Development Programme. “Gender Inequality Index (GII).” Accessed February 28, 2016. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>

## Conceptualizing Patriarchy

Kandiyoti (1988)'s work on patriarchy can help us gain analytical traction on some of these issues. In conceptualizing gender relations as a "patriarchal bargain," she calls attention to women's status as the outcome of negotiation. The "patriarchal bargain" constrains women, while at the same time offering space in which women develop strategies and negotiate areas of autonomy. Women in this conceptualization are seen as having agency, helping us exit out of rigid paradigms, such as cultural and economic modernization theory, which see outcomes as determined by broader forces outside women's control. This bargaining may also explain the wide range of outcomes we actually observe across different measures of gender inequality (see Tables 1 and 2). Women may negotiate rights in one sphere and also in ways that are not captured by current political science theorizing.

Kandiyoti's "patriarchal bargain" has other useful elements as well. She argues that the bargain takes different forms across cultures—"Arab culture" is no longer essentialized — and varies across history — providing a conceptual structure for understanding improvement and regression in women's rights in the Arab world and beyond. The bargain is constantly being renegotiated. Moreover, the patriarchal bargain varies *within societies* and across classes and ethnicities. Wealthy women enjoy areas of autonomy that poor women do not. Women from privileged regions or ethnicities might be more empowered than males from less privileged areas. Finally, because it is a bargain, space that is negotiated can relate to specific aspects or dimensions of life, such as the public or private space.

## How Taking Patriarchy Seriously Will Change Our Scholarship

Taking the patriarchal bargain seriously will change our scholarship in four ways. First, we will more seriously take the need to analyze subnational differences in women's empowerment in addition to national differences. This will lead us to explain not only differences across males and females, but also across females with intersecting traits, such as ethnicity, class, or region. Second, it will encourage us to examine change over time and explain improvements and reversals for females. Third, and most importantly, it will encourage us to recognize that outcomes for women vary across dimensions of patriarchy, which may have different causes and consequences. Finally, we will be better able to discern how gender-based inequality relates to broader outcomes such as authoritarian persistence, political instability, and terrorism, and to better integrate gender into other important literatures in Middle East political science.

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# Rethinking Patriarchy and Kinship in the Arab Gulf States

*By Scott Weiner, George Washington University*

Existing accounts contend that state level patriarchy is rooted in traditional family power arrangements. These accounts describe patriarchy in parliaments, ruling families, and personal status laws, as well as norms and informal practice across societies. Feminists writing on socio-economic class, for example, point out that relations between husbands and wives create unequal divisions of labor and wealth between them (Walby, 1989; Eisenstein, 1999). These effects aggregate to the national economy as a whole. Feminist work on patriarchy and the state focuses on how political actors shape policy based on certain ideals about contemporary families (Geva, 2011).

Work on patriarchy in the Middle Eastern context makes a similar argument, contending that changing family structures among both “urban” and “tribal” kinship groups are the basis of patriarchal policies reinforcing women’s traditional roles (Moghadam, 2004). These roles are reproduced at the state level via “homosocial capital” - networks of men who leverage their resources to maintain power (Bjarnegard, 2013). Family structures also reinforce male roles, in that participation in family gatherings and religious observances is tied to masculinity (Herzog and Yahia-Younes, 2007). Given the rapid changes that have occurred in the region over the past century, Middle Eastern states are excellent cases in which to test hypotheses examining traditional and contemporary structures of patriarchal power. Importantly, the Middle East is also a region where family ties and kinship authority are particularly strong. Foundational work on political kinship and states (Anderson, 1986; Kostiner and Khoury, 1990; Layne, 1994) speak to the utility of these cases.

The linkage between familial and state-level patriarchy, however, is widely asserted but not well specified. It is unclear by what mechanisms patriarchal family relations create and shape patriarchy at the state level. Claims that state-level patriarchy originates in person-to-person relationships within the family may be accurate, but

accounts linking the two often draw on similarities that invoke correlation but not necessarily causation. These accounts assert that familial patriarchy is “reproduced” (Moghadam, 2004) without explaining the mechanisms by which that reproduction occurs. This gap impairs scholarly attempts to understand what patriarchy is and how it shapes political access according to gender identity.

The linkage between familial and state authority, furthermore, is by no means implicit. While families and kinship groups operate under traditional forms of authority, states are bureaucratic. While familial patriarchy impacts a specific set of resources and political access, state-level patriarchy is a political “terrain of power” (Hunnicut, 2009) affecting both state and society. While familial patriarchy advantages men in relation to women who are kin, state level patriarchy gives broad advantages to men as a class over women as a class. The idea that patriarchy in a traditional kinship group is “reproduced” cannot be taken at face value given the substantial differences in governance between such groups and states.

Some explanations have accounted for the reproduction of family patriarchy at the state level in a colonial context. In Africa, for example, European powers preserved indigenous familial patriarchy to ensure social stability (Schmidt, 1991). The kinship institutions in which this preservation occurred, however, were manipulated heavily by these colonial powers. They also say little about the experience of Middle Eastern states where manipulation occurred to a much lesser extent. Other accounts use patrimonialism to illustrate the reproduction of familial patriarchy. Accounts of state building in Tunisia, Morocco, and Iraq, for example, describe how kinship-based patrimonial networks were subsumed under the “fatherly” leadership that positioned itself discursively as protecting the “national family” (Charrad, 2011). These accounts explain how leaders legitimized patriarchy but not why they chose to use it. They also highlight symbolic

similarities between father-son and state-society relations, but fall short of arguing a causal linkage between the two. Furthermore, similar accounts of leaders providing goods to constituents (e.g. Bueno de Mesquita, 2003) make causal arguments about this provision with no reference to such a relationship.

Theorizing the relationship between familial and state-level patriarchy should be a systematic endeavor. If state-level patriarchy is a reproduction of kinship patriarchy, we might expect states where kinship authority is more politically salient at the state level to have more patriarchal forms of governance. Since state level patriarchy is reproduced from patriarchy in kinship groups, the strong presence of kinship authority should be an indicator of patriarchy at the state level. The seven months of field work I conducted in Kuwait and Oman presented an opportunity to evaluate some of these claims. In Kuwait, where kinship's political salience is high, there is evidence that state-level patriarchy is strong as well. Women could not vote until 2005 in Kuwait. Only four women were elected to a parliament of fifty in the 2009 parliamentary elections and the parliament has had no women since the resignation of Safa al-Hashem in May, 2014. Women have only been permitted to serve as prosecutors for the Kuwaiti government since January 2014. Kuwaiti women who marry non-Kuwaiti men cannot pass their Kuwaiti citizenship to their children. Yet the picture is more complex than it first appears. Slightly more than half of public sector employees in Kuwait are female. Under the Labor Act of 2010, pregnant Kuwaiti women are entitled to 100 percent pay during seventy days of maternity leave, followed by two hours break for nursing when they return to work.<sup>1</sup> Kuwait ranked highest among Middle Eastern countries in the 2014 Global Gender Gap Index, and has the highest percentage of working women citizens among GCC states. Kuwaiti women are represented in business, medicine, and academia, and have a history of participation in the workforce as Quran teachers

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1 "Kuwait," *United National Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*, 2015. Online: <http://spring-forward.unwomen.org/en/countries/kuwait>.

(mutawaat) dating back to at least the late 1800s.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the correlation between familial patriarchy and state level patriarchy is not as obvious as existing accounts might predict. Furthermore, as Lindsey Benstead points out in this POMEPS study, using different measures of patriarchy produces vastly different assessments of which states are more or less patriarchal.

Kinship's political salience at the national level in Oman is much lower than Kuwait, but patriarchy still exists. In Oman's October 2015 elections, only one woman was elected to the eighty-four member *Majlis al-Shura*. Women comprise slightly more than one-third of government employees. Out of 117 lawyers with permission to appeal to Oman's high court, two were women as of 2010. Furthermore, women require their husband's permission to obtain a passport under Omani law.<sup>3</sup> Even where kinship authority has lower penetration into the national bureaucracy, patriarchy exists at the state level. Oman specialist Rafiah al-Talei points out that "despite progress, women [in Oman] face discrimination in almost all areas of life, and men are traditionally and legally seen as heads of household."<sup>4</sup>

Women in Oman have challenged patriarchy successfully on a number of important levels that should not be understated.<sup>5</sup> Yet it is puzzling that patriarchy remains strong in Oman if kinship authority is the means by which patriarchy is reproduced at the state level. Such a puzzle, however, opens new avenues of scholarly inquiry to identify the means by which the reproduction of patriarchy occurs. However, these avenues themselves require specification.

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2 Interview, al-Nuzha, Kuwait, February 15, 2014.

3 Rafiah al-Talei, "Oman," in *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Progress Amid Resistance*, ed. Sanja Kelly and Julia Breslin (New York: Freedom House, 2010): 12.

4 al-Talei, 2010.

5 Mandana Limbert, In *The Time Of Oil: Piety, Memory and Social Life in an Omani Town* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010): 43; See also: Scott Weiner, "The Muscat Commute: A Young Generations Journey Between Tradition and Modernity," *The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington*, June 18, 2015. Online: <http://www.agsiw.org/the-muscat-commute-a-young-generations-journey-between-tradition-and-modernity/>.

For instance, patriarchy in states where kinship has low political salience at the state level could be the result of capitalist economic development. Scholars point out that such development concentrates capital in the hands of men as a class.<sup>6</sup> Thus, states with more development should see more patriarchy. However, other accounts point out that such development should have the opposite effect. It should “eradicate all arbitrary differences of status among laborers” and level the playing field for women.<sup>7</sup> This hypothesis also presumes that capitalism and patriarchy have any relation at all.<sup>8</sup> The role of development in state-level patriarchy, therefore, must be further specified.

Perhaps patriarchy in such cases results from social expectations that persist independently of kinship authority itself. Interviews I conducted with female college students at universities in the capital region of Oman revealed these social expectations. Female students from Muscat sometimes felt they were being judged by their more conservative classmates from the interior for more liberal practices normally considered frowned upon (‘aib). One student from Muscat remarked, “for them, everything is ‘aib.” These women also took steps to hide their identity when attending soccer matches, where Omani society frowns upon women’s attendance.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, these women’s liberal gender identity is itself the product of social changes that Oman’s government instituted

following the 1970 coup d’état. These changes happened more quickly in the urban centers than in Oman’s interior. Women I interviewed from the interior described culture shock upon arriving at university in Muscat, noting differences in “words, traditions, dress, and accents.”<sup>10</sup> In addition, despite the persistence of patriarchy, classes at Oman’s national university (Sultan Qaboos University) have been co-educational since the university opened in 1986. Social expectations, therefore, are not themselves a convincing explanation for patriarchy because they were shaped by the state in Oman, rather than vice versa. Such a causal explanation would also need to explain the origins of these expectations.

A full account of the origins of state-level patriarchy will help scholars better identify its political effects. While kinship patriarchy may play an important role in the story, it cannot alone account for empirical manifestations of state-level patriarchy. Leveraging methodological rigor and deep familiarity with the region’s states and societies, scholars of Middle East politics are positioned to make valuable contributions to understanding patriarchy not only in the region, but in all gendered societies.

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6 See: Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (London: Zed Books, 1986): 38.

7 Heidi Hartmann, “Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex,” *Signs* 1 no. 3 (Spring 1976): 139.

8 See, for example: Sylvia Walby, “Theorising Patriarchy,” *Sociology* 23 no. 2 (May 1989): 214.

9 Interview, German University of Technology, Halban, Oman, March 6, 2014.

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10 Interview, Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat, Oman, March 24, 2014.



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# Women's Rise to Political Office on Behalf of Religious Political Movements

*By Mona Tajali, Agnes Scott College*

In many Muslim-majority countries, Islamic movements and parties tend to negatively view women's access to political leadership positions.<sup>1</sup> The dominant gender discourse of these movements, which is often based on patriarchal interpretations of religious texts, views women's proper place to be within the domestic sphere as mothers and wives, and largely denies women's active presence in the public sphere, including in political decision-making positions. Despite this official gender ideology, women have nonetheless been playing increasingly powerful roles within many Islamic political movements and parties with varying degrees of visibility and influence.<sup>2</sup>

While during the early decades of Islamic party formations in the 1960s and 1970s across many Muslim countries, women were mostly recruited to serve as 'foot soldiers' in support of the Islamic movement (Arat 2005; Iqtidar 2011; White 2002), following the turn of the century,

their roles became increasingly visible as some began to gradually enter political office (Tajali 2014; 2015). Islamic party women's shift from grassroots organizers and voter-recruiters to eventual politicians and leaders within these conservative religious settings was unexpected as it not only diverged from the dominant gender ideology of these movements, but also countered the essentialist assumptions of modernization and secularization theorists (Fish 2002; Inglehart and Norris 2003).

It was even more surprising when religious political movements on a number of occasions outperformed their secular and more liberal counterparts in terms of women's nomination and recruitment to political office in major national elections in various Muslim countries, including in Tunisia, Turkey, Iran, Yemen, and Jordan, among others. In this brief note, I highlight the gradual ideological shift that occurred in a number of Islamic political movements in support of women's increasing political roles. I argue that this shift has been in large part due to women's decades-long involvement with religious political movements and increasing pressuring to enter positions of authority. While religious political movements initially mobilized and politicized women to enter the political sphere mostly as voters and voter-recruiters, today many women are seeking to also become decision-makers in support of these movements.

## **Islamic Political Movements: Recent champions of gender equality?**

Scholarship on Islamic political movements has identified a series of transformations and ideological shifts, particularly in terms of gender, that many political parties and institutions arising out of such movements have undergone in recent decades. For instance, Asef Bayat (2007) identified a post-Islamist turn in a number of popular Islamic movements as many sought to fuse religiosity with

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1 For the purpose of this work, the term 'Islamic movements' refers to ideologically and politically motivated movements that advocate living according to Islamic social mores (Mahmood 2005). While many Islamic movements are presented as revivalist movements that arise in response to extreme secularization, westernization, and suppression of religious expression, it is important to note that there is great ideological and practical variety among Islamic movements in different contexts and times. Despite significant ideological shifts however even within the same particular movement, it can be argued that the dominant gender discourse of most Islamic movements are patriarchal in which women hold subordinate positions (Shitrit 2013). This is the case with the Islamic movements in Iran and Turkey. Although the Islamic discourse is constructed differently in each country (one a theocracy and the other a secular state which is currently governed by a pro-religious party), the dominant gender discourses of both groups of ruling elites advocate non-gender equal agendas.

2 The literature on women and politics has been increasingly recognizing many aspects of women's efforts and actions to influence and shape their surroundings, communities, and other formal and informal institutions as 'political' (Chappell 2002; Waylen 2007). While I also acknowledge multiplicity of women's political roles and actions in various contexts, here, I wish to emphasize women's efforts to enter formal political decision-making positions, such as membership to the national parliament or access to ministerial positions. Whether women who enter political office on behalf of Islamic parties (their descriptive representative) leads to representing women's interests (substantive representation) is beyond the scope of this brief analysis.

rights, faith with freedom, and Islam with liberty, with women's and youth groups serving as key actors in such internally driven transformations. Kurzman and Naqvi (2009) in a cross-national study have also recognized that "Islamic parties are more likely now to emphasize democracy and gender equality, and to deemphasize the implementation of shari'a (p. 2)." Similarly, Mona El-Ghobashy (2005) in the *Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers*, documented the party's departure from its initial "old guard's conservative views on women" to one which in the early 2000s recognized gender equality, as well as women's right to access political office. In this issue of *POMEPS Studies*, Ellen McLarney also highlights the fact that the first assertion of 'gender equality'—without qualification—in the Egyptian constitution occurred in 2012 under the Islamic government of Mohamed Morsi, and ironically not when more secular governments were in power.

