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From Protest to Parliament

Understanding Egyptian Women's Political Participation

University Honors in International Relations

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Abstract: *Egypt's January 2011 uproar of popular protest made women activists visible to the international community. When the new government, controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood, threw out the 2010 constitutional amendment, stipulating a quota for women's parliamentary representation, the international community immediately concluded that Egypt was moving "backward." The purpose of this work is to understand the barriers that Egyptian women face when reaching for political power. In addition, a statistical analysis of GDP and the Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index is presented. The research indicated that barriers to decision-making positions are multifaceted for women. Poverty, patriarchal culture and misunderstanding of Egyptian civil society are holding back progressions in women's representation. Furthermore, efforts by international organizations vouching for increased parliamentary representation for Egyptian women overlook key socioeconomic conditions that effect women's underrepresentation. The results found no correlation between GDP growth and reduced inequality measured by the GGI indicating that proactive measures need to be taken to boost equality for women.*

Introduction

Over the past two years, Egyptian women have been at the forefront of protests to demanding political reform and the establishment of democracy, dignity and political freedom. Now, after regime change, it is perplexing to witness the absence of women in decision-making positions of power, namely in Egypt's parliament. However, the focus on women parliamentarians in Egypt and the greater Arab region is a top-down focus and one that mainly emerges from the interests of the international community such as from the UN development agencies, USAID and international NGO's. According to recent reports the most immediate concerns for a large segment of the female Egyptian population in coping with is poverty. Economic security and opportunity is what many Egyptian women want.¹ Unfortunately, the loudest voices in the international community are not those of poor women. Concerns about levels of representation in parliament have caused an uproar for those who have the most access resources.

My research began with a similar question to those circulating in the international community. Why, if so many women were active in the January 25, 2011 revolution, are there so few women representatives in Egypt's parliament? The November 2011 elections brought just 8 women to Egypt's 508 parliamentary seats, making representation just 2% post revolution;² but it is not only in Egypt. Women all over the world lack adequate gender based representation face obstacles when reaching for political power.³ My inquiry was partially stirred by the Western media outcry against the removal of the 2010 constitutional amendment that put a quota on

¹ UNWomen, "What Egyptian Women Want from the next President," Youtube. Flash video file. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvIhLPIZxiE>.

² "Bringing Gender Justice to Egyptian Parliament," *Institute for Development Studies*, Issue 30, December 2012, www.ids.co.uk.

³ "Women in Parliament," *The Economist*, March 12, 2011.

Egyptian women's representation in the parliament. While I continue to contend the immense importance of women in decision-making positions, I cannot ignore the scholarly research that says that quantitative generalizations about women and their rights Egypt and the Arab region more broadly do not provide a sufficient understanding nor solutions to the problems that MENA women face. Arab women's experiences are not the same and neither are Egyptian women a monolith. The reasons for women's lack of participation in Egyptian politics are dynamic, intricate and based on various forms of socioeconomic, cultural, and structural factors.

As a young American woman of Arab heritage, as a feminist, and activist I have a tremendous interest in seeing the political and economic advancement of women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. I have spent time living in Saudi Arabia, where my father is a native, I have recently had the fortunate opportunity to travel to a number of countries in the Middle East, including Egypt where I spent two years studying at the university level and witnessed the peaceful and courageous January 2011 popular uproar that brought down a thirty yearlong dictatorship in a miraculous eighteen days. My work in this paper has been an attempt at compiling a literature review of the barriers to equality that Egyptian women face in their societies when reaching for political power. Included in the literature review is knowledge that I gained through interviews and attending conferences about developments in Egypt. Following are my findings from a statistical analysis of the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index (GGI) and GDP of 135 countries. The statistical analysis was used to demonstrate whether an increase in wealth for a country leads directly to more gender equality.

Barriers to Equality

Authoritarianism and Political Corruption

Political repression of all Egyptian citizens and not just women has been rampant for the past three decades.⁴ Under the authoritarian rule of Hosni Mubarak and his regime, elections and policy were manipulated in favor of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) and political dissent was violently and strategically silenced.⁵ Even the furtherance of feminist causes became a medium for retaining an NDP stronghold.⁶ Political dissent was and continues to be met with violence, humiliation and intimidation tactics.

