

OUR MISSION

The Middle East and North Africa Politics Section of the American Political Science Association (APSA) was established in 2018 to support, develop and publish research on the politics of the MENA region. It seeks to fully integrate the rigorous study of the politics of the Middle East with the broader discipline of Political Science. It serves as an institutional home for the community of political scientists dedicated to the Middle East. This Newsletter is a forum for discussion of research and issues of interest to the community, and is produced with the support of POMEPS.

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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

A Note from the Section Chair

As Editor and Chair of the Section, I am delighted to present the Fall 2020 issue of the APSA MENA Politics Newsletter. We lead with a report by Nermin Allam, Gail Buttorff and Marwa Shalaby about the results of a survey of MENA scholars on the impact of COVID-19 on their research and careers. The results are sobering, and pose a profound challenge across generations – particularly for women, who have been disproportionately affected. The impact of COVID-19 is also unevenly distributed across methodologies, and has struck MENA research more than it has other regions of the world, which could produce long-term inequities and imbalances in MENA political science. The leadership of the MENA Politics Section is deeply committed to working with our colleagues and partner institutions to try to mitigate these difficult problems.

The rest of the Fall 2020 issue is dedicated to a symposium on women and gender in the politics of MENA. The symposium, based on papers presented to a virtual workshop organized by Gamze Cavdar, ranges widely across methodologies, countries and issues to paint a fascinating picture of the complex evolution of the role and status of women in MENA. There are few more important issues for the Newsletter to take up, and I'm deeply grateful to Gamze Cavdar and her colleagues for producing this exemplary work of engaged scholarship.

The Newsletter itself is delighted to welcome five new members to its editorial board: Gamze Cavdar (Colorado State University), Justin Gengler (Qatar University), Diana Greenwald (City College of New York), Noora Lori (Boston University), and Daniel Tavana (post-doctoral fellow at Yale University). They bring a diverse set of skills and substantive interests to the editorial board. As they join us, we bid farewell to four of the founding members of the Board: Holger Albrecht (University of Alabama), Jillian Schwedler (Hunter College), Nadav Shelef (University of Wisconsin, Madison) and Stacey Philbrick Yadav (Hobart and William Smith College).

Beyond the Newsletter, the MENA Politics Section had a busy and productive year. Working with the Project on Middle East Political Science, the Section sponsored a Virtual Research Workshop for junior scholars in response to the COVID-19 shutdown of most in-person workshop opportunities. The Section held seven workshop sessions over the summer with 25 junior scholars, and has five more scheduled for the fall to workshop another 16 papers. The Section and POMEPS also ran its second annual Research Development Group for junior scholars from the MENA region in conjunction with the APSA's Annual Meeting. Jillian Schwedler, Bassel Salloukh and Lindsay Benstead organized a terrific slate of seven panels for the 2020 Annual Meeting. We also awarded three Section Awards: Best Book, Best Dissertation, and Best Paper Presented to the APSA (see below for a list of the winners).

Finally, two new members were elected to the leadership of the Section: Matt Buehler (University of Tennessee, Knoxville) replaces Lindsay Benstead (Portland State University) as Vice Chair, and Marwa Shalaby (University of Wisconsin) replaces Bassel Salloukh (Lebanese American University) as At-Large Member. Thanks to Lindsay and Bassel for their service, and a hearty welcome to Matt and Marwa!

We are always looking for ways to better serve the needs of our Section members, so please feel free to get in touch with me or any of the Section's leaders with any suggestions for programming or other ways we might be able to help. And if you have ideas for the Newsletter – or have an interest in being a candidate to be the next editor of the Newsletter – please to get in touch!

Marc Lynch
Washington, D.C. – October 14, 2020
Chair of the MENA Politics Section and Newsletter Editor
Perna BalaEddy
Newsletter Assistant Editor

SECTION 2020 AWARD WINNERS

Best Book

Committee: Jason Brownlee, Sean Yom and Michaelle Browsers

The APSA MENA Politics Section recognizes Lisa Wedeen, "Authoritarian Apprehensions: Ideology, Judgment and Mourning in Syria" (University of Chicago Press) for best book in the field of Middle Eastern politics by a senior scholar published in 2019.

The APSA MENA Politics Section recognizes Steven Brooke, "*Winning Hearts and Votes: Social Services and the Islamist Political Advantage*" (Cornell University Press) for best book in the field of Middle Eastern politics by a first-time author published in 2019.

Best Paper

Committee: Daniel Corstange, Jeannie Sowers and Diana Greenwald

The APSA MENA Politics Section recognizes Holger Albrecht, Sharan Grewal, and Kevin Koehler, "The Political Sources of Support for the Military: Experimental Evidence from Tunisia," for best paper on Middle Eastern politics presented to the 2019 APSA Annual Meeting

The APSA MENA Politics Section recognizes Tugba Bozcaga, "The Social Bureaucrat", for honorable mention, best paper on Middle Eastern politics presented to the 2019 APSA Annual Meeting.

Best Dissertation

Committee: Matt Buehler, Marwa Shalaby and Michael Herb

The APSA MENA Politics Section recognizes Stephen Monroe, "Varieties of Protection: Ethnic Politics and Resistance to Neoliberalism in the Arab World" (Princeton University) for best dissertation in Middle Eastern politics, 2019.

The APSA MENA Politics Section recognizes Chantal Berman "Protest, Social Policy, and Political Regimes" (Princeton University) for honorable mention, best dissertation in Middle Eastern politics, 2019.

NOTE FROM APSA

Hello from APSA's International Programs. We hope you and your loved ones continue to stay safe and healthy wherever you are.

In response to the continued disruption in working, teaching, and research created by the pandemic, APSA has launched several new programs to support our members: [APSA Educate](#) is an open access online library for political science teaching and learning materials. You can easily search for, submit, and save educational materials to your personal library. [APSA Preprints](#) is a free-to-access prepublication platform dedicated to early research outputs in political science and related disciplines. It offers rapid turnaround times and allows for quick dissemination of working papers. Additional resources and program updates can be found on APSA's [COVID-19 resource page](#).

As for APSA's MENA Programming, some projects are still going forward while others have been postponed. Although the in-person workshop of the 2020 APSA MENA Program on "[Securitization and Insecurity in the Middle East and North Africa](#)," has been postponed, workshop co-leaders invited 16 fellows to participate in a 4-week virtual program in July/August 2020. The program focused on research feedback and thematic discussions, and we hope to be able to organize an in-person workshop at some point in 2021.

We are also glad to report that the MENA Research Development Group (RDG) took place this year as part of APSA's annual meeting program. We thank our partners at the MENA Politics Section and POMEPS for running another successful program that featured 5 early career scholars who engaged in 2 days of research feedback and professional development discussions.

Looking ahead to next year, we are now accepting applications for the 2021 IQMR summer program. We encourage those interested in receiving advanced training in qualitative and mixed methods to apply through this [link](#) by [December 12, 2020](#). All those interested in the quantitative summer program organized by ICPSR at the University of Michigan should check our website for updates on next year's opportunity.

The [departmental collaboration initiative](#) continues to attract interest from faculty members and departments at Arab Universities. APSA staff is fine tuning the details of two programs with University of Tunis El-Manar, Tunisia and Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University in Fez, Morocco. The tailored programs will support graduate students and faculty members. We are also planning to convene a strategic planning workshop for faculty members from across the Arab world to share experiences and best practices on organizing projects within university departments.

Finally, the Arab Political Science Network ([APSN](#)) has created a [virtual library](#) that will feature a [syllabi bank](#) (aimed at collecting syllabi from universities in the region in Arabic, English and French) as well as a video library of its public [webinars](#) and subtitled educational videos. APSN encourages all scholars, especially those based in the region, teaching courses in political science as well as other topics focused on the region to share their syllabi by emailing Mona Farag at mfarag@arabpsn.org.

After a successful and well attended webinar on [Research in Pandemic Times](#) in collaboration with Al-Fanar Media, APSN will be collaborating with the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship in organizing a webinar on "Teaching Gender and Politics in the Arab World" on [October 27, 2020](#). You can find more information [here](#) or by following APSN on [Twitter](#)

If you are interested in the learning more or getting involved with the APSA MENA Project, please contact us at menaworkshops@apsanet.org.

Best to all in the coming months and stay well!

Ahmed Morsy and Andrew Stinson
APSA MENA Project
American Political Science Association

REPORT: COVID-19 PANDEMIC COMPOUNDS CHALLENGES FACING MENA RESEARCH

By Nermin Allam, Gail Buttorff and Marwa Shalaby

Researchers of Middle East and North African (MENA) politics have long faced considerable ethical, methodological, and logistical challenges conducting fieldwork in the region. Scholars encountered obstacles to access study sites and research subjects due to political instability, the prevalent repressive practices of autocratic regimes, general mistrust in foreign researchers and entities, and regimes' arbitrary exercise of power coupled with linguist and cultural differences (Clark and Cavatorta 2018).¹ The shifting political landscape following the Arab uprisings in 2011 revived questions relating to the safety and security of conducting research in conflict and politically sensitive contexts.² Recently, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has imposed an additional layer of uncertainty and complexity on MENA research and researchers with the enforcement of travel restrictions, freezing of research funds as well as the shift to remote data-collection and research dissemination. These heightened uncertainties will have both short and long-term negative impacts on MENA research and researchers as outlined in this short contribution.

To better understand the adverse effects of the pandemic on scholars' productivity and research plans, we administered an online survey between May 26th and July 28th, 2020. The online survey was shared with academics and researchers working at regional and international institutions through academic listservs, personal networks, and various social media platforms.³ More than 200 researchers and academics in the social sciences and humanities responded to the survey, 59% of whom identified as female. Almost three-quarters of respondents hold tenure-track positions (assistant, associate, or full professor, or equivalent), with the vast majority working at public (56%) or private (25%) research universities. Respondents worked at institutions in 32 countries in North and South America, Europe, Africa and the MENA.⁴ Half of our respondents carried out research on the MENA region (n=107). In addition to the survey data, we conducted eleven qualitative interviews with international and regional scholars of Middle East politics to further explore the challenges facing academics studying the MENA region.

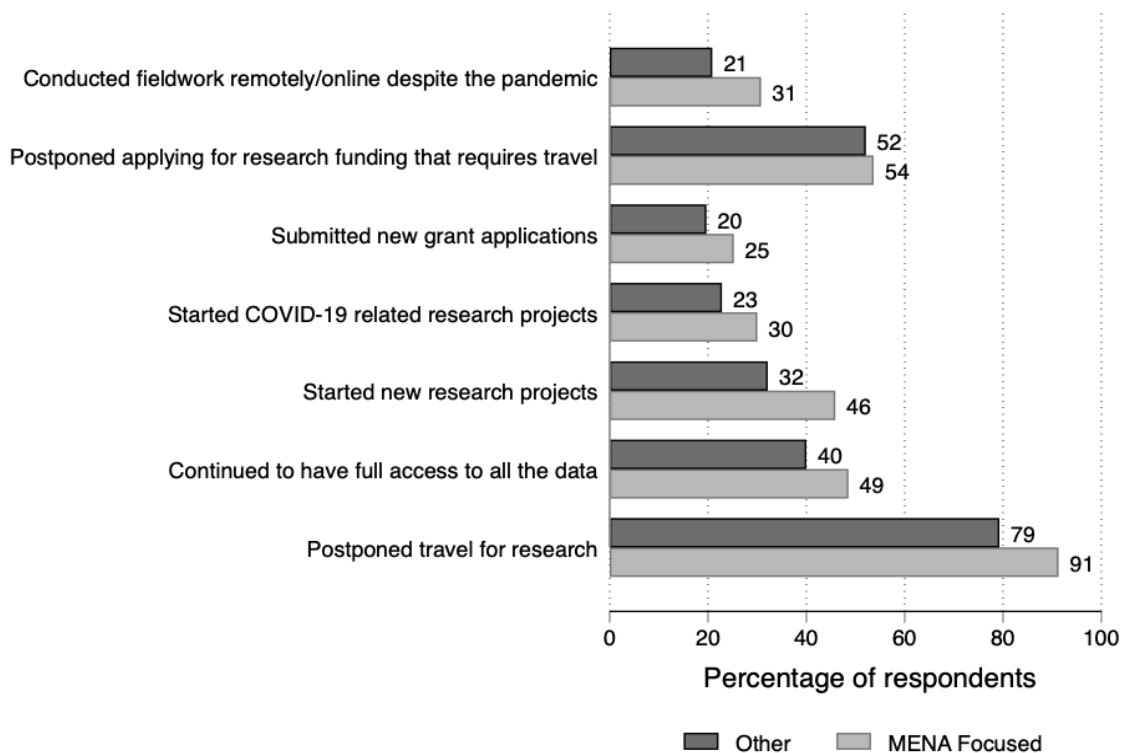
Our data shed clear light on the adverse effects of the pandemic on scholars' research productivity and ability to conduct research worldwide. Yet, the results provide considerable evidence that MENA researchers will have to deal with higher levels of uncertainty relating to conducting research and fieldwork in the region compared to scholars studying less autocratic settings. The first part of the memo highlights the short-term effects of the pandemics—mainly the shift to remote modes of data-collection, inability to access research sites, and acquiring research funding—on scholars' ability to conduct research. The second part of the memo deals with the long-term effect of the pandemic on MENA scholarship and publications as well as scholars' careers. It concludes with a discussion on the ethical and practical implication of the findings.

The Adverse Effects of the Pandemic on MENA Research

The COVID-19 pandemic transformed the way we teach, work, and carry out research. For most scholars conducting comparative work, the ability to travel for data collection is essential not only for advancing their research agendas, but also for career advancement and promotion. Due to the lockdowns, travel bans and restrictions, and social distancing measures, researchers were unable to carry out fieldwork; others have indefinitely delayed their plans for data collection. The vast majority (80%) of our survey respondents indicated that they had to change, cancel, or postpone their summer research plans due to the pandemic. The ability to disseminate research and network has also been disrupted. Early on in the pandemic many conferences were cancelled, and many scheduled later in the summer and fall moved to virtual formats. Sixty-eight percent reported conferences being cancelled and only 60% noted that conferences had moved to virtual formats.

While the pandemic has negatively affected academics' research and fieldwork plans, our survey and qualitative interview data show evidence that MENA researchers are more likely to face increased challenges. As shown in Figure 1, scholars with a MENA focus were more likely to postpone travel for research (91%) and to postpone applying for funding that requires travel (54%) compared to other regional experts. Only a third of MENA scholars were able to conduct their fieldwork remotely (31%), and (46%) started new projects, including research related to COVID-19 (30%). Finally, less than half of the respondents (49%) were able to resume their research and secure access to previously collected data.

Figure 1. Effect of the Pandemic on Scholars' Research Plans and Fieldwork



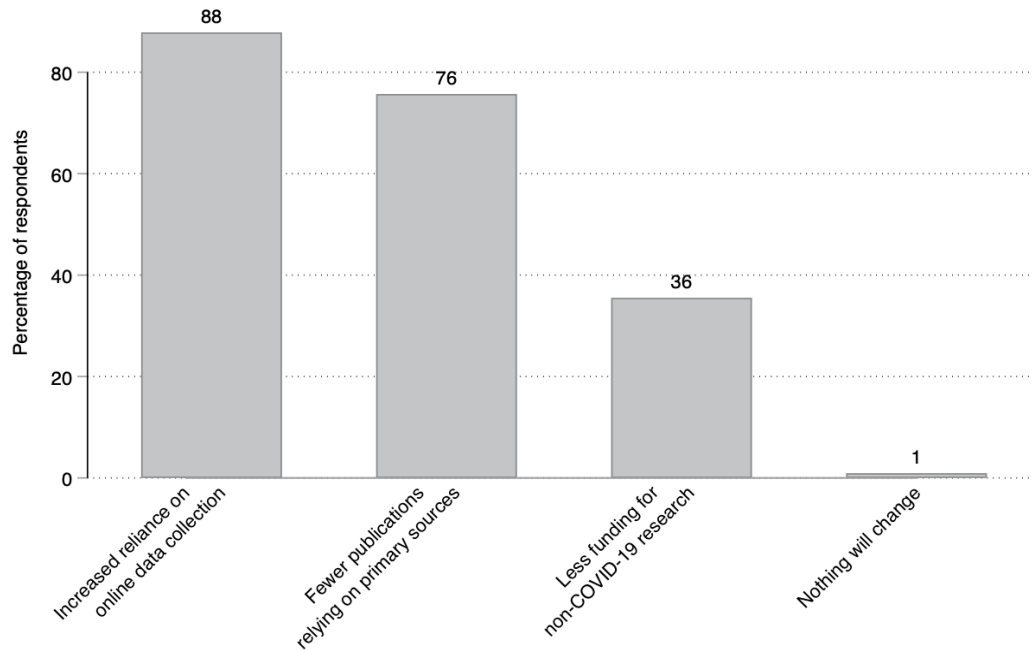
As universities around the globe cut their budgets and freeze research spending, these cuts will inevitably have an effect on scholars' research agenda. Eighty eight percent of MENA scholars reported that COVID-19 took a financial toll on their universities. Not surprisingly, then, the majority of MENA scholars (84 percent) were 'somewhat' or 'very concerned' about the ability to fund their research as a result of the pandemic.

Researchers based in MENA are in a further precarious position. Prior to the pandemic, resources dedicated to research and knowledge dissemination were already scarce and limited in most Middle East academic institutions.⁵ For those scholars located at institutions in the region, approximately 60% reported research funding had been frozen or decreased by departments and universities, compared to 40% overall. As one of our respondents explained, "For scholars based in the Middle East region, research and funding were already a challenge and with the effects of COVID on universities, it will become even more challenging to be able to travel for conferences or to get grants for research." Researchers based in the MENA region might thus further fall behind in their research plan as they require not only access to data but also access to resources to carry out and disseminate their research.

Long-Term Effects of the Pandemic on MENA Research

Our survey respondents also expressed concerns over the long-term impact of the pandemic on their careers as well as on the field at large. This anxiety stems from twin challenges related to uncertainty around resuming fieldwork as well as research funding. Eighty-eight percent of MENA scholars believe that, going forward, scholars will increasingly rely on online data collection and 76% believe fewer publications will utilize primary sources (Figure 2). Thirty six percent thought that funding and research priorities would shift toward COVID-19-related research. Less than one percent of respondents believed that nothing will change.

Figure 2. Long-Term effects of Pandemic on MENA Research⁶



In addition, researchers who conduct ethnographic studies and other qualitative data-collection methods in the MENA region expressed concerns that field research will not only be “delayed” but also “devalued,” since “big data” and “regression” based research may not necessarily face similar challenges.⁷ Such methodological divides will deepen, and as one respondent anticipated, it will become one of “the most important divide[s]” in the field. This disparity will have long term implications on scholars’ careers. As an associate professor explained, researchers relying on qualitative data-collection are “really almost more like biologists who, you know, if they can’t be in their lab, they can’t write and they can’t publish because they can’t work.”⁸ Junior scholars who carry out qualitative work, one professor explained, will face at least “two, three years of repercussions.”⁹ In sum, the pandemic will have long term effects not only on scholars’ research agendas, plans, and careers, but also on the field of Middle East politics at large.

Autocratic Politics and Research Ethics amidst the Pandemic

Most MENA scholars in our survey anticipate increased reliance on online modes of data collection (See Figure 2); however, the feasibility of these plans is still unclear. While online research designs—such as interviewing subjects over web-based video apps—have been hailed as the answer, they raise a number of serious ethical and practical concerns. Prior to the pandemic, researchers spent countless hours in the field with their subjects and interlocutors to establish networks of trust, appreciate the context, and ensure participants’ safety and privacy as well as the ethical implementation of their research designs. This ability is almost non-existent in the new pandemic reality. Given the authoritarian nature of politics in most parts of the region, MENA researchers face security and ethical challenges associated with conducting fieldwork remotely. In our open-ended questions (as part of the online survey) and during interviews, participants unpacked some of the challenges associated with conducting online research in an authoritarian context. Salient among these challenges are security issues surrounding the use of digital

technologies, questions around access and inclusive research designs, and difficulties associated with doing research on vulnerable and displaced populations.

Digital technologies in the MENA often become mediums for state surveillance and crackdowns, raising concerns surrounding the security and safety of research subjects.¹⁰ Many autocratic regimes are increasing their surveillance and control measures under the pretext of controlling the spread of the virus.¹¹ For example, a number of MENA governments launched contact tracing applications to trace the spread of the virus. Notwithstanding the importance of these applications for health measures, they can be abused by the regimes and used as tools for state surveillance in the absence of adequate privacy laws.¹² It is also unlikely that the regimes will relax their enhanced control measures once the pandemic is under control given their patterns of authoritarian consolidation.

Furthermore, researchers' overreliance on remote data-collection poses serious accessibility issues. Internet connectivity varies in accessibility and reliability across Middle Eastern societies, relying on online research design can thus result in further excluding the voices of disadvantaged research subjects who might not have access to internet and digital technology. In an online survey carried out by Al-Fanar media in 2019, almost half of the surveyed MENA-based researchers reported having unreliable internet connectivity.¹³

Finally, the challenge of online research design is further exacerbated for scholars who study vulnerable and displaced populations. One professor studying sex trafficking in refugee camps emphasized how it is impossible to secure "someone's trust that we see in refugee camp in Jordan to talk to me online about what happened....[i]t's not going to happen."¹⁴ While digital technologies provide one way to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on research, they pose significant ethical and moral conundrums for MENA scholars.

To conclude, the outbreak of COVID pandemic created new barriers and exacerbated existing challenges to scholars who research the MENA region. Regardless of whether scholars utilize qualitative or quantitative methods, scholars of Middle East politics face distinct challenges. In the new COVID reality, challenges to field research will affect the knowledge produced about the region as well as scholars' careers and research agendas. Researchers based in MENA are in a further precarious situation, as budget cuts to the already scarce research funds will have long term effects on their research agendas.