While these ideological shifts may seem as mere political moves of religious political movements to appeal to voters (as well as the international community) by distancing themselves from their more conservative and 'undemocratic' predecessors (Bush 2011); in practice they have led to modest, yet significant, increases in the rate of women's political representation in recent decades. For instance, among Arab countries, Clark and Schwedler (2003) observed that in Yemen and Jordan the percentage of women assuming political office has modestly increased in the wake of conservative and Islamist forces' rise to power. Both Jordan's *Islamic Action Front* and Yemen's *Al-Islah parties* outperformed their secular counterparts in terms of women's recruitment to the national parliaments in their respective countries. Likewise, the Islamic *Ennahda* party in Tunisia was the only party to successfully implement the gender parity quota that required all parties to nominate exactly fifty percent women candidates on their party lists, and to alternate men and women's names down party lists in a so-called 'zipper' system for the 2011 parliamentary elections.

Despite the fact that nine political parties from across the ideological spectrum entered the parliament in the

2011 Tunisian elections, 42 out of the 49 women elected to the 217-member parliament were from Ennahda (Marks 2013). This notable success of Ennahda was due to its well-organized and widespread structure, thanks in part to women's grassroots organizing and mobilizing efforts in support of the party. The party had mobilized and politicized so many women that when the time came to implement a gender parity quota, it had no problems recruiting qualified women from within the party structures.

Similar trends are also witnessed in non-Arab countries of Iran and Turkey; despite their different theocratic and secular political frameworks, conservative religious parties have at times been at the forefront of expanding women's access to political office. In 2009, Iran's neo-conservative president Ahmadinejad's bold move of nominating three women as members to his cabinet surprised many. This move was particularly surprising since unlike his more reformist and liberal counterparts, Ahmadinejad never campaigned on women's access to high level decision-making positions, but also because the gender ideology of his party renders women primarily to the domestic sphere.

It has been similarly puzzling to witness that in Turkey, women's rate of political representation in the parliament raised notably under the watch of the pro-religious and conservative Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi – AKP or AK Parti*).<sup>3</sup> Indeed, within the past decade AKP leaders have been strategically nominating token amounts of women in electable positions at a higher rate than their secular counterparts of

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3 Turkey's Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi – AKP or AK Parti*), was founded in 2001 by members of former Turkish Islamist parties, such as *Welfare (Refah)* and *Virtue (Fazilet)* parties. Since its landslide victory in 2002, AKP, which identifies itself as a "conservative democratic" rather than "Islamist" party, has steadily increased its percentage of popular votes in general elections (Akdogan 2006). Due to AKP's support of a secular system in which public displays of religion have a place, I identify this party as "pro-religious."

the previous decades.<sup>4</sup> In 2013, due to women's pressuring, AKP also removed the decades-long headscarf ban for women serving in state institutions, including parliaments (Tajali 2014). Removal of this restriction further contributed to women's political representation as it enabled headscarved women, who constitute more than 70 percent of the female population in Turkey, to also access the parliament (Cindoglu 2011).<sup>5</sup>

### **Mere window-dressing or genuinely empowering women?**

A number of factors, arising both from international or domestic spheres, led these modest, yet significant, rises in the percentage of women's political representation on behalf of these Islamic political parties. On the international level, a number of incentives and pressures have encouraged Islamic political parties to democratize, often with particular emphasis on women's political roles (Bush 2011). Given that increasing women's numbers in political office often serves as a window-dressing for parties to seem democratic, modern, and liberal, many conservative pro-religious parties, including Turkey's AKP, have been willing to increase women's access to decision-making to appeal to voters and international actors. With the recruitment of token numbers of women, this approach also helped distinguish AKP from its predecessor Islamist parties of *Refah* and *Fazilet*. However, a major limitation of this analysis is that it predominately credits the party's leadership for the decision to eventually include women in decision-making ranks, with little regard for Islamic party women's own roles in pressuring for greater access to such positions. Indeed, Western scholarship writing predominantly from a liberal and feminist standpoint has failed to shed sufficient light onto Islamic women's

activism and agency within religious political movements and parties. This is partly because Muslim women's activism in support of Islamist movements, conservative institutions, or even patriarchal attitudes has been more difficult to explain, given the paradox of women supporting movements that seek to undermine their rights and status.<sup>6</sup>

To mainly credit the Islamic party leadership for opening the doors for women's political representation, de-emphasizes women's own efforts and organizing for increased access to political office from within the religious political movements. Marwa Shalaby, in this issue of *POMEPS Studies*, identifies authoritarianism as one of the key factors that impacts women's access to political office as well as their influence while in power, often regardless of the party's ideological tendencies. Expectedly, such authoritarian tendencies are not destabilized abruptly, but are rather gradually undermined as a result of decades-long pressuring and internal bargaining that attempts to reform these political institutions from within. Consequently, while international incentives do play a key role in encouraging party leaders to become more inclusive of women's political presence, women as well, have been continuously working towards this end as many do not see any contradictions between their religion and women's leadership. In fact, many of the women who initially joined Islamic political movements, did so with the hopes of gender justice and equality, which often includes accessing political representation (Personal interviews with Islamic party women in Iran and Turkey, 2011 and 2015).

My research on Islamic party women in Iran and Turkey suggests that more attention needs to be paid to women's organizing and mobilizing efforts to increase their access to political decision-making positions. I argue that one of the key factors that has led to the recent notable increases in the percentage of women's political representation on behalf of religious political movements is the activism and recent

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4 An important exception among all of Turkey's political parties is the pro-Kurdish rights parties, which put particular emphasis on women's political representation. The 2015 parliamentary elections was the first time however that a Pro-Kurdish party, the HDP (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*) or the People's Democracy Party, entered the parliament as a party, rather than independent candidates. Women constituted close to half of HDP candidates.

5 According to research conducted by Dilek Cindoglu (2011), as of March 2011, more than 70 percent of Turkish women cover their hair.

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6 Although some research attempted to explain this through reference to women's false consciousness, more analytical research has attempted to address it by questioning 'rational choice theory' which emphasizes actor choices based on reason (to maximize self interest) rather than emotion (Mahmood 2005).

outspokenness of many Islamic women in demand for removal of gender discriminatory behaviors and attitudes of their own male party leaders in recruitment and nomination processes. Hence, many Islamic women activists in Iran and Turkey, despite supporting conservative and pro-religious political groups and parties, do not see a contradiction between their interpretation of Islam and female authority. In fact, many are disillusioned of the fact that the Islamic political movements in which they have invested so much time and effort in, have failed to deliver on the promise of 'Islamic justice,' including the promise to restore women's rightful place in an Islamic society (Osanloo 2009). Hence, while some conservative women's rise to political office may still be a strategic move on behalf of the party, it is important to note that many women themselves have also been agitating for their rise to power.

Islamic party women's increased activism and loss of patience with their male political elites on the demand to enhance women's political roles and influence is apparent from the public campaigns that have been recently launched at the time of major elections by influential Islamic women's groups and individuals in demand for women's increased access to political office. Having realized that they have public support on their side, these campaigns openly criticize the gender discriminatory actions of Islamic party leadership by directly pressuring male party elites to address women's marginalization from political office. Over time, many Islamic party leaders became willing to reward women's decades-long

commitment to the party, particularly as they realized that women constitute half of the electorate, also had it not been for women's initial support as voters and voter-recruiters they would not have risen to power (Arat 2005; White 2002).

In sum, Islamic movements in many countries, including in Iran and Turkey, politicized and mobilized previously marginalized female sections of the society to enter the political sphere. Although the Islamic political leaders in both Iran and Turkey initially encouraged women's political participation as grassroots organizers and voter-recruiters in support of the Islamic movement, they never expected women's political engagement and experience to eventually translate into women political leaders. However, decades of women's politicization and grassroots organizing in support of the Islamist movement have resulted in a caliber of qualified women who want their seat at the decision-making table. Hence, despite being products of religious political movements in their countries, many Islamic party women are increasingly playing a key role in agitating for more expanded roles for women in political decision-making. Given the fact that women compose half of the supporters and constituents of religious political movements in their countries, Islamic parties can no longer afford to turn a blind eye to women's demands, including their access to political leadership.

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# Women's Equality: Constitutions and Revolutions in Egypt

By Ellen McLarney, Duke University

Many criticisms of the 2012 Egyptian constitution revolved around its presumed violations of women's rights. The media, research institutes, and human rights organizations blamed the Islamism of the government of Muhammad Morsi for jeopardizing women's "personal liberty" and civil rights.<sup>1</sup> Yet the 2012 constitution was the first to explicitly establish – without qualification – "equality and equal opportunities for all citizens, men and women (*muwatinin wa muwatinat*), without distinction, favoritism, or partiality, in rights or duties."<sup>2</sup> The preamble asserted this equality as one of the founding principles of the new state, going to great lengths to pay tribute to democratic concepts like popular sovereignty, political pluralism, dignity, and freedom (of thought, expression, creativity, etc.). Gender equality was an integral element of this liberal vision of the new state, asserted in the preamble's fifth principle. Moreover, the equality of all citizens was reiterated as a general principle no fewer than five times – Articles 6, 8, 9, 33, and 63 – in the main body of the 2012 constitution. In contrast, the U.S. constitution has no mention of equality anywhere between anyone.

The 2012 constitution's attitude toward women did not represent a radical departure from prior "secular" constitutions. This paper charts the genealogy of the language of "women's equality" in successive Egyptian constitutions, culminating in the 2012 constitution in which the liberal language of women's rights and equality converged with Islamist political aims. The Morsi government adapted the liberal language of women's rights, drawing simultaneously on a long history of constitutional language, as well as a long history of Islamist rhetoric about women's rights in Islam. This Islamist language has long been deployed in the service of Islamic mobilization, advocacy that has been essential to cultivating its appeal among the populace.<sup>3</sup>

The 2012 document paved the way to a more extended assertion of equality in the subsequent 2014 constitution,

which called (in Article 11) for appointing women to high political office, including the judiciary, "without discrimination," as well as for equal representation of women in the parliament. The 2012 constitution raised the bar on women's equality in Egyptian constitutional history, so that the 2014 "secular" constitution strove to top the 2012 "Islamist" one with further provisions for women's rights.

Gender equality first appeared in Article 31 of the 1956 constitution promulgated under Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser. "All Egyptians are equal under the law in public rights and duties, without discrimination due to sex, origin, language, religion, or belief."<sup>4</sup> In contrast, the previous 1923 constitution called for equality for all Egyptians, without discrimination with respect to "origin, language, or religion," without mentioning sex. In addition to gender equality, the 1956 constitution introduced the tension between women's public work and her duties to the family, asserting that "the State facilitates for women the agreement (*al-tawfiq*) between her work in society and her duties to the family" (Article 19).

This language of *tawfiq* between women's public work and her duties in family life was reproduced verbatim in the 1971, 2012, and 2014 constitutions. The 1971 constitution, promulgated when Anwar Sadat came to power, states: "The State shall guarantee the agreement (*tawfiq*) between the duties of a woman toward her family and her work in society, considering her equal status with man in the fields of political, social, cultural, and economic life, without contravening the laws of Islamic shari'a" (Article 11).<sup>5</sup> This constitution introduced something new into the tension between public rights and private duties: religion as potentially opposed to women's equal rights with men, especially in the sphere of the family. This clause thus set up a binary between equal work in (secular) society, in contradistinction to (religious) hierarchies governing the intimate domain. The language of the clause connects

equality to *public* rights, but suggests a different set of gendered *private* duties.

The clause asserting women's equality to men – but only where this equality does not “violate the rules of Islamic jurisprudence” – found its way into an early draft of the 2012 constitution. After public uproar, the drafters ultimately opted for broad, unqualified, assertions of gender equality. The removal of the clause spoke volumes about the liberal ambitions of the Morsi government, ambitions that were both political and economic. The Morsi government clearly intended to show that women's equality was not antithetical to an Islamic society, an Islamist president, a government by an Islamist party, or an “Islamic democracy.” Gender inequality remained encoded in the personal status laws with regards to witnessing, polygamy, and divorce. But the liberal language of the 2012 constitution sublimated these inequalities (in typical liberal fashion) underneath euphoric celebrations of newfound political liberties, pluralism, democracy, and freedom (mentioned no fewer than eight times in the preamble alone). The language clearly rankled activists, who, along with feminists, critiqued this liberalism's dissimulations and hypocrisies, along with its dualisms and paradoxes.<sup>6</sup>

The 2012 constitution also called for providing free services for motherhood and childhood, a clause that had been interpreted as an Islamist bid to relegate women to the home and force them to be mothers.<sup>7</sup> Yet protection of the family, and especially of motherhood and childhood, is hardly unique to the 2012 constitution. (It made its way verbatim into Article 10 of the 2014 constitution as well.) The clause is derived directly from Article 18 of the 1956 constitution and from Article 10 of the 1971 constitution, which also called for supporting the family and protecting motherhood and childhood. These articles might be understood as an Islamist provision, but they are also influenced by from Articles 16 and 25 from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, promulgated a few years before the Free Officers' Revolution in 1952. The language of protections for motherhood and childhood is not found in the 1923 constitution, but *is* introduced in the later, post-UDHR constitutions. Article 18 of the

1956 constitution says: “The State protects and supports (*takfil al-da'm*) the family, in accordance with the law, and protects motherhood and childhood.” Article 25 of the UDHR similarly declares that “motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance,” just as Article 16 calls for protection of the family by society and state as a “natural and fundamental group unit of society.” Not surprisingly, Article 5 of the 1956 constitution echoes this language, stating that “the family is the basis of society and her [family, *usra*, being a feminine noun in Arabic] support is religion, morals, and nationalism.” This language was identically transposed into both the 2012 and 2014 constitutions.

After the publication of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, its principles were “translated” into Islamic thought in Egypt, in widely circulated texts such as Sayyid Qutb's *Social Justice in Islam* (1949), 'Ali 'Abd al-Wahid Wafi's *Human Rights in Islam* (1957), and Muhammad al-Ghazali's *Human Rights Between the Teachings of Islam and the Declaration of the United Nations* (1963). These thinkers called for freedom, rights, and equality first under the Egyptian monarchy, and later, under subsequent military dictatorships, as they strategically deployed “rights talk” against repressive regimes. The family became a place for envisioning – and articulating – a system of reciprocal rights and duties in an Islamic society, symbolically standing in for an Islamic polity within a secular, semi-authoritarian state. Moreover, the family became a place where rights and duties could be balanced, through a sense of religious communalism, care, and self-sacrifice, in contradistinction to a liberal, secular conception of unbridled individualism.