What is significant about the 2011 uprisings that forced Mubarak to resign is that it was the first time that Egyptians called for the ousting of a home-grown authoritarian regime. The Revolution of 1952 had a starkly nationalist fervor that called for an end to British colonial control over Egypt.⁷ Yet, Mubarak had not shed the stigma of being an elitist puppet of the U.S. and U.S. interests. Legally, Mubarak and the NDP controlled opposition parties by outlawing those that based their political platform on religion.⁸ Most importantly, this outlawed the Muslim Brotherhood and for Mubarak, justified his thirty year long dictatorship to the West and other outsiders who perceive the Muslim Brotherhood as a radical group that threatens their interests in the region. Election rigging, media censorship, police brutality, arrests and military trials were methods used to maintain power and quell dissent. These tactics have had a disenchanting affect

⁴ Bradford Dillman, "Parliamentary Elections and the Prospects for Political Pluralism in North Africa," *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 11, Issue 4, October 1976.

⁵ Andrew Puddephatt, "Corruption in Egypt," *Global Partners and Associations*, March 2012.

⁶ Mariz Tadros, "Quotas: A Highway to Power in Egypt... But for Which Women?" *Institute of Development Studies Bulletin*, Vol. 41, Issue 5, September 2010.

⁷ Jean Leca, "Opposition in the Middle East and North Africa," *Government and Opposition*, Volume 32, Issue 4, October 1997.

⁸ The Egyptian Constitution (1971), Article 5.

on the Egyptian population.⁹ Now, as Egypt builds new institutions and legal codes, one wonders if women will have the opportunity to take part.

Culture

A culture of patriarchy defines familial, societal, and political relationships in Egypt. This system is hierarchically based on age and gender. Patriarchal roles and interpretations of Islam stipulate that women's obligations are in the private sphere and men's in the public sphere; women are associated with that which is familial. In this system, a woman's duties are perceived as natural and are assumed to include bearing children, raising them, maintaining the household, in addition to the happiness of her husband.

The family plays a major role in the formation of any Islamic society. It is the foundation on which the society is built and has hence become a rhetorical national priority. The family is emphatically thought of as vital to nation building, being a place where the next generation is born that will lead and protect the country. Article 10 of the Egyptian Constitution reads, "The family is the basis of the society and is founded on religion, morality and patriotism. The State is keen to preserve the genuine character of the Egyptian family, its cohesion and stability, and to protect its moral values, all as regulated by law."¹⁰

In a *neopatriarchal* system, a system defined by patriarchy mixed with modernity, special emphasis is placed on the father (the patriarch),¹¹ who is ascribed the role of decision-maker in both family and society. This structure plays out in political life and is exemplified by the way

⁹ Sherine Hefaz, "No longer a bargain: Women, masculinity, and the Egyptian uprising," *Journal of the American Ethnology Society*, Vol. 39, Issue 1, February 28, 2012.

¹⁰ The Draft of the Egyptian Constitution (2011), Article 10.

¹¹ Hisham Sharabi, "Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society," New York : Health Press ,1992.

former president Hosni Mubarak defined his relationship with Egyptian citizens. Up until his very last days as a dictator of Egypt, Mubarak referred to himself as “the father” and to Egyptian citizens as “his children.” Yet after thirty long years, many Egyptians found his analogy to be patronizing and out of touch. The idea that politics are the duty of men is a direct obstacle that women face when entering the political arena as parliamentary candidates or influential intellectuals.