At the same time, the global health crisis has opened possibilities for MENA scholars to explore new avenues of research. According to our survey, 46% of scholars specializing in MENA report starting new research projects and 30% of MENA scholars have started COVID-related research projects. In addition, there is a real opportunity to build and/or strengthen institutional and personal partnerships between Western and regional universities and scholars in a way that magnifies the work and voices of scholars in the region.

RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM: WOMEN AND GENDER IN MENA

INTRODUCTION: LOOKING BEYOND ISLAM

By Gamze Cavdar

The topic of women and gender in MENA politics has long been associated with Islam because of a historically-held notion that Islam determines every aspect of life in the region, including politics, economics, culture, and of course, women's status and gender. Decades of research on women and gender in the MENA have challenged this notion, and, instead, pointed out how complex contexts and relationships among actors shape the role and status of women. This previous scholarship has demonstrated that women's political, economic and legal statuses vary greatly across and within MENA countries, that they change over time within a single country in response to political activism as well as strategic calculation, and that in this sense the region is not fundamentally different from the rest of the world. This by no means suggests that Islam is irrelevant. Religion continues to influence women's status and gender through public policies and laws as well as political and social attitudes. But Islam is far from being the single or even the most significant factor. The collection of essays in this symposium, despite their different foci and methodologies, all look beyond Islam to highlight complex interactions among rational political actors who operate in various economic, institutional, legal, cultural and historical contexts.

This symposium's essays aim to shed light on recent developments in gender politics in the MENA region. The topics covered are impressively wide-ranging: Citizenship and women's legal status, social movements, state policies and Islamists' positions, political economy, political and social attitudes, and

methodological discussions. The empirical evidence examined involves an equally impressive large list of countries, including Morocco, Palestinian Territories, Israel, Turkey, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, Egypt, and Algeria.

The first four essays explore the question of citizenship, broadly defined, and the legal status of women and sexuality. Lillian Frost raises the question as to why Jordan refuses to remove the discriminatory clause in its citizenship law that prevents women from passing their nationality onto their spouses and children. Frost highlights the variation among the Arab countries when it comes to conferring nationality in law and argues that the state's concern with migration and demography plays a critical role in this discrimination towards women. Lihi Ben Shitrit discusses how contemporary Israeli discussions of annexation of the West Bank revolve around preoccupation with the "Palestinian woman" seen through her reproductive functions. Shitrit demonstrates how these concerns are often framed as a "feminist" concern for Palestinian women's rights and opportunities. Catherine Warrick investigates how the gendered legal system becomes another tool for the state in citizenship management and argues that these discriminatory clauses often trigger political activism and demands for reform, as demonstrated by the recent uprisings in the region. Shirin Saeidi moves beyond the concept of citizenship as an institution, and, rather, examines "self-acts of citizenship in different geographical spaces" by drawing on the self-immolations of two Iranian women. Saeidi notes that what these acts of citizenship symbolize is that the modern nation-state cannot respond to the current

demands of citizenship and that we need to create a space where the vulnerable seek refuge and are respected.

Women's political activism has experienced unusual dynamism over the last decade in many parts of the region. Erika Biagini and Paola Rivetti raise the question of how women are mobilized in contexts of authoritarianism and state violence. By discussing the feminist movements in Egypt and Iran, Biagini and Rivetti explain that these movements take advantage of informal spaces, which allow them to become invisible and hide until the conditions change.

State policies and Islamists' positions towards women's political and economic statuses are examined in the following two essays. By using the Moroccan case, Aili Mari Tripp asks why some autocratic leaders adopt women's rights policies. Tripp argues that the leaders adopt these reforms under pressure from women's rights activism. By doing so, Tripp continues, the leaders hope to seek two objectives: 1) present a modernizing image, externally, and 2) neutralize Islamist movements, internally. Tripp also notes that in a radical move, the Party of Justice and Development that has been in a coalition government since 2011, changed its position on women's rights and supported the proposed reforms. My own essay on Turkey discusses how public policies under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) rule have created a "double-burden" for women by encouraging them to maintain their traditional roles at home and seek employment at the same time. I argue that as a result of these conservative views held by the top brass and the neoliberal policies, female employment is now more concentrated in low-paying, low-status type of jobs that provide no benefits or job security, which in turn increases women's poverty levels and makes them vulnerable to

clientelist relations. These two essays demonstrate, among others, that state policies and Islamist positions on women do change and evolve, at times in opposite and unexpected directions.

The next two essays explore political and social attitudes towards women's economic participation and political representation. Marwa Shalaby examines the relationship between gender stereotypes and women's political representation in MENA by using the case of Morocco. Shalaby demonstrates that voters view candidates from a gendered perspective and vote accordingly. Specifically, male policy and trait stereotypes play the most significant roles in affecting citizens' decisions to support female candidates while female policy stereotypes also matter but to a lesser degree. Shalaby's findings are consistent with extant work in more established democracies. Lindsay Benstead examines the relationship between women's labor force participation and social attitudes, specifically, feminist views in society. Benstead's empirical analysis is based on Arab Barometer data from six countries (Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, the Palestinian Territories, Lebanon and Yemen). Benstead finds that while beliefs about the role of Shari'a law strongly predict whether an individual believes that women should have equality in the workplace, women interpret religious teachings in a more egalitarian way. Benstead's essay ends with a positive note because it demonstrates that women's employment play an important role because employed women and their husbands exhibit greater egalitarianism possibly paving the way for more egalitarian attitudes in the long run.

The last essay by Nermin Allam tackles the question of methodology. Allam makes a case for a community engaged research approach, which she argues provides great insights to

researchers and also ensures positive outputs for communities. Community engaged research, which includes such methods as participant observation and interviews, unravels women's diverse identities and positions and contributes to undermining biases against women as victims of an oppressive culture. As many of us take our research to online settings due to COVID-19 pandemic, Allam's essay reiterates the value of this approach and reminds us of the necessity to pursue community engaged research during the pandemic albeit in a limited fashion.

Together, these contributions offer a glimpse of recent developments and provide provocative insights by looking beyond Islam to show the diverse and complex ways in which political context and human agency shape the status of women and gender politics in MENA.

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UNEQUAL CITIZENS: STATE LIMITATIONS ON WOMEN'S NATIONALITY RIGHTS

By Lillian Frost

"When you turn 18, you realize you are a stranger, but I don't know Syria. People told me I am not Jordanian...Many of my friends do not know that I am not Jordanian; I try not to bring it up. It is embarrassing when everyone thinks you are Jordanian and you have this different color identity card..."

I went to a bank and wanted to talk to an employee about cashing my paycheck. When I

showed my passport, they were surprised I was Syrian because I have a Jordanian accent...

I can't even donate blood for my mother because I do not have a national number."¹⁵

In most of the Arab world,¹⁶ women cannot pass their nationality onto their spouses and children on equal terms with men, and in many cases, women cannot confer their nationality at all. The introductory quote illuminates that this often means the child of a citizen mother and noncitizen father is not automatically a citizen in the mother's country and in some cases, cannot ever become a citizen in the mother's country. For example, in Jordan, that child could not obtain Jordanian nationality, even if that child was born and raised there; instead, that child would need to apply for residency, could not access work sectors reserved for citizens (e.g., medicine, engineering, etc.), and could not even donate blood to a Jordanian family member.

Although this phenomenon is not limited to the Arab world—as of 2018, 46 states prohibit women from passing their nationality onto their spouses or children on equal terms with men; 13 of which effectively prevent women from passing on their nationality at all—it is prevalent in Arab states.¹⁷ Currently, female citizens in 16 Arab countries cannot confer their nationality to their spouses on the same terms as men. Algeria is the only Arab state that has revised its nationality law to remove this discrimination fully.¹⁸ Similarly, 15 Arab countries prevent women from passing their nationality to their children on equal terms with men. The only Arab states that have removed this discrimination fully are Algeria, Egypt, and Morocco.¹⁹ Considering that most states around the world removed this discrimination from their nationality laws in the 1980s, after the adoption of the

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, *why have some states maintained this discrimination?*

In addition, within the Arab world, there is substantial variation in the levels of this discrimination toward women (DTW), as shown in Table 1. For example, Tunisia allows women to transmit their nationality to their children on equal terms with men when the child is born in-country (though not when born abroad), and Tunisia facilitates (though does not automate) the naturalization of female citizens' foreign spouses by removing the residency requirement in this process. In addition, Egypt, Morocco, Iraq, and Yemen typically allow women to pass their nationality to their children (though not to their spouses) under the same conditions as men.²⁰

Table 1: Levels of DTW in Conferring Nationality in Arab States (as of 2018) ²¹

Extent of DTW in Conferring Nationality in Law	Arab States
(1) Low or No Discrimination	Algeria, Tunisia
(2) Partial Discrimination	Egypt, Morocco, Iraq, Yemen
(3) High Discrimination	Sudan, Libya, UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman
(4) Full Discrimination	Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Kuwait, Qatar

Likewise, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Libya, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have introduced legislation indicating that women can pass their nationality onto their children and spouses through certain procedures (while men confer theirs automatically), though these states may not implement these provisions or may make them strict and limited.²² Further, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Kuwait, and Qatar do not allow citizen women to confer their nationality to their children or spouses under nearly any circumstances,²³ and even these circumstances often are not implemented in practice.²⁴ *What explains variations in the extent of this DTW across states?*

Existing Explanations of DTW in State Policies

Much of the literature explaining the presence and extent of DTW in state policies focuses on three main explanations: cultural and religious structures, women's activism, and women's political and economic participation. First, many highlight conservative personal status codes or family laws that codify rules of patrilineal descent as a perpetuating source of women's inequality, including in nationality laws.²⁵ Similarly, others point to religious doctrine, particularly in Islam and Catholicism, as upholding gender inequality,²⁶ including the institutionalization of religion in the state, rather than religious tenets themselves.²⁷

Second, many scholars highlight the role of women's activism in pushing through reforms that expand women's rights. Some argue that reformist coalitions, including feminist activists, lawyers, state officials, academics, and social workers, are central in mobilizing demands for greater women's rights.²⁸ These groups can become influential by teaming up with leftist political parties and human rights movements²⁹ or presenting their arguments within an existing social framework, such as Islam.³⁰ In these studies, women's movements are central in directing a government's attention to women's rights issues.³¹

Third, there is a diverse literature arguing that states grant women more rights when women participate widely in the government and economy. Some argue that higher literacy and education rates as well as labor force participation for women are central in empowering them to address gender discrimination.³² Others contend that legal gender discrimination persists when women lack political representation, such as in legislative and executive positions.³³

A New Lens: Demographic Politics and DTW in Nationality Conferral

Although these existing explanations are central in explaining the original introduction of DTW in nationality laws,³⁴ my research, using quantitative and qualitative data, suggests that concerns with migration and demography play a critical role in motivating the persistence and extent of this DTW. The quantitative data reflect an original dataset I compiled on the presence of DTW in 172 states' nationality laws from 2003–18 and investigates whether larger per capita migrant populations correspond with the persistence of DTW in spousal and descent (child) nationality conferral. The qualitative data draw from interview research on this topic in Jordan, where I conducted roughly 200 interviews with governmental officials, lawyers, families affected by these policies, and others during 14 months of fieldwork from 2016–19. Jordan is an interesting case because of its high levels of DTW in nationality conferral, which is somewhat surprising given that Jordan tends to have more moderate policies that grant women relatively more rights than other states in the region.

My research finds that larger migrant populations and more sensitive demographic politics are important factors behind the persistence of high DTW in the Arab world. I contend that migrant's and women's rights intersect in nationality laws because, if a state reforms its law to allow citizen women to transmit their nationality, then this creates a new pathway to citizenship for migrants who marry citizen women as well as for their children. This new pathway, regardless of its implications for women's rights, can threaten demographic politics. The addition of this *new* pathway is central in these debates because it places the focus on preventing the

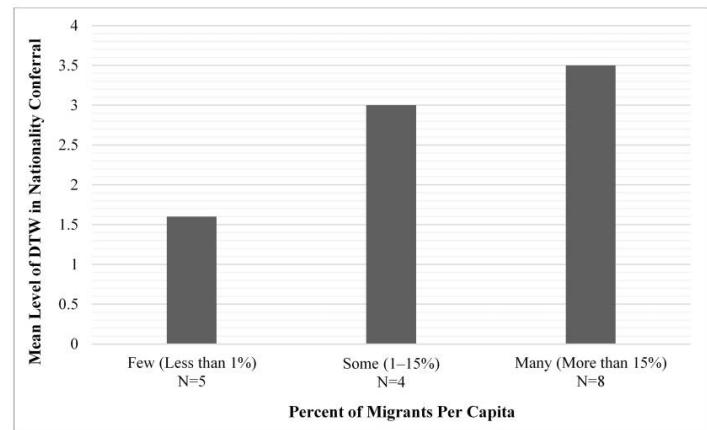
expansion of access to nationality rather than necessarily removing this access. As such, men's well-established and long-existing rights to nationality conferral often do not encounter opposition in these debates.³⁵

The link between large migrant populations and more restrictive nationality laws is well-established in the citizenship literature.³⁶ However, this research innovates by connecting this finding to the persistence of DTW in laws governing the conferral of a state's nationality.³⁷ The remainder of this research note will unpack these findings.

Large Per Capita Migrant Populations and High DTW in Nationality Conferral

First, my initial research indicates that states hosting more migrants per capita tend to have higher levels of DTW in their nationality laws. A simple comparison of the mean extent of DTW in states by the levels of migrants per capita in the Arab world highlights this observation, as shown in Figure 1.³⁸

Figure 1: Mean DTW in Nationality Conferral by Per Capita Migrant Population in Arab States in 2017



Second, based on research in Jordan, states reference migrants directly in their explanations for the persistence of this DTW. In an official Jordanian announcement regarding the government's decision not to remove this DTW, then Prime Minister, Abdullah Ensour, explicitly stated that the reform "might affect the demographic balance in Jordan and might lead to empty[ing] Palestine from its people."³⁹ A former prime minister I interviewed also noted government concerns with migrant naturalization when discussing the persistence of this DTW in Jordan: "There are 600,000 Egyptian men in Jordan, also Iraqis and Syrians, they would all marry Jordanian women," and "we can't have citizenship equality without a solution to the Palestine issue."⁴⁰ Another former minister familiar with this issue explained, "60,000 women are married to non-Jordanians; 90% of them are married to Palestinians...300,000 Palestinians [husbands and children] would become Jordanian overnight; this is a problem for Jordan's identity."⁴¹

Securitizing Migrants and the Persistence of DTW in Nationality Conferral

Third, these quotes highlight that, in connecting this DTW to migrants, states can turn nationality law reform into a security issue. This step to "securitize" reform reflects broader securitization processes, where leaders cast an issue as an existential threat that calls for extraordinary measures beyond the norms of everyday politics.⁴² As such, leaders can lift an issue "above politics" and block reform due to its security implications.⁴³ With nationality reforms, states can frame these policies as a "societal threat" because they would integrate migrants, including refugees, by providing them with a new pathway to citizenship.⁴⁴ States can describe this new pathway to citizenship as a security threat because many

naturalized migrants could change the nation's identity, shift demographics away from a leading ethnic or religious group, or take limited public benefits, like jobs, welfare transfers, and natural resources, from native citizens.

A state's ability to use societal securitization—whether the alleged security threat actually exists or not—to avoid reforming DTW in nationality laws highlights how equal nationality rights can be distinct from other women's rights because this DTW is interwoven with questions about who is a true national and who should be able to gain insider status. This dimension enables states where these questions are sensitive to remove this issue from "normal politics," including discussions of whether the nationality law is constitutional, until the security threat is "resolved."⁴⁵

Discussions with Jordanian officials reflect the societal securitization of women's nationality reform. For example, a former minister described the prominence of security in this area: "There are two people in me on this issue. One is humanitarian: these women deserve it [nationality law reform]. One is [about] security: we cannot afford to do it...many women are married to Palestinians...Jordan cannot take any more refugees!"⁴⁶ The same former minister later added, "Nationality law change will only happen when there is a solution to the Palestinian issue."⁴⁷

Similarly, another former minister commented: "unlike other women's policies, citizenship law stems from the security apparatus...it is not cultural or religious, it is political."⁴⁸ Another former prime minister likewise noted: "I do not think of it as a women's issue, but a political one...it is not about women's rights but diluting Palestinians in Palestine." He continued "the

lack of a final solution to Palestine leads to bizarre policies, like this women's one."⁴⁹

Implications

These findings suggest that states with large migrant populations per capita and sensitive demographic politics are less likely to remove DTW from their nationality laws. In addition, one way these states can buffer themselves from international and domestic pressures for such nationality law reform is by securitizing the reform. This securitization may be particularly effective in the Arab world, where even more democratic actors, like U.S., EU, and UN officials, tend to privilege stability over political and social reforms in their policy agendas.

In addition, these findings highlight the intersection of women's and migrant's rights in nationality laws as well as broader citizenship debates. In doing so, it makes two broad contributions. Theoretically, this research suggests that more attention should be devoted to understanding the intersection of women and migrants in state policies and in the persistence of discrimination toward both groups. For practitioners, this insight suggests that an effort to remove DTW in nationality conferral likely requires simultaneous efforts to address or mitigate the demographic politics in which these reforms are entangled. Overall, migration is an important factor to consider and study further when evaluating persistent barriers to women's nationality rights.

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GILEAD IN PALESTINE

By Lihi Ben Shitrit

In her 1985 novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, which has received renewed attention following its adaptation to a television series by the same name, Margaret Atwood tells of the dystopic Republic of Gilead, a state and society single-mindedly obsessed with the management and control of women's fertility. While the description of Gilead was inspired by historical examples of policies designed to control women's bodies,⁵⁰ today's "Gileads" often take on more subtle forms. In this piece I discuss the ways in which contemporary Israeli discussions of annexation of the West Bank revolve around an explicit and implicit preoccupation with the "Palestinian woman" seen strictly through her reproductive functions.

The essay is based on discourse analysis of the publications from 2013 to 2020 of the Sovereignty Movement (*Ribonut* in Hebrew) – the most vocal and influential group pushing the annexation agenda. It seeks to identify the contours of the sovereignty discourse as it grapples with the question of Palestinian demography. I argue that although more subtle than that of the nightmarish Gilead, and at times even framed as a "feminist" concern for Palestinian women's rights and opportunities, this anxious fixation on Palestinian fertility, by advocates of Israeli sovereignty in the West Bank, has equally pernicious undertones. As in Gilead, women's hierarchized citizenship is linked to their varied (desired or undesired) reproductive capacities.⁵¹ Palestinian women's incorporation into Israel – following the desired annexation of the West Bank – is a question that rests solely on their diminished threat of producing

demographically undesirable (i.e. Palestinian) children.

An implied but less discussed mirror image of the Palestinian woman in this Israeli Gilead is the Jewish woman whose contribution to the project of annexation is her enhanced fertility. Ethnic demographic competition is not new or unique to the context of Israel/Palestine. Moreover, it is not only the Israeli right that has been concerned with Palestinian demography. The Zionist left has advocated for a two-state solution with the argument that in its absence, Palestinians will become a demographic majority that will overtake Jews between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean. Yet what makes the annexationist iteration of the phenomenon more elusive and thus more effective is its cooptation of the feminist language of “women’s rights” and women’s choice and autonomy. The implications of the demographic discourse identified here remain pertinent to future research as well as feminist activism in the context of Israel/Palestine. Even as public attention to the question of annexation is experiencing a momentary lull due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the political forces that advocate for the application of Israeli sovereignty in the West Bank are continuing to push their agenda. It is imperative to continue and deepen the study of these forces in order to clearly grasp what exactly is meant by Israeli sovereignty in this case.

Demography and the Sovereignty Movement

The preoccupation with Palestinian women and their reproductive capacity is a consistent theme in the publications of the Sovereignty Movement, the most vocal network lobbying for the application of Israeli sovereignty in the West Bank. As Meirav Jones and I show elsewhere,⁵² even

though the movement is lead primarily by members of the Jewish settler movement, its supporting interlocutors and participants encompass the highest echelons of Israeli politics. For example, in the period from November 2013 to May 2018, the movement published ten issues of its journal *Ribonut*, or Sovereignty. Of 168 persons who appear in the publications as contributors, interviewees, or thought authorities, 39 persons were at the time of the publication, or are currently, Members of Knesset (Israeli Parliament). Of these, 25 held government cabinet positions as ministers or deputy ministers. The largest representation was of MKs from the ruling coalition – Likud and settler parties like the Jewish Home - but the list also included a few MKs from ultra-Orthodox parties, and even one from each of the so-called centrist Kulanu and Blue and White parties. Some of the high profile government participants in the journal were Israel Katz, currently the finance minister; Naftali Bennett, who until recently was defense minister and before that, education minister; Yuli Edelstein, currently the minister of health; Yariv Levin, currently the speaker of the Knesset; Ayelet Shaked, who until recently was Israel’s justice minister; Yoaz Hendel, currently the minister of communications; and many other high office holders. Additional contributors included elected officials in settlements, academic experts affiliated with universities or think tanks, and well-known journalists and media personalities.

In the 12 volumes of Sovereignty published to date (2020), demography or demographics come up 109 times. In the following, I highlight some of the themes surrounding this discourse on demography as it concerns itself with the “Palestinian woman.”