What purpose has the discursive ideology of equality served for the new Egyptian state? The authors of the 2012 constitution clearly aimed to thwart resilient assumptions about the incompatibility of Islam with gender equality. But they also wielded a long developed discourse of gender equality in Islam as a political tool. This gender equality has been a pillar of contemporary Islamist ideology, developed in the writings of thinkers like Sayyid Qutb, Abd al-Wahid Wafi, and Muhammad al-Ghazali.<sup>8</sup> Each wrote extensively



on Islamic notions of women and men's reciprocal rights and duties, on conceptions of Islamic freedom and equality, and on women. Each focuses on gender equality as a pillar of social justice and human rights in Islam. It is a principle that the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party spokeswoman Dina Zakaria reiterated in an interview about the constitution on NPR.<sup>9</sup> Dr. Huda Ghaniyya, one of the drafters of the 2012 constitution and a member of the People's Assembly (the lower house of Parliament), similarly defended the constitution's protections of "women's rights, dignity, and freedom" in a video on Ikhwan Tube, a Muslim Brotherhoods version of YouTube.<sup>10</sup>

Criticisms of Egypt's 2012 constitution focused on Article 10: "The family is the basis of society, her support is religion, morality, and patriotism." This article has been generally interpreted as an Islamist provision and stemming from an Islamist emphasis on family values and on women's roles as mothers. Yet Article 10 hardly has its origins in the Islamic ideology of the Freedom and Justice Party, as public commentaries relentlessly asserted. Article 10 is taken verbatim from Article 5 ("The family is the basis of society, founded on religion, morality, and patriotism") of the 1956 constitution under Nasser, who was, by that time, resolutely at war with the Muslim Brotherhood. This historical context, along with the UDHR, is utterly critical to understanding this particular formulation of a religious family as the basis of society. Through the constitution, Nasser sought to curb and control the powers of not just the Muslim Brotherhood, but also Al-Azhar and the religious courts.<sup>11</sup> He did this partly by concentrating religion in the family and the personal status laws, as emblems of authentic religion, circumscribed within the family. In 1956, Nasser abolished the religious courts, bringing the (religious) laws of personal status under the jurisdiction of the (civil, secular) national courts, in addition to bringing the administration of al-Azhar under government control. Personal status laws were, nonetheless, still governed by the religious laws of their respective religious communities. In his book *Formations of the Secular*, Talal Asad calls the personal status laws "the expression of a secular formula, defining a place in which

'religion' is allowed to make its public appearance through state law," and religion is (publicly) relegated to private life.<sup>12</sup> Article 10 is a reflection of that "secular formula," growing out of the state's complex – and contested – relationship with the religious personal status laws. The personal status laws have historically functioned as a means of controlling religious law partially by consigning it to the family (and religious property), a tactic first used by colonial regimes in the region. Relegating shari'a to family law served to delimit its sphere of influence.

The role of Islamic law in state legislation has been one of the most contested questions in Egypt's constitutional history, manipulated toward different political ends by different regimes. In the aftermath of the 2011 uprisings, the news media obsessed over whether the Morsi government was going to impose religious law. But the personal status laws have come to stand in for (or even replace) religious law in general. Article 2 of *both* the 2012 and the 2014 constitution states that "Islam is the religion of the state and Arabic its official language. Principles of the Islamic shari'a are the main source of legislation." The 2012 and 2014 constitutions' assertion of Islamic law as "*the* source of legislation" is closely related to the role of the personal status laws as a repository for religious law in the Egyptian state. It is no accident that the next article, Article 3 (in both constitutions), goes on to define religious law of the respective religious minority communities as the basis for their own personal status laws, reiterating the centrality of religion (and religious law) to governing the personal affairs of the family. Moreover, the assertion of Islamic law a "*the* source of legislation" was a holdover from the Sadat era. The 1956 and 1971 constitutions declared Islam the religion of the state, but Sadat's 1971 constitution added an additional clause asserting that shari'a was *a* main source of legislation (even though the personal status codes were the only laws based on shari'a). In a later constitutional amendment in 1980, the Sadat government would change this to shari'a as *the* main source of legislation – identical to the clause in the new constitution. This clause was designed to counteract the uproar against "Jihan's law," a set of reforms to the personal status laws instituted by emergency decree in the wake of the 1978 Camp David

accords with Israel.<sup>13</sup> Most striking are virtually identical approaches to hotly contested issues by the “Islamist” government of Muhammad Morsi and the more “secular” government of Abdel Fatah al-Sissi, in their imbricated visions of gender, religion, and rights in public and private.

In the aftermath of the 2011 uprisings, the new Egypt converted the fervor of revolutionary change into the civil liberties of a new constitutionalism. This is what Hannah Arendt calls the “end of revolution” in her classic book *On Revolution*, when constitutions augur the end of revolutionary freedoms that are replaced with “civil liberties.”<sup>14</sup> In the case of the Arab Spring, this partly involved the re-constitution of the existing power structure, even as the promise of gender equality glimmered with the hope of a newfound political order. The glimmer little dissimulated the tightening of restrictions on other civil liberties with the re-institution of the *ancien régime*, as all Egyptian citizens, men and women (*muwatinin wa muwatinat*), see their freedoms circumscribed.

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## **Activism and identity**

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# Changing the Discourse About Public Sexual Violence in Egyptian Satellite TV

*By Vickie Langohr, College of the Holy Cross*

In 2012, young Egyptian female and male activists launched a number of groups dedicated to ending public sexual violence, or PSV. They sought to end sexual harassment — ranging from catcalls to groping women’s bodies — on the street and in public transit, and to stop mass sexual assault on major shopping boulevards during the Eid holidays or political protests, when groups of men grabbed and stripped women, and in some cases raped them with sharp objects.

This activism represents the kind of change political scientists often miss. Democracy advocates and political scientists alike tend to focus on quantifiable changes in electoral politics, laws and constitutions. But how can we measure less tangible changes in societal norms that may have even more impact on securing citizens’ daily freedoms? Though Egypt has not witnessed the democratic blossoming many had hoped for in the immediate aftermath of the uprisings, discourse on key social issues has evolved in significant ways.

In the decade before Hosni Mubarak’s February 2011 overthrow, women’s rights activism in Egypt focused on improving girls’ and women’s legal rights in the private sphere, including increasing access to divorce and raising girls’ marriage age. This activism was led by female lawyers, professors and other professionally accomplished, primarily middle-aged women.

In contrast with earlier women’s rights activism, the main objective of the 2012 anti-PSV work done by groups, such as Basma, Anti-Harassment Movement and Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment/Assault (OpAntiSH), was not legal change. While activists took pride in 2014 amendments to the penal code on harassment, a major short-term goal was to physically intervene to prevent instances of PSV — that is, until President Abdel Fatah al-Sissi’s crackdown on activism in public spaces rendered

this impossible. The long-term objective remains changing the norms used to justify PSV.

What allowed this new form of activism to emerge, and how does it matter? In addition to the creation of new youth movements, significant structural change in the Egyptian TV sphere after 2011 markedly expanded televised discussions of public sexual violence. This coverage has helped to spread and normalize two arguments central to anti-PSV activism: that perpetrators are engaging in an unacceptable, and criminal, form of behavior, not excusable by any form of women’s dress; and that it is the responsibility of all Egyptians — everyday citizens and leaders alike — to work to stop it.

Privately owned satellite TV channels — as opposed to programming created directly by state agencies on state channels — are widely viewed in Egypt, with cost not a significant barrier due to the ubiquity of illegal access. Coverage of PSV on satellite TV began during the late Mubarak era, but until December 2010 it was episodic and usually in reaction to high-profile events. In 2006, a group of men grabbed and stripped women in front of a Cairo cinema during Eid celebrations, and no TV station discussed the assaults for three days until activist Nawara Negm appeared on an episode of Mona al-Shazly’s “al Ashira Mas’aan” show discussing Ramadan soap operas. Negm’s on-air suggestion that the guests address the assaults instead led al-Shazly to interview bystanders and ask the Ministry of Interior for a response. Al-Shazly returned to harassment issues with an October 2008 interview with Noha Rushdy, the first woman to sue her harasser in court.

More regular coverage of PSV would only begin two months before Mubarak was overthrown, in December 2010, as hosts began covering new anti-PSV initiatives. This included an interview with Engy Ghozlan, a co-

founder of HarassMap, the first major organization dedicated to stopping PSV, which had opened only one month earlier.

In the months after Mubarak's overthrow, the satellite media landscape changed dramatically. While only five private satellite channels existed in January 2011, by September, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces had licensed 16 new satellite stations, including the Muslim Brotherhood's Misr 25. As the number and ideological diversity of satellite programs increased, new types of programming also emerged, including the investigative journalism program "Awwal al-Kheit" and humor programs, such as "Hukumat Nuss al-Layl" and Bassem Youssef's "al-Birnamij." These new programs publicized the work and mainstreamed the narratives of anti-PSV groups.

It is possible, but unlikely, that the significant increase in TV coverage of PSV after Mubarak's overthrow was simply a reflection of an enormous increase in the phenomenon itself post-2011. Sexual harassment was widespread under Mubarak, with a 2008 survey in three governorates by the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights finding that 83 percent of women had been harassed, 46 percent on a daily basis. A 2013 U.N. survey of women in seven governorates found that 99 percent of women had experienced harassment, with 49 percent saying it occurred daily. Studies asking women whether harassment has increased since Mubarak's overthrow have found a range of results, from unanimous reports of increases in one study to more equivocal responses in the U.N. Women 2013 poll. However, one clear change in the post-2011 period was the emergence of mass sexual assaults at protests.

Mass assaults were not unknown during the Mubarak era, including the 2006 Eid attacks, but the number and brutality of such attacks increased dramatically at protests between 2012 and 2014, with groups like Tahrir Bodyguard and OpAntiSH created to rescue women assaulted in Tahrir protests. Many TV programs took these attacks as a springboard from which to discuss PSV more generally. But the activism of new anti-PSV groups also played a key role in pushing the issue onto the agenda and shaping how

it was discussed, from programs that detailed how anti-harassment and assault groups worked to the many TV hosts who allotted significant airtime to activists.

### **Challenging dominant discourses: Does women's dress cause harassment?**

The most widespread "justification" for PSV is that women's "improper" appearance — a category that could include lack of veiling and wearing form-fitting clothing — causes harassment. In the U.N. Women 2013 survey, the most prominent reason men gave for harassing women was dress, with 73 percent of men indicating that "the girl's dress was not decent and revealed her body contours" as a reason for harassment.

Several new satellite shows tackled this issue head on. An April 2014 episode of the comedy show "Hukumat Nuss al-Layl" opened with the host, surrounded by mannequins covered in white sheets, scoffing at claims that women bore no responsibility for harassment. The host uncovered the first mannequin to show a female form in a sleeveless bandeau and tight pants and asked, "what about this woman isn't asking to be harassed?" Each mannequin that he uncovered was more conservatively dressed than the previous one. As he undraped the last mannequin, he asked, "what respectable woman who doesn't want to be harassed would walk in the street dressed like this?" while uncovering a form dressed in a black niqab only showing the eyes and a voluminous black dress. Later in the segment the host interviewed Tahrir Bodyguard member Mary Awadallah about myths and realities surrounding PSV.

The extent to which women-blaming narratives have been increasingly challenged can be seen in the fact that they are beginning, on occasion, to be rejected even on Islamist programs. On an October 2012 episode of "Sitt al-Banaat," a talk show aimed at women on the Muslim Brotherhood's Misr 25 channel, host Shahinaz Mahmoud rejected the idea that women were responsible for harassment and praised women who reported their harassers to the police. While another host, Nour



Abdullah, suggested that “immodest” dress might facilitate harassment, the segment was dominated by a psychologist who insisted that even public nakedness could not legitimize harassment, a narrative strengthened by an interview with activists from Basma, best known for forming groups to stop Eid harassment, and Against Harassment.

Even Salafi channels, which feature repeated invectives against women in the public sphere, are not immune. On a February 2013 episode of the show “Masabih al-Buyut” on the Salafi al-Hafeth channel, an Islamist-leaning professor of criminal law, a member of the upper house of parliament from the Muslim Brotherhood’s ruling Freedom and Justice Party and Ayman Nagy of Against Harassment debated the causes of PSV. Unsurprisingly, the guests disagreed strongly with Nagy on the role of women’s dress, with the law professor arguing that it facilitated harassment while Nagy responded that “we [men] are not animals walking in the street ... [as if] I have to attack any woman I walk behind.” More surprising was that host Ahmed Baha repeatedly contested his guests’ claims that “inappropriate” dress facilitated PSV, at one point arguing that in the 1960s and 1970s there was much less harassment despite the fact that most women were unveiled and many wore short skirts.

In a clear sign of changing social narratives, talk show host Riham Sa’id was suspended after an October broadcast in which she showed private photos of a woman who had been assaulted in a mall and suggested that more conservative dress would have prevented such assault, leading advertisers on the show to withdraw their sponsorship.

### **Questions of accountability**

Activists assert that all citizens need to fight PSV and hold leaders accountable for encouraging or neglecting

it. The work of everyday citizens against harassment has been lauded by hosts across the political spectrum, from the liberal Bassem Youssef, who praised activists from OpAntiSH and Tahrir Bodyguard as “people who are really making a difference,” to the previously mentioned Muslim Brotherhood “Sitt al-Banaat” program, whose hosts extolled their activist guests as “beautiful and positive.” More important, satellite TV has also facilitated challenges of both Islamist and military leaders. In November 2012, Azza Soliman, then the director of the Center for Egyptian Women’s Legal Assistance, and a leader of I Saw Harassment, appeared on ONTV’s program “al Sura al Kamila.” Host Liliane Daoud confronted Saad Amara, a Freedom and Justice Party leader, with recent statements by Muslim Brotherhood leaders blaming women for harassment, after which the activists sparred with Amara and Nader al-Bakkar, the then-spokesman for the Salafi al-Nour party.

Even as criticism of the Sissi government has slowed to a trickle in satellite media, an assault on women at the mass celebrations of Sissi’s June 2014 election prompted pro-Sissi talk show host Lamis Hadidi to excoriate the minister of health for public hospitals’ lackadaisical response.

It is too early to tell definitively whether the changing discourse about PSV in the satellite media is decreasing harassment on the ground. But the development and spread of a changing narrative reminds us of something that political scientists often forget – that the results of periods of political upheaval cannot be measured only by changes in the formal political sphere, and that “revolutions,” which so far have definitively failed to usher in stable, liberal politics, can nonetheless advance important social changes.

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## Egypt, Uprising and Gender Politics: Gendering Bodies/Gendering Space

By Sherine Hafez, University of California, Riverside

Though the Egyptian uprising of 2011 sought democracy and social justice, women quickly discovered that, despite their extensive participation in the protests, they were to be excluded from rewriting the Egyptian constitutional referendum, barred from committees chosen to negotiate with the military forces, and repeatedly harassed and threatened with gang rape in Tahrir Square. Women's bodies, once mobilized (and mobilizing), after the end of Mubarak's regime became the source of contention and debate. "Virginity tests," sexual assaults, *fatwas* (religious decrees) validating the rape of unveiled activists, were violent measures targeting the female body designed to limit women's marginalization from politics and to subvert democratic life in the country.

In what follows, I discuss how women's bodies are implicated in the re-articulation of state power over space and political action, from within a gender framework. I ask how gendered/marked bodies intervene within public spaces to reassemble the complex weave of political action, masculine politics, religious ideology and cultural and social norms. These forces in turn constitute the body. My intent is to capture this fluid process to understand the gendered relationship to the state in the Arab world and how practices of women's citizenship evolve in the region. With a focus on Egypt, I argue that women's citizenship post the so-called Arab Spring is continuously being reconstituted through vociferous processes in the wake of a revolution, post an Islamic-styled state, and under the current militaristic regime.

Although not surprising, the Egyptian uprising elevated women's participation in the public sphere to another level. Women marched on Tahrir in thousands – their numbers reaching 50 percent of the protestors, according to eyewitness accounts. They continued to demonstrate despite unrelenting harassment and reported human

rights violations committed against them. In a number of cases that have gained both local and global attention, the centrality of female corporeality in public debate after the "Arab Uprising" becomes clear. These cases demonstrate the struggle over defining women's bodies as demarcators of public space and employing them as conduits of state power and religious control. Ultimately, gender becomes the principal instrument that defines the kind of urban space envisioned by the state.