Women, as mothers and wives, are expected to take on a submissive role and adhere to orders rather than give them. A woman’s modesty is what protects family honor and therefore restrictions are placed on relations between men and women.¹² Men’s control over female family members is thought of as crucial to social order and is rooted in the idea that female sexuality is a threat to social order if not controlled.¹³ While this idea holds strong, especially in rural areas in Egypt, Egyptian women’s presence in the urban public sphere has been uprooting this dichotomy for the past century. Their very presence challenges long held notions of patriarchy.¹⁴

Numerous women were in Tahrir Square in January 2011. They led crowds of protesters in chant, camped out in Tahrir Square and confronted security forces face to face. The demands of the crowd were demands of men and women. Dignity, democracy, an end to political repression and “bread” were among those demands. Yet since, women have faced both violence and antagonism. Sexual harassment is rampant and utilized by both the state and public citizens; possibly, to scare women off the streets.

Hafez (2012) attributes the push-back against women’s political participation on a patriarchal socio-political dynamic. She extends Kandiyoti’s notion of the “patriarchal bargain”

¹² Abdelwahab Boudiba, “Sexuality in Islam,” Routledge, 2008.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Sherine Hefaz, “No longer a bargain: Women, masculinity, and the Egyptian uprising,” 2012.

to the relationship between Egyptian citizens and their leaders. The commitment of the Mubarak regime to economic liberalism created consumer trends that broke down the extended family structure, a system that the most disenfranchised Egyptians relied on for basic economic sustenance. At the same time the state failed for years to provide reliable health, education and social services. The uprisings saw a breakdown of the myth that the state (and Mubarak “the father”) would be that provider. “Multilayered patriarchal power... is at the heart of the uprising,” she said. So after decades of state institutions and Mubarak failing to uphold their part of the bargain, the mythical patriarchal bargain is being dismantled. Hafez attributes the rampant sexual harassment evident before and after the euphoric 18 days of social cohesion in Tahrir Square, as a result of the emasculation of Egyptian men because of economic hardship.¹⁵

Class and Politics

Historically, upper class women have been more politically active in Egypt. Through family ties to politically active men, the privileged intellectual capabilities that prolonged education granted and the luxury of free time, upper class women to invest time writing in publications or engaging with other women in their communities. The famous Huda Sha’rawi, who created the Egyptian Feminist Union, is one example of a woman who had the privilege to be politically active, even travelling abroad in the early 1900’s attending international feminist conferences.¹⁶ Women from the emerging middle class, such as Nabawiyah Musa, were sometimes participants as well in the early politics of feminism alongside Sha’rawi.¹⁷ Their

¹⁵ Hefaz, “No longer a bargain: Women, masculinity, and the Egyptian uprising,” (2012), 40.

¹⁶ Margot Badran, “Feminism, Islam and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt,” Princeton University Press, 1995.

¹⁷ Badran, “Feminism, Islam and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt,” 96.

tireless efforts led to women's citizenship and suffrage in 1956.¹⁸ Today, political participation is still a luxury afforded to upper and middle class women. With some 40% of Egyptians living in poverty and 20% below the poverty line,¹⁹ many poor Egyptian women find themselves without the financial support that would facilitate time for political activity.

The inhospitable economic climate for many women was fostered by Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) recommended by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and implemented by Sadat and Mubarak.²⁰ These adjustments reversed socialist and state feminist efforts of Gamal Abdel Nasser through privatization—making market forces the primary driver of the economy—and the state retreated from providing social services.²¹ As a result, male labor migration to the Arab Gulf countries has left women heads of households with increased social burdens and separated families. Furthermore, women have faced unemployment or marginalization into professions that do not allow for advancement, minimizing career experiences that would lead to political candidacy. This is significant since two-thirds of respondents in an interview of women who ran for parliament in 2011 said that they were “working women” or professionals and had contacts with other professionals, doctors, academics and public servants in senior roles and over 90% held at least an undergraduate degree.²² Hatem (1992) uses the Scandinavian understanding of state feminism describing it as a progressive set of laws and government social services that encouraged female integration into the economy by making women's productive and reproductive roles a concern of public policy.²³ The demise of

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ “Egypt Overview,” *World bank*, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/egypt/overview>.

²⁰ Mervat F. Hatem, “Economic and Political Liberation in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2, May 1992.

²¹ “Bringing gender justice to Egyptian Parliament,” 2012.