Some contributors to the pages of the Sovereignty journal express their deep

concern with “women’s rights” in Palestine. This is perplexing when coming from intellectuals, activists, and politicians who have done little to promote policies advancing Palestinian women’s rights. The plight of Palestinian women is framed within the greater plight of the Muslim and Arab woman, oppressed by her society and culture. This lowly state of Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian women alongside other minorities is contrasted with their status in Israel, which is portrayed as a beacon of respect for rights. As one article puts it, for example, “Europe is...aware of the persecution faced by various minorities in the Muslim world and sees Israel as a haven for them.” It continues to highlight the “[p]ersecution of Christians, of women, of children and other minorities.”⁵³ Another contributor asserts, “There is apartheid among Arabs; among the Arabs there is oppression of women and minorities; the Arabs do not honor human rights, they have no democracy...[Yet] we have multiple races here and more freedom of religion and democracy than the US.”⁵⁴ All these ills of discrimination and persecution, according to this discourse, are epitomized in the state of affairs under Palestinian control. As one writer explains, “In the areas under the civil control of Abu Mazen and Hamas there is no freedom of the press, Christians are persecuted and radical Islam is the sole ruling religion. Human rights, women’s rights in particular, are trampled.”⁵⁵

The solution to the oppression of women and discriminated groups, at least in Palestine, is the application of Israeli sovereignty that will save them from the trials of Arab self-rule. Without granting Palestinians equal citizenship in the Israeli state, as sovereignty according to the *Ribonut* framework rests only with the Jewish People, a benevolent Israeli rule will be an improvement for Palestinians and will deliver them from their

oppression. Another article explains this by stating that “a Palestinian state is the farthest thing from human rights that it is possible to imagine.” The left’s false tying of Palestinian statehood to issues of human rights is merely a misleading marketing ploy, the author argues. He writes, “dear people of the Left...Is there really not even a little mercy in your hearts for the poor Palestinians, that you relegate them to a life under such a regime? What - aren’t they human beings? What have they done to you, leftists, that you work so diligently to impose upon them a life of oppression and maltreatment?...And we have still not spoken of the oppression of women and the beating of women, or about child slavery and exploitation, about unbridled religious coercion, about the destruction of any monument that is not connected to their religion, or about trampling on the honor of the unfortunate and on and on...The Right’s plan of application of Israeli Sovereignty, with all of its difficulties and limitations, on the contrary, is the one that entails both the rights of the fathers and human rights.”⁵⁶

To “save” Palestinian women, minorities, and Palestinians in general from their predicament, Israeli rule is justified with the very familiar colonial trope of “saving brown women (and minorities) from brown men.”⁵⁷ Yet such rule raises the question of demographic anxieties; what will happen when Israel adds millions of Palestinians to its populace? In the next section I outline the Sovereignty discourse’s Gileadian answer.

Arab women’s modern liberation as a demographic strategy

As mentioned, the Zionist left has also been concerned about Palestinian demography. Not putting forward an alternative cultural or civic definition for what a Jewish state means in a democratic context, much of the Zionist

left still relies on a racialized understanding of Judaism, where a Jewish state's definition is simply a state with a Jewish demographic majority. The two-state solution aims to facilitate such a majority while maintaining Israeli democracy. The Sovereignty discourse is in dialogue with the left's preoccupation with demography and attempts to alleviate the concern that an Israeli annexation of the West Bank will bring about a Palestinian demographic majority. The left's worry is baseless, this discourse asserts, because of the celebrated "modernity" of the Palestinian woman that has led to her declining fertility.

The most well-known and cited right wing authority on this subject is former ambassador and demographer Yoram Ettinger. His view, widely heralded by sovereignty advocates, is that there has been an overcount of the Palestinian population in the West Bank. Furthermore, as he writes in the pages of the Sovereignty journal, "The present situation is that there is a Jewish majority of sixty six percent in the area, including Judea and Samaria and within the Green Line. This majority will become a demographic tailwind, stemming from the surge in Jewish fertility, especially among secular Jews, compared with the collapse of Muslim fertility, stemming from various aspects of modernization."⁵⁸ He attributes the erosion of Palestinian fertility to "the exposure of Arab women to Western education and culture." Applauding the modern liberation of these women, he explains that, "UNRWA has broadened the infrastructure of local colleges and the Arab woman takes advantage of these educational opportunities. She marries much later and, consistent with the Western attitude; Palestinian women have become the second most frequent users of birth control methods in the Arab world (after Moroccan women)."⁵⁹ Lest we think that the reason for celebrating expanded educational

opportunities for Palestinian women and greater reproductive choice is simply an intrinsic concern with women's equality and decision making autonomy, he argues that this is a positive trend because, he writes, "it works in our favor" (by "our" he means a Jewish demographic majority). If the choice of the Palestinian woman to have fewer children is a cause for optimism for Ettinger, the opposite in the Jewish woman is also a cause for rejoicing. For him, demography "works in our favor" because "today the trend for Arab women, age 20-30, is in the direction of less than three births on average while for Jewish women, the trend points to more than three births on average."⁶⁰

Another contributor, David P. Goldman, is the author of a book titled *Why Civilizations Die (and Why Islam is Dying, Too)*. Similarly to Ettinger, he sees modernity as heralding Muslim and Arab demographic decline broadly, and as a result, the ascendance of Israel's superiority. "It is difficult to measure the impact of modernity, but one failsafe gauge of the social transformation now underway is the sudden demographic transition underway in most of the countries of the regions. Arab, Turkish and Persian birth rates are falling from pre-modern to post-modern levels, and the result is a sudden aging of their populations."⁶¹ The liberation of women from the restrictions and limitations of traditional society is a positive development, as per the author, but again not due to an intrinsic concern with women's rights, but rather because it causes, in the view of the author, Muslim "civilizational decline." Writing about the broader Middle East, he notes that women in the region now "reject the constraints of Muslim family life as soon as they obtain a high school education. The shock of sudden passage from traditional society into the modern world has produced the fastest-ever fall in fertility rates in the Muslim world." Yet

Israel, he delightedly notes, is not subject to such a decline, in fact, he states, “Israeli Jewish fertility rate [is] 3.11 vs. 2.91 for West Bank and Samaria Arabs.” Furthermore, “In October 2015, Israel’s Jewish fertility rate is higher than in any Arab country, other than Yemen, Iraq and Jordan.” So, while Arab and Muslim women’s educational and material advancement has utility as it decreases their reproduction rate, the opposite is true of Israeli women. As he states, “Israel’s robust fertility profile...is a symptom: Israel is the only industrial country in the world to reproduce at above the replacement rate of 2.1 live births per female, and by a substantial margin. It is a gauge of Israel’s long-term social and economic viability in contrast to the civilizational decline around it.” Therefore, in this demographic battle in which women’s wombs are the gauge of civilizational ascendance or decline, “time is on Israel’s side,” he triumphantly asserts.

The falling fertility rate among Palestinian women allows advocates of Israeli sovereignty to sidestep the more explicit engagement with active efforts toward ethnic demographic reduction. Yet it is clear that the logic of demographic control of minorities through policies aimed at reducing their numbers haunts the Sovereignty Movement’s discourse. Ettinger suggests that “the governments of Israel cannot encourage Arab emigration” not because it is tantamount to ethnic cleansing, but rather because it is, as he phrases it, “not exactly politically correct, to put it politely.” Yet he discusses Israeli unimplemented initiatives up until 1977 directed at “moving a number of large Arab families. Not forcefully, of course, but to help them move to South America, Western Europe and other places.” These efforts, he says, should be encouraged. He points to the fact that, at least according to his reading, “there are a number of clans in Samaria of significant size that would be willing to leave

tomorrow morning out of Ben Gurion Airport if only they were allowed to do so.” Israel should “help” these Palestinian emigrate and yet currently it makes it difficult for them to do so. He points that “anyone who reads public opinion polls and comes into contact with the Arabs of Judea and Samaria knows that there is a very large percentage who would consider leaving.”⁶² A minority of the Sovereignty journal contributors openly discusses, like Ettinger, Palestinian population control. For example, MK Bezalel Smotrich, until recently Israel’s Minister of Transportation, argues that Palestinians who want collective self-determination should be moved to another country with the “help” of Israel. Other contributors simply suggest incentivizing vast numbers of Palestinians to emigrate in order to eliminate the demographic threat they pose.⁶³

Conclusion: implications for the future

The demographic discourse I presented in this paper, although superficially couched in a language of women’s empowerment, bodes ominously for any possibility of equal ethnonational and gendered citizenship under Israeli sovereignty. What if in a post-annexation future Palestinian women’s fertility rate increases?

Annexation advocates already provide us with clues as to their potential response. Smotrich, for instance, recently participated in a news conference in the Negev Desert together with Naftali Bennett, former Education Minister and former Defense Minister, and Ayelet Shaked, former Justice Minister.⁶⁴ The purpose of the conference was to target the Palestinian Bedouins in the Negev, who are already citizens of Israel, and highlight the danger in their high population growth. Seeing citizenship through the lens of the fertility rate, when Palestinian women, as opposed to Jewish women, have too many

children, they reconstitute themselves as a threat to the state. Smotrich stated that the Bedouins “double [their population size] every 12 years and this is something that must be dealt with.” He called this trend “a bomb, which, if we do not dismantle its apparatus, will detonate on us even more powerfully.” He argued that if Israel *makes* Bedouins more Westernized, their fertility rate will decline.

While he sees himself as an already so-called “modern” subject who wants to “Westernize” Palestinian Bedouin women, it is noteworthy that Smotrich himself has seven children. The founders of the Sovereignty journal, Nadia Matar and Yehudit Katzover, each has six and five children respectively. Smotrich and his fellow annexationists argue that they want to empower the Palestinian woman, who with education and employment opportunities will have greater reproductive choice. In the Bedouin context, she will be able to resist polygamy and to reduce the number of children she is expected to have. Yet the Jewish woman is subject to a different logic in which having more “choice” is decoupled from lower fertility rates. The modernized Palestinian woman is expected to organically and autonomously “choose” fewer children, while the modern Jewish woman is expected to “choose” the opposite. That this so-called choice is their obsessive concern, and that they so starkly center it on the desirability of Jewish fertility and the undesirability of Palestinian fertility should alert us to the profound racism of these new forms of appropriation of the feminist language of “women’s choice.” Studying the intersections of racial and gendered concerns in Israel’s annexation discourse helps us better grasp the forms of hierarchical citizenship regimes the sovereignty project seeks to cement.

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GENDER AND THE LAW IN THE ARAB WORLD: TEXT, PRETEXT, AND CITIZENSHIP

By Catherine Warrick

The body of scholarship on gender and politics is rich and wide-ranging, as the essays in this issue of the newsletter demonstrate, and it has been particularly fruitful in the interrelation of gender issues and the law. The study of law has helped to identify and delineate the role of gender in many arenas of politics, from executive and legislative power to the role of parties, electoral campaigns, and public opinion. Conversely, scholars of gender have made significant contributions to the understanding of law and politics, particularly in the study of the boundaries and experiences of citizenship, contestation about tradition, and the role of religion in the state.

This scholarship has perhaps been most visible in fostering the inclusion of gender as an analytical category in mainstream politics. Writers on gender and citizenship in the 1980s and 1990s firmly established gender as an important issue in the analysis of state power to define its relationships with society; as Suad Joseph (1996) pointed out, “the concept of citizenship has been gendered from its origins in the Middle East, as elsewhere.”⁶⁵ Citizenship, both in the sense of nationality and in terms of political participation, was a chief focus of scholarship in this era, producing foundational studies on women’s movements, informal politics, nationalism, and public opinion.⁶⁶ More recent work on the nexus of gender and law in the past two decades has built on this scholarship, expanding our analyses of both the politics of gender and the complexities of citizenship beyond the original issues of women as subjects of the law. Studies of

gendered violence, family law, and religion, among other topics, have deepened the field of gender and law in Middle East studies.⁶⁷

This scholarship provides tools and insights useful beyond what might seem to be its natural boundaries of either gender issues or law. Gender is often at work in political issues where it is not apparent, and the concepts developed in the study of law are useful in studying not only codes and legislative processes, but claims of authority more broadly and even the exercise of power outside the law. I argue here that gender issues in law are not just important topics in political science, but arenas and tools by which the state engages in citizenship management, differently positioning citizens with regard to state power and protection. This happens explicitly, for example, with regard to gendered nationality law, as Lilian Frost explains in her contribution to the present collection of essays. But it also happens implicitly in criminal law, and in practice in the regulation of political opposition.

This memo briefly describes some of the useful concepts and distinctions at work in the scholarship of law and gender and illustrates those in recent developments in laws of the Middle East. The examination of the broad presence of gender in the content and boundaries of the law suggests the possibility of wider application of these approaches to topics not normally considered under the umbrella of gender and law.

Gender and the law as an approach to politics research

Part of the value of studying gender issues through a legal lens, and vice versa, is that it provides an excellent analytical framework for understanding the relationship between

state and society. This is of course not something unique to the Middle East; law and society research has been a valuable contributor to a wide range of disciplines and area studies. In the context of the Arab world, in particular, a number of important political developments draw on claims about law, and claims about gender deployed by the state and the state's opponents; studying those developments and the contestation surrounding them points up some useful distinctions that we might draw.

First, in thinking about "gender and the law," we are not solely studying laws that are specifically about gender roles or "women's issues." A wide range of laws are facially neutral, meaning their text does not draw gendered distinctions or appear to address gender issues, yet they have gender differential effects or are deployed in unexpected ways related to gender issues. This is the case, for example, with certain rules of criminal law described below. Second, there is a difference between "the law" – usually meaning text and rules of practice – and the use of state power by, for example, law enforcement agents. Even in extralegal abuses of power, where the state is acting outside or against the law, the law is often still important as a pretext for the application of that power in the first place.

Contestation regarding the law is sometimes about content problems (such as the marital loophole in rape law described in Aili Mari Tripp's essay in this issue) and sometimes about boundary problems (when the state operates outside the law, or fails to encompass all its citizens equally under the law). In both cases, this is an area where the use of gender as a lens of analysis is particularly helpful in understanding political and social phenomena.

This essay discusses developments in two broad areas of law: criminal law and the regulation of political protest and speech.

Criminal law: gender-neutral texts contribute to gendered effects

Criminal law in the Arab world is most clearly gendered in areas relating to the regulation of violence against women, including “honor” crimes and rape law. The past decade has seen worthwhile progress in legal reforms in these areas, without however radically altering the gendered nature of state regulation of violence against women.

Violence against women continues to be generally treated within the “family protection” paradigm, positioning women not as individual citizens with rights to the protection of the state and equality before the law, but as members of families who should be protected by (and sometimes from) their relatives. The “family protection” approach, which also encompasses child abuse, may be regarded as a sensible basis for embarking on the improvement of women’s legal protections, or as a means of establishing only limited reforms while leaving the larger patriarchal system intact. The approach is of long standing (Jordan established a Family Protection Unit in the police force in the late 1990s) and has arguably proved a useful tactic for bringing social conservatives on board with efforts to combat gendered violence, but it may also limit the scope of such reforms. The Palestinian Authority was reportedly planning a new family protection law to be enacted by the end of 2019, dealing with a range of issues from minimum age at marriage to domestic violence and police practice; but as of the summer of 2020, the legislation is still being formulated.

Penal codes in the Arab world impose extremely harsh penalties (usually capital punishment) for murder, except for those murders, primarily of women and girls, claimed to have been carried out for reasons of family honor. This is probably the most widely-studied element of gender and criminal law in the region and an example of the ways in which laws are a product of state power, public sentiment, arguments about tradition, and legal genealogy. Despite a great deal of both activism and scholarship on the issue, the legal underpinnings of honor crimes have not been radically altered in recent years. But there have been some developments in this area, including changes both in penal codes and in sentencing.

One welcome development was the recognition that ostensibly gender-neutral elements of the legal system, such as the laws defining provocation or self-defence, have had highly gender-discriminatory effects in practice and have supported the toleration of violence against women. The Jordanian Penal Code was amended in 2017 to alter Article 98, long recognized to have been a chief element producing very light sentences in honor killing cases. Article 98 reduces culpability, and thus punishment, for criminal violence in cases where the perpetrator was considered to have been “provoked” by a wrongful act on the part of the victim. Many systems in the world have such provisions relating to provocation; though they are facially neutral as to the gender of the actors, their application is an important vehicle for bringing into legal practice the dominant social mores about “appropriate” gendered behavior.⁶⁸

Heavier sentences in honor crimes cases have also come from changes in judicial practice. In 2017, a Jordanian court doubled the original sentences of two brothers convicted of killing their sister by poisoning her, with

the judge explicitly noting that the purpose of the harsher sentences was to set a precedent for lower courts, serve as a deterrent against honor killings, and remove the use of the exonerating excuse in trials.⁶⁹ Sentences for honor killings remain out of line with punishments for other types of deliberate homicide, but there is some evidence that longer prison terms are being imposed in recent years.

The practice of honor killings is a matter of many factors other than law, but elements of the legal system from police and prosecutorial practice to legal codes to judicial attitudes affect the extent to which this type of violence is punished or tolerated. In the law itself, many aspects of both code and practice are neither explicitly gendered nor specific to cases of honor killing, but their gendered effect is clear.

Law, extralegal power, and the regulation of political behavior

The scholarship on gender and the law has so far concentrated primarily on areas of law that are overtly gendered in text or in practice, such as criminal, family, and nationality laws. But the relevance of gender to issues of law is broader than this, shaping the operation and effect of state power even where the law's text and purpose do not center gender or sexuality as their subject. Events of the past decade suggest that a worthwhile area for the future extension of law and gender research will be the regulation of political behavior, particularly political speech and dissent. States' legal tactics for limiting dissent are potentially gendered in two ways: they put the weight of the state behind the enforcement of gendered social norms (as when the state restricts women's activism on the grounds that it damages public order or morality), and they provide a pretext for criminal detention that

then places individuals at the mercy of extralegal abuses related to gender and sexuality.

In the events of the Arab Spring in 2011, the attention of many outside observers was caught by the highly visible participation of women in the street protests across the region. Both this visibility as political actors and the prospect of serious systemic political change sparked a wave of commentary and scholarship⁷⁰ on the prospects for improvements in women's political access and their rights more generally. The predictions of the most optimistic observers about a widespread transition to democracy were, of course, not borne out by subsequent developments, but the importance of both women in politics and gender as an element of political analysis should by now be well established even beyond those of us who study gender and politics directly. Gender is prominent not solely in connection to "women's issues" or the mobilization of women themselves, but as an integral element of oppositional and progressive politics addressing both specific policy issues and the nature of the political system, participation, and even national identity.

The protests of 2019 in Lebanon and Iraq made this clear again, and perhaps even more explicitly. Women were not only present and active, they were often centered by activists themselves as authoritative leaders in the arena of criticizing the many failures of the state. Bassel Salloukh described the protests in Lebanon as part of a wider phenomenon of "reimagining the Lebanese nation" as one where "alternative class, gender, and environmental interests drive political action."⁷¹

But the current prominence of gender in MENA politics is not limited to opposition movements and progressive agendas. States

recognize the potential power of gender-based criticism, too, as they have long done, and their attempts to constrain or erase this power are visible in the texts and practices of the law. This falls into two broad categories: the general crackdown on political speech and protest, often via legislation, and the practices of policing and detention that arise from but may operate outside the laws. States are not only instituting repressive laws relating to political speech, but enforcing those in ways that often make use of individual and social vulnerabilities relating to gender and sex.

Any assessment of the state of the law regarding political protests must also take into account that this is not a fully law-governed arena, and the extralegal actions of the state and its agents are important not only as elements of state power but as commentary on the rule of law itself. In the arena of political protest, law often operates as a pretext for detention and thus puts people into a position in which they face extralegal abuses.

Several MENA states have enacted new legislation to regulate political opposition in the past few years.⁷² These range from restrictions on political protests to the regulation of journalism and social media. These laws operate alongside already-existing limitations on political speech, such as *lèse majesté* laws that prohibit criticism of the executive. Again, these laws do not establish gendered rules in themselves, but they grant to the state greater powers to punish opposition, and these powers have distinctly gendered applications. For example, during the events of the Arab Spring, activists in Egypt reported widespread sexual harassment and assault of women protestors by government forces, including the reviled “virginity tests” acknowledged to have been conducted by the

military in order to demonstrate that women protestors were morally suspect.⁷³

A well-known case of political detention directly related to gender issues has been the Saudi state’s treatment of women activists involved in the driving protests. A number of women participants in the “Women to Drive” movement have been arrested over the years, and although driving without a license is not usually a criminal offence, the charge of “disturbing public order” has sometimes been used as the legal basis permitting more serious charges and punishments. One activist was sentenced to 10 lashes in 2011 (but later pardoned), and others have been in detention for extended periods, including Loujain al-Hathloul, who was detained in 2018 and held for nearly a year without charge. She was later charged with crimes relating to challenging the country’s male guardianship system and violating the laws relating to contacts with foreign media and organizations. She has reported torture during her detention, including threats of sexual violence.⁷⁴

One of the most egregious examples of the gendered application of state power outside the formal legal rules has been the Syrian state’s use of rape as a weapon against its opponents and their families, which has been well documented throughout the current civil war.⁷⁵ Both women and men have been subjected to sexual abuse and violence in detention; the threat of rape serves not only to punish dissidents but to silence potential opponents as well. Sexual violence by the state is so pervasive that, according to one report,

it has become a general assumption in Syria that if a woman is detained, she will unquestionably be raped or subjected to other forms of sexual assault. Far from arousing compassion,

such abuses are regarded as further sources of shame for the families and communities of the women concerned.⁷⁶

Sexual abuse in custody is not permitted by the law, but laws creating the legal pretext for detention create the situation in which citizens are made vulnerable to illegal abuse. Political protests, and the laws regulating protest via limitations on speech and on civil society, are not generally seen as “gender issues,” but it is increasingly clear that the genders of protesters, and the state’s exploitation of vulnerabilities related to gender and sexuality, are important elements of mobilization, discourse, and repression.

Conclusion

It is commonplace to note that states use the tools of law to bolster and to exercise the power of the regime; what is notable in the context of political protest is the degree to which the texts of the law are pretexts for an extralegal exercise of power that draws heavily on gender and sexuality for its ability to intimidate and to punish. We might draw a comparison here to some of the ways that gender operates in the arena of criminal law, with the text of the law serving in part as a departure point for establishing state toleration of social practices or signalling the regulation of those to various audiences of the law. Law and political power are each not fully comprehensible without the other, and while the state dominates the legal arena, it does not do so with full autonomy from its own society. There are rich opportunities here for future research investigating the ways in which gender (and sexuality) underlies the use of power within and against the law – by the state and by its opponents – in arenas of politics that have not traditionally been addressed in studies of gender and politics.