While protestors experienced a wide range of violence and brutal repression during the events of the January 25th uprising, 25-year-old Samira Ibrahim and at least 17 other female protestors were subjected to a special brand of violence that military personnel labeled, "virginity tests" (*kshufat al 'uzriyya*). This form of assault that was reserved for "girls who . . . were not like your daughter or mine," as a Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) military general put it (Fleishman 2012), caused Samira Ibrahim to see death as a welcome alternative. She describes her body becoming an instrument of inflicting shame and humiliation during a nightmare of violation (Human Rights Watch 2011). "Virginity tests" were rationalized by the anonymous SCAF general as a "precautionary measure" to protect military personnel from accusations of sexual assault by the arrested girls. Conjuring up strong imagery of virginity and family against the transgressive body of the female protestor of unknown virtue and family, the general framed the case in familiar sociocultural and religious undertones. Meanwhile, Samira as well as the rest of the 17 young female protestors experienced the loss of bodily integrity and their corporeal autonomy as citizens of the state. Ibrahim filed a lawsuit against the officer who conducted her virginity test, bringing much attention to the plight of women protestors and the role the SCAF had played in the physical and psychological abuse conducted against the activists in Tahrir. Samira Ibrahim



lost that legal battle but succeeded in banning the violating procedure in military prisons in December of the same year (Al Jazeera 2011).

The case of Samira Ibrahim evokes a common trope in the discourses of male domination that rationalize gendered ideologies of public space.<sup>1</sup> In these narratives, women's bodies are reduced to biological terms that link them to reproduction and domesticity, relegating them to the home and marginalizing them from the sphere of politics. Feminine bodies that challenge these normative ideals are therefore identified in negative terms and framed in discourses that validate punitive action against them. The violating procedure of virginity testing is one of the methods designed to marginalize the female body; however, sheer violence unleashed on the bodies of women who dare trespass into the public or political realm has also been the subject of much controversy surrounding the uprisings in Arab countries. The horrific beating of a female protestor who, having fallen down on the asphalt ground of Tahrir Square during a military raid, was stomped on by the soldiers' heavy boots is one such example. While soldiers beat and kicked her, her clothing fell apart to reveal that she was wearing a blue bra underneath her black *abaya*. The incident conferred on her the title of, "the girl in the blue bra." State owned media struggled to explain away what became a testimony to the military's human rights abuses by blaming the young woman and criminalizing her intentions. The image of the exposed naked body of the "girl in the blue bra," however, continued to epitomize an autocratic state's attempt to thwart local resistance, not simply through physical violence but also through the manipulation of patriarchal gender metaphors of sexuality and honor.

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1 Feminist scholarship has contributed extensively to this subject for example, Sherry Ortner 1974, Louise Lamphere 1997 and others. Although there are some limitations to viewing the public and private as binaries and perceiving women's political participation simplistically as strictly public, such theories do contribute to our understanding of larger dynamics that to some extent and in some cases do govern modern urban societies. See Ann Fausto Sterling 2000 for a rigorous critique of the role biology plays in sexing the non masculine body.

Violence – no matter how brutal in these cases – was once more justified by framing the female body in denigrating terms that question its purity and piety. Piety and purity, therefore, are implied as prerequisites for women to access the public sphere. What happens then when the female body embodies these qualities yet still participates politically? How does the state frame these bodies that challenge its power from within the very corporeal rubrics it claims as requirements for public presence? The young female cadets (*hara'ir*) of the Muslim Brotherhood organization who participated in October 2013 protests in Alexandria put this gendered state discourse to the test. At 7 a.m. one morning, 21 women – 14 of whom ranged in age from 15 to 17 years old – headed out to protest against the unseating of the MB president Mohamed Morsi and his imprisonment by the military.<sup>2</sup> They were arrested and immediately tried in an Alexandria court for inciting violence.

To impugn the female protesting body, state and military discourse defined transgressive bodies participating in political action during the uprising as impure and impious, but these arrested young *hara'ir* defied the very tenants of state discourse. They stood behind bars in an Alexandrian court, uniformly dressed in white, with white veils covering their hair. Youth, purity and innocence were accentuated by the anxious scrubbed faces peering from behind the bars as they awaited their verdicts. Newspaper reports called them "virginal," and in no time at all, the trial and its subsequent proceedings were soon known as, "The Virgin Trials." The Muslim Brotherhood conducted a social media campaign that affirmed their piety and purity and challenged the court's accusations pleading innocence for its junior members. The Virgin Trials epitomized these qualities and their case succeeded in galvanizing public opinion to support the MB for quite some time despite recent waves of anger towards the organization. At the core of these deliberations were the bodies of these young

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2 A popular backed army coup deposed the Freedom and Justice party's (the political party of the Muslim Brotherhood) former president Mohamed Morsi and held him under house arrest pending his trial. Police raided the camps of MB protests in July 2013, killing hundreds of remaining protestors.

cadets who stood facing the cameras, the public and the state, subverting hegemonic messages of state control by claiming purity and piety as their own and not the purview of state hegemony. They were released from jail in December of the same year.

A central trope of feminist theory problematizes the social construction of the gendered body as an effect of discourse rather than a pre-discursive material being (Butler 1998). In so arguing, these scholars of the body emphasize the fluidity of the corporeal form and its temporality. Women's bodies are often vehicles of resistance that reinscribe the very principles of social control being resisted (Bordo 2003). In so doing as bodies appropriate the forms of dominance that oppress them, they concurrently normalize the logic of male centric gender ideologies they seek to overcome. In this regard, one can argue that to transform a social order is to reconstitute the body in terms that lie outside the hegemonic forms of bodily comportment. Re-envisioning new spaces or alternative bodily compartments and novel deployments of discourse that surround the body might, according to Bordo's stipulation, begin to make a fissure in an otherwise impermeable system of power that undergirds society. These fissures in public performance are referred to as "bodily insurgency" by Daphne Brooks (2006). Speaking in the context of black performers' bodies in the 19th century, Brooks notes how black actors, singers and activists in the United States reconstituted their bodies in ways that "defamiliarized" hegemonic notions of blackness in transatlantic populations. Their performances, she argues, created a powerful counter-discourse to dominant narratives of race and gender relations. Through gesture and speech as well as material props and visual technologies, the body is able to confound and disrupt conventional constructions of the racialized and gendered body.

Public performance in particular, holds much potential to transform women who are otherwise construed as belonging to the private sphere and who, more often than not, are perceived as disruptive and unruly. Once in the public sphere, women's bodies are not only regulated and disciplined by the "male gaze" but also through state power

and religious authority, which ensure that the masculinity of the public domain remains protected from the potential chaos introduced by non-masculine, transgressive bodies. As a spectacle, women's non-conformist bodies are disciplined by the requirements of the public domain.

In Egypt today, the revolutionary protestor is constructed as the other. On one hand, civilized bodies – rational, modern, progressive and obedient – respond favorably to a strong and dominant government seeking to impose order on chaos. On the other hand, the transgressive body – out of control and associated with lack of rationality and lack of civilization – becomes increasingly alienated, stigmatized and denigrated. Within this binary construct of human subjects that depicts the disciplined versus the undisciplined body lies a key strategy to the control of populations, especially the non-masculine body

These cases – however briefly discussed above – demonstrate how women's bodies become spaces of contestation where battles over authenticity, cultural dominance and political control are fought. While women's bodies are disciplined and regulated through discourses of patriarchy, Islamism and state politics, they are also sites of dissent and revolution. Seeing women's bodies as a means to their political ends, Islamists, liberals and pro-government groups alike have all competed over the definition of the female body as transgressive, unregulated and unruly, or pious and pure to suit their agendas. Despite these hegemonic representations, the narratives of gendered corporeality persist in articulating a counter discourse that, perhaps, will succeed in imagining the female body differently in public spaces.

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# Women and the Right to Land in Morocco: the Sulaliyyates Movement

By Zakia Salime, Rutgers University

“They destroyed my shack and called me crazy.” “Where do I go now?” “I have nowhere to go.” These fragments of a life account reached us through a YouTube video recorded with a cell phone camera of a bystander as Fadwa Laroui set herself on fire on February 21, 2011. Laroui, the 25-year-old single mother of two, immolated herself in front of the town hall of Souk Sebt, a small town in central Morocco, to protest her exclusion from a social housing project. After demolishing the shack in which she lived with her two children and parents, the town hall denied her access to a plot of land she had formerly been promised, as a part of state sponsored relocation project. Laroui, the first woman to immolate herself in the Arab region in the midst of the Arab Spring, confronted the state bureaucracy and laws regarding urban marginality, land distribution and displacement. Though Laroui was not part of a formalized movement, her last scream resonated in a context in which women’s mobilization for land rights and housing reached a tipping point in Morocco. Rural women, known as *Sulaliyyates*, are at the forefront of struggles over land rights, housing, and political representation in Morocco.

## Politics, Agency and Identity

No women’s movement has marked the political debate in Morocco, after the North African uprisings as much as the *Sulaliyyates*. The term *Sulaliyyates* derives from the Arabic root, *sulala* (ethnic genealogy). It refers to “tribal” women, from both Arabic and Tamazight speaking collectivities that are demanding an equal share compared to men, when their land is privatized or divided. In Morocco, the term *al-aradi al-sulaliyya*, points to a dominant mode of land tenure in which members of an “ethnic” collectivity hold communal rights on the land they inhabit and/or exploit. Although communal land could in the past neither be seized nor sold, it could be transferred from fathers to sons over the age of sixteen. According to hegemonic understanding of *urf* (customary law), women can only benefit through male relatives. Unmarried women,

widows, divorcees — and those with no sons — often face expropriation and become destitute. Many end up living in slums surrounding their communal land.

The marginal status of women with regard to land tenure does not reflect the importance of their labor force and knowledge in farming. Women’s labor represents 50.6 percent of agricultural production in Morocco; of these women, 92 percent are involved in farming.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, women’s lack of access to land is certainly the most challenging facet of rural poverty, and the biggest obstacle to sustainable development in the countryside. The urgency to liberalize larger portions of the rural economy through land privatization and division, put land at the heart of political struggles over competing notions of development and rights.

## Postcolonial Legacy and Neoliberal Encounters

Morocco became a French Protectorate in 1912. The 1919 Decree transferred overall responsibility for communal land from tribal authorities to the state, facilitating its appropriation by French settlers and inclusion into capitalist modes of production.<sup>2</sup> In order to control land transactions, the independent state kept the same structures established by the French colonial regime and instituted committees of *nuwabs* (male representatives), to speak on behalf of their rural communities. It also created an office inside the Ministry of Interior, *majlis al wissaya*, a Tutelary Council to centralize decision making, supervise transactions, treat disputes, and distribute compensations. Other mediations take place at the local level in town halls, city and rural councils, all involving a large network of

1 Asmae Alaoui Chahid : “Application de la dimension genre au secteur de l’agriculture.” Accessed March 29, 2016. [https://www.google.com/?gws\\_rd=ssl#q=Asmae+ALAOUI+CHAHID+%2F+MADRPM%2FDERD+Asmae+ALAOUI+CHAHID+%2F+MADRPM/DERD](https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=Asmae+ALAOUI+CHAHID+%2F+MADRPM%2FDERD+Asmae+ALAOUI+CHAHID+%2F+MADRPM/DERD)

2 Bouderbala, Negib. 1996. “Les terres collectives du Maroc dans la première période du protectorat (1912-1930)”. *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*. 79-80: 143-156

male-centered interest, profit and privilege. From selected constituencies in the 1960s, the *nuwabs* have become the inescapable brokers, and gatekeepers, while remaining key to all the transactions around privatization, land distribution and monetary compensation. Notably missing are the Sulaliyyates.

Competition among nation states over the global investment map put land at the forefront of economic transactions. In the 1990s, the World Bank-mandated privatization policies accelerated the liberalization of land and the uniformity of legal frameworks regulating various modes of land tenure.<sup>3</sup> Morocco signed the Free Trade Agreement with the United States in 2004 and won advanced status as an economic partner of the European Union in October 2008. Land acquisition is the means through which Free Trade Zones, touristic activities, and real estate development materialize. Communal land is thus a gold mine, and covers about 42 percent of Morocco's land, as is held collectively by tribes.

### The Mobilization

The Sulaliyyates movement is the first nationwide grassroots mobilization for land rights led by rural women in contemporary Morocco. The movement puts communal land at the heart of struggles over economic liberalization, development projects, and political representation. The Sulaliyyates question the deep structures of corruption linked to the process of liberalization of land, the sexism embedded in the everyday exchange with state bureaucrats supervising land transactions, and the legacy of the colonial legal regime and customary practices that put tribal men at the center of these transactions, while excluding women. Their demands for equal rights for land and political representation underline the material struggles around land exploitation, the gendered underpinning of the laws regulating land tenure, and the social cost of privatization that dismiss women as holders of rights.

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3 World Bank. 2008. *Marchés Fonciers Pour la croissance Economique au Maroc*. Volume 1- "Héritages et Structure Foncières au Maroc". Accessed June 30, 2015. <http://documents.banquemonde.org/curated/fr/2008/05/11091110/maroc-marches-fonciers-pour-la-croissance-economique-au-maroc-vol-1-5-heritage-structures-foncieres-au-maroc>

In March 2009, 500 Sulaliyyates — coming from all over the country — stood in front of the Moroccan Parliament in Rabat to attract media attention to their fight. It all started when in 2007 Rkia Bellout, a Sulaliyya from the *Haddada* tribe in the Kénitra region, questioned her exclusion from the transactions taking place on her ancestral land. She contacted several women's organizations in Casablanca and Rabat, and succeeded to attract support from the ADFM, the Democratic Association for Moroccan Women. Thousands of women have since joined the ADFM as members, and have mobilized other women in their rural communities across the Arabic and Tamazight speaking regions. The Sulaliyyates want equal rights to access land by virtue of their kinship ties. They want the right to housing when the state changes their land into real estate, and claim equal monetary compensation when the state privatizes the land and bloc any transaction on the land when their names are not published on the lists of the rightful land holders established by men.

### Towards Political Representation

In order for women to become visible as rightful land holders, lists and inventories of communal and familial land must be produced. As members of declared tribal configurations, many Sulaliyyates never envisioned themselves as individual political agents, and most have delegated to male relatives the right to manage their livelihood. Listing all the women who have land rights in a particular collectivity may sound simple, but it is not. First, it requires getting women to meeting places and training them in basic writing before, finally, convincing them to put their names on a list that will become public.

Despite women's involvement in local farming economies, their fear of state institutions, the stigmatization by family members, and their distress about possible alienation in their own communities, slows down this process in several parts of the country. These are real fears. Because of their precarious economic position, women cannot afford to lose the imagined support of a brother, upset a husband, or compete with a son over land rights. Many fear or have been subjected to retaliation, sometimes in violent ways. By allowing their



names added to a public list of women claiming land rights, these women stand on opposite sides of male — and even female family members — who mobilize *'urf* (custom) to justify the women's illegibility to claims over land.

The second most challenging aspect of the Sulaliyyates' mobilization is the struggle over political representation in the nuwab's committees. Being elected is not the issue; most of the well-known Sulaliyyates leaders are now respected by women and men in their rural communities. However, the struggle stems from having to engage with local bureaucrats who may approve or reject the presence of women in committees traditionally reserved to men, and who are in most cases, still reluctant to give women their rights. To many women, getting elected to these committees requires engaging with the rules of the political game and financial bargains — which can be challenging for women who have had such limited education that they don't feel comfortable reading or writing.