²² Ibid.

²³ Hatem, “Economic and Political Liberation in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism,” 1992.

Egyptian state feminism with SAPs harmed working class women as it bolstered opportunities for upper class women.²⁴

While the state retreated from providing social services, the politically banned Muslim Brotherhood stepped in to fill the role of social and economic provider for poor Egyptians. Over years of such work, the Muslim Brotherhood has gained widespread support. This can be seen in their popularity in the most recent parliamentary elections and the election of one of their members, Mohammed Morsi, to the presidency. They have been criticized by the international community and liberal Egyptians as spreading an ideology that is unsympathetic to women's rights and by some scholars for fostering undemocratic and unsustainable political practices whereby the party or candidate who provides the most economic relief gains votes. For example, Blaydes' and El Tarouty's (2005) study found that poor women were susceptible to selling their votes for economic gain. While this empowered women economically, "clientalist voter recruitment" stripped women who sold their votes of their political agency and thus political participation is once again understood as an upper class privilege. Poverty makes immediate economic gain more important for poor women. Therefore, selling votes is more practical than voting for a candidate that might help their situation in the long term.²⁵

Singerman pp 14 for racist attitudes of association leaders

NGOs, "Civil Society," and Women's Organizations

In the face of government failure to bring about development and social change, women's rights efforts in the Arab world have increasingly moved towards issue-oriented Non-

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Lisa Blaydes and Safinaz El Tarouty, "Electoral Participation in Egypt: The Implications of Gender for Voter Recruitment and Mobilization," *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 63, No. , Summer 2009.

governmental Organizations (NGO).²⁶ The “NGO-isation,” as Islah Jad (2005) describes this development, has elicited two main contending viewpoints: NGO’s can be seen as a counter to authoritarian governments and a facilitator to civil society yet at the same time are criticized as enabling dependency on the West and enforcing a narrow ideology without consideration of the opinions of local citizens of the country in which they operate.

Though NGO’s are essentially non-governmental, that does not exclude them from having to deal with the bureaucracy of government. In Egypt, the government has the ability to manipulate NGO activity by regulating their finances. Most NGO’s have international donors, and grants must be approved by the Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs.²⁷ Since the revolution began, the new government has had NGOs in a financial chokehold. According to news sources, organizations have had to lay off workers and delay projects. As reported, The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights laid off nearly half of its staff and the New Woman Foundation had not received a grant in a year and half when they won their appeal in February for a grant that was previously denied.²⁸

The critique of NGOs stated above emerges from the history of imperialism. Conservative groups view the West as trying to continue an imposition of cultural values of individual freedom, materialism, and secularism through NGOs while some liberals critique NGOs for the corrupting practices of buying-off elites and maintaining an underlying agenda of neo-liberal economic expansion.²⁹ The limits of NGO effectiveness to surmount tangible change

²⁶ Isla Jad, “The NGO-isation of Arab Women's Movements,” *Institute of Development Studies*, Vol. 35, Issue 4, October 2004.

²⁷ Kristen Chick, “Egypt quietly stifles NGOs by cutting off foreign cash flow,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 28, 2013, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2013/0228/Egypt-quietly-stifles-NGOs-by-cutting-off-foreign-cash-flow>.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Jad “The NGO-isation of Arab Women's Movements,” 2004.

are not solely exterior to the NGO. According to Jad, NGOs can never advance a fully-fledged women's movement because of their internal hierarchical structure, professional requirements for staff and board members, and the short-term nature of the projects that they implement which make these organizations removed from broader political and economic realities in society.³⁰