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“WE DON’T HAVE CITIZENSHIP:” LIBERATION AND OTHER CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS FOR UNDERSTANDING IRANIAN WOMEN’S ACTIVISM IN THE MENA AND BEYOND⁷⁷

By Shirin Saeidi

During my research and conversations with Iranians, I am often questioned on my research interest in citizenship. Iranians from a variety of political backgrounds argue that there is no such thing as citizenship (*shahrvandi*) in Iran. I typically respond by highlighting that many different conceptualizations of citizenship exist and that although these are limited, the Islamic Republic still has Republican elements. However, what if the intervention of my interlocutors—the assertion that “we don’t have citizenship”—is not actually about the presence or absence of citizenship? What if both linguistically and conceptually, a discourse on citizenship alone is not enough to encompass the world-making stakes inherent in the act of creatively imagining the geographical?

In what follows, I demonstrate that by examining the acts of citizenship⁷⁸ performed by Iranian women in different geographical spaces, we can capture the poetics of their interventions as world-making. I address the circumstances surrounding Sahar Khodayari’s 2019 self-immolation in Iran. Sahar, also known as the Blue Girl, was facing a six-month prison sentence for having entered a stadium to watch football. She set herself on fire in front of the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Tehran on September 2, 2019. She died a week later. Social media

outlets and some Persian news sources from inside Iran reported that Sahar's family claimed that she was diagnosed as bipolar and had attempted suicide in the past. They had informed the court about her mental health, but this information did not impact the state's interactions with her. Slowly stories also began to emerge on social media about the unstable family life that Sahar was enduring. On the surface, her self-immolation seemed to target the state, represented by the Islamic Republic's judicial system. However, other narratives also competed with this one as Iranians reflected on her life and death.

I also bring into the conversation the 2018 suicide of Nasim Aghdam in California in order to highlight the relevance of comparative studies to gender politics in the MENA. Nasim was a vegan activist and YouTuber who became angry about restrictions YouTube placed on her channel. In response, Nasim opened fire at YouTube offices in San Bruno, wounded three people, and died as a result of a self-inflicted gunshot. When reflecting on YouTube's decision to restrict her page, Nasim stated that there was no freedom of speech in the "real world."⁷⁹ In other words, despite the fact that she only opened fire on people working at YouTube (in a manner the police described as entailing "no rhyme or reason")⁸⁰—she did not hold only YouTube accountable for her anguish but apparently viewed the corporation's policies as connected to the state and world in which she lived. Her family was shocked by her actions, and apologized to "all of humanity" saying that she would never hurt an ant.⁸¹

I encourage readers to imagine frameworks other than citizenship to help them make sense of Sahar and Nasim's stories, and indeed this was my initial motivation for writing about these women's deaths in a

comparative fashion. However, similar to other scholars working on gender and the MENA, I find the pursuit of citizenship and rights is often connected to gender struggles in Iran. I piece together parts of Sahar and Nasim's mysterious stories with the intent of addressing what is missing from the dominant view on citizenship in gender studies of the MENA. That is, to conceive of citizenship as an institution that includes a focus on how statuses, rights, and responsibilities are forged or undermined overlooks the transferability and placelessness of citizenship, or what Engin Isin identifies as the universality of citizenship.⁸² The comparative aspect of this essay demonstrates how Sahar and Nasim's manners of death posit the reentering of the body as a tool for world-making. This turning away from the nation-state to the self makes consideration of additional lenses, such as world-making and acts of citizenship, necessary to understand struggles that are connected to citizenship as an institution regulating rights, roles, and responsibilities.

There are several lessons to be learned for gender studies in the MENA, particularly in relation to citizenship, through an examination of the narratives surrounding the suicide deaths of these two Iranian women living in Iran and the U.S. First, the common themes that emerge from the women's deaths—such as the real possibility of liberation for the living by connecting with the dead through spatial movement—demonstrate that the academic commitment to a state-centered form of democratic change in the region prevents us from seeing the new politics and sensibilities that women from the MENA not only embody, but also share with women elsewhere. Second, as we witness these tragic and untimely deaths, we are forced to question what frameworks are overlooked when citizenship, rights, and equality come to define the entirety of

women's desires. I argue that a focus on Engin Isin's notion of acts of citizenship (instead of rights alone) allows us to connect three poles of citizenship—institution, body, and space. By unifying these three different poles of citizenship, citizenship can be refashioned in such a way that it possible for us to imagine its afterlives in the form of connectivities and world-making. Lastly, my argument has implications for the ways in which we study the 2011 uprisings and the role of women during and after these moments. Given that citizenship has become a dominant framework for these investigations, it is important to remain critical of how the concept operates in our work.

Conceptual and Theoretical Issues with Citizenship Studies in the MENA

Since the optimism that followed the 2011 uprisings for many women in the MENA, and the subsequent disappointment they encountered, gendered investigations of women's roles during and after the uprisings have highlighted the centrality of citizenship.⁸³ While a lens on citizenship and rights is essential to understanding women's political participation before and after the uprisings, there are other questions to ask and conceptual frameworks to consider.⁸⁴ This task becomes particularly urgent when we remember that citizenship is a tool through which the modern nation state distinguishes insiders/outside, respectability, and community within its population. Hence, investigations benefit from exploring what women's creative energies in the face of political upheavals are producing in addition to the obvious demand for equality, justice and a clarification on rights and statuses.

My reframing of citizenship is grounded in Engin Isin's notion of acts of citizenship.

Citizenship is a tool for states to categorize their populations, as well as a set of rights and responsibilities. Citizenship can be enacted from above or below, it can be rights and/or responsibilities, but *acts of citizenship*, including self-immolation and murder/suicide, are interventions that challenge these routine citizenship regimes.⁸⁵ Social inquiry produces rigorous scientific explanations through categorizations, classifications, and measurements, but the knowledge overlooked in such an inquiry is the poetics of Sahar and Nasim's acts of citizenship.⁸⁶ These are bodily directed interventions. They may have been ignited due to institutional discrimination, but they ultimately redefine notions of space and home in ways that challenge the grip of the state over imagination. My methodological framework accommodates the more atomized forms of gender activism that have emerged in the MENA, where, since 2011, organized political movements and cooperation with the state are less central to people's interventions.⁸⁷

I suggest that refashioning citizenship by bringing citizenship as an institution and as bodily intervention together, makes visible the space for movement between different worlds, between the living and the dead. This perspective is needed, not least of all because of the cultural significance of martyrdom and remembering for segments of the population in the MENA. Additionally, a refashioning of citizenship in this manner also makes tangible politics and sensibilities that are less often addressed in gender studies of the MENA. This is because such findings rest below our line of vision as academics. For instance, for young Iranians on social media the shock surrounding Sahar and Nasim's deaths lingers, creating a back and forth movement between this world and the one Sahar and Nasim were pushed towards by the nation-states in which they lived.

The silences, confusion, and missing pieces of Sahar and Nasim's stories highlight the importance of more comparative investigations of women's experiences in the MENA. As Wynter has argued, binary depictions of knowledge/ignorance, habitable/uninhabitable, and other universal forms of distinguishing spaces date back to the pre-fifteenth-century feudal understandings of geographies.⁸⁸ If we move beyond a colonial conceptualization of space that undergirds the separation of area studies from the international global system, what unusual or unexpected desires could we identify resting beyond the institutions that Sahar and Nasim lived within? I argue that one approach for bringing renewed visibility to questions pertaining to gender and citizenship in the MENA is to engage with Black feminist writing on the politics of liberation. Methodologically, I suggest that by looking at citizenship from different platforms and spaces, we may not only develop more substantial understandings of what women's desires encompass, but also reinvigorate imaginings of life in the thrust of citizenship.

By bringing attention to their bodies and the aesthetics of their deaths, we find in Sahar and Nasim's stories individual acts of subjectivation. Studying the moment of subjectivation gives us a route to imaginatively piece together the kind of world Nasim and Sahar were constructing.⁸⁹ The moment of subjectivation is entangled with Sahar and Nasim's acts of citizenship because they reentered their bodies on their own terms as they committed suicide. However, self-immolation and (attempted) murder/suicide also pose questions about the limits of the state's centrality to women's imagination. When considering that both women were upset by the impact of the

state's legal parameters on their lives, this ramification becomes more urgent.

While I focus on dead bodies, my attention to the connection between bodies, space, and world-making also builds on current trends in studies of gender and politics in the MENA.⁹⁰ Scholars have addressed women's bodies as "fluid and culturally mediated" with the capacity to engender revolutionary transformations in the MENA.⁹¹ What I call for is a broader understanding of which bodies count, and those disruptive acts of citizenship, such as self-immolation and murder/suicide, expose world-making in ways that acts of citizenship enacted by the living do not reveal.

The Pursuit of Liberation: Sahar, Nasim, the Space that Separates Us, and Possibilities of World-Making

Sahar's name means "just before dawn" in Arabic; Nasim means "breeze." I find the women's names to be powerful in how they capture the forging of space through air and not nothingness.⁹² In both cases, reentering one's own body occurs as the women acknowledge their own stories (which are for them to tell as Christina Sharpe reminds us and I make no claims on). Yet through the act of reentering their bodies with suicide, they used the air to create distance between themselves and others as they intentionally made an exit before our eyes. At the same time, they also established a pathway between worlds. I see this pathway as creatively empowering because it illustrates the possibility for individuals to move away from the entrapments of the nation-state's citizenship contract. This is indeed the way liberation is generally imagined. However, liberation can also be seen in Sahar and Nasim's capacity to reenter their own bodies instead of only escaping the structures of the nation-state.

Importantly, their deaths do not make dying the only method for exiting the state. Sahar was alive for a week before finally succumbing to her injuries and Nasim was missing for a few days before opening fire on employees at the YouTube office, and finally killing herself. The story of their deaths involved a suspense that continues to keep the living hanging on, or as Lihi Ben Shitrit stated during our workshop for this newsletter, their stories “keep you up at night.” The women did not disappear but demanded respect while still present by reentering their bodies on terms that defied the state, and it is in this capacity that the air carries them back and forth. This same process makes movement between different worlds a possibility for the living. Leaving spaces of oppression need not only be sought through the pursuit of martyrdom, but the living can imagine real-time connections with their ancestors to move through their conditions with grace and force.

The bodies that Sahar and Nasim reenter as subjects who took control into their own hands are no longer defined by or limited to the citizenry structures that triggered their elevation. Once we shift our gaze toward their bodies again, which we are inclined to do due to the manner of death, they are not tied down to the methodology or mythology of the nation-state. As we become implicated in the scene by our gaze, liberation as reentering one’s own body becomes a communal vision, if not experience. The nation-state defined Sahar and Nasim through the patriarchal state’s governing system, and these are contracts that they individually decided to refuse. If we focus on the bodies after the act of suicide, the pursuit of acceptance from the nation-state and a solid *home* is less central, although not necessarily bypassed. These are bodies that are questioning the patriarchal state and

home project altogether and we know that because they decided to lessen their engagement with it and turn toward themselves as we watched.

Sahar and Nasim’s self-destruction amplifies less noted outcomes of subjectivation in the form of world-making. Berlant understands world-making to be a sensual experience that captures the subtleties of sentiments, such as feeling the water beneath your feet, or the light breeze just before dawn.⁹³ From my view, as Sahar and Nasim elevated, their bodies on the ground forced me to respect the air that separated us, that continues to move in directions I cannot control. I was forced to see that as this air disorients me—for I could not follow them but they were visible—it also creates pathways for movement. I unpack Berlant’s understanding of world-making and suggest that Sahar and Nasim’s deaths show us that when space for movement is created, worlds are made. Sahar and Nasim’s decisions to commit suicide were not simply refusals or acts of disruption. Behind their decisions to reenter their own bodies rests knowledge. This is a knowing that I no longer have access to extrapolating, but it does create the conditions for other possibilities as I ponder on the space between us. Thus, one of the afterlives of these deaths is the unveiling of a world, forged through air, where the vulnerable seek refuge and are respected—where it is recognized that citizenship rights or aspirations actually do not save lives and are no longer the main motivation of those denied their dignity.

Pondering on the death of Sahar and Nasim makes me certain that I do not need a patriarchal state and home. Instead, I desire a home that is defined through living and dead loved ones and those who protect my vulnerabilities by creating a path for movement. In this sense, the pursuit of

liberation becomes tangible to me by bones, blood, bodies, lips, ideas, memories, words, but not a land. As McKittrick states, this view of liberation recognizes that “...the earth is also skin and that a young girl can legitimately take possession of a street, or an entire city, albeit on different terms than we may be familiar with.”⁹⁴ Diversifying our methods and research designs challenges the assumptions underlying the stability of space in the nation-state. With this research perspective, the possibilities that these same spaces make tangible begin to appear.⁹⁵ Citizenship need not only be associated with the hard labor of demanding gender equality from the state. Instead, the bodies of Sahar and Nasim are also “speaking to and across the world” with a different vision altogether that includes a lightness and a floating through air that the modern nation-state system cannot contain and that we have yet to fully explore.⁹⁶

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STATE REPRESSION AND ACTIVIST ORGANIZING IN INFORMAL SPACES: COMPARING FEMINIST MOVEMENTS IN EGYPT AND IRAN

By Erika Biagini & Paola Rivetti

A decade since the so called “Arab Spring”, women’s success in advancing demands for gender change in the region is mixed. While the general consensus is that patriarchal regimes have been destabilized and things cannot go back as they were before,⁹⁷ in many countries we witnessed the resurgence of authoritarianism and state violence, which challenge women activists and movements

wanting to advance reforms.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, protests continue to erupt in the region, as witnessed in Sudan, Lebanon, Iran and Iraq, among others, and women, their mobilization and demands continue to be relevant to them. How do we explain women’s ability to mobilize in contexts of authoritarianism and state violence, and where are we to look to capture the continuum of women’s protest activities and claims?

Building on our previous work,⁹⁹ we are interested in explaining what happens to women’s and feminist social movements when MENA authoritarian regimes repress them. We compare the Muslim Sisterhood (henceforth Sisterhood) in Egypt after the 2013 repression of Islamists and the progressive, pro-democracy activists for women’s rights in Iran since the repression of the 2009 Green Movement and the 2013 election of President Hassan Rouhani. Our contention is that when state repression causes movements’ fragmentation, marginalized activists find in informal spaces a more functional venue to sustain their activism and demands. Informal spaces, which we define as venues where activism is non-mediated by the formal leadership of an organization, explain how cycles of protests survive authoritarianism, allowing mobilizations to re-emerge as more favourable opportunities materialize again. This also explains the long history of protesting and political organizing in the region, of which the 2011 uprisings were just one peak.¹⁰⁰ This note is based on our individual research work in Egypt (2013-2018) and Iran (2015-2019) with women’s activists of both movements. While substantial parts of both works are published, this is the first attempt at a comparative analysis.

The Egyptian Muslim Sisterhood

In Egypt, women's demands for greater emancipation in the Muslim Brotherhood (henceforth Brotherhood) movement emerged more prominently in the 1990s,¹⁰¹ when Mubarak-led liberalization created opportunities for Islamists to participate politically, fostering internal debates for greater pluralism and democratic reforms.¹⁰² While challenged, the senior leaders prevented genuine reforms from happening and successfully marginalized progressive activists, including women's claims. Consequently, like their male counterparts, more progressive Sisters found alternative venues outside the organization to advance their gender agenda. Mona, a Sister who had joined the Brotherhood in college during the 1990s and was active in *da'wa* at the time of interview, recounted that during her college years the Sisters were very active on university campuses to encourage women's political participation.

During weekly university meetings, they relied on the writings of Muslim reformers such as Abd al-Halim Muhammed Abu Shiqqa's book "The Liberation of Women at the Age of the Message" (*Tahrir al-Mar'a fi Asr al-Risala*), to promote women's involvement in society from an Islamic standpoint. After completing college, Mona continued to be active in *da'wa* and to use Abu Shiqqa's writings as part of the educational (*tarbyia*) material she used with the Sisters attending *da'wa* meetings in her district.¹⁰³ To be sure, not all the Sisters in the 1990s endorsed the call for reforms; rather, many Sisters, and particularly those belonging to the earlier generations, continued to espouse conservative gender views, epitomised in women's primary role within the family sphere. However, it is important to highlight that the Sisters too were part of the reformist trend that

emerged in the Brotherhood in the 1990s, not only as recipients but also as promoters of emancipatory ideas. In the 2000s, the Internet and social media also became important venues for young activists, women included, to vocalize criticism of the Brotherhood leadership and demand change.¹⁰⁴ Thus, the emergence of political opportunity and informal spaces grew hand in hand, and both were important to sustain the activism of progressive Brotherhood fringes encountering the senior leaderships' resistance to change.

Demands for greater equality and opportunities within the Sisterhood grew stronger after the 2011 Egyptian uprising, which caused the delegitimization of the Brotherhood's traditional, nepotistic and hierarchical culture.¹⁰⁵ Senior Brotherhood leaders took advantage of electoral victories to fully marginalize progressive activists and their demands. Therefore, while after 2011, women enjoyed increased agency, political participation and leadership, only those women aligned to the conservative leadership were allowed to do so in the formal political offices and institutions the Brotherhood controlled.¹⁰⁶ Back then, many young male activists left the Brotherhood or were expelled by the senior leaders. Among women, defections also took place, but in a very limited number when compared to male members. Many of those Sisters who held grievances towards the leadership decided instead to use women-only spaces, such as women-gatherings and Brotherhood camps for women, to exercise greater freedoms, roles and leadership denied to them in the movement. For instance, with the support of reformist oriented senior Sisters, young female members introduced changes to the Sisterhood dress-code and lobbied to elect female district leaders of their choice, previously selected by the male leadership.

In 2013, the repression of Islamists severely damaged the Brotherhood's organization and leadership structure. With most male leaders either in jail, abroad or killed, women and their activism became instrumental to the Brotherhood's mobilization¹⁰⁷ and survival. While mobilizing in support of the movement, some Sisters also took the opportunity of increased leadership to make women's voices heard at the highest echelons of the Brotherhood movement. Against Brotherhood orders, younger Sisters self-organized and established independent movements such as Ultras-Banat and Bint al-Tawra, advancing partially independent agendas and challenging the Brotherhood's gender code. Women's direct experience of state-led violence, including gender based violence, also emboldened more radical demands among the young activists. These demands centred on bodily integrity and autonomy, and thus directly challenged the Brotherhood's discourse on women's modesty and respectability. It was then that more radical elements among the Sisters suffered the first significant wave of punitive purges from the Brotherhood leadership. By 2015, the Brotherhood re-established a leadership structure, largely from abroad and thanks to media channels and online platforms, regaining some control over its base. Then, the Brotherhood resorted to traditional patriarchal tools to silence and discipline those women critics of the leadership and who refused to abandon street activism, expelling some of them from the movement or tarnishing the reputation.

By 2016, protracted repression and the absence of men had placed extra burdens on women's shoulders, leading to their demobilization. Furthermore, the Brotherhood believed that under such circumstances, women could best support the movement by playing their traditional role in the family, promoting *da'wa* and

sustaining the prisoners and their families. Most Sisters agreed that their family role was crucial to rebuild a strong movement and willingly redirected their efforts to this sphere. However, my fieldwork in Egypt (2017-2018) also revealed that those Sisters who had been most active in advancing a reformist agenda for women since 2011, particularly young Sisters but not only, continue to bring forward their struggle for gender change from within informal spaces. Some of those senior Sisters active in *da'wa* are currently revisiting the Brotherhood's curricula for women to promote a more moderate and pluralist interpretation of women and their role, while working to retain young members into the movement. Some Ultras-Banat and Bint al-Tawra activists enrolled in professional educational programmes to formalise the skills they gained while engaging in post-2011 activism, to build a life outside the Brotherhood. While men's absence adds to women's workload and responsibilities at home, a newfound sense of autonomy in that sphere led some Sisters to advance a critique of the patriarchal family, established on male privileges and authority. Furthermore, amid state repression, the Internet allows likeminded activists to share experiences, create a sense of community and re-build activist networks, particularly between those still in Egypt and those who fled abroad.

Thus, in absence of formal organizational structures and opportunities for political participation, current and former Sisters rely on informal spaces to bring forward their activism. Oftentimes, their ideas appear more radical as they challenge the Brotherhood's dominant heteropatriarchal gender regime, thus highlighting the connection between marginalization, violence and the emergence of radical feminist identities in hierarchical movements operating in constraining political environments.

Pro-democracy feminist activism in Iran

In the case of Iran, a similar pattern can be observed in junction with the different orientations that the regime and the government have taken up, shifting between repression and selective toleration of women's activism. During the 1990s and early 2000s, the so-called "reformist" governments engineered a more liberal political and public sphere, crafting opportunities for women's visibility and activism. This engendered expectations in terms of participation and autonomy among women activists at large. As the government became frustrated by such expectations for fear that they would translate into demands bypassing what the government was willing or able to deliver, women advancing more far-reaching demands were pushed into informality. The government's refusal of women's demands caused more radical feminist identities and activism to emerge, which went beyond the politics of institutional reforms it supported. An example of such feminist politics was the One Million Signature (OMS) campaign, which demanded pro-women changes in family and personal law, and emerged out of feminist grassroots initiatives, bringing a number of diverse feminist and women's groups together. One activist with the campaign reminds that "I used to go to *bassij*¹⁰⁸ barracks and ask them if they wanted to sign up for the campaign! Can you imagine? (...) we were so brazen!"¹⁰⁹ Such brazenness was the result of a decade of limited toleration for women's activism, which emboldened the activists. The campaign soon fell to state repression, but the activists could continue to rely on this pre-existing network and know-how to continue organizing politically after the OMS was disbanded. Hailing from informal spaces of activism helped women survive state violence and work in the lead-up to the 2009 presidential election and

subsequent political crisis. In June 2009, as Ahmadinejad was re-elected as president, millions of Iranians protested the electoral result and denounced fraud. The protests – which came to be known as the Green Movement – lasted for months and were suppressed with brutality by the state.