As the Moroccan parliament is still failing to implement the gender quotas set in the 2011 Moroccan Constitution, women farmers are trying to implement their quota in rural communities. In Mehdia for instance — the region that triggered the Sulaliyyates movement — has reached the 50 percent quota. Rkia Bellout, the founder of the Sulaliyyates movement, is part of committee of twelve nuwab, half of which are women. When I visited various parts of Morocco in the summer of 2015, other Sulaliyyates were mobilizing and campaigning for quotas in their own nuwab councils, disrupting decades of male predominance.

### **Argumentation and Gains**

The 2004 Family Code remains the main staple of King Mohamed VI's reign. The new code gave women nearly equal rights with men in marriage, divorce, and child custody. It also gave them equality within family units. Furthermore, the 2011 amended constitution stipulates those rights, and points to gender quotas as a goal. Rural poverty and urban precarity are also stated goals through various programs, including the 2005 National Human Development Initiative (INDH) and the 2004 City Without Slums. They are showcases of the king's declared desire to create wider access

to resources and address redistribution. The Sulaliyyates case is a real challenge, however, to this vision.

The language of rights, poverty reduction, and gender equality is instrumental in the Sulaliyyates movement. Trained by the ADFM members, providing with basic legal literacy, the Sulaliyyates specifically use state language to refer to equality and poverty alleviation. This is a rejection of any reference to the Islamic inheritance laws, and instead a use of the secular language of gender justice and equality already sanctioned by Morocco.

In early responses to their mobilization, the minister of interior issued the 2009 Ministerial Circular to the Governor of the province of Kénitra, asking him to allow women to be listed as land right holders.<sup>4</sup> In November 2009, 792 women from Qasbat Mehdia (in Kénitra) received money leftover from previous transactions with the men of Qasbat Mehdia. Their land was already transferred in a massive government industrialization project to create of a new international port in Kénitra /Mehdia. The symbolic nature of this compensation disrupted the dismissal of women as individual economic agents.

Faced with women's persistent and growing mobilization, the 2010 Ministerial Circular encouraged all governors across Morocco to consider only lists of land rights beneficiaries if women were also listed. And in March 2012, another circular raised more questions about the process of listing and allocation of resources. While these circulars are not to be taken for laws, they still gave the Sulaliyyates enough leverage for their demands. Their sustained mobilization for rights — despite entrenched interests of state officials, urban representatives and rural elites — points to both the potential and the limitations of policies and decisions that do not disentangle the nexuses of power, and the layers of mediations and profit obstructing poor women's access to rights and property in the neoliberal era.

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<sup>4</sup> For text of the government circulars mentioned in this memo, please refer to the official website of collective land: <http://www.terrescollectives.ma/>.

# The Politics of the Truth and Dignity Commission in Post-Revolutionary Tunisia: Gender Justice as a threat to Democratic transition?

*By Hind Ahmed Zaki, University of Washington*

For decades, thousands of Tunisian women suffered from systematic sexual violence at the hands of state agents. The establishment of a Truth and Dignity commission less than two years ago has empowered many of these women to seek legal remedies and public recognition of those crimes. Redress for gender-based violations at the hands of state agents in Tunisia represents an important, albeit until recently ignored, dimension of Tunisia's post-revolutionary democratic transition.

The extent of the use of rape as a weapon of political intimidation and the number of women who had suffered from sexual abuse at the hands of state agents was surprising, even to those following Tunisian affairs closely. Since the commission began to hear testimonies from more than 20,000 victims, an ugly picture of the state's systematic use of sexual violence against female members of the opposition, as well as female members of the families of opposition members began to emerge. According to the commissioners, between June 2014 and December 2015, thousands of women came forward, recounting stories of being raped and tortured while held in detention, some suffering serious physical and psychological injuries that would last for decades.

Tunisia's nascent transitional justice process initially focused on government corruption and human rights violations in general without a special focus on gender-based violence. The true extent of the of the systematic use of rape and sexual assault against women by the Tunisian state only became clear after the commission started hearing testimonies from hundreds of female survivors of sexual violence. While women were victims of imprisonment, travel bans and constant government harassment like their male counterparts, they also suffered an added stigma – that of rape and sexual assault.

For a state often hailed as an outlier in the Arab world for its record of women-friendly laws, the extent of the Tunisian state's abuse of its female citizens marks a paradoxical feature of state feminism in Tunisia and the region. While a number of recent developments, including a constitutional guarantee of electoral parity between men and women, suggest substantive gains for women's rights in the arena of formal politics; those rights did not often extend to the subject of gender-based violence, whether in the public or the private spheres. A culture of shame still very much surrounds these crimes, effectively resulting in impunity for perpetrators, whether state agents in prison cells or intimate partners at home.

As part of ongoing doctoral dissertation research, from 2014 to 2015 I interviewed members of the Truth and Dignity Commission, political activists and women who filed their cases before the commission and have also consulted available government archives. I analyze the contradictory results of the workings of the Truth and Dignity Commission in Tunisia, as an important site in which gender-based violence features in the formal procedural mechanisms of transitional justice. While the commission's work is far from complete, it could represent a rare opportunity to push forward new rights claims for Tunisian women that move beyond the secular/Islamic division and provide symbolic justice for Tunisian women.

## **Procedural and political challenges of transitional justice**

Established June 9th 2014, the commission was tasked with the ambitious mandate of addressing the gross human rights violations committed by the state or those acting in its name since 1955. Initially backed by Tunisia's two main political parties, the Islamic Ennahda and the more secular

Nidaa Tounes, the commission enjoyed a wide range of powers, including investigation, arbitration and reparation.

However, from the very start, the process of establishing the commission was deeply polarizing among different political factions. On one hand, Ennahda was often accused by political opponents of selecting civil society activists that were more sympathetic to the Islamic bloc and did not adequately represent the diverse voices of Tunisian civil society. The appointment of Sihem Bensidrine, a former journalist, and human rights activist to head the TDC was seen by many of Ennahda's more secular opponents as a guarantee that the commission would serve the Islamic agenda. The TDC also lacked a coherent roadmap for its work. Though the commission has successfully gathered testimonies from more than 16,000 survivors of torture since its establishment, commission members themselves disagree about what should be done with this material. Some favor a model of reconciliation via telling the truth while granting some form of legal amnesty for perpetrators. Others argue for providing former victims with legal means of justice, including court hearings and retributions.

The commission's lack of real power to carry out its mandate was recently evidenced when its members tried to access state security files in the Interior Ministry and secure the archives of the presidential palace only to be blocked by the presidential guards.

Such inefficiency is a symptom of Tunisia's wider political polarization. While the commission itself was the product of Tunisia's fragile democratic settlement, the TDC also seemed to inherit many of its unresolved issues. The historic 2013 settlement saved the fragile democratic transition and rested on three fundamental principals: electoral legitimacy, equality of party representation regardless of votes received and increased security by Ennahda against the growing threat of Islamic terrorism. Each of those principals uniquely affected transitional justice in general and gender justice in particular.

### **Gender justice in the context of democratic transition**

The terms of Tunisia's fragile political settlement influenced both the form and the content of the Commission's work. The delicate balance of the electoral and political settlement in Tunisia has made both Ennahda and Nidaa Tounes reluctant to pursue a real process of transitional justice. Ennahda's reluctance seem curious, given that the majority of female survivors of state-sanctioned gender-based violence are members, or related to members of the Islamic opposition. The reluctance of the leadership of Ennahda to confront the history of violence against its female members, despite the enthusiasm of their wider constituency for the commission, was criticized by a number of young members. One such member told me during an interview in early 2015 that such reluctance stems from the political leadership's need to make peace with Tunisia's "deep state" – the still functioning state security apparatus. Many young cadres of Ennahda expressed their frustration at how the 2012 Ennahda controlled parliament constantly delayed issuing the law for transitional justice and the establishment of the commission; despite paying lip service to transitional justice since the outbreak of the Jasmine revolution.

This continued to be the case even after Nidaa Tounes's sweeping victory in both the parliamentary and the presidential elections of 2015. Earlier this year, Ennahda did nothing to oppose Tunisia's current president, Beji Caid Essebsi's move to propose an "economic reconciliation" law, meant to provide impunity for financial corruption to many members of the old regime. Although the proposed law failed to pass in parliament late last year, Ennahda's lack of action speaks volumes of their reluctance to deal seriously with the legacy of state-sanctioned human rights abuses, fearing that doing so will disrupt an already frail political settlement and confirm accusations directed against Ennahda and its allies of secretly supporting radical Islamic groups.



In addition to the broader political context, the lack of clear procedures and goals has created an environment in which many female survivors of sexual violence feel that their testimonies are pointless. As one member of Ennahda who is also a survivor told me, “Why would I go and give my testimony? I am not seeking any financial repartitions. I am seeking justice. I want to see those who assaulted me admit their crimes and apologize. I will only go if that is possible.” Others who have given their testimonies are similarly skeptical that the process will lead to any real justice. Allegations about Tunisia’s deep security state and its efforts to silence victims were also commonly cited as a reason for the lack of progress.

In addition to these structural factors, a culture of shame surrounding sexual crimes colored both the intentions and actual procedures of the commission. Many survivors come from more religious backgrounds, and are generally unwilling to discuss sexual violence in public. However, many of them, both men and women, were willing to come forward and give their testimonies to the commission. For some, this was not just a personal act but also a political one. Dealing with past abuses at the hand of the state was their only way to move forward and an important tool through which institutions of the deep state could be reformed. In the word of one survivor who was sexually assaulted while in detention for distributing political leaflets on campus as a student, “I am not sure what will happen to my testament now, I know that names of the policemen who assaulted me, but I am not sure where they are now or even if they are still alive. What matters is that my statement will let the Tunisian people know that these practices could no longer occur with total impunity.”

## Looking forward

The current gender-related struggles in Tunisia and their mixed outcomes merit a closer look at the relationship between gender justice and democratization. The details of the Tunisian case challenge the assumption that both are necessarily compatible. The rise and electoral victories of Nidaa Tounes have helped members of the old regime’s political and business elite regain influence in the new democratic system. The country’s two main political parties seem to be seeking reconciliation in the interest of national stability but seem less interested in justice.

Ultimately, the process of transitional justice in Tunisia had yet to take into account the gendered nature of these violations. Though the democratic transition exposed the extent of the state’s past use of gender-based violence for political motives, its failure to clearly address them risks the reproduction of these same traditional and hegemonic gendered categories.

Tunisia’s process of transitional justice has created an opportunity to construct new narratives of women’s rights in Tunisia, through a painful reexamination of the nation’s history. While this process has so far had mixed results on women’s daily realities, some results could be surprisingly empowering, especially if this process were to become a vehicle for further legal and political mobilization for gender justice. In order for that to happen, however, the Truth and Dignity commission will have to establish strong popular support to counter the diminished political will to address past grievances and open new venues for gender justice.

*Hind Ahmed Zaki is a PhD Candidate in political science at the University of Washington.*



## **Women's political participation in authoritarian regimes**

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# First Ladies and the (Re) Definition of the Authoritarian State in Egypt

*By Mervat F. Hatem, Howard University*

In this short memo, I focus attention on how the institutionalization of the role of the first lady in Egypt explained its emergence as a “focal point of discontent” during the Egyptian uprising. Some commentators on this phenomenon have suggested that it be understood as a representation of the intersection of a form of public sexism used to critique the president and the corruption and hypocrisy of these powerful women.<sup>1</sup> I wish to take these views one step further to argue that the position and role of the first lady provided insights into the specific social and political institutional histories of the authoritarian state and that the abandonment of that role and title did not signal an end of the authoritarian state’s deployment of gender and/or its agendas to serve its interest. It only set the stage for the rise of new forms of top down gender politics whose discussion is beyond the focus of this memo.

President and Mrs. Anwar Sadat were responsible for the import and public use of this concept and role in the Egyptian political arena in the late 1970s, ignoring the objections of their political advisors who pointed out that it lacked legal or constitutional rules.<sup>2</sup> Both persisted seeing it as defining them as a modern couple different from president Gamal Abdel Nasser and his wife, Tahia Kazem Nasser, who was for most part publically invisible.<sup>3</sup> It also signified the closer alliance between Egypt and the United States in the 1970s. Mrs. Sadat’s embrace of the American concept served another purpose: pride in her Western ethnic roots as the daughter of an Egyptian father and a British mother. She shared this mixed heritage with Mrs. Mubarak and both used it to define themselves as modern/Western women with public roles to play separating them from the accelerated Islamization of Egyptian society that prioritized women’s family roles. As a result, the role of first lady became identified with yet another top down marker of ethnic, social and political difference/distance between those who were in power and the Egyptian majority.

As though to reinforce this view, President Sadat approved the use of the personal status laws that played an important role in the lives of Egyptian men and women and their families, to serve the social and political ambitions of the first lady. The 1979 law (allowing for some restrictions to polygamy and giving divorced mothers claims to the family home) was passed by a presidential decree ignoring the sitting parliament and any appearance of population input. When the High Constitutional Court struck down that law in 1985, five years after the assassination of President Sadat, it sought to discourage this use of personal status laws to satisfy the interests of first ladies and to underline the illegality of using presidential decrees to pass laws while parliament was in session. Only the second part of this political lesson was learned by the Mubaraks, who quickly pushed parliament to pass another personal status law that could be used by the first lady at the 1985 UN’s Women’s conference in Nairobi to showcase the progress made by Egyptian women under the new regime.<sup>4</sup>

The establishment of the National Council for Women (NCW), passed by presidential decree number 90 for 2000 “to propose policies and plans for the empowerment of women through a wide ranging mandate... to be chaired by Egypt’s First Lady, Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak,” institutionalized the connection between the gender policies of the authoritarian state and the role of the first lady.<sup>6</sup> It was supposed to serve as an independent national structure devoted to “women’s empowerment,” but its formal connection to the first lady indicated continued domination by the state. This repelled, but also offered, an active section of middle class women, a potential institutional opening for putting into effect their work on the change of the hopelessly outdated family and other (nationality) laws that discriminated against them.<sup>8</sup> It invited another section of middle class, providing its members with jobs and methods of advancement in the state bureaucracy through the service of the first lady.

Even though the changes that NCW introduced to the personal status laws appropriated the work of many non-governmental organizations on these important concern, Mrs. Mubarak claimed credit for shepherding them through parliaments. According to her husband's advisors, Mrs. Mubarak also developed an interest in a bigger political role i.e. setting the stage for her son's succession of his father as president.<sup>9</sup> Both of these engagements were not helped by her reputation as an arrogant and imperious woman. It explained why the Egyptian public gave her the title of *al-hanem* (the lady) and categorized the changed personal status laws with which she was identified as *qawanin al-hanem* denying her and them any social justification or importance.<sup>11</sup> They included giving a woman the right to initiate khul' (no fault) divorce against her husband in exchange for giving up any financial claims she may have (2000), allowing women to pass Egyptian citizenship to their children born with foreign nationals (2004), giving mothers longer custody of children until the age of 15 (2005) and the use of quotas in two consecutive elections to allow for the better political representation of women (2010).

During the first two years of the uprising, a loud campaign — led by some aggrieved divorced fathers and some Islamists — described the laws as un-Islamic and responsible for the disintegration of families. Feminist women and religious reformers (both men and women) associated with al-Azhar, who played a role in approving them, struck back — challenging these claims and explaining that the changes reflected the interests of children, not those of sparring spouses.<sup>12</sup> This last coalition which the old regime utilized explained why and how these laws survived this campaign.