In a personal interview with Andrea Rugh, anthropologist and longtime advisor to USAID's education promotion in Egypt, she confirmed that bureaucratic restraints from both the U.S. and Egyptian government limit USAID projects in terms of time and scope. Rugh, often known to be a cultural relativist and critic of USAID, had this to say when I asked her what the program could do better, "My main criticism of USAID is that their process is often incompatible with development which requires time, long-term funding, and flexibility to be effective. I am not sure they can do much to solve these problems with congress breathing down their necks."³¹ The State Department's program rarely funds NGO's because of Egyptian government regulations but their focus for development since the 1970's has been heavily geared towards women. Rugh says that she believes women were receptive to these efforts until "mainstreaming" came along and women began to complain that their interests were being sidelined. My understanding of "mainstreaming," from Rugh's description, is the successive assistance agencies that began to follow the USAID model of focusing on "empowering women." Rugh finds the term "empowerment" itself problematic and warns against its use because the Arabic translation *quwi* implies an association with that which is masculine namely physical strength which many women do not relate to.

Singerman (2006) contends that the academic and activist analysis of civil society in Egypt, and MENA, has ironically overlooked the key and most obvious element of Egyptian

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Andrea Rugh. Interview by Amal Mimish. Personal Interview. Washington D.C. April 25, 2013.

civil society—the family and informal networks.³² She writes, “Notions of civil society that exclude the family have not only distorted the analytic utility of the term, but the character and meaning of political struggles in this region where family means so much.”³³ She urges scholars to incorporate the study of the family and informal networks, to best understand societal power dynamics in Egypt and the MENA region.

The Law: Quotas

Laws directly limiting women’s political participation are basically nonexistent. However, laws promoting women’s political participation have recently been dismantled and gender discriminating laws have indirectly disenfranchise. A 2010 amendment to Egypt’s 1971 constitution allowed for quotas to be established for women’s parliamentary representation. The new constitution no longer includes an option for gender based quotas. When the amendment was passed it controversially was done so with the backing of Suzanne Mubarak. The illegitimacy of the regime tainted this effort and it was not seen as a genuine push for women’s rights to political participation. Rather, the effort was perceived for what it was—a move to bring more NDP members into parliament in the face of the election of a large number of Muslim Brotherhood candidates who ran as independents.

Quotas, as a remedy for women’s underrepresentation, have been popular in the international community and in national agendas seeking to make historical leaps on the path to gender equality. This top-down approach however, does not guarantee societal change in gendered inequality and therefore cannot be a single resolution. Historically, top-down

³² Dianne Singerman. “Restoring the Family to Civil Society: Lessons from Egypt,” *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies*. Vol. 2, No. 1, Winter 2006.

³³ Singerman, “Restoring the Family to Civil Society: Lessons from Egypt,” 2006, 2.

approaches to remedying gender equality in the Middle East have often been recognized as a furtherance of patriarchal political systems that use the status of women to represent political agendas and keep women from actualizing individual and collective agency.³⁴

Yet many observers sight the elimination of quotas as a step backward for women. Rather we might ask how effective quotas are when they are not put in place by the will of women themselves. Matland (2006) finds that while reserved seats ensure access for women, a problem of legitimacy arises making it difficult for women to use power in the legislature because they are often not directly elected by the citizens who they are supposed to represent.³⁵ Women's underrepresentation is a symptom of a larger problem that illegitimate representation where women lack any real power in the legislature is hardly a step forward. If a genuine women's movement were to emerge that pushes for reinstalling quotas, this may be politically empowering and socially disrupting to the patriarchal order but until then it is questionable how effective can be in this context.

The law has been a focal point for women activists who hope to make gains in the struggle of gender equality. It is through the law that gender inequality is institutionalized and legitimized. Egyptian law including commercial, civil, and criminal, has been secularized since the late 19th century, except for laws affecting the status of women.³⁶ A number of legal gains have been made to advance the status of women. As a result of intense popular demand and pressure from women's rights organizations, female genital mutilation (FGM) was successfully outlawed and changes were made to Egypt's personal status law in 2000, giving women the

³⁴ Jenny White, "State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman," *NWSA Journal*, Vol.15, No.3, Fall 2003.

³⁵ Richard E. Matland, "Frequency and effectiveness of quotas," in *Women, Quotas and Politics*, Edited by Drude Dahlerup, Routledge. 2006.