As interactions with activists in Iran suggest,¹¹⁰ following the repression of 2009-2010, activists, including feminists, took refuge in activities such as research and education, avoiding public protesting as a strategy of action. Mass incarceration and emigration had put many activists in danger, and those who survived the wave of repression were struggling to re-build their network and recover from the trauma of the violence experienced. Informal spaces became a hub to re-create networks under the label of cultural activities. On university campuses, students organized conferences, seminars and other initiatives about women's political history, along with research-action initiatives aimed to work with women of diverse class and ethnic background. While before 2009 informal feminist activism was strong enough to supersede institutional reformism as the "real politics of change," after 2009 informal spaces were reduced in size and scope but still ensured the survival of a discourse of change alternative to state reformism. Informal spaces were also healing spaces for those affected by the 2009-2010 repression. The Internet also provided feminists with an alternative to offline activism, considered dangerous. While online activists are also at risk of persecution, online spaces allowed them to partially "free" themselves from close state surveillance, strengthening ties with the diaspora which grew bigger after the 2009 repression, and continuing their work to raise gender and feminist awareness. Manata, who has been involved in the campaign about women's right to access sport stadiums, is quite open

about the depression she suffered after 2009. As all her activist friends were either incarcerated or had to leave Iran, she found herself alone and in constant fear of retaliation by the state. At the same time, however, she also reflects that such a situation of isolation allowed her to start campaigning on her own, enjoying a degree of freedom and autonomy unknown to her. She improved her computer skills and proactively made contacts with international sport organizations, working to popularize the campaign.¹¹¹

The election of Rouhani in 2013 did not alleviate the risks connected to feminist activism, in spite of the electoral promise to do so. Agitating in online or offline informal spaces, portions of Iranian feminists' focus shifted from a liberal women's rights agenda towards adopting an intersectional analysis of state-enforced gender regimes and capitalism. This is an extremely significant change of ideological orientation from the mainstream liberal feminism dominant in the 2000s. It took place because of the fragmentation and marginalization of the women's movement, which found itself with a more diffused structure and leadership, thus allowing for ideological renovation. Such unbowed feminist discourse and the sparse, yet persistent, women-led protesting prepared the terrain for the 2017-2020 protest cycle. Defiant and radical acts by the so-called Girls of Enqelab Street, who publicly took off their *hejab*, and less performative activism such as educational initiatives and online campaigning,¹¹² have been part of the movements taking to the street in 2017-2020. This highlights the relevance of informal and online spaces as incubators of dissent and as avenues where the link between marginalization, state violence and radical politics takes place and it is strengthened.

Marginalization, Informal Spaces and Radical Politics

Our case studies suggest that informal spaces are important to the emergence and resilience of feminist demands and organizing in both the presence and absence of political opportunities. They however acquire a greater significance in times of state repression, when violence causes the fragmentation of activist groups, thus causing marginalized fringes to rely on informal spaces to sustain their networks and demands, building on strategies and resources they availed of in times of political opportunity. This dynamic is observed beyond feminist activism and the MENA.¹¹³ There is however a specific gender dimension to our case studies, because feminist activism remain dangerous in patriarchal MENA societies and Islamist movements, often causing women to be severely targeted by MENA authoritarian states and male conservative Islamist leaders. The longitudinal perspective we adopted on women's movements working for gender change in highly patriarchal MENA regimes, reveals a double shift has taken place in terms of women's space and demands, whereby activists' demands become more radical as opposed to conciliatory or reform-oriented when confronted with the exclusionary and *divide et impera* politics of authoritarianism, and where informal spaces act as incubators for cycles of feminist activism and mobilization.

While in Egypt a women's movement for internal Brotherhood reforms emerged prior to 2013 but was tamed by the conservative leadership, the 2013 repression of Islamists led to its radicalization, causing women to advance a critique of the Brotherhood's gender regime that challenged the very nature of the patriarchal family, a pillar of the movement's identity politics.

Similarly in Iran, while women's activists are more likely to raise demands for reforms in periods of political opportunities, their demands radicalize in times of repression. As one activist noted,¹¹⁴ this dynamic is not necessarily positive for social movements because it increases the individualization of activism, thus making the goal of overcoming fragmentation more difficult. While informality and the absence of a strong leadership allow for more freedom and autonomy, the strength of the demands for change put forth by social movements necessarily weakens. Albeit resulting into little actual change, the electoral campaign and election of the moderate Rouhani in 2013 reignited some hope. The partial opening up of the opportunity structure for gender reform activists has led to the emergence of campaigns oriented to institutional change, such as the one aiming at increasing the number of women elected in Parliament in 2016, along with more radical and persisting demands and actions oriented to gender justice as part of a broader agenda for social justice. Such demands and persuasions were powerfully expressed both on the Internet and in the streets, like seen repeatedly in 2017-2020.

A second trend we see recurrent in both cases is the increasing significance of the Internet and social media for activist networking and the diffusion of campaigns in repression and post-repression times, as the scholarship on the Arab Uprisings highlighted.¹¹⁵ As public and private spaces for mobilization and civil society campaigns falls under increasing securitization by authoritarian regimes, social media platforms and the Internet provide activists with a tool to stay informed, regroup and share ideas. This is true also for movements that adopt a strong surveillance of their members, like the Brotherhood. While authoritarian regimes

have invested resources to maximize the surveillance of the cyber realm –an indication of the importance of cyber activism in the region– and arrest cyber activists, the Internet still remains more difficult for states to systematically control; it requires states to invest in new infrastructures and capabilities rather than relying on repressive security service apparatuses they have spent decades to perfect. As such, the Internet offers activists in exile and fragmented movements a platform to reunite and voice dissent, explaining how activist networks survive repression and fragmentation, and diffuse campaigns.

While the informalization of activism is common among activists working on a diverse set of topics, we want to emphasize that the cycle of repression, marginalization, informality and radicalization has a gender dimension to it. Feminist activists are often more subjected to exclusionary politics because of the very nature of feminist work, seen as more threatening of the *status quo*. It follows that feminist analysis of contentious politics in the region will benefit from paying attention to informal venues of activism, beyond lobbying and campaigning for more women into positions of power.

Building on this, we suggest three directions for future research. First, we invite scholars to investigate the potential of online activism for feminist work and gender change in the region. Second, more theorization about the difference between formal and informal activism would be extremely relevant to scholars examining MENA social movements. Third, more engagement with feminist intersectional analysis in the region will help moving beyond the current focus on women's rights and towards a more comprehensive research perspective able to analyze the implications of non-binary gender identities, labour and class, race/ethnicity, queerness

and their multiple intersections, for anti-patriarchal political organizing.

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WHY AUTOCRATS ADOPT WOMEN'S RIGHTS: THE CASE OF MOROCCO

By Aili Mari Tripp

Why have the three Maghreb countries, Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, passed more extensive constitutional and legislative reforms regarding women's rights than other Middle Eastern countries, especially since 2000?¹¹⁶ The Moroccan case offers some explanations for why non-democratic governments adopt women's rights. The Islamist Party for Justice and Development (Parti de la justice et du développement, PJD), which has been in power since 2011 at the helm of a coalition government, has made major legislative and constitutional reforms in women's rights. This represented a sea change in its orientation towards women's rights. Morocco, nevertheless, remains a non-democratic country ranked as partly free by Freedom House.¹¹⁷ This essay (which is also based on research in Tunisia and Algeria), draws on over 130 interviews conducted in Morocco between 2015 and 2016 with leaders and members of a variety of Islamist, feminist, and Amazigh women's rights organizations, members of parliament, women's ministry representatives; academics; journalists; and representatives of donor and UN agencies.

Maghreb countries have made advances especially with constitutional provisions regarding women and work, political

representation, gender equality, discrimination against women, and gender-based violence when compared with most Middle East countries. They passed legislation regarding quotas both at the national and municipal/regional levels, sexual harassment, the prohibition of the marriage of victims to their rapist, nationality issues, violence against women, abortion, contraception, polygyny, and family law more generally. Some explanations focus almost entirely on the role of the women's movement and women in the judiciary (2009, 2017). Others have argued that women gained broader civil rights in countries with unitary legal systems.¹¹⁸

The adoption of unified legal systems and unified laws in the Maghreb at the time of independence helps account, in part, for the greater ease with which women's rights policies have been adopted in these countries compared to the Middle East. If one looks beyond the Maghreb, one finds that Iraq and Kuwait also have unified laws and a unified court system, and Libya, Yemen, Oman and Egypt have unified courts (but not unified laws). Yet none of these countries has made the same types of gains found in the Maghreb with respect to women's rights. Thus, the adoption of unified courts and laws may be a necessary but not sufficient condition for advancing women's rights.

I argue that Morocco (and the other Maghreb countries) made gains in women's rights as a result of four key factors: pressure from women's movements, close cooperation between women's movements in the three countries (Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco), support from King Mohammed VI, and the domestic interests of the ruling Islamist parties.

Existing Explanations

Much of the literature focuses on the obstacles to women's rights reforms. For Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, it is the prohibitive mix of Islam and autocracy that stands in the way of women's rights.¹¹⁹ Jocelyne Cesari suggests that the deficit of women's rights in Muslim countries is tied to religiously based legislation, particularly in countries that have a hegemonic religion where the state elevates a certain religious group with exclusive legal, economic or political rights and denies these rights to other religions.¹²⁰ Usually this is a dominant religion. Dawood I. Ahmed and Moamen Gouda (2015) similarly argue that the more constitutions in Muslim-majority countries are Islamicized, the less they adhere to women's rights, and the less democratic and politically stable they are.¹²¹

While agreeing that most Islamic countries are governed by authoritarian regimes and women's status is worse in Islamic countries than in others, Daniela Donno and Bruce Russett find these patterns to be more likely in Arab countries, not Islamic countries.¹²² They also argue that these types of relationships are fluid and point out that Catholic countries at one time used to be even more likely to be authoritarian than Islamic ones, yet this had changed by 1980. Another cross-national study conducted by Mala Htun and Laurel Weldon argue that the adoption of family law that upholds women's rights depends on whether religion is institutionalized in the state as doctrine.¹²³ Mounira Charrad's rich and detailed study of women's rights reforms in the Maghreb focuses on the importance of state autonomy from kinship groups in explaining Tunisia's early women's rights reforms.¹²⁴

With a few exceptions, many of these studies do not explain why there is so much variance

among Muslim majority and authoritarian countries over time when it comes to women's rights.

I argue that Morocco (and the other Maghreb countries) made gains in women's rights as a result of four key factors. The first was pressure from women's movements, which intervened at critical junctures after a change of leadership and major social upheaval. In the case of Morocco, a key critical juncture was the coming to power of King Mohammed VI, which initially saw the passage of the 2004 *Moudawana* or family law reforms. Later the *Vingt février* movement in 2011, Morocco's version of the Arab Uprising, was followed by the adoption of a new constitution, which increased women's rights provisions particularly regarding women's political participation.

The second factor for women's rights adoption is diffusion and close cooperation between women's movements in the three countries (Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco), which explains the coincidence of the passage of many laws at the same time. The Collectif maghreb-égalité 95 was formed in 1991 by activists and researchers from Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia to coordinate activities leading up to the United Nations Fourth Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. They plotted a strategy for bringing about gender equality in the region, drawing on their commonalities of history, language, and civilization to forge unity. They outlined an agenda which they have followed ever since.

A third factor was pressure from the King Mohammed VI, who has capitalized on his religious authority, yet at the same time has positioned himself as a modernizer and placed women's rights at the center of his agenda for Morocco. He used women's rights to keep extremist elements at bay. And

finally, the ruling Islamist parties in Morocco, adopted women's rights reforms for domestic purposes of political expediency and survival in order to stay in power and stay in the good graces of the king. As a result, there has been an almost 180-degree change in the stated policies of the PJD with respect to women's rights since they became head of the governmental coalition.

The PJD and Women's Rights

I would like to focus on one of these four factors in more depth. The PJD is an Islamist party that is often compared to Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development (AKP) party in Turkey. It also has an affinity to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. It is the only Islamist party in the Arab world that has survived a full term in office and been re-elected with a larger majority.¹²⁵ In a country where the King holds enormous power, the party has been able to navigate a pragmatic course that has afforded it some independence, while making sufficient concessions to the win the trust of the palace.

After the bombings by jihadists in Casablanca in 2003, the PJD became more conciliatory, publicly denouncing terrorism and religious extremism and highlighting its support for the king and democracy. The PJD separated from its religious movement (Harakat al-Tawhid wal-Islah, the MUR) and called for a separation of politics from religion, resulting in the secularization of the party.¹²⁶ The MUR's leadership was increasingly pressuring the party not to work with the left and was beginning to question the authority of the king. The PJD has also learned by watching the fate of Islamist parties that veered too far from the sentiments of the population, the military, or those in power in Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt.

By 2011, after the elections, the PJD became head of a governmental coalition. The party, which had at one time issued fatwas against women's rights organizations supporting the PSC, dramatically changed its orientation toward women's rights, albeit reluctantly, in response to pressure from the king, but also from the women's movement, donors, and from a sense that this was necessary in order to stay in power. This is evident in the quantity of legislation passed after 2011 and in changes in rhetoric.

Since 2011, PJD has supported the adoption of an electoral quota in 2011, which allowed for an increase in women's representation in parliament, from women holding 10.5% of the seats in 2007 to 17% in 2011. As a result of heavy pressure from women's organizations, Article 475 of the Penal Code, which protected a rapist from prosecution if he married his victim, was repealed in 2012, making Morocco one of the first countries in the MENA region to repeal this law. Other legislation around migration, domestic workers, a Finance Act, trafficking, has also addressed women's rights concerns.

The government passed a series of amendments to the country's Penal Code, which in the past only allowed abortion if the mother's health was threatened (Art. 453). The new amendment allowed for abortion in cases of rape, incest and fetal impairment. After strong pressure from women's organizations, a major law 103-13 on the Elimination of Violence Against Women was passed in 2018. Efforts to get this law passed under a coalition led by a secular party, Istiqlal, in 2004 had failed.

Various institutional measures were also adopted, including the creation of an independent Authority for Parity and the Fight Against All Forms of Discrimination to oversee the implementation of constitutional

provisions regarding discrimination of women. Two long-term policies were adopted by the Ministry of Family, Solidarity, Equality, and Social Development, in collaboration with various ministries to promote women's rights and parity known as the Government Plan for Equality: ICRAM I (2012–2016) and then ICRAM II (2017–2021).

The PJD changed its position on women's rights, but the process was far from linear. When the PJD came into power in 2011, the symbolic politics of women's clothes was one of the first ways in which the new Prime Minister, Abdelilah Benkirane, sought to reassure the country as well as foreign investors about the nature of his administration. He said that he would not force women to dress modestly.¹²⁷

However, other statements he made regarding women drew criticism. In 2014, Benkirane in a parliamentary speech said that homes were now dark because women, who had once been like chandeliers lighting up their homes and raising their children, were now working outside the home. Benkirane's comments immediately triggered fiery protests on the part of women's rights activists and other parties, many of whom protested in front of the parliament. The incident revealed deep divisions within the party itself. Benkirane's successor, Saad Eddine El Othmani, who took over as prime minister in 2017, adopted a tone that was different from his predecessor. In his speeches was keen to underscore that the question of women was at the heart of the government's concerns. He highlighted the constitutional provisions for the establishment of the principle of parity between men and women, the king's focus on the importance of the role of women in society, as well as the kingdom's international commitments, in particular

international gender equality treaty, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Conclusions

This article has argued, drawing on the case of Morocco, that leaders in the Maghreb used women's rights internally to drive a wedge between themselves and Islamist extremists and externally to paint an image of their countries as modernizing. Ruling political parties used these tactics, especially at times when their rule was threatened and they needed political support to remain in power. It should be noted that at the same time, women's movements — often in the face of a perceived threat of losing gains — heightened their activities, especially during critical junctures, such as changes in power or moments of societal unrest, to expand their influence and advocate for change. They networked within the region and beyond and used these ties to build their strategies at home. The strategic interaction between the king, women's movements, the PJD and other political parties, and religious movements in Morocco conspired to produce the outcomes we see today in the adoption of women's rights reforms.

To the feminists in Morocco, the changes described here are a far cry from what is required, but as this piece has shown, they reflect a significant change from the past. It should be pointed out that in spite of these advances in legislative and policy reform; there are still important limitations on the actual realization of these rights. These formal changes are only a first step. Without adequate measures to see that they are realized, many of these reforms can only benefit women with means.¹²⁸

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IMPLICATIONS OF ISLAMIST RULE FOR WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN TURKEY*

By Gamze Cavdar

Do Islamist governments harm women's educational and professional opportunities? Previous scholarship suggests no consistent trend when it comes to the impacts of Islamist rule on women. For instance, Lisa Blaydes finds that an urban neighborhood run by the Islamic Group (*al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya*) in Egypt produced better health outcomes for women compared to another neighborhood that shared many characteristics except for the Islamist rule.¹²⁹ But elsewhere Blaydes and Drew Linzer argue that "fundamentalist ideologies" favor "men over women in employment and education opportunities".¹³⁰ Erik Meyersson notes that "Islamic mayors led to higher female participation in both education as well as politics".¹³¹ Lindsay Benstead demonstrates that female citizens in Algeria are more likely to approach Islamist politicians than non-Islamist ones—especially at the local level.¹³²

Islamist movements and parties show great variation among themselves and their ideology evolves over time resulting in no single "Islamist position" on gender. Janine Clark and Jillian Schwedler demonstrate that the largest Islamist groups in Jordan and Yemen, despite their initial opposition to women's full and equal participation, ended up having women representatives in their highest decision-making bodies more than any other parties in their respective countries.¹³³ Thus, determining whether Islamist governance impacts women's employment requires a highly-contextualized examination of employment trends by gender in a particular case and at a particular time.

This essay examines the employment trends for both women and men under the Party of Justice and Development Party's (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*-AKP) rule in Turkey since 2002. The case of AKP is significant because of its long experience in government, which allows researchers to examine trends over time. In the broader Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, examples of Islamist political parties winning the national elections and forming majority governments are limited: Islamists are either active at the local level, as in the case of Hezbollah of Lebanon, or when they come to power at the national level, their experience is short-lived, as in the cases of *al-Nahda* of Tunisia and the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*) of Egypt.¹³⁴ The AKP is unique as it has remained in government since 2002 by winning all national and local elections and forming majority governments.

My book, *Women in Turkey: Silent Consensus between Neoliberalism and Islamic Conservatism* (co-authored with Yavuz Yaşar) examines the trends in employment, education and health care by gender in Turkey since the early 2000s by using both quantitative and qualitative data collected during the fieldwork.¹³⁵ This essay focuses on the employment trends by utilizing the micro-data with over half a million people based on the Household Surveys conducted by the Turkish Statistical Institute (*Türk İstatistik Enstitüsü—TÜİK*) between 2003 and 2016. The micro-data I obtained during my fieldwork in Ankara, Turkey, not typically available to the public, enabled me to disaggregate categories and make new analyses. As an analytical framework, the analysis relies on the theoretical insights of the feminist political economy (FPE). Apart from having a normative commitment to gender equality, Feminist Political Economy typically focuses on the material that directly

affects the lives of men and women, and emphasizes both the production that mainly takes place in the market and the reproduction that occur at home. The latter refers to care giving and domestic activities, such as cooking, cleaning, caring for children, elderly, and the sick and disabled, etc.; the type of unrecognized and unappreciated activities mostly performed by women—either through paid or unpaid labor.

This micro-data shows that women’s overall employment figures increased during the period of AKP rule under examination, an objective pursued by the AKP from its early years. The types of jobs created, however, mostly fall under the category of informal, part-time and unpaid family work as opposed to the full-time employment with benefits. These jobs are often irregular, seasonal, low-paying, and they often come with no benefits or job security. The government policies behind these trends were primarily shaped by neoliberalism and Islamic conservatism. While deepening, expanding and institutionalizing neoliberalism, the AKP pursued a two-folded policy regarding employment; they encouraged female employment while also calling to preserve women’s traditional roles as housewives and domestic caregivers. These two contradictory objectives were made possible through the implementation of neoliberal principles, such as the promotion of female entrepreneurship and flexible market conditions. Thus, women might bake in their own kitchens to sell their products in the farmer’s market or work part-time online, neither of which disrupts their “primary” roles as caregivers and homemakers.¹³⁶ The implications of these findings are significant because these trends worsen the wage gap, gender segregation and female poverty, while also leaving women reliant on public and private welfare transfers at a much faster rate than men,

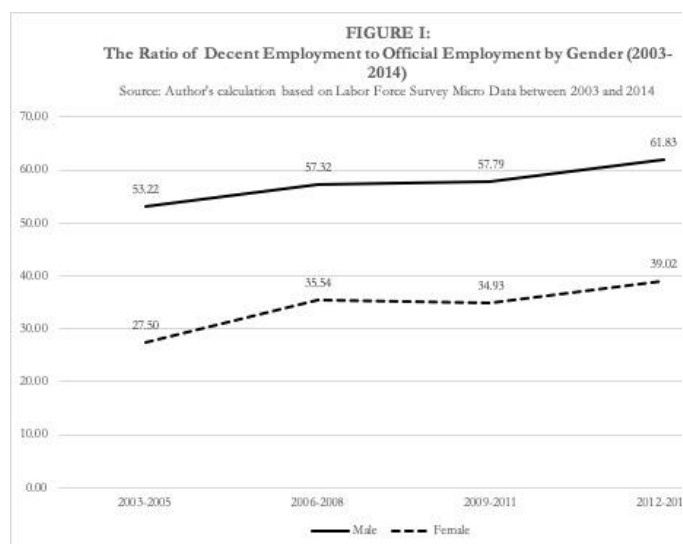
which makes them vulnerable for clientelist relations in return of political support.