Most liberal and Islamist groups and women did not support NCW, whose primary loyalties lay with the Mubarak state. It was not surprising therefore that many called for either its radical restructuring to better represent and address the gender agendas of civil society organizations or its dissolution. The organization survived, however, with some of its rules of operation intact e.g. the state continued to appoint its members, who included men

and women with 30 percent of the members changing every three years. Politically, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), that governed the first 18 months that followed the uprising, had tarnished its reputation through the use of so-called virginity checks against activist women, as well as the violence with which its soldiers treated women in the streets. This made the dissolution of NCW unwise.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the government of President Morsi was unwilling to move against the very critical NCW for fear that this would also confirm the partisan view that his Muslim Brotherhood was not sympathetic to women.

While the NCW survived, the formal role of the first lady did not. The public contempt with which Mrs. Mubarak was discussed compared with the respect generated by the publication of the memoirs of Mrs. Nasser, published in 2011. It contributed a different model of the role of a presidential spouse that was less controversial and had general public support. With a workaholic spouse, who was mostly absent, she described how she took complete responsibility for a family with five young children and juggled these responsibilities with the occasional public need to entertain the wives of visiting dignitaries<sup>14</sup> In that capacity, she played a role with which women of different classes and generations were familiar (i.e. primary caretakers of their families, especially children, adding to them whenever possible some public responsibilities).

Nagla Ali Mahmoud, President Mohammed Morsi's wife, concurred with Nasser's definition of the role of a presidential spouse denouncing the position of first lady. In foregrounding her role as a mother and wife, she highlighted it as offering an Islamic definition of the important roles of women in the family. To the horror of her critics at the NCW — led by Mervat al-Tellawy, the former ambassador and UN civil servant — she took pride in being identified as *Umm Ahmed* (the mother of Ahmed) and wearing a frumpy variant of the Islamic mode of dress of middle class women. Mrs. Morsi did not behave, however, as a passive or silent Muslim woman giving many interviews that offered views and opinions that reflected an activist Islamic sensibility shared by the many women

members of the Muslim Brotherhood. She offered a contrast to the wife of the interim president Adly Mansour, the jurist who came to power following the July 3rd coup, and whose wife was both unknown and invisible. Finally, Intisar Amer (Mrs. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi) shared Mrs. Morsi's interest in the familial roles of wife and mother. She made a late public appearance following her husband's election that was largely designed to dispute the public rumors that she wore the niqab. The variant of the Islamic mode of dress that she wore was different from that worn by Mrs. Morsi and could be characterized as middle class chic. It did not provoke the uproar that Mrs. Morsi caused and neither did her statement that she was only interested in being a wife and a mother.

The strong rejection of Mrs. Mubarak and the role of first lady removed an irritant in the relations between the rulers and ruled under the authoritarian state reminded the latter of the expanded encroachment of executive privilege into their lives through the change of personal status laws. It also reminded the public of the arbitrary rules that the presidency imposed on the functioning of other state institutions including the judiciary and the legislature. Finally, it underlined the emergence of some social consensus regarding the role of the president's wife: she was to play the same roles that other women of different classes played in their families taking on some public responsibilities should the need arises.

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1 Laurie A. Brand, Rym Kaki and Joshua Stacher, "First Ladies as Focal Points for Discontent", *Foreign Policy* (February 16, 2011) (<http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/0216/first-ladies-as-focal-points-for-discontent/>)

2 Mahmoud Fawzi, *Jihan al-Sadat, al-Mar'at alati Hakamat Misr* (Cairo: Matabi' Rose al-Youssef al-Gadida, 1993), pp. 102-106.

3 Jehan Sadat, *A Woman of Egypt* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1987), pp. 256-59, chapter 10.

4 Mervat F. Hatem, "Egypt's Economic and Political Liberalization and the Decline of State Feminism", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (May 1992).



# Women's Political Representation and Authoritarianism in the Arab World

By Marwa Shalaby, Rice University

On January 10, 2016, Egypt convened its first parliament under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi after almost four years of constitutional gridlock and electoral maneuvering.<sup>1</sup> In an election marked by overwhelming public apathy and the noticeable absence of youth, female candidates managed to win merely 17 out of the 420 contested seats in the single-member districts, in addition to the 56 provisional quota seats allocated to women through the closed party lists.<sup>2</sup> President Sisi subsequently appointed 14 women to parliament, thereby increasing the number of female MPs in the lower chamber to 87 (i.e., about 15 percent of the total seats). While deemed an improvement compared to Egypt's 2011 People's Assembly under Mohamed Morsi's rule<sup>3</sup> — when women won only 10 of the 508 contested seats<sup>4</sup> — the current situation does not indicate a major leap for women's political representation compared to pre-Arab Spring.<sup>5</sup>

This reality is not particularly unique to the Egyptian context. Women in the Arab world continue to face numerous obstacles toward achieving parity in elected legislative bodies. Arab states have one of the lowest

rates of women's political representation at 17 percent, compared to 27 percent in both Europe and the Americas (IPU 2015). There are also stark variations across the region in terms of the numerical presence of women in Arab parliaments that have remained mostly unexplained.<sup>6</sup> For instance, whereas a few Arab countries have attempted to bridge the gender gap in the political arena by means of constitutional and electoral mechanisms (i.e., Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco), the majority of the region continues to lag behind with the lowest percentages of women in national legislatures globally (i.e., Qatar, Yemen, and Oman). While previous studies have mainly focused on the role of traditional and patriarchal gender norms (Abou-Zeid 1998, 2006; Sabbagh 2007), religion (Fish 2002; Karam 1998), international pressure (Krook et al. 2010; Tripp 2005), women's movements (Brand 1998; Moghadam 2014), economic and structural factors (Ross 2008; Kang 2009), and the effect of institutional mechanisms (Amawi 2007; Dahlerup 2009; Darhour and Dahlerup 2013; David and Nanes 2011), on shaping women's access to the political arena, little or no attention was paid to the impact of the politics of authoritarianism in shaping not only women's numerical presence in national legislatures (i.e., descriptive representation), but most importantly, their legislative behavior and policy priorities once in office (i.e., substantive representation) (Brand 1998; Liddell 2009; Sater 2012; Shalaby 2015).<sup>7</sup>

The main goal of this short paper — which is a part of a larger book project — is not just to understand why and under what conditions women are more numerically represented in some Arab countries compared to others,

1 The lower chamber is now called the House of Representatives instead of the People's Assembly, according to Law 46, issued in 2014. This same law also abolished the Upper House (Majlis Al-Shura).

2 According to Law 46, there are 568 total seats in the lower chamber. 420 seats are elected via the plurality system, and the other 120 seats are elected via closed party lists. In addition, the President has the authority to appoint 28 additional members to the parliament.

3 The previous People's Assembly (PA) under former President Morsi was elected via a mixed electoral system, with two-thirds of the assembly elected through proportional lists (46 proportional party lists) and one-third (83 members) elected through individual lists. The Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) ordered the dissolution of the PA in June 2012, ruling it unconstitutional. The ruling was based on the fact that the electoral system in place favored political parties (mainly the Islamist ones) over individual candidates who did not get an equal chance to compete.

4 Female candidates were placed at the bottom of the electoral lists in 2011 elections due to the absence of placement mandates.

5 The last PA under Mubarak's regime had 64 females out of 444 seats (about 15 percent).

6 Women today hold on average 27 percent of legislative seats in the Maghreb, compared with an average of 10 percent in the rest of the MENA countries.

7 This paper relies on Levitsky and Way's definition of authoritarianism as: "a regime in which no viable channels exist for opposition to contest legally for executive power." (2010,7).



but also to shed light on the varying effects of authoritarian politics on women's substantive representation. The first section of this paper offers a brief overview of the impact of authoritarian politics in shaping women's numerical presence in Arab parliaments. The second section explicates how the current situation has impacted women's substantive representation and policy priorities, using original cross-national parliamentary data from three Arab monarchies: Jordan, Morocco, and Kuwait. The concluding section summarizes the findings and highlights prospects towards empowering Arab women in the decision-making process post-Arab Spring.

### **Why are So Few Women Elected to Arab Parliaments?**

Whereas previous explanations for women's political underrepresentation has been mostly limited to socio-economic and cultural factors, this research contends that the politics of authoritarianism is one of the key factors hindering women's access to political power. Female candidates do face numerous challenges to garner voter support and confidence, but the real issue lies at the top levels of power where electoral outcomes are manufactured, even manipulated, by the ruling elites to ensure their survival while maintaining the facade of fair and free elections. In addition, the sluggish democratization process and the failed aspirations of political liberalization have negatively impacted women's political representation, even with the frequent promises of gender reforms under state feminism.<sup>8</sup> Finally, the opacity and volatility of the rules of the game under such autocratic regimes, combined with the fragmentation of party systems, have minimized women's prospects for playing a more meaningful role in the electoral arena.

Despite the fact that promoting women's presence in

elected office has been part of state feminism efforts in several Arab countries over the past few decades (i.e., Tunisia, Morocco, and Jordan), these efforts were least successful compared to other gender-related reforms (such as the CPS in Tunisia and the Mudawana reforms in Morocco). On the one hand, the struggle for power among male elites — especially given these regimes' limited political openings — and their reluctance to cede power have created a hostile environment for women's inclusion in the decision-making process. On the other hand, most of these state-orchestrated efforts have always been associated with attempts to build support, consolidate power and/or in reaction to imminent legitimacy crises (Tunisia in 1956 and 1989, Morocco in 2002, Saudi Arabia in 2015, and Egypt in 2015 are prominent examples), or as a reaction to mounting international pressure (Bush 2011, 2015; Welborne 2010), with no genuine interest in empowering women in politics.

While some studies have demonstrated that institutional mechanisms, such as quotas, can remedy gender inequalities in politics regardless of the country's level of democracy (Tripp and Kang 2008), recent research has shown that this is not necessarily the case in the Arab world. As maintained by Goulding (2009, 76) studying Tunisia, "the efficacy of gender quotas set forth to encourage women to become active participants in their government is hindered by the authoritarian structure in which they exist." James Sater (2012, 73) found similar findings for the Moroccan case as he argues that quota mechanisms are indeed "embedded" in the fabric of existing authoritarian structures, with very limited impact on producing genuine change.

Furthermore, the volatility of election rules and the continual maneuvering of the electoral scene have led to paramount uncertainty not only among elites, but also among political candidates and voters, which further impedes women's presence in politics. Besides, the fragmentation — and in some instances, the absence — of coherent party systems in most parts in the region have contributed to limiting women's access to political office. Previous research has shown that political parties play a

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<sup>8</sup> Brand (1998, 10) describes state feminism as "policies directed from (as well as generally formulated at) the state leadership level, which aim at mobilizing or channeling women's (re) productive capabilities and coopting them into support for the state through such programs as raising literacy, increasing access to the labor market, establishing state-sponsored women's organizations, generally along the lines of the single-party model."



crucial role in the advancement of women in the electoral arena, especially when combined with inclusive electoral systems (i.e., proportional representation), placement mandates on the party lists, and noncompliance sanctions.

### Women's Substantive Representation in Arab Parliaments: The Gender and Elections in the Middle East Project (GEMEP)

Female parliamentarians face many challenges to gain access to politics, only to encounter a hostile and aggressive environment in these predominantly “masculine” councils. As maintained by Safa al-Hashem, the only female MP in the most recent Kuwaiti Parliament, upon her resignation in May 2014,<sup>9</sup> “There are overwhelming levels of corruption within the Kuwaiti Parliament. I have never been able to exercise my legislative role.”<sup>10</sup> Although previous studies have provided scattered evidence on the implications of women's numerical presence in Arab legislatures, there is currently no research that explains the role of authoritarian politics on women's substantive representation (i.e., policy preferences and priorities). Thanks to the Governance and Elections in the Middle East Project (GEMEP), launched in 2013 by the Women's Rights in the Middle East Program at Rice University's Baker Institute, researchers are able, for the first time, to better understand the policy stances of both male and female legislators in MENA's legislative bodies. Analyzing parliamentary data from three MENA countries — Jordan, Morocco and Kuwait — offers a unique opportunity to understand the dynamics of power in these elected councils. The countries included in this analysis are three Arab monarchies with various

demographic and cultural similarities that have enjoyed considerable stability over the past few decades and have remained relatively untouched by the sweeping winds of the Arab Spring.

To better understand the legislative process in these assemblies, it is important to briefly highlight their current electoral arrangements. In 2002, Morocco introduced a 10 percent “gentlemen's agreement” quota for women in the National Assembly (30 reserved seats on national party lists). Morocco currently has 17 percent female representation in parliament. Jordan adopted a 5 percent legislative quota system in 2003 that increased to 12 percent in 2013. Kuwait did not grant women the right to vote and run for office until 2005. In the 2009 elections, four women were able to win seats in the parliament for the first time (about 8 percent of total seats). There are also significant variations in the electoral systems in the three cases. In Morocco, elections are based on the list proportional system, while Kuwait employs the block vote system. Finally, Jordan implements the single non-transferrable vote (SNTV) system.<sup>11</sup>

Figure 1 summarizes the cross-national data — mainly the parliamentary questions proposed by female MPs during earlier parliamentary sessions in each of these countries. Data was collected and coded according to the comparative agenda project's coding<sup>12</sup> scheme (major topics), and the researchers added two additional categories of specific relevance to the focus of this research (women's issues and corruption<sup>13</sup>). The data for Jordan is from February 2013 to May 2015. As for Kuwait, data was collected since women gained access to the Assembly in 2009 until 2012. Finally, the Moroccan data presented in this paper is from January 2012 to July 2013.

9 Fadiyah al-Za'bi, “Two More MPs are Leaving the National Assembly,” *Elaph*, accessed August 25, 2015, <http://elaph.com/Web/News/2014/5/900885.html>.

10 Another prominent example was the “Sit Down Hind” incident that received extensive media and international attention. The incident took place in December 2014 when Hind al-Fayez, a Jordanian female MP elected via the quota system, was asked by one of her fellow MPs (Yahya al-Saud) to sit down and stop talking. When she ignored his repeated requests, al-Saud started slamming female representation in the Parliament by repeating “God curse the person who brought the women's quota in the Jordanian Parliament.” <http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/08/world/meast/jordan-female-parliament/>

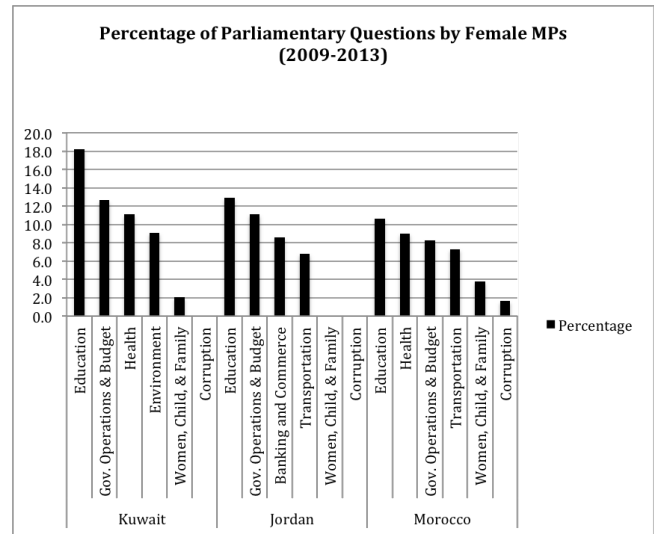
11 Voters can cast only one vote regardless of the district magnitude—also known as “one-person-one-vote” system.

12 For more details see <http://www.policyagendas.org>.

13 Most public opinion surveys in the region have repeatedly shown that corruption is deemed one of the most pressing issues facing these countries at the present. The research team added the category “combating corruption” to the coding categories to better understand the responsiveness of legislative bodies to the constituency.