³⁶ Nathan J. Brown, "The Rule of Law in the Arab World: Courts in Egypt and the Gulf," Cambridge, 1997.

unilateral right to divorce through what is known as the *Khul Law*.³⁷ Laws regarding FGM and divorce are essential to women's health, safety and financial independence. The current predominance of the Muslim Brotherhood in executive and legislative government has caused speculative fear about the rollback of women's legal progress.

Religion

The idea that progression in legislation pertaining to women is contrary to Islamic law is at the root of arguments that have held and continue to hold Arab countries back from implementing reforms. Mir-Hosseini (2003) argues that the essence of the Muslim religion is justice and that justice cannot be fulfilled without equality between the sexes.³⁸ She contends that the traditionalist interpretation of Islamic law, which has been state-sanctioned through the neo-traditionalist development, has been wrongly understood as God's divine rule of law when in fact it is only a scholarly interpretation.

Regressions to women's improved legal status or threats to gains already made are couched in religious rhetoric that can be difficult to counter because one is then arguing with God. But claims made in the name of religion should be investigated as to their legitimacy in Islam. *Shariah* law is a moral code and is the term used to refer to Islamic law. *Shariah* in Arabic means the "path to be followed." The Qu'ran is the main source for *Shariah* law but the Qu'ran must be interpreted by its readers because it contains general ethical guidelines rather than strict instructions. It is family laws and personal status laws that affect the status of women in Egypt

³⁷ Lama Abu-Odeh, "Modernizing Muslim Family Law: The Case of Egypt," *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law*, Vol. 37, 2004.

³⁸ Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "The Construction of Gender in Islamic Legal Thought and Strategies for Reform," *HAWWA*, 2003.

(and most of the MENA region) and for Muslim women, family and personal status laws have been the legal targets for reform for women's liberation.

Elections

From 2010 to 2011, the number of women who nominated themselves for parliament doubled but with the removal of the 2010 gender quota, women's representation went from 13% to less than 2%.³⁹ Building a constituency of supporters is crucial for political candidates and their success. A common way that potential female candidates have sought to build their constituency is through work that would classify as charity work and through the creation of informal welfare programs for people in need. The Muslim Brotherhood and other candidates have taken up similar strategies. As a result, the struggle for the vote comes down to which prospective candidate provides the most welfare; or potential supporters will accept charity without actually voting for the prospective candidate who provided it in the end. Poor Egyptians are especially susceptible to selling their votes.⁴⁰

Dalia Ziada was a parliamentary candidate in November 2011 for the newly formed moderate *Eladl* (Justice) Party. Although she did not win the race, she has remained dedicated to women's political empowerment and provides insights into what parliamentary candidacy entails. For Ziada, the decision to run itself was a difficult one to make. In a news article written the day before the elections Ziada wrote,

The decision to run for parliament was not an easy one for me as a human rights activist, a young revolutionary and above all a young woman who lives in a society that hardly accepts women in leadership positions.

...

³⁹ "Bringing Gender Justice to the Egyptian Parliament," 2012.

⁴⁰ Blaydes and Tarouty, "Electoral Participation in Egypt: The Implications of Gender for Voter Recruitment and Mobilization," 2009.

Of course, not all interpersonal interactions on the campaign trail have been positive ones. Over the course of my campaign, I have had to deal with death threats sent to my cell phone and filthy attempts by my rivals to distort my image by spreading false rumors about me, claiming that I am not patriotic enough because I work for an American non-governmental organization that I am not a devout Muslim because I encourage women to stand up for their rights, and because I am passionate about creating understanding and dialogue between the West and the Muslim world.⁴¹

This excerpt gives insight into the challenges that candidates face on the campaign trail in Egypt. This account may seem similar to what any candidate regardless of gender or country might face but for Ziada her gender was a factor to consider. But another issue for female candidates, is the placement of their names on the parties ballot list of candidates. Ziada says even her party placed her name far down on the list while the men's names were at the top which significantly impacts one's chance of getting elected to office.⁴² Tunisia has implemented a successful solution to the discrimination against women in terms of where their names are placed on the ballot