EMPLOYMENT BY GENDER: QUALITY MATTERS

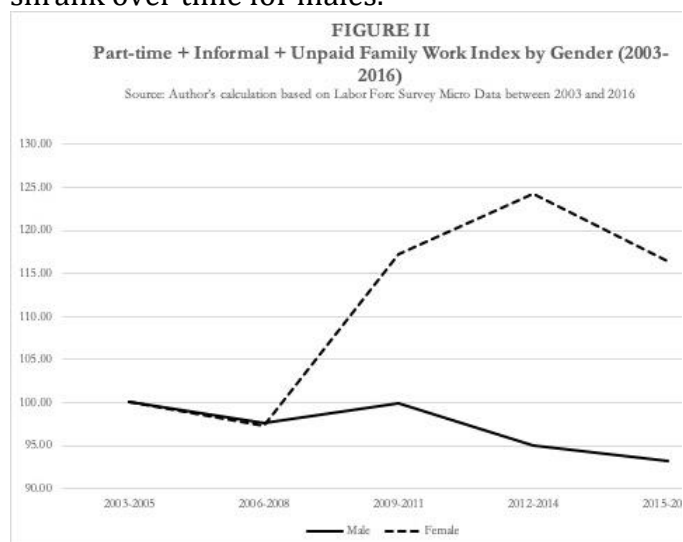
Female employment patters in Turkey follow the general trends in the broader MENA region:¹³⁷ The female employment rate has declined since the 1950s—Turkey’s female employment percentage is the lowest among the OECD countries—with rising education levels not resulting in higher labor force participation.¹³⁸ Under intense international pressure especially from the EU, the AKP laid out a plan¹³⁹ to increase female employment at the outset of its first government in 2002, and, to its credit, managed to increase it over time.¹⁴⁰

The micro-data of TÜİK allow me to disaggregate the statistics that are typically available to the public in their aggregated forms. I disaggregated the employment data by first creating a category of full time employment with benefits, which I call “decent employment”. The data show that decent employment numbers for males were significantly higher (about five times) than that of females for the 2003-2005 period. As an improvement, the difference got smaller over time—dropping to 3.7 times for the 2012-2014 period. FIGURE I reports the ratio of decent employment trends to official employment trends by gender. As FIGURE I demonstrates, between 2003 and 2014, the ratio of decent-to-official employment for males shrunk by about 3 percent per year, whereas the same ratio for females grew by about 3 percent per year. Nevertheless, the male advantage in decent employment continues to be the case today: The data show that out of the total official employment for males, 62 percent is decent, while out of total official employment for females, only 39 percent belongs to this category as of 2014.

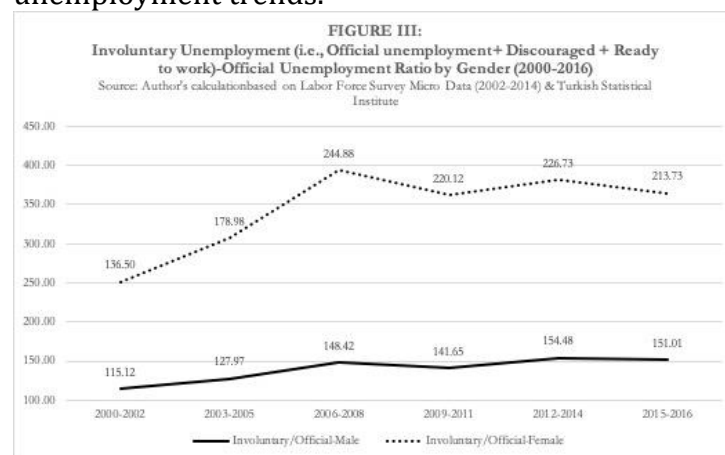
UNEMPLOYMENT BY GENDER: MORE WOMEN WISH TO BE EMPLOYED



As a second step in my analysis, I examined the remaining part of the “employed” category, which consists of part-time, informal and unpaid family work,¹⁴¹ shown in FIGURE II. This category shows a significant jump for females. It is not only that the female employment in this type of low-paying, irregular and insecure jobs have grown exponentially, it is also that this exponential growth is unique to females—in fact, the number of this type of work has shrank over time for males.



I also examined the unemployment data by gender. Official unemployment data exclude these two groups of people: 1) those who state that they are not actively searching for jobs but they are “ready to work”; 2) “discouraged workers”, who gave up on searching for jobs and left the labor market. I added these two to the official unemployment category and call them “involuntary unemployment”.¹⁴² As shown in FIGURE III, I have examined both official unemployment and the involuntary unemployment trends.



As FIGURE III demonstrates, the official unemployment numbers significantly underestimate the number of women who wish to be employed—much higher than that of males. In other words, more women than men who wish to work are not currently counted as “unemployed”. Furthermore, the involuntary unemployment has another gender dimension, which is that the figures have grown faster for women during the period under examination increasing the gap between the male and female unemployment. In other words, the percentage of females who wish to work is significantly higher now than it was in the 2000-2002 period while the increase in the male percentage is much smaller.

KEY QUESTION: WHO DOES THE DOMESTIC WORK?

The employment and unemployment trends above cannot be discussed without addressing the gender division of labor at home. This obvious relationship comes up in the surveys as well when women are asked why they are not seeking employment outside home. In the Household Budget Surveys by TÜİK, women who are identified as “housewives” typically respond that the main reason why they are not employed is because of the household responsibilities, such as raising children, and all other domestic work. While the belief that women belong home has deep socio-cultural roots and domestic work mostly being done by women is a global phenomenon,¹⁴³ public policies play a key role in reinforcing and legitimizing these beliefs or undermining and invalidating them. The government policies by the AKP mostly belongs to the former category.

The AKP aimed to promote women’s employment and was successful to some degree. It is not that the AKP calls for women to go back home or declares that women should not work outside the home. Rather, the government promotes women’s employment through legislative and administrative measures—mostly based on neoliberalism¹⁴⁴—so that women’s traditional roles are preserved. The government makes frequent references to Islam to legitimize its position. How the AKP has blended neoliberalism and Islamic conservatism regarding female employment can be seen in specific policies since 2002: 1) the legislative changes to adopt neoliberal principles, such as the promotion of flexible jobs; 2) the promotion of female entrepreneurship through training programs and low-interest loans; 3) the promotion of

vocational training; and 4) the emphasis on the primacy of family with references to Islam and national heritage.¹⁴⁵ Given that the first three policies are based on neoliberalism and the last one relies on Islamic conservatism, the AKP has left women’s employment to the mercy of the market and the patriarchal family structure.

Thus, for instance, women are openly encouraged to have “at least three children”¹⁴⁶ while no affordable childcare is provided for the working women. Given the highly patriarchal family structure, the childcare—let alone all other domestic work and care activities, such as the care of the elderly, the sick, the disabled, as well as the house maintenance—almost entirely falls on the shoulders of women. This makes working full time outside the home virtually impossible for lower class women—especially those with small children—while women from the higher classes subcontract the domestic work to other women through paid labor. Despite intense pressure from the women’s and LGBTQIA organizations that a separate ministry must be founded to commit to gender equity, the government resisted the idea and founded the Ministry of Family and Social Policy instead.¹⁴⁷ This further institutionalized the primacy of family and made women a subcategory of it.

The government rejects the possibility that the interest of the family and women might be different—let alone conflicting. The party leadership claims that their solution to female unemployment—that the women should do “double work”—is in fact a brilliant invention. Fatma Şahin, former Ministry of Family and Social Policy (2011-2013), proudly declares that “We pursue family-based policies for the children, disabled and women” and that this approach was unique to Turkey, a virtue lacking in the West.¹⁴⁸ Family values are lost during the

process of modernizing, and as a result Western societies face serious social problems, Şahin argues.¹⁴⁹ President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan strongly disagrees with the suggestion that women’s interests might be different from those of the family. He argues that implying that they might be separate “does not belong to our culture” nor can “the intention of this mentality” be considered “innocent.”¹⁵⁰

The net result is that women’s employment is often concentrated in certain sectors, such as textile and service; that women work either at home or somewhere nearby; that the workplace is often gender-segregated; that the work does not demand long hours so that their “primary roles” as wives and mothers are not disrupted; and that female poverty has increased. The types of jobs described here are typically low-paying and low-status jobs with little or no job security, and, as the COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us again, these are also the jobs that are easily eliminated. We do not know the full impacts of the pandemic on female employment yet—it is too early to tell. However, another crucial trend that stands out in the data is that female poverty levels have skyrocketed during the period under examination: Female poverty, measured by using in-kind and cash welfare transfers as a proxy, grew 8 percent per year between 2003 and 2016—as opposed to 2.4 percent for males. For the poorest of the population—measured as those whose personal income consisted of more than 50 percent welfare transfers—the picture gets even more unpleasant: While the percentage of females and males in this poorest segment of the population were close to each other in 2003, the percentage of poorest females grew twice as much compared to that of males.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

There are significant implications of this research for the broader MENA region. One implication is that the findings highlight the significance of social policy, ranging from childcare to poverty elimination measures to job creation for achieving some resemblance of gender equity. The pandemic’s long term impacts remain unknown. However, what is unequivocally clear is that the pandemic has created unprecedented demands on the domestic work that is disproportionately performed by women, such as childcare, homeschooling, caring for the sick, etc. Funding programs that provide social services in these areas is of utmost significance to women’s lives, especially now under the COVID-19 conditions and cannot be left at the mercy of the market or non-governmental organizations—religious or not. Future research should examine the impacts of the pandemic on women’s employment trends as well as the time use by gender in the MENA region.

Another implication of this research relates to the relationship between female poverty and clientelism. Scholarship has already demonstrated that poverty feeds clientelism especially in non-democratic settings and where informal networks are predominant. Islamists disproportionately benefit from these networks through which they approach women and build relationship based on trust and friendship. Indeed, the micro-data show that women have received public welfare transfers more than men during the same period.¹⁵¹ Future research should examine the relationship between voting patterns and welfare transfers and explore to what extent, if any, these transfers played a role in the women’s support for the AKP in the elections.

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GENDER STEREOTYPES AND WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN MENA

By Marwa Shalaby

Female underrepresentation in politics in the MENA has often been attributed to traditional socio-cultural norms that tend to favor male candidates; yet, few studies have systematically investigated the structure as well as the impact of such norms on female candidates' electability. While gender stereotypes may not be unique to the MENA region, I argue that understanding the way they shape voters' decisions is particularly relevant in less democratic contexts with weak or no political party support for female politicians. To bridge the aforementioned gap and better understand the implications of citizens' gender attitudes— especially those relating to gender stereotypes— this short paper explicates the relationship between gender stereotypes and voters' behavior using original survey data from Morocco (n=1200). The results show that voters are three times more likely to support female candidates who demonstrate competence in male-dominated policy areas, mainly the economy and terrorism. Female policy stereotypes also matter; women who are perceived as competent in areas of health and education are more likely to garner voters' support. Moreover, female candidates who exhibit male traits, such as assertiveness and ambition, are two times more likely to be supported by both male and female voters.

This memo is organized as follows. The first section provides a comparative lens on extant work on gender stereotypes in established democracies as well as the MENA region. The findings of the analysis are presented in the second section of the memo. It concludes with implications for female representation in MENA and direction for future research.

Why Do Gender Stereotypes Matter? A Comparative Perspective

Research on gender-based stereotypes in established democracies has flourished to better understand women's underrepresentation in politics.¹⁵² Scholars have differentiated between the role played by gender-trait (i.e., gender-linked personality traits) and gender-belief stereotypes (i.e., policy/issue stereotypes) on female candidates' electability.¹⁵³ According to this line of research, voters' perceptions of the feminine qualities of female candidates (i.e., compassion, affection, warmth) may negatively impact their electability as they may be deemed incongruent with the leadership traits most valued by voters.¹⁵⁴ Gender policy/issue stereotypes can also shape voters' choice as women are commonly perceived as more liberal, competent in family-related domains such as: education, health and welfare while males are more competent in issues pertinent to agriculture, economy, foreign policy, and defense. Thus, gender stereotypes can shape voters' behavior mainly through the negative and positive feelings that voters may have about the specific traits and issue competence of their candidates.¹⁵⁵ Party affiliation can also intersect with voters' gender stereotypes to determine vote choice.¹⁵⁶ Finally, gender stereotypes can be particularly important for activating preferences for female candidates in low information electoral settings.¹⁵⁷

Work on political gender stereotypes and their effect on citizens' voting decisions in non-democratic settings has been scarce. Despite the low numbers of women in MENA politics, only few studies have investigated voters' traits and issues' stereotypes toward male and female politicians and/or discerned the way political gender stereotypes shape citizens' voting behavior toward female candidates in transitioning contexts.

This is beginning to change, however. A recent study exploring the link between gender, religion and electability using a survey experiment in post-transitional Tunisia depicts significant gender biases against female candidates as religious voters—both males and females—tend to vote for religious female candidates.¹⁵⁸ Other work shows a significant gender gap in Libya, Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia in the electability of female candidates engaged in business-related careers compared to those engaged in civil-society organizations.¹⁵⁹ The authors attribute these variations to the fact that gender-based stereotypes always associate women as caring and “community oriented” that is more congruent to their roles within civil society organizations. Research also investigated the effect of gender- and leadership- congruent political platforms on support for female candidates in post-transitional Tunisia using survey experiments and find prevailing voters’ bias against female candidates, especially among those with patriarchal norms.¹⁶⁰ Voters also tend to favor candidates who emphasize issues congruent with stereotypes of political leadership, such as security. Finally, work explicating the link between mass attitudes toward female representation and perceived corruption in Lebanon demonstrate that support for women in politics is positively associated with citizens’ perceptions of corruption.¹⁶¹ The study confirms previous findings on the important role played by gender stereotypes as it shows that citizens who view female politicians as more trustworthy and ‘clean’ are more likely to express higher levels of support for women in politics.

Gender Stereotypes and Female Politicians in Morocco

To better understand the structure and the relationship between gender stereotypes and voters’ behavior, I conducted an original face-to-face survey of 1,200 respondents in Morocco. The survey was fielded in October 2017 with a nationally representative sample; a stratified multi-stage probability sample was implemented based on the 2014 housing and population census.

Morocco is a valuable case for this analysis given its progressive policies toward women, uninterrupted female political inclusion since early 2000s, and the long history of women’s movements as masterfully explicated in Tripp’s contribution to this volume. Morocco is also characterized by relatively strong political parties that have participated in relatively competitive national and local elections since independence from the French occupation.¹⁶² Parties compete for national seats under closed-list, proportional representation (PR) electoral system while local elections are administered using a combination of PR and single-member (SMD) systems. Yet, Moroccan women continue to be underrepresented in politics and face challenges to gain seats beyond the mandated quota system on both national and local levels.

Relatedly, deep-rooted gender biases continue to exist. For instance, more than 40 percent of the survey respondents either strongly agree or agree that men are better political leaders. However, our knowledge is limited when it comes to the determinants of mass attitudes toward women in politics, and particularly the effect of gender stereotypes on shaping voters’ decisions. To bridge this gap, the survey included questions that directly measure citizens’ gender stereotypes and their relationship to voting decisions.

Furthermore, to allow comparability with more democratic contexts, the questions used in this analysis are adapted from Dolan (2010) study on the effect of gender stereotypes on support for female candidates in the United States.¹⁶³ The results will not only allow us to gauge the structure and impact of stereotypes on voting behavior, but will also offer important comparative insights on variations across democratic and non-democratic contexts.

Table 1 presents the frequencies of the political gender stereotypes in Morocco. Respondents were asked whether they think that female/male in elected office would be better in handling education, terrorism, healthcare or the economy. To measure trait stereotypes, respondents were asked to evaluate male (i.e., assertiveness and ambition) and female (i.e., compassion and consensus-building) traits.

Table 1. Frequencies of Political Gender Stereotypes

In general, do you think men or women in elected office are better at: (n=1200)			
<i>Policy Stereotype</i>	Men %	No Difference	Women %
Education	25.11%	41.9%	33.7%
Terrorism	63.8%	28.1%	8.1%
Healthcare	13.9%	40.4%	45.7%
Economy	33.7%	49.4%	16.8%
When you think about political candidates and officeholders, do you think men or women would tend to have more...? (n=1200)			
<i>Trait Stereotype</i>	Men %	No Difference	Women %
Assertiveness	57.3%	28.2%	14.5%
Compassion	8.8%	16%	75.1%
Consensus building	30.4%	49.3%	20.3%
Ambition	20.8%	48.7%	30.5%

Starting with respondents' policy/issue stereotypes, data show that female politicians are perceived to be most competent in issues relating to healthcare while men are deemed better at handling terrorism. Yet, most respondents express no gender difference in handling education and the economy. Moreover, there are interesting variations in respondents' trait stereotypes for both male and female politicians/candidates. While the majority of respondents in Morocco perceive men as predominantly assertive, women are perceived as compassionate. Most respondents stated no gender difference in trait stereotype, such as consensus-building and ambition.

In the U.S. context, Dolan (2010) found that citizens perceive female politicians as better at education and healthcare, males as competent in issues relating to terrorism, and no gender difference in issues pertaining to the economy. Furthermore, consistent with data from Morocco, female politicians are mostly stereotyped as compassionate. However, most respondents stated no gender differences relating to assertiveness, consensus-building and ambition. What is remarkable about these results is the major commonalities between the two contexts when it comes to the personal characteristics and policy competencies expected from political leaders. Despite operating under autocratic rule, voters hold fairly similar expectations for their political leaders. I argue that these perceptions/expectations are particularly important in the MENA given the weak presence –and even absence – of political parties from the electoral arena in many parts of the region. Furthermore, as shown in a recent study, MENA has the highest percentage of countries with female candidates running as independents.¹⁶⁴ Thus, understanding these perceptions and the way

they shape voters' decisions are crucial for female political advancement in the MENA.

Gender Political Stereotypes and Voting Behavior

While it is imperative to understand how citizens perceive male and female candidates and politicians, it is equally important to discern the effect of stereotypes on voting decisions and whether such evaluations further contribute to female marginalization in politics. There is considerable debate among gender and politics scholars on the extent to which gender stereotypes affect voter decision-making.¹⁶⁵ In the U.S. context, research has shown that trait stereotypes play a marginal role in shaping mass support for female politicians. Contrastingly, views on policy stereotypes are essential for understanding mass support for female candidates, especially views relating to stereotypically male issues.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, emphasizing traits that align with leadership tend to provide female candidates with a boost on masculine issues and promote their electability.¹⁶⁷

To better gauge the role of political gender stereotypes in shaping citizens' preference for female candidates in autocratic settings; I conduct a baseline logistic regression analysis model as well as a fully estimated model that includes the four different stereotypes: **Female Policy, Female Trait, Male Policy** and **Male Trait**. The dependent variable in both models is the likelihood of voting for a female candidate.¹⁶⁸

The baseline model includes respondents' ideological orientation (left/right scale), age, gender, education, marital status, and region. The full model includes the previous variables as well as the four political gender stereotypes constructed based on extant research on gender stereotypes. Female

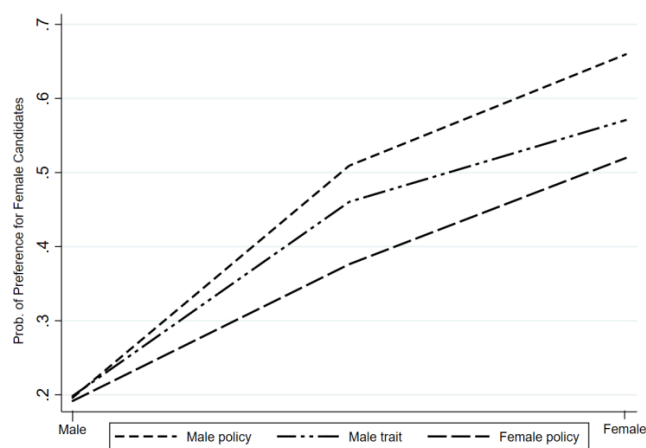
policy variable is the combination of both education and healthcare issue areas; female traits are compassion and consensus-building; male policy areas are terrorism and economy while male traits are assertiveness and ambition.¹⁶⁹ Each stereotype is coded as 1 if the respondent perceives men as better in the issue or more likely to uphold the trait; 2 if they think there is no difference between men and women; and 3 if they think women are better at the issue or more likely to have the trait. The results of the logit model show that female policy, male policy, as well as male traits stereotypes, play a strong role in shaping voters' preferences for a female candidate. Respondents' gender and ideological orientation are also significant.¹⁷⁰ Expectedly, females as well as unmarried and more liberal respondents are more likely to support female candidates compared to more conservative ones. Female traits stereotypes, age, education and region (i.e., urban or rural) play a less significant role when it comes to respondents' voting decisions.

Figure 1 presents the predicted probabilities of citizens' preference for a female candidate as a function of their stereotypes evaluations. It shows the probabilities for political gender stereotypes: female policy, male policy and male trait. Starting with female policy, respondents who see men as better at female policy issues (education and health care) are .20 more likely to prefer the woman over the man. However, for those who see women as better at female policy areas, the probability of supporting the woman increases to .52

Male trait stereotypes (often associated with male leadership qualities) are also important for female electability. Respondents who believe that women possess the male traits (assertiveness and ambition) are .57 more likely to support the female candidate compared to only .21 among those who believe that males possess these traits.

Importantly, respondents who see women as better in male policy stereotypes (economy and terrorism) are .67 more likely to support a female over male candidate. The probability of supporting a woman if males are perceived as better in the male policy areas is merely .22. Support for female candidates almost triples when citizens' perceive them as more competent in handling the economy and terrorism.

Figure 1. The Probability of Support for Female Candidates and Gender Stereotypes



Summary and Future Direction

The results show that voters tend to view candidates from a gendered perspective, and that political gender stereotypes play a major role in shaping citizens' voting decisions in autocratic settings—mainly Morocco. This short paper demonstrates that male policy and trait stereotypes play the most significant roles in shaping citizens' decisions to support female candidates. Female policy stereotypes also matter; women who are perceived as competent in areas of health and education are more likely to garner voters' support. Consistent with extant research in democratic settings, female traits are less significant when it comes to voters' decisions. Voters are less likely to support

women who conform to feminine traits as they view these qualities as incongruent with the most desired leadership traits. In other words, while voters may uphold traditional views regarding the role of women in politics— and society more generally— they tend to penalize female candidates who are unable to demonstrate leadership traits (often associated with male candidates). Consistent with extant work in more established democracies, women in Morocco seem to have more success in garnering voters' support if they place enough emphasis in their electoral campaigns and other interactions with voters on male-dominated policy areas and assuring the public that they are equally qualified to handle the economy and security related domains.