Figure 1 shows stark variations in proposing “women’s domain” parliamentary questions across the three countries.<sup>14</sup> While female MPs are consistently interested in raising questions about feminine (i.e., women-friendly) issues – such as health and education – very few female MPs are working on advancing particularly “feminist” issues, especially in Jordan and Kuwait.<sup>15</sup> The female MPs in Kuwait’s Parliament have proposed only 2 percent of the questions focusing on women/child/family issues (N=3300), while female politicians in the Jordanian Parliament did not propose a single question on this topic (N=2900). Women in the Moroccan parliament have asked about 58 percent of the total questions in Parliament, but only 3 percent of these questions were focused on gender-related issues (N=3000).

While this may not seem surprising to legislative politics scholars in established democracies enjoying some level of gender equality, this finding is worthy of note given the context of the MENA region. Women across the region continue to face numerous challenges that have remained unaddressed for decades, such as soaring rates of domestic violence, honor crimes, antiquated personal status laws, and unequal wages. The core of representation theory is that female MPs would work on “translating” pressing policy issues and interests into legislative outcomes in favor of these marginalized groups (Phillips 1995) and would be their “voice” in these decision-making institutions. However, this does not seem to be the case in the countries under study. Future research will include additional individual-level and contextual data to unravel this intriguing paradox.



**Figure 1: Percentage of Parliamentary Questions Posed By Female MPs**

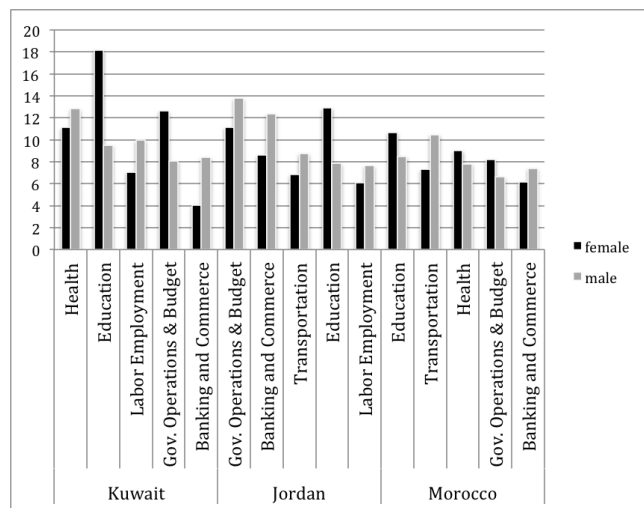
A closer look at Figure 2 provides some evidence supporting previous studies on the role of elections and legislative politics in the region. As maintained by Lust (2008), elections in the region are meaningful political phenomena, but they serve “different” purposes. Elections in these contexts are merely a fierce competition over the allocation of state resources; thus, voters are more likely to vote for those with access to the ruling elites and/or who are capable of offering material gains and benefits (Lust 2006). Despite the fact that these are preliminary findings of the first phase of the GEMEP project, data presented in Figure 2 shows that the top four categories (out of 19 different categories) in the cross-national analysis of questions posed by female MPs were about education, health, employment, and government operations and budgets. Interestingly, female MPs are heavily invested in determining government spending and allocations in all three countries, which supports previous studies on the idea of service MPs (i.e., the main role of MPs is to perform constituency service rather than actual policymaking).

Finally, it is interesting to see that the path to gaining access to political office did not have much impact on women’s legislative behavior in these three parliaments. In other words, the policy priorities and preferences of female candidates elected through the quota system in Jordan or

14 Despite disagreement among scholars in regard to distinguishing women’s domains from men’s domains, this study conceptualizes women’s domain issues as those related to: women’s issues, family and child issues, health and education.

15 See Schwindt-Bayer (2006) for more details on the differentiation between “feminine” and “feminist” issues.

the reserved party quota in Morocco were not that distinct from those of the female MPs in Kuwait who came to office via direct elections. There are slight variations in their legislative behavior and policy agendas, which also confirm the strong impact of the broader political context and the existing dynamics of power in shaping their priorities in these elected bodies.



**Figure 2: Comparison of the Top Five Priorities of Legislators in Kuwait, Jordan, and Morocco**

### Conclusions and Implications

This analysis contends that scholars need to pay more attention to the effect of authoritarian politics on shaping women's political representation in the region. Comparative politics scholars have focused on understanding the dynamics and the functions of political institutions (i.e., elections, parliaments, legislatures) under authoritarian rule and their impact on regimes' durability and survival. However, most of these studies were conducted in isolation of the larger political context, and our knowledge continues to be lacking, especially in regard to the intertwined relationship between gender, politics, and authoritarianism.

The findings of this paper are one step toward bridging this gap. Future research will focus on explaining variations among political actors — especially female legislators — based on political party, tribal and/or bloc affiliation

using the GEMEP data. It would be also very interesting to investigate what types of individualized services provided to women and/or women's groups by those female MPs. Further studies will also pay special attention to legislators' policy responsiveness by comparing their policy stances and priorities to the public using survey data. The preliminary findings presented in this paper have shown that legislators are not addressing the most pressing topics for the mass public, such as combating corruption, and bridging the income gap.<sup>16</sup> However, more research is needed to better understand the impact of the Arab Spring on influencing both legislators' and voters' orientations, especially given the fact that we now have data available to investigate such connections.

The Arab Spring has undoubtedly brought about a set of tremendous challenges to the region, but it also created some hope for women's political empowerment. The recent parity clause in the Tunisian constitution that was implemented in the country's most recent parliamentary elections is deemed a major achievement for women post-Arab Spring. Algeria has also enforced a mandatory party quota in 2012.<sup>17</sup> Women now constitute 30 percent of the Algerian Parliament. While it is still too early to gauge the impact of increased women's presence in these legislative bodies, it would be very interesting to see whether critical mass theories can actually overcome the shackles of authoritarianism and to promote more women-friendly policies in this part of the world.

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16 These were the most frequent responses to the question, "what is the most important problem facing your country at the present?" in regional public opinion surveys, mainly the Arab Barometer data.

17 Law No.12 of January 12, 2012 stipulated that political parties should include female candidates on their party lists according to the size of the constituency. As a result, women's presence in the Algerian Parliament leaped from merely 8 percent in 2007 to more than 30 percent in 2012.

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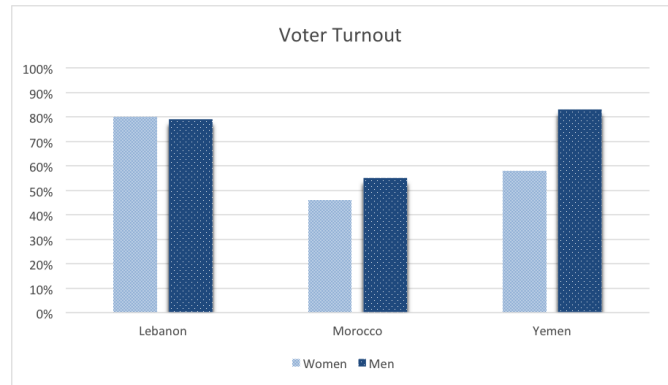
# The Future of Female Mobilization in Lebanon, Morocco, and Yemen after the Arab Spring

By Carla Beth Abdo, University of Maryland

On December 17, 2010, a fruit vendor by the name of Mohammad Bouazizi doused himself in paint-thinner and lit himself on fire as an act of political protest in Sidi Bou Zid, Tunisia. Bouazizi could not have known that his actions would reverberate across the region, leading to calls for democratic change and reform through the Arab world. Using the Status of Women in the Middle East and North Africa study conducted in 2010 by the International Foundation for Electoral Studies, examining the electoral behavior of women in the transitioning Arab world merits further discussion. Using Lebanon, Morocco, and Yemen as cases representing the Levant, North Africa, and the Arabian peninsula respectively, this study examines the propensity to vote among women, and examines the question as to whether or not impositions on women's personal space reduces political participation.

This is not the first examination of the gender-based implications of space. According to Sherine Hafez in her piece, *Egypt, Uprising and Gender Politics: Gendering Bodies/Gendering Space*, women's bodies are often the source of contention in public life. In the Egyptian context, measures against female mobilization included virginity tests, sexual assaults, fatwas (religious decrees) validating the rape of unveiled activists, all of which were implemented explicitly to demobilize politically active women. The findings in this research indicate that mechanisms of demobilization which are based on the gendered body occur not only in the public sphere, but also in the private sphere.

According to the polls conducted by IFES (accessible from [www.swmena.org](http://www.swmena.org)), the turnout rate for women varied significantly across these three countries. In 2010, 80 percent of Lebanese women voted compared to 79 percent of men, 46 percent of Moroccan women voted compared to 55 percent of men, and 58 percent of Yemeni women voted compared to 83 percent of men.



*Note: These statistics come from the Status of Women in the Middle East and North Africa Survey conducted by the International Foundation for Electoral Studies in 2010. The chart is the author's own.*

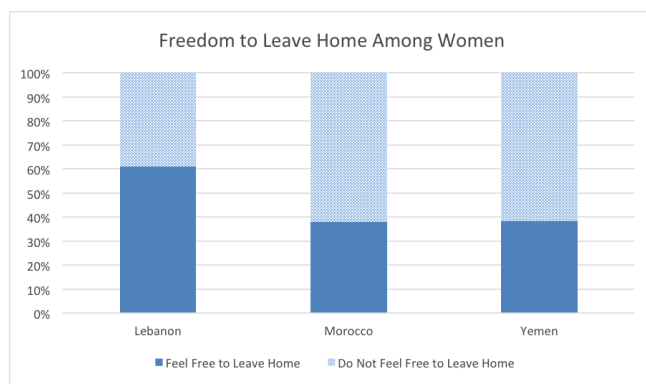
In all three countries, voting is not only an exercise in political participation. It is also an occasion to elect a leader who will provide basic services and goods as a reward, such as food, jobs, scholarships — even repairing basic infrastructure, such as roads and fences. Ultimately however, visiting the polls is the most widespread modicum of political self-representation. While it should come as no surprise that those who are of lower socio-economic status and those who come from marginalized socio-political social groups are less likely to vote, one unusual regulatory mechanism comes into play when discussing the electoral habits of women. It appears as though familial control over mobility demobilizes women, ultimately reducing their political presence in the midst of political change.

A region typically associated with communal behaviors and strong familial ties, most Arab youth (male or female) live with their parents until marriage. In this context, men move from living in their family homes to become heads of their own households, whereas women who marry are not often given roles of familial leadership. This is clearly reflected in the experience of familial control over mobility,



as women typically go from being under the authority of their parents to that of their husbands.

When women were asked how free they felt to leave the home without permission from either husbands or parents, 39 percent of Lebanese women surveyed stated that they feel restricted, while in Morocco, 62 percent admitted feeling restrictions of this nature. Similarly in Yemen, 61.84 percent of female respondents do not feel that they can leave the house independently.<sup>1</sup> In Yemen, the law explicitly restricts independent mobility among women, making gender-based restrictions on mobility not only the norm, but also legally sanctified. Though this is not the case in Morocco, the cultural practice in many parts of Morocco includes refraining leaving home without a male guardian, particularly in rural areas.<sup>2</sup>



*Note: These statistics come from the Status of Women in the Middle East and North Africa Survey conducted by the International Foundation for Electoral Studies in 2010. The chart is the author's own.*

Among women who said that they feel restricted to leave the home in Lebanon, 37 percent did not show up to the polls, compared to 22 percent among those who felt completely free. In Morocco, 57 percent of women who said they felt restricted did not vote, compared to

50 percent of women said that they feel free to leave the home. In Yemen, 46 percent of women who did not feel free to leave the house did not vote, compared to 36 percent of women who experience freedom of mobility. In all three cases, it appears as though the proportion of voter attrition is higher among women who do not feel free to leave the home independently, although the strength of this relationship is more salient in Morocco and Lebanon. In Lebanon, a woman who feels free to leave home independently is 29 percent more likely to vote than a woman who does not, and in Morocco, women who feel free to leave home independently are 34 percent more likely to vote.

Interestingly, women who asserted that they did not feel free to leave home independently tended to be younger, less educated, less likely to be employed, and had fewer material assets in the form of either income or property ownership. Moreover, they were less likely to have regular access to healthcare and other social services. Among women, those who are not participating tend to be dominated at home, and have limited larger social capital. Indeed, it appears as though female political participation is more likely to occur among women who are already employed, educated, have higher levels income, and have access to social services. As such, impositions on personal space compounded with fewer material resources could both be demobilizing women.

In the context of the transitioning Middle East, it appears as though a substantial social cleavage of the total electorate which is vulnerable to social distress is not participating. Given the absence of their voices, it appears as though the promises of revolutionary measures may not include policies that would address acute social needs. These would include creating scholarships which target women, increasing access to healthcare, and creating incentives for employers to hire women. Ultimately, it appears as though to those who are more vulnerable, much will go unaddressed. However, this is not to imply that the socio-political scene is unchanged — for vulnerable minorities and other groups — since 2010 in either Lebanon, Morocco, or Yemen.

1 International Foundation for Electoral Systems. 2010. Status of Women in the Middle East and North Africa. <http://www.swmena.org/>

2 S. Tang, Oral communication with author, March 11, 2016, POMEPS workshop, Washington, D.C. Sasa Tang is a doctoral student at American University. Her specialization is gender politics in the Middle East, and she worked as the Communication and Public Relations Officer at the Amal Women's Training Center in Morocco from July 2014-June 2015.

In 2011, Houthi rebels engaged in the Yemeni revolution calling for the resignation of President Ali Abdullah Saleh. In 2014, the Houthi insurgency took over the presidential palace, leading to the ouster of President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi in early 2015. At this point, Yemen is experiencing violent political conflict not only between Houthi rebels and those who are loyal to the regime, but also with ISIS.

In Lebanon, rivalry between the March 8<sup>th</sup> and March 14<sup>th</sup> coalitions has led to the failure of parliament to elect a president, as the March 8<sup>th</sup> camp continues to boycott attending presidential election sessions unless Michel Aoun, their candidate for president, is determined to be the president beforehand.<sup>3</sup> Undermining the concept of democracy, these tactics have led to a void in the presidential office for nearly two years. Moreover, parliamentary elections cannot be held without first holding presidential ones. Moreover, Lebanon is also dealing with an influx of ~2 million Syrian refugees, and increasing levels of political violence from Syrian rebels fighting from Lebanese territory. There have also been terrorist attacks from ISIS on Lebanese soil.

In Morocco, substantial political change has occurred since 2010. In response to Moroccan protestors, Morocco transformed its style of governance from that of an absolute monarchy to that of a constitutional one<sup>4</sup>. The Islamist opposition Party of Justice and Development has a plurality in parliament, and the government has allowed Moroccan citizens increased civil freedom in the form of increased political expression.<sup>5</sup> By that same token, it is appropriate to characterize Morocco as a country that is transitioning into democracy, rather than one where democratic transition has been solidified.

At this point, it appears as though heavy political unrest is dominating the region in the wake of the Arab Spring, leaving existing political structures little room to accommodate for new political discourses, or create substantive reformatory policy. What these statistics show is that even under circumstances where political restructuring is effective, female political participation is framed with mechanisms of familial control, thereby limiting the ability of female voters to consolidate and mobilize into a particular socio-political bloc with interests that need to be addressed.