This research has far-reaching implications for the study of gender, politics and electoral politics under authoritarianism and paves the way for further scholarship on the topic. Future work should pay closer attention to the effect of voters' ideology on gender stereotype formation and female electability in MENA. Candidate party affiliation (i.e., party stereotypes) can also intersect with candidates' gender stereotypes in shaping voters' perceptions. But what about contexts in MENA where political parties are banned or fragmented? How would this affect voters' perceptions/evaluations of female candidates? Furthermore, more work is needed on the effect of gender stereotypes across dissimilar electoral contexts (i.e., strong party systems and/or proportional representation rules and single-member voting). Finally, more work is needed to discern the effect of gender stereotypes across different levels of governance (i.e., local versus national elections) with elections' related information asymmetries.

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WHAT EXPLAINS PATRIARCHAL ATTITUDES? THE ROLE OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE

By Lindsay J. Benstead

Religion and culture are often seen as the primary driving force in the MENA region behind strongly patriarchal practices such as guardianship, which makes women minors throughout their lives and requires the permission of a male relative to marry, travel abroad, or enter the labor force.¹⁷¹ These patriarchal norms are, in turn, often treated as a static social environment. Existing research unpacks the role that political, economic, and structural factors—principally oil—play in inhibiting women's labor force participation and presence in the legislature.¹⁷² Yet we know little about how women's labor force participation affects social attitudes. Studies of patriarchal attitudes miss the crucial contribution that women's labor force participation plays in increasing feminist views in society. The MENA region has the lowest women's labor force participation in the world—26 percent compared to 54 percent globally.¹⁷³ But in countries like Tunisia, women's labor force participation as a result of government policies, including gender quotas for management in state-run enterprises, has helped foster a more egalitarian society.

In a recent book chapter,¹⁷⁴ I show empirically that women's employment fosters more egalitarian views both for them as well as for their male household members. Using Arab Barometer data from six countries (Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, the Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, and Yemen),¹⁷⁵ I evaluate two employment-based mechanisms of attitudes change drawn from American sociological studies. First, I look at *exposure-based* mechanisms, which posit that

when women work, they are exposed to new roles and experience discrimination, and this leads them and their spouses to develop more feminist views. Second, I look at an *interest-based* mechanism, which suggests that women's employment gives them and their male household members an interest in ensuring that women are paid the same as men for equal work.

The findings reveal that women's employment is a missing variable in attitudes toward gender relations. Husbands of employed wives exhibit greater egalitarianism than single men and husbands of nonworking wives. Moreover, the effect of religiosity on attitudes depends intersectionally on the gender of the respondent. Indicative of the Islamic feminist ideology that is present in the women's rights movement in Morocco¹⁷⁶ and other countries,¹⁷⁷ female supporters of Shari'a are less accepting of inequality than religious men because they are more likely to see patriarchal interpretations of Islamic law as originating from influences outside of Islam.

What Do We Know about the Determinants of Egalitarian Attitudes?

Most existing literature sees social and economic modernization as a driver of egalitarian attitudes. Arab women are, unsurprisingly, more egalitarian in their outlooks than men.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, younger citizens and those with more formal education tend to hold less patriarchal views, although some studies find that education can also ossify traditional views like patriarchal attitudes and support for authoritarianism.¹⁷⁹ The role that younger age and high formal education play in reducing support for gender inequality is highly significant because it suggests that if current trends continue, social attitudes may look very different in the decades to come.

The MENA region countries have younger populations than other regions—60% are under 25 years¹⁸⁰—and youth are the fastest-growing segment of the population. They also have high primary and secondary enrollment rates¹⁸¹—and this means that egalitarian views are likely to increase, particularly among women, who are especially likely to go to college or university in the Arab world.¹⁸² More religious respondents also tend to answer in a less egalitarian way across several studies, but there are real limitations in how religion has been treated in the studies.

Yet while we know a great deal about the role that modernization and religion may play—and women’s employment has been linked to their *political* power—most existing studies of attitudes miss political economic factors such as employment-based mechanisms. Two mechanisms of attitudes change—interest- and exposure-based theories—are useful for explaining micro-level attitudes change.

Interest-based theories of attitudinal change argue that, when “a person’s defined interests benefit from an ideology of gender equity, then that individual should be more likely to hold feminist attitudes.”¹⁸³ Wives, husbands, children, and other family members experience economic benefits of women’s employment, which alters their calculations of interests and the outcomes of family negotiations relating to women’s workforce participation.¹⁸⁴ This approach suggests that women tend to have more feminist views than men¹⁸⁵ because they gain directly from their own employment. However, female employment, whether that of a spouse, daughter, or other female relatives, also benefits male family members,¹⁸⁶ leads to an increase in support for equality among men who benefit indirectly from their spouse’s employment. This leads to greater acceptance of

egalitarianism among husbands and other male family members of employed women.

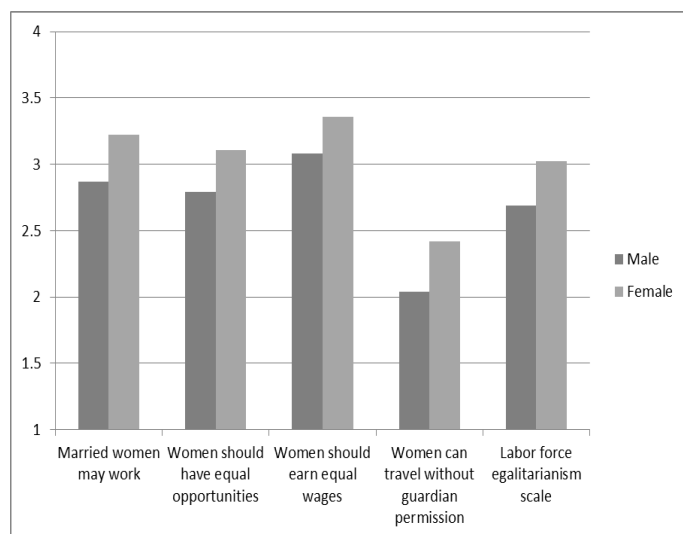
Interest-based mechanisms also explain why women may retain traditional views. Women who stay at home arguably have an incentive to maintain traditionalism because they benefit from women’s exclusion from the paid workforce through their husband’s improved employment opportunities.¹⁸⁷ Consistent with this theoretical expectation, Lisa Blaydes and Drew Linzer found evidence for an economic basis of support for fundamentalist views.¹⁸⁸ They argue that poor job and educational opportunities for women lead to higher returns for conservative views in the marriage market than secular views in the job market.

Exposure-based theories, in contrast, argue that as women enter the labor force, they, their husbands, and others in society develop more egalitarian attitudes as a result of being exposed to women in new roles. “Individuals,” Catherine Bolzendahl and Daniel Myers argue, “develop or change their understanding of women’s place in society and attitudes toward feminist issues when they encounter ideas and situations that resonate with feminist ideals.”¹⁸⁹ Exposure to women’s employment shapes women’s and men’s attitudes through five mechanisms. Importantly, cross-generational effects of women’s employment occur as a result of socialization, as children are raised in a home with two breadwinners.¹⁹⁰ Changes to attitudes, arising from exposure to women in the workplace, occur over a life course, as well as across generations, leading to a substantial shift in attitudes as women’s employment increases and women enter higher paying and male-dominated fields.

Data Analysis

Existing survey data, while not without limitations, allows us to test the implications of interest and exposure-based theories on attitudes toward gender issues. Using Arab Barometer data, I created a continuous dependent variable by scaling support for gender equality using four items: (1) work and equal wages, (2) women's mobility (i.e., ability to travel), (3) preference for sons' over daughters' education, and (4) women's suitability as political leaders (Figure 1).¹⁹¹ These items are highly correlated measures of support for public rights.¹⁹² This allowed me to explain variation in attitudes using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression.

Figure 1. Support for Egalitarianism in Six Countries in the Arab Barometer



Source: Arab Barometer, Wave 1.

To conduct my analysis I pooled the data from the six countries and ran separate models for men and women. First, I included only controls (i.e., age) and religious factors (i.e., personal prayer, support for Shari'a law, and religion/religious sect). (See the [chapter](#) for full models and for the testing of other

hypotheses drawn from social and economic modernization). Second, I added modernization factors including following the news, higher education, and more income. Finally, I added household and employment factors including marital status, employment status, and the employment status of female adults in the household. To test interest- and exposure-based theories, I proposed two working hypotheses:

H1: Women who are employed will be more likely than those who are unemployed to support equality in the workforce.

H2: Men with an employed spouse will be more likely to support equality in the workforce than those who are single or married to a nonworking wife.

Findings

The results diverge from traditional theories about Islam and social attitudes. While beliefs about the role of Shari'a law strongly predicted whether an individual believes that women should have equality in the workplace, personal religious observance (i.e., prayer) did not. But there were confessional differences. Christians tended to hold more egalitarian views than Druze and Sunni and Shi'a Muslims.¹⁹³ Moreover, the effects of religious factors are larger for males than females. This suggests that females interpret religious teachings in a more egalitarian way, consistently with Islamist feminism, or of the belief that patriarchal norms do not reflect the true teachings of Islam but rather stem from non-Islamic influences on Shari'a law during its codification.¹⁹⁴

The addition of economic modernization also improved the explanation of the results. In most models, the size of the effect is as

substantial as cultural factors, suggesting that economic development promotes egalitarian attitudes. The impact of religious identity and orientations, as well as economic modernization, on attitudes appears to have a more substantial effect for males than females. This suggests that women hold more egalitarian interpretations of Islam and higher levels of egalitarianism than men, even at similar, low levels of income and education.

Yet women's employment also played an important role in explaining attitudes. Husbands of employed wives exhibit greater egalitarianism than single men and husbands of nonworking wives. On average, women are more egalitarian than men, but it depends on their marital status and family status. Among male respondents, having a wife who is employed is a larger predictor of attitudes than his own employment or level of modernization (e.g., following the news, having higher education or income, or being employed).

Married women who did not work also tended to hold less egalitarian views than women who do. Some married women, in particular, may see women's exclusion from the workforce as good for their own interests, helping to explain high levels of patriarchal attitudes among women in the Arab world.¹⁹⁵ Married women who are not employed may benefit indirectly from less egalitarianism in the workforce, and may also be exposed to fewer opportunities to see women as capable members of different professions or discrimination. They may socialize their children to hold similar views.

Conclusions and Implications

This study has limitations, but it allows us to begin to better understand the relationship between the low levels of female labor force

participation and social attitudes in the region. First, the study is observational, not experimental and has many of the limitations of public opinion studies, including the possibility of reverse causation. Like many social processes, these mechanisms are likely mutually reinforcing.

Second, the data do not allow us to distinguish between the exposure and interest-based mechanisms or explore fine-grained household-level dynamics. Third, the data does not allow us to know whether interests or exposure or both are at work. Surveys should include questions tapping these mechanisms, as well as the employment status of mothers, wives, and adult children. Longitudinal studies or qualitative life histories are needed to better understand how attitudes change for women, their family members, and others in society as a result of women's increased workforce participation. Experimental studies may also use vignettes to understand how interests affect attitudes or how attitudes are affected by images of competent men and women leaders.

Yet the implications of the findings for theory and social policy are profound. Efforts to explain attitudes focus on Islam and modernization, but miss employment-based mechanisms developed in sociology that should be included in future studies. Women's employment is not just an economic imperative and a matter of gender justice, but it also contributes to social change by developing feminist viewpoints among women and their male family members.

Moreover, because governments can make policies that increase women's access to employment, the evidence is heartening. For instance, governments can enact quotas for female employees in the public and private

sectors, increasing demand for female workers and reducing the negative gender gap in educational attainment that contributes to wage discrimination. Particularly in Gulf countries, subsidy structures should be altered to benefit both sexes equally and support childcare for families with two working parents. Further, laws ensuring equal pay, abolishing existing legal structures that exclude women from certain jobs, and banning employment discrimination based on gender or other group identities are essential.

The results are therefore encouraging because they suggest the potential for profound intergenerational change in attitudes as women's labor force participation increases. This suggests specific mechanisms by which the Middle East may develop different social attitudes in the decades to come.

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A CASE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGED RESEARCH IN GENDER STUDIES AND THE MIDDLE EAST*

By Nermin Allam

Why is a community engaged research approach important in the field of gender politics and the Middle East? As I looked over my half-filled lecture notebook from the spring of 2020, I was overwhelmed with a sense of grief and reminded of the value of a community engaged research approach that embraces reciprocity between academic research and community needs. For the past two years, I have designed my gender politics and the Middle East course in partnership with a domestic violence organization which serves women from Middle Eastern

communities in the United States. Through volunteering at the organization, students identify the diverse structures that enable gender inequalities, and how as members of society they can challenge them. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, the carefully planned community engagement course had to be remodeled, and its community engaged component had to be dropped all together. The organization had to close its doors and moved to remotely delivering some of its services due to the ongoing health crisis. While I grieved the lost opportunity to introduce students to a meaningful experience, more intensely I grieved what the move meant for women who relied on the organization for shelter, refuge, and safety. The women are victims and survivors of domestic violence, some are undocumented and many face language and cultural barriers.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, governments and organizations have been reporting an increase in the number of domestic violence cases. The National Domestic Violence Hotline in the United States reported a 9% increase in calls between March 16 to May 16, 2020.¹⁹⁶ France reported a 30% increase in domestic violence reports and/or calls as of April 2020;¹⁹⁷ and the United Kingdom experienced a 65% rise in calls to the national abuse hotlines over a single weekend in March 2020.¹⁹⁸ In the Middle East, the systematic tracking of domestic violence cases is largely absent in many countries, however women's rights groups and domestic violence hotlines reported an increase in the number of domestic violence reports and calls in Egypt,¹⁹⁹ Iraq,²⁰⁰ Iran,²⁰¹ Lebanon,²⁰² Palestine,²⁰³ Saudi Arabia,²⁰⁴ Tunisia,²⁰⁵ and Turkey.²⁰⁶ The rise in domestic violence cases is not simply an unfortunate consequence of the pandemic. It reflects the failure to take into account how race, gender

and class shape the experiences of different groups. A community engaged research approach is necessary to understanding some of these gendered implications of the pandemic on our societies. It promises to identify silences in our data, contributes to envisioning a new aesthetic for engaged research, and centers a feminist engaged consciousness in our study and knowledge production.

Community Engaged Research and the Field of Gender Politics and the Middle East

Community engaged research is an approach to research and learning that emphasizes the need to respond to “community-identified needs,”²⁰⁷ to democratize knowledge production,²⁰⁸ and to embrace self-reflexivity in the research process.²⁰⁹ Ernest Boyer’s criticism to academic work and its growing detached character from the wider community contributed to the recent rise in community engaged research among researchers and in universities.²¹⁰ While community engaged research takes on different names and forms, at the heart of community engaged research is the recognition that the “knowledge acquired in the academic setting is strengthened and enhanced by the real-world experience found in communities.”²¹¹ This approach to research and learning contributes to identifying significant research questions and ensuring not only scholarly rigor but also the validity of outputs for communities.²¹² It offers important opportunities for locating spaces of social change and in so doing aligns with feminist ontology and translates feminists’ epistemology into the research design.

Indeed, the field of gender studies is founded upon a feminist epistemology of

collaborative, community-based and engaged approach.²¹³ In articulating a feminist engaged pedagogy and scholarship, Leeray M. Costa and Karen J. Leong rightly points out that integrating a community-based component in our work underscores and reiterates feminist commitments to self-reflexivity, the analysis of power, and active participation to accomplish social equality.²¹⁴ As Catherine Orr states in the Teagle White Paper, “Women’s Studies has dedicated itself not just to critical thinking *about* practice but to critical thinking *in* practice.”²¹⁵ Integrating community engaged research in studying gender politics and the Middle East allows us to critically employ the language of intersectionality while thoughtfully contesting it. Intersectionality will not simply be a theoretical tokenism that is neatly discussed in our theory section; intersectionality, diversity, and heterogeneity will be at the heart of our research and analysis, thus challenging essentialist hegemonic narratives about women from and in the region.

Moving beyond “the binary of agency/victimhood”

In our community engaged research, we utilized participant observation, interviews with leaders and members of community organizations, as well as conducted review of case files to identify reasons and factors that stop survivors from seeking help. While domestic violence can occur across all ethnic backgrounds, economic levels, age ranges, and sexual orientations; immigrant victims of domestic violence were in a further vulnerable situation. Survivors’ new homes were often far from family, friends, and safety networks that they might have had prior to immigration. For victims of domestic violence who recently immigrated to the United States they had to navigate a system that they are unfamiliar with and abusive partners further

fed their victims misinformation such as threatening to get them deported. Some survivors who lived in the United States for a long time and had extended family described how their abusers would claim that the victim is deviating from religion and from her family obligation and threatened to tarnish her reputation in the community. Women's diverse identities and positions, not surprisingly, shaped their experiences, structured their access to services, and their responses—either internalizing or challenging the abusers' claims.

Community engaged research contributes to not only identifying silences in our data, but it also allows us to transcend the “the binary of agency/victimhood”²¹⁶ in our analysis of women from the Middle East. For example, in my research on domestic violence, our community partner is a community organization led by women from the Middle East. In their work and activism, female leaders from the community often denounce traditions and practices that perpetuate gender inequalities by using phrases from the Quran and engaging with historical reading of the sacred text. In so doing, they not only challenge the system from within, but also challenge what Asma Lamrabet, an Islamic feminist writer, rightly describes as the narrative of “liberating the poor Muslim women who are victims of Islam.”²¹⁷ Women, their experiences, and activism are thus understood and studied with an eye to the complex and interdependent systems of social inequalities, political symbolism, cultural traditions, and biased historical readings.

New and Emerging Limitations to Community Engaged Research

Notwithstanding the value and significance of community engaged research in highlighting the diverse experiences of women,

researchers face significant challenges in adopting it. Within the United States academe, community engaged research and learning are frequently branded as a form of “activism” and thus delegitimized in the broader higher education debates.²¹⁸ In the Middle East and North Africa, researchers face a similar dilemma as community research is perceived as too political and thus censored and suppressed by autocratic regimes in power.

Community research also brings to the front a classical dilemma frequently evoked in social movements literature; that is: the question of how to define ‘a community’ and who represents and speaks on behalf of ‘the community.’ The ways in which we define a community in our research and the decisions we make in partnering with some organizations and not others are not objective. The decisions we make inevitably result in amplifying certain voices and silencing others. For example, in researching domestic violence among Muslim diaspora in the West, do we partner with women's groups and associations only; or should we include voices from community mosques? What about Muslim associations that are dominated by men, and community male leaders who are viewed as interlocutors by governmental entities?²¹⁹

The challenge of defining a community is further exacerbated as women's groups who call out gendered practices in their own diaspora communities often find themselves caught between what scholars describe as “community domination” and in the case of Muslim diaspora “wider society's orientalist tendencies.”²²⁰ For example, the groups can become ostracized and their community credentials challenged by their diaspora community. Members in some women's groups also face the challenge of how to call out gender inequalities in their own diaspora

communities without feeding orientalist tropes of the weak Muslim women that need to be saved from the violent Muslim men.²²¹

Furthermore, partnering with community organization does not guarantee that the research will be inclusive; researchers thus need to reflect and acknowledge the limitations of their study. For example, men who are victims of domestic violence are often less inclined to share their stories and seek help from community organizations due to certain toxic understandings of masculinity. Researchers thus need to actively identify gaps in their community engaged research and acknowledge their research limitation.

The outbreak of COVID exacerbates these ethical and logistical challenges facing community research. Researchers have an ethical and moral responsibility to minimize undue risk to their participants, community partners, and themselves throughout their research especially as traveling to local and/or international communities risk transmitting the disease. While moving our research online is increasingly viewed as the answer, it is not a universal solution.²²² Some communities have limited or no access to the internet, thus moving our research online can risk skewing our analysis and limiting the voices in our research to participants who enjoy higher socioeconomic status in the community. Research in gender and women's studies often engages with experiences of trauma, inequalities, but also agency and activism. Some of these topics are incredibly challenging to study online and require establishing relations of trust, empathy, and compassion with our participants.

For example, in my coauthored study on the gendered effects of COVID on academia²²³, an interviewee studying the piety movement in Egypt explained to me how "[Y]ou cannot

really go to people you don't know and without them seeing you and you ask them questions about their lives as women."²²⁴ Another interviewee underscored the difficulties of establishing trust online, her research investigates sex trafficking in refugee camps and thus she described how "...the question of doing zoom as opposed to interviews, it's crazy...[a]m I supposed to get someone's trust that we see in refugee camp in Jordan to talk to me online about what happened? I mean, it's not going to happen."²²⁵ Questions around safety, security, and trust in carrying out research are further complicated in the context of the Middle East as digital technologies often become a medium for state surveillance. Scholars observe how autocracies in the Middle East and North Africa have been recently further expanding their surveillance power under the pretext of the pandemic health crisis.²²⁶ I by no means intend to minimize the value of moving our research online as one possible strategy to mitigate the effects of COVID on our research. Rather, my objective is to contribute to unpacking the opportunities offered by online research design but also to underscore the moral and ethical challenges facing researchers who embrace it in their community research.

In conclusion, a community engaged research approach is significant to the field of gender politics and the Middle East as it underscores and reiterates feminist commitments to self-reflexivity, the analysis of power, and conscious engagement to accomplish social equality. While the outbreak of COVID-19 has created new ethical and logistical challenges to conducting community research and exacerbated existing ones, the answer is not to abandon our commitment to community research. Rather, our research and methodological debates should address how to mitigate these dilemmas to ensure that our research challenges rather than reproduces

inequalities in communities and in the
knowledge produced about them.