Admittedly, increased voting among women is no guarantee of either policies which allow for increased gender equity, or even an increased female presence in legislature. In Marwa Shalaby's piece *Women's Political Representation and Authoritarianism in the Arab World*, she shows that the Middle East has the least number of female politicians respective to other regions, and female politicians in the Arab world do not advocate for women's issues, such as domestic violence, honor crimes, antiquated personal status laws, and unequal wages. In her examination of Jordan, Morocco, and Kuwait, it appears as though the women bring up gender-specific political issues a maximum of 3 percent of the time. This trend is salient throughout the Arab world.

Ultimately, the Arab Spring has done little for female voters in Lebanon, Morocco, or Yemen. Women experience significant demobilizing obstacles within the home, and do not enjoy an external political environment where addressing women's issues is welcomed. In the final analysis, there appears to be no sign of addressing gender-based socio-political inequity in the immediate future.

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3 Samaha, N. and Chughtai, A. 2015. Lebanon At Crossroads. Accessed from: <http://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2015/lebanoncrossroads/>

4 Masbah, M. 2015. His Majesty's Islamists: The Moroccan Experience. Accessed from: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2015/03/23/his-majesty-s-islamists-moroccan-experience>

5 Ibid.

## Why quotas are needed to achieve gender equality

*By Lindsay J. Benstead, Portland State University*

The news that Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau named a gender-balanced cabinet — and one that is more representative along other dimensions, including religion and ability — is refreshing. (The cabinet of his predecessor, Steven Harper, included six women among its 26 members in 2006).

Even more encouraging than Trudeau's leadership on this issue — and his lack of excuses — is his apparent understanding of the need to address inequality. When asked why he named a government comprised of 50 percent women, he said simply, "Because it's 2015." As succinct as his response was, it reflects much greater clarity about the problem of inequality — and its solution — than much public discussion on the issue.

Scholars who study politics and gender reject conventional wisdom that women's marginalization from leadership is due to poorer performance or lesser qualifications (women now outnumber men in advanced degrees in the United States, as in conservative Islamic countries), arguing instead that it reflects unfair recruitment practices. In addition to gender-based biases, inequality can also arise from basic social practices, including the tendency to socialize with others of the same gender. Men simply know fewer women and often prefer to work with other males. This observation helps expose the fallacy that gender equality will be easily achieved without institutional solutions like quotas.

Unfortunately, debates about gender have also figured prominently in the U.S. presidential primary races, and in troubling ways. Despite the presence of female candidates Hillary Clinton and Carly Fiorina, public debate on and media coverage of the issue are often devoid of an understanding of the mechanisms that create and perpetuate inequality.

In a recent article in *Governance* — currently ungated — I write about issues of women's access to government

resources and the role that often overlooked structural factors play in contributing to this problem. Although my research takes place in two authoritarian countries in North Africa, it highlights why subtle social dynamics can perpetuate women and other minorities' lack of access to political power, even when social stereotypes and sexism are diminishing in society in general.

Drawing on an original survey of 200 Moroccan and Algerian parliamentarians and field research conducted 2006-2007, I investigate the link between parliamentary gender, quotas, and service provision to women. A form of constituency service, parliamentary clientelism refers to providing help with personal and community problems, including medical services, judicial or bureaucratic corruption, jobs, money or grants, or electricity. Due to high levels of corruption and economic difficulties in many non-democratic settings, elected officials often spend much of their time trying to help citizens with these issues. Yet I find that women are relatively excluded from these informal service networks with parliamentarians, due in part to structural factors. On average, 20-29 percent of requests that Moroccan and Algerian parliamentarians receive are from women. The effects of gender quotas are striking. While electing women increases service responsiveness to females, parliamentarians elected through quotas experience mandates to help women and are more responsive to females than members of either sex elected without quotas.

To explain gender gaps in clientelistic services — and to think about why progress toward gender parity in United States and many other relatively egalitarian societies has stalled — I extend Elin Bjarnegård's (2013) theory of homosocial capital, which she developed to explain male dominance in Thai parliamentary politics. Homosociality refers to friendships, collaborations and other non-romantic relationships with others of the same gender. Bjarnegård argues that, as long as males are numerically dominant in positions of power, they will continue to enjoy

advantages accumulating homosocial capital — predictable relationships with individuals who are similar and have resources needed to win elections.

According to Bjarnegård, homosocial capital is composed of instrumental and expressive resources. Expressive resources are dispositional similarities which facilitate close, predictable relationships and access to instrumental resources needed to succeed in campaigns.

Men and women often prefer friendship and work collaboration with others of the same gender, due to greater ease relating (e.g., similar behavior and interests, fewer conflicts and sexual harassment concerns, higher trust). Male dominance is reproduced because instrumental and expressive resources are seldom in opposition for men. Males have more instrumental resources and can rely on homosocial linkages. In contrast, women must foster heterosocial networks to obtain resources, while enjoying less expressive resources, such as trust and familiarity, in networks with men.

I extend Bjarnegård’s theory of homosocial capital accumulation by incorporating structural and normative

aspects of patriarchy into the framework and identifying two gender gaps: in parliamentarians’ supply of and citizens’ demand for services. Patriarchal structures are formal laws and policies such as personal status (e.g., marriage, divorce, inheritance, mobility) and employment laws (e.g., wage discrimination, sex segregation) which give males more instrumental resources and reproduce stereotypes about women’s traits and abilities (i.e., what women are like and can do), including their ability to provide *wasta* (use of a connection to get things one needs). Patriarchal norms and attitudes are traditional views of gender roles which identify public space as male, discourage mixing of unrelated males and females, and justify gender discrimination (i.e., what women should do).

Exclusion of women from service provision occurs through mutually-reinforcing structural and dispositional factors operating on the supply and demand-side of exchanges. On the instrumental, supply-side, patriarchal structures limit female deputies’ instrumental resources needed to provide services. Because female leaders enjoy fewer patronage networks, women are less likely to be seen as good *was*tas and are less able to run and succeed in elections (see Table 1).

Table 1. Mechanisms of exclusion from service provision

	<b>Instrumental resources</b> <b>Structural/situational contributions to exclusion</b>  Patriarchal structures	<b>Expressive resources</b> <b>Dispositional contributions to exclusion</b>  Patriarchal norms
<b>Supply, elite</b> Politician-regime networks	Patriarchal structures limit female deputies’ instrumental resources to provide services; females stereotyped as less effective sources of <i>wasta</i>	Patriarchal norms limit female deputies’ linkages with male elites; female deputies can provide fewer services to constituents, who are more likely to be female
<b>Demand, mass</b> Citizen-politician networks	Patriarchal structures exclude female citizens from employment and politics; females have fewer instrumental resources and are less politically active, making their support perceived as less important	Patriarchal norms limit male deputies’ interactions with female citizens, leading to less service provision to women

In Tunisia, 19.1 percent saw male deputies as better service providers, compared to 6.9 percent who saw women as better (73.9 percent believed there was no difference), according to a 2014 Transitional Governance Project survey of 1200 Tunisians conducted by United Nations Democracy Fund and Centre d'Études Maghrébines à Tunis, in collaboration with Lindsay Benstead, Ellen Lust, Dhafer Malouche and JMW Consulting.

In Jordan, 45.4 percent saw males as better, compared to 13.5 percent females (41.1 percent, no difference), according to a 2014 Program on Governance and Local Development poll conducted among 1,488 Jordanians by Lindsay Benstead, Kristen Kao and Ellen Lust.

In Libya, 28.2 percent believed a man would be more effective, compared to 10.9 percent women (60.9 percent, no difference), according to a 2013 National Democratic Institute poll of 1200 Libyans conducted by Diwan Research and the Transitional Governance Project, in collaboration with Lindsay Benstead, Ellen Lust, and JMW Consulting.

On the instrumental, demand side, patriarchal structures exclude women from public space (e.g., employment, politics), giving them fewer resources and influence. Women are less likely to be civically engaged or lead civil society groups, Sufi brotherhoods, and tribes — groups which are critical for winning semi-competitive elections.

The Transitional Governance Project found voting in first post-uprisings parliamentary elections was 77 percent for Egyptian men, 58 percent for women; 75 percent for Tunisian men, 65 percent for women; and, 84 percent for Libyan men, 59 percent for women. As a result, serving women is a less effective electoral strategy than serving men.

On the expressive, supply side, patriarchal norms limit female deputies' interactions with male elites. Female parliamentarians provide fewer services to constituents, who are more likely to be female.

On the demand side, patriarchal gender norms limit interaction and networks with male deputies.

Afrobarometer data suggest women are less likely to contact members: 11.7 percent of Moroccan men, compared to 3.5 percent of women ( $p < .000$ ) and 2.2 percent of Algerian men, compared to 1.7 percent of Algerian women ( $p < .533$ ) had contacted a member in the previous year. According to the Arab Barometer, 56.6 percent of men and 43.4 percent of women used *wasta* during the last five years.

Where patriarchal structures and norms are robust and services distributed via informal networks, males have substantial advantages accumulating homosocial capital, succeeding in elections, and accessing services through clientelistic networks. Quotas of more than 50 percent of seats would be needed to achieve parity — 50 percent of requests provided to females — as long as women as less mobilized electorally and have fewer resources.

The results also show that economic and political context shapes the size of the gender gap. Algeria's military-backed regime and oil economy excludes women from political and economic networks to a greater extent than Morocco's oil-poor economy and monarchical regime. Quota design also affects the size of mandates: reserved seat quotas, implemented in Morocco, led to a larger impact of quotas on service provision to women than party list quotas, implemented in Algeria.

This study provides compelling evidence across two quota designs — reserved seat and party candidate — that quotas create mandates to serve women and increase gender equity in access to services. The findings are applicable to authoritarian regimes and patriarchal societies worldwide, such as Pakistan, Mali and Yemen, but illustrate that quota design, oil and regime type affect the size of gender gaps and mandate effects.

The study also has implications for the United States and other Western countries, where men still hold most leadership positions, including 95 percent of posts as CEO in S & P 500 companies and more than 80 percent of seats in Congress. Even as social attitudes become more accepting of gender equality, the preponderance of males in positions of



power creates structural conditions that perpetuate women's exclusion. Since, as a starting point, males enjoy more resources — and because men and women tend to develop more effective networks with others of the same gender — without quotas, whether legally enforced or voluntary, the lack of women in leadership will remain a stubborn and difficult problem to change.

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## Does Western pressure for gender equality help?

*By Sarah Bush, Temple University and Amaney Jamal, Princeton University*

Although some analysts have criticized the focus of Western governments and NGOs on goals such as trying to increase the number of women in parliaments, enhancing women's representation remains a central objective of many international democracy promotion efforts in the Arab world. But the impacts of these efforts are more complex than they might appear. Lila Abu Lughod's provocative recent book, "Do Muslim Women Need Saving?" challenges what she refers to as a Western "moral crusade to rescue oppressed Muslim women from their cultures and their religion [that] has swept the public sphere." She notes that international, and especially U.S., pressure on Muslim governments to improve on certain measures of gender equality could actually undermine the local legitimacy of feminist causes.

Is she right? In "Anti-Americanism, Authoritarian Politics, and Attitudes about Women's Representation: Evidence from a Survey Experiment in Jordan," an article published by *International Studies Quarterly* in July, we report on a unique experimental study that examines how U.S. and domestic endorsements of women in politics affect local attitudes about women's representation in Jordan.

We focus on Jordan for several reasons. First, the international community — including the United

States — has strongly pressured Jordan to improve women's representation, including through the adoption of measures such as gender quotas for its elected national parliament and local councils. Although Jordan is a monarchy that is strongly allied with the United States and European countries, it has been subject to the same international democracy promotion efforts pushing for the adoption of gender quotas that have occurred globally. Second, anti-American attitudes are widespread in Jordan, which heightens the possibility that foreign support for women's representation could engender a local backlash.

Our study draws on evidence from a nationally representative survey of the political attitudes of 1,650 adults in Jordan in November 2010. The survey contained a randomized experiment that was designed to help us understand the effects of foreign support for gender equality on local attitudes. The experiment contained three conditions. We first told a group of randomly selected respondents about Jordan's quota and the support of a U.S. government-funded organization for women's political participation in Jordan. Then, as a point of comparison, we told a group of randomly selected respondents about Jordan's quota and the support of some Jordanian imams for women's political participation. Finally, a control group received only information about Jordan's quota. After



obtaining their experimental treatments, all respondents were asked questions about their support for women's representation, including women running for parliament and serving as municipal councilors.

Our findings about the effects of the endorsements were surprising. Although few respondents expressed trust in the United States, providing them with information about a U.S. organization's support for Jordan's gender quota did not depress their support for women's representation on average when compared to the control group. For example, 64 percent of respondents in the control condition expressed willingness to vote for a woman running for parliament, whereas 66 percent of respondents in the U.S. treatment did so – a small increase that was not statistically significant. Our analysis suggests that this null finding is not driven by respondents' preexisting beliefs about the endorsers' support for gender equality, their preexisting trust in the endorsers, or their levels of political knowledge.

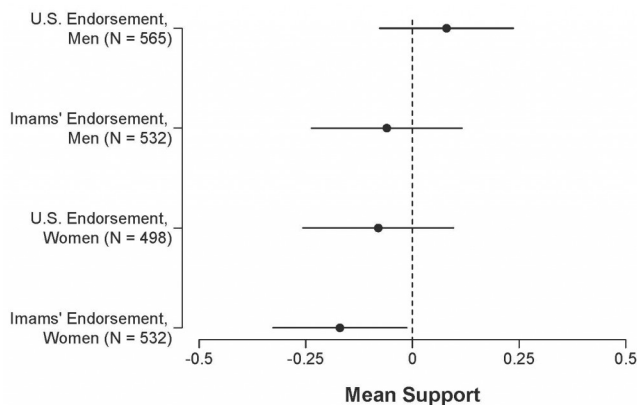


Figure 1

Moreover, although most respondents expressed trust in local imams, we found that providing them with information about these religious leaders' support for Jordan's gender quota did not increase their support for this issue on average. Both local and international reformers often seek out endorsements from trusted religious leaders for their policy goals. It is not clear, however, from this evidence that such strategies will always pay off. For example, an identical 64 percent of

respondents in the control and religious endorsement conditions expressed willingness to vote for a woman running for parliament.

Finally, our study uncovered some preliminary evidence that both U.S. and religious endorsements reduce support for women's representation more among women who opposed the monarchy than supported it. That finding holds even though regime opponents and supporters have similar attitudes about gender. To interpret those unexpected findings, we argue that, in autocracies, disposition toward the incumbent regime is an important cleavage that shapes citizens' receptivity to endorsements. This interpretation dovetails with research by Dan Corstange and Nikolay Marinov that shows how foreign endorsements polarized domestic attitudes in Lebanon.

These findings challenge much of the conventional wisdom about international democracy promotion in the Middle East. Some observers after the Arab Spring urged the United States and other foreign actors not to undermine the legitimacy of local reformers' efforts. According to Al Jazeera's former director general, Wadah Khanfar, for example, "what is most important about the Arab spring is that it is coming from Arabs themselves." At least in the case of gender quotas in Jordan, however, the results suggest that foreign endorsements of political reforms will not necessarily delegitimize the cause, even when delivered by American groups that publics might generally distrust. As we note in the article: "If American support has no average negative impact on public attitudes toward women in politics, the net effect of active American efforts to promote women's representation is more likely to be beneficial."

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## **The Project on Middle East Political Science**

The Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS) is a collaborative network that aims to increase the impact of political scientists specializing in the study of the Middle East in the public sphere and in the academic community. POMEPS, directed by Marc Lynch, is based at the Institute for Middle East Studies at the George Washington University and is supported by Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Henry Luce Foundation. For more information, see <http://www.pomeps.org>.