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Endnotes

Allam, Buttorff and Shalaby Notes

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2 Arne F. Wackenhut, “Ethical Considerations and Dilemmas Before, during and after Fieldwork in Less-Democratic Contexts: Some Reflections from Post-Uprising Egypt,” *The American Sociologist* 49, no. 2 (June 1, 2018): 242–57, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12108-017-9363-z>.

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4 65% of respondents work at institutions in the United States and Canada, 19% in Europe, and 13% in the MENA.

5 Al-Fanar Media, “Arab Researcher Survey,” *Al-Fanar Media* (blog), accessed October 4, 2020, <https://www.al-fanarmedia.org/tag/arab-researcher-survey/>.

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7 Author’s Interview, Assistant Professor based in the United States, Jun 14 2020.

8 Author’s Interview, Associate Professor based in the United States, May 30 2020.

9 Author’s Interview, Assistant Professor based in the United States, Jun 14 2020.

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12 Dima Samaro and Marwa Fatafta, “COVID-19 Contact-Tracing Apps in MENA: A Privacy Nightmare,” *Access*

Now (blog), June 18, 2020, <https://www.accessnow.org/covid-19-contact-tracing-apps-in-mena-a-privacy-nightmare/>.

13 Pakinam Amer, “Not Just Money: Arab-Region Researchers Face a Complex Web of Barriers,” *Al-Fanar Media* (blog), December 3, 2019, <https://www.al-fanarmedia.org/2019/12/not-just-money-arab-region-researchers-face-a-complex-web-of-barriers/>.

14 Author’s Online Interview with Adjunct Professor based in the United States, May 29, 2020

Lillian Frost Notes

¹⁵ Author interview with an (adult) child of a Jordanian mother and Syrian father, February 2017.

¹⁶ In this analysis, the Arab world refers to 17 countries in the Middle East and North Africa: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

¹⁷ These data are from the author’s global dataset on discrimination toward women in state nationality laws from 2003–18. This dataset primarily draws from the findings presented in the following studies. Bronwen Manby, *Citizenship Law in Africa a Comparative Study*. New York, NY: Open Society, 2016. Equality Now, “The State We’re In: Ending Sexism in Nationality Laws,” January 2016. UNHCR’s annual “Background Note on Gender Equality, Nationality Laws and Statelessness” from 2014–19. In the case of discrepancies between these datasets, the author consulted the respective nationality law directly.

¹⁸ Although Algeria revised the provisions of its nationality law in 2005 to introduce gender equality in the conferral of nationality to children and spouses, Algerian Muslim women are banned from marrying, and as such, conferring nationality to men of other religions, and this restriction is not imposed on Algerian Muslim men. See Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights, “Countries: Middle East & North Africa,” <<https://equalnationalityrights.org/countries/middle-east-north-africa>>.

¹⁹ All statements regarding the content of these countries’ nationality laws are based on the text of the most recent nationality laws in English, Arabic, and or French, unless otherwise noted. For greater detail on the contents of these laws in terms of women’s nationality conferral, see Lillian Frost, “Brief on Women and Nationality in the Arab World,” Boston Consortium for Arab Region Studies Series, April 2020, <https://f2b65c88-a185-4b0b-aa91-bb12b0500709.filesusr.com/ugd/55e102_2a01ee697d564fc7bea8723f67c13689.pdf>.

²⁰ In Iraq and Yemen this only applies when the child is born in-country. See Zahra Albarazi, “Regional Report on Citizenship: The Middle East and North Africa (MENA),” RSCAS/GLOBALCIT-Comp. 2017/3, November 2017

<http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/50046/RSCAS_GLOBALCIT_Comp_2017_03.pdf> pg. 11.

²¹ For greater detail on the contents of these laws, see Lillian Frost, “Brief on Women and Nationality in the Arab World,” Boston Consortium for Arab Region Studies Series, April 2020, <https://f2b65c88-a185-4b0b-aa91-bb12b0500709.filesusr.com/ugd/55e102_2a01ee697d564fc7bea8723f67c13689.pdf>.

²² Ibid.

²³ In Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and Kuwait the main exception is if the child would otherwise become stateless, such as when the father is unknown, stateless, or without filiation to the child, while in Qatar, women cannot confer their nationality to their children under any circumstance.

²⁴ For example, in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, the children of stateless Palestinian fathers rarely receive access to their citizen mother’s nationality. Likewise, although Article 3 of Lebanon’s nationality law facilitates the naturalization of a foreigner married to a Lebanese woman by reducing his required residency from 5 years to 1 year, this policy often is not implemented in practice, particularly because this process depends on a discretionary decision by the head of state. See Melkar el-Khoury and Thibaut Jaulin, “EUDO Citizenship Observatory Country Report: Lebanon,” September 2012 <<http://eudo-citizenship.eu/docs/CountryReports/Lebanon.pdf>> pgs. 1 and 4.

²⁵ Mounira Charrad, *States and Women’s Rights: The Making of Postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2001. Suad Joseph, “Gender and Citizenship in Muslim Communities: Introduction,” *Citizenship Studies* 3, no. 3 (1999): 293–294.

²⁶ Jennifer C. Seely, Emma Diambogne Diouf, Charlotte-Anne Malischewski, Maria Vaikath, and Kiah Young-Burns, “Second-Class Citizens? Gender in African Citizenship Law,” *Citizenship Studies* 17, no. 3–4 (2013): 429–46. Merike H. Blofield and Liesl Haas, “Defining a Democracy: Reforming the Laws on Women’s Rights in Chile, 1990–2002,” *Latin American Politics and Society* 47, no. 3 (2005): 35–68.

²⁷ Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon, “Religious Power, the State, Women’s Rights, and Family Law,” *Politics & Gender* 11, no. 11 (2015): 451–77.

²⁸ Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon, “State Power, Religion, and Women’s Rights: A Comparative Analysis of Family Law,” *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 18, no. 1 (2011): 145–165.

²⁹ Janine A. Clark and Amy E. Young, “Islamism and Family Law Reform in Morocco and Jordan,” *Mediterranean Politics* 13, no. 3 (2008): 333–352.

³⁰ Laurie Brand, *Women, the State, and Political Liberalization: Middle Eastern and North African Experiences*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998. Shirin Saeidi, “Creating the Islamic Republic of Iran: Wives and Daughters of Martyrs, and Acts of Citizenship,” *Citizenship Studies* 14, no. 2 (2010): 113–126.

³¹ S. Laurel Weldon, *Protest, Policy, and the Problem of Violence Against Women: A Cross-National Comparison*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002.

³² Martha Nussbaum, “Women’s Education: A Global Challenge,” in Marilyn Friedman, Ed., *Women and Citizenship*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005: 188–214. Feryal M. Cherif, “Culture, Rights, and Norms: Women’s Rights Reform in Muslim Countries,” *The Journal of Politics* 72, no. 4 (2010): 1144–1160.

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³⁴ As mentioned earlier, DTW existed in nationality laws globally before the introduction of CEDAW in 1979. As such, these laws, at the time of their writing in the first half of the twentieth century, reflected widespread patriarchal norms that limited women’s participation in economic, political, and public spheres.

³⁵ However, some Jordanian ministers noted in personal interviews that drawing attention to the disparity in women’s and men’s rights to nationality conferral in the current political climate is more likely to lead to more restrictive policies on men than to more inclusive policies for women; for example, by amending the nationality law to require that both parents are Jordanian (rather than just the father). Although such a measure would remove gender discrimination in conferring nationality to children, it would exacerbate existing problems with the statelessness and other challenges that the current nationality law creates.

³⁶ Marc Morjé Howard, *The Politics of Citizenship in Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Martin Ruhs, *The Price of Rights: Regulating International Labor Migration*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013.

³⁷ This research note focuses on discrimination in law alone; for a more comprehensive picture, it is important to assess discrimination in practice as well. For example, see: Lillian Frost and Nathan Brown, “Constitutions and Citizenship: Rights in Law and Practice in Jordan and the Arab World,” in *Handbook of Citizenship in the Middle East and North Africa*, edited by Zahra Babar, Roel Meijer, and James Sater. Routledge Press, 2020.

³⁸ Mean levels of DTW calculated based on the additive scale presented in Table 1, where 1 corresponds to low or no, 2 to partial, 3 to high, and 4 to full DTW in nationality conferral. Per capita migrant levels correspond to the following percentages of migrants in a state’s population: Few (0–1%), Some (1–15%), Many (15–90%), based on data from UNPD (2017). The UNPD data reflect estimates of the population of foreign-born individuals or of the country of citizenship of individuals in a state (depending on data availability). Thus, this measure essentially captures the number of foreign citizens in a state, including economic migrants and UNHCR

refugees. The number of states in each category is indicated below the migrant size categories.

³⁹ Rana Hussein, "Gov't Announces Privileges for Children of Jordanian Women Married to Foreigners," *Jordan Vista*, November 9, 2014. <<http://vista.sahafi.jo/art.php?id=dcd832e583bcddb74a3b00cf3f96d765394697b>>.

⁴⁰ Author interview with former prime minister, February 2017.

⁴¹ Author interview with former minister, November 2017.

⁴² Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998.

⁴³ Michael C. Williams, "Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics," *International Studies Quarterly* 47 (2003): 511–531.

⁴⁴ Buzan et al., *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*.

⁴⁵ Williams, "Words, Images, Enemies."

⁴⁶ Author interview with former minister, November 2017.

⁴⁷ Author interview with former minister, December 2017.

⁴⁸ Author interview with former minister, January 2016.

⁴⁹ Author interview with former prime minister, December 2017.

Lihl Ben Shitrit Notes

⁵⁰ <https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2019/sep/margaret-atwood-handmaids-tale-testaments-real-life-inspiration/>

⁵¹ For discussions of gender-hierarchical citizenship regimes in other countries in the MENA see articles by Lillian Frost, Shirin Saeidi, and Aili Tripp in this APSA MENA Politics issue.

⁵² Meirav Jones and Lihl Ben Shitrit "The Decline of Democracy in Israel's Sovereignty Discourse." *APSA MENA Politics Newsletter* 3:1 (2020).

⁵³ "Former member of Italian Parliament Fiamma Nirenstein Europe and Israel - a story of love and darkness," *Ribonut* 3(2104):13.

⁵⁴ Avraham Zion, "We made every possible mistake, one after another," *Ribonut* 4(2014):13.

⁵⁵ Dafna Netanyahu, "A monster in the ultra-sound," *Ribonut* 5(2015):9.

⁵⁶ Shimon Cohen, "Let's talk again about human rights," *Ribonut* 5(2015):18 (by "rights of the fathers" to author refers to Jewish birthrights over the Land of Israel, or the entirety of Mandatory Palestine).

⁵⁷ Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim women need saving?* Harvard University Press, 2013.

⁵⁸ "Ambassador (ret.) Yoram Ettinger Demography works in our favor," *Ribonut* 2(2014):10.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ David P. Goldman, "Judea and Samaria in a region of failed states. Time is on Israel's side," *Ribonut* 7(2016):14-15.

⁶² "Ambassador (ret.) Yoram Ettinger Demography works in our favor," *Ribonut* 2(2014): 11.

⁶³ <http://ribonut.co.il/BlogPostID.aspx?BlogPostId=117&lang=1>; see also "Dr. Sherman's Humanitarian Solution: An interview with Dr. Martin Sherman, Director, Israel Institute for Strategic Studies." *Ribonut* 2(2014):15.

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Catherine Warrick Notes

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⁶⁷ See, for example, Lama Abu Odeh, "Honor Killings and the Construction of Gender in Arab Societies," *American Journal of Comparative Law* 58:4 (2010), Catherine Warrick, "The Vanishing Victim: Criminal Law and Gender in Jordan," *Law and Society Review* 39:2 (2005), and Stephanie Nanes, "Fighting Honor Crimes: Evidence of Civil Society in Jordan," *Middle East Journal* 57:1 (2003). Comparative treatments of family law include Lynn Welchman, *Women and Muslim Family Laws in Arab States*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008, and the contributions to Lynn Welchman, ed., *Women's Rights and Islamic Family Law: Perspectives on Reform* (London: Zed Books, 2004).

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⁶⁹ <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/cassation-court-sets-precedent-toughens-sentence-honour-killing>

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⁷¹ Bassell Salloukh, “Reimagining an alternative Lebanon: what lies beyond the sectarian system,” *Executive*, 8 November 2019.

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⁷³ For a thorough treatment of women and gender in the 2011 uprising in Egypt, see Sherine Hafez, *Women of the Midan: the Untold Stories of Egypt’s Revolutionaries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019) and Nermin Allam’s *Women and the Egyptian Revolution: Engagement and Activism during the 2011 Arab Uprisings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). Both works make it clear that gender issues are not simply policy questions of the moment, but integrally connected to state-society relations both historically and currently.

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⁷⁶ Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, “Detention of Women in Syria: a weapon of war and terror,” <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/321-emhrn-womenindetention-en-final.pdf> (Copenhagen, 2015).

Shirin Saeidi Notes

⁷⁷ **Acknowledgment:** I would like to thank Gamze Cavdar for organizing this newsletter, and her critical reading of my work. I am also grateful to Marc Lynch, Engin Isin, Anne McNevin, Paola Rivetti, Lillian Frost, and Lihi Ben Shitrit for their comments and suggestions on previous drafts. Discussions with Mino Moallem during MESA 2019 inform my ideas here, and I appreciate her generosity. I had read about Nasim Aghdam’s death, but I only began to see her demise as the enormous tragedy and moment of collective political failure that it was due to conversations with Hossein Derakhshan, and I thank him.

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¹⁰⁵ Lucia Ardovini and Erika Biagini, forthcoming special issue, "Assessing the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood after the 2013 coup: Tracing Trajectories of Continuity and Change", *Middle East Law and Governance*.

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Gamze Cavdar Notes

* I would like to thank all contributors of this issue, particularly Catherine Warrick, for their constructive comments and questions and Yavuz Yaşar for his help with the data analysis. Special thanks go to Marc Lynch for further comments.

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¹³⁶ Not all conservatives share these ideas. The conservative Islamic ideology expressed by the top leadership are at times criticized, especially by some female columnists, who are connected to the same conservative circles. No such criticism has been expressed by the MPs of the AKP nor by the party's own women's branches.

¹³⁷ For a comprehensive analysis of women's economic participation in the MENA, see Valentine Moghadam. "Women's Economic Participation in the Middle East," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2005): 110-146.

¹³⁸ Marwa Shalaby. "The Paradox of Female Economic Participation in the Middle East and North Africa," *Rice University's Baker Institute Issue Brief* (2014): 1-4.

¹³⁹ Five-year development plans and the party programs are good examples of these plans.

¹⁴⁰ The female labor force participation rate for 2005–2015 increased from about 23 percent to 35 percent while the same rate increased from about 71 percent to 77 percent for males.

¹⁴¹ An example of this would be working for a family-owned business without pay.

¹⁴² These two categories are typically excluded in typical unemployment calculations; I have included them in the calculation to demonstrate the gendered aspects of the official unemployment numbers.

¹⁴³ Time-use surveys typically measure the time males and females spend on unpaid labor on housework and it is well-established that females spend more time on these activities than males across the globe.

¹⁴⁴ As an economic philosophy, neoliberalism refers to the belief that free-market capitalism is the answer to almost all economic and political problems. With respect to employment, neoliberalism advocates such policies as economic liberalization, privatization of public enterprises, entrepreneurship, bigger role for the private sector, and reduction in government expenditures. See David Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press (2005).

¹⁴⁵ In the book, we have argued that neoliberalism and Islamic conservatism agree on gender roles not only at the policy-level but also by assuming that 1) men and women are fundamentally different 2) that women's primary domain of activity should be home; and 3) there exist a natural order between men and women, and attempts to change it might be detrimental. The discussion also examined the theoretical origin of neoliberalism, which includes the writings by Francis Y. Edgeworth (1845-1926), Alfred Marshall (1842-1924), and W. Stanley Jevons (1835-1882) and the discourses by the top AKP leadership for Islamic conservatism. These assumptions are shared by many other socially conservative religious groups and by no means unique to Islamic conservatism.

¹⁴⁶ Recommended number varies from "at least three" to "four and beyond".

¹⁴⁷ Women's organizations long demanded that the General Directorate of Woman's Status, founded in 1990, turn into a ministry. The AKP rejected the demand and instead founded the Ministry of Family and Social Policy in 2011.

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in "Aile Üniversitesi Açıldı" *Aile Bülteni* (Publication of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy) Vol.1, No.7 (2013), p.3.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: 'Çalışmak Kadının Aile İçindeki Önemi Ortadan Kaldırmaz'", *Haberler* (Turkish Daily), December 11, 2019, available at <https://www.haberler.com/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-calismak-kadinin-aile-12708359-haberi/> (accessed on 9/24/2020)

¹⁵¹ For the poorest of the population, defined as those whose personal income consisted of more than 50 percent welfare transfers, the percentages of males and females who received public transfers were close to each other in 2003 while the percentage of females grew twice as much compared to that of males by 2016.

Marwa Shalaby Notes

¹⁵² Stereotyping is the assignment of “identical characteristics to any person in a group regardless of the actual variation among members of that group” (Aronson 2004, 244).

¹⁵³ Kathleen Dolan. “The Impact of Gender Stereotyped Evaluations on Support for Women Candidates” *Political Behavior* Vol. 32, Issue 1 (2010): pp.69-88; Leonie Huddy and Nayda Terkildsen. “Gender Stereotypes and the Perception of Male and Female Candidates” *American Journal of Political Science* Vol. 37, Issue 1 (1993): pp.119-42; Jennifer Lawless. “Women, War, and Winning Elections: Gender Stereotyping in the Post-September 11th Era.” *Political Research Quarterly* Vol.57, Issue.3 (2004): pp.479; and Monica C. Schneider and Angela L. Bos. “Measuring Stereotypes of Female Politicians: Measuring Stereotypes of Female Politicians” *Political Psychology* Vol. 35, Issue. 2 (2014): pp. 245-66.

¹⁵⁴ Alice H. Eagly and Steven J. Karau. “Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice toward Female Leaders.” *Psychological Review* Vol.109, Issue 3 (2002): pp.573-98; Anne M. Koenig, Alice H. Eagly, Abigail A. Mitchell, and Tina Ristikari. “Are Leader Stereotypes Masculine? A Meta-Analysis of Three Research Paradigms” *Psychological Bulletin* Vol. 137, Issue 4 (2011): pp. 616-42.

¹⁵⁵ Kathleen Dolan. “Gender Stereotypes, Candidate Evaluations, and Voting for Women Candidates: What Really Matters?” *Political Research Quarterly* Vol.67, Issue 1 (2014): pp. 96-107; and Kira Sanbonmatsu. “Gender Stereotypes and Vote Choice.” *American Journal of Political Science* Vol.46, Issue 1 (2002): pp.20.

¹⁵⁶ Danny Hayes. “When Gender and Party Collide: Stereotyping in Candidate Trait Attribution.” *Politics & Gender* Vol.7, Issue 2 (2011): pp.133-65; see also Dolan, “Gender Stereotypes, Candidate Evaluations, and Voting for Women Candidates: What Really Matters?”; and Kira Sanbonmatsu and Kathleen Dolan. “Do Gender Stereotypes Transcend Party?” *Political Research Quarterly* Vol. 62, Issue 3 (2009): pp. 485-94.

¹⁵⁷ Monika L. McDermott. “Voting Cues in Low-Information Elections: Candidate Gender as a Social Information Variable in Contemporary United States Elections.” *American Journal of Political Science* Vol.41, Issue 1 (1997): pp. 270.

¹⁵⁸ Lindsay J. Benstead, Amaney A. Jamal, and Ellen Lust. “Is It Gender, Religiosity or Both? A Role Congruity Theory of Candidate Electability in Transitional Tunisia” *Perspectives on Politics* Vol. 13, Issue 1 (2015): pp. 74–94.

¹⁵⁹ Lindsay J. Benstead and Ellen Lust. “Why Do Some Voters Prefer Female Candidates? The Role of Perceived Incorruptibility in Arab Elections.” in H. Stensöta & L. Wängnerud (Eds.) *Gender and Corruption* Palgrave Macmillan (2018): pp. 83-104.

¹⁶⁰ Alexandra D. Blackman and Marlette Jackson. “Gender Stereotypes, Political Leadership, and Voting Behavior in Tunisia.” *Political Behavior* (2019). Forthcoming.

¹⁶¹ Marwa Shalaby. (2019). “Support for Gender Quotas and Perceived Corruption in Developing Democracies: Evidence from Lebanon.” In *Corruption and Informal Practices in the*

Middle East and North Africa, edited by Ina Kubbe and Aiysha Varriach, *Routledge Corruption and Anti-Corruption Studies*.

¹⁶² Morocco introduced a voluntary party quota in the lower chamber since 2002. The number of women hovered at around 11 percent in 2007. In 2012, the number of reserved seats for women increased to 60, or about 17 percent as a result of the constitutional amendments in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. Women currently constitute about 20 percent of the lower chamber.

¹⁶³ Dolan, “The Impact of Gender Stereotyped Evaluations on Support for Women Candidates.”

¹⁶⁴ Bozena Welborne. “On Their Own? Women Running as Independent Candidates in the Middle East,” *Middle East Law and Governance* (2020). Forthcoming

¹⁶⁵ Yoshikuni Ono and Masahiro Yamada. “Do Voters Prefer Gender Stereotypic Candidates? Evidence from a Conjoint Survey Experiment in Japan.” *Political Science Research and Methods* Vol. 8, Issue 3 (2020): pp. 477–92.

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¹⁶⁹ Deborah Alexander and Kristi Andersen. “Gender as a Factor in the Attribution of Leadership Traits.” *Political Research Quarterly* Vol. 46, Issue 3 (1993): pp.527; see also Huddy and Terkildsen, “Gender Stereotypes and the Perception of Male and Female Candidates.”

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Lindsay J. Benstead Notes

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Nermin Allam Notes

* I am grateful to all my colleagues in this issue for their comments and questions, especially Paola Rivetti and Gamze Cavdar for their detailed feedback.

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²²¹ Within the Middle East and North Africa, researchers face a similar dilemma as women’s groups largely face cooptation by the regime thus challenging their community credentials.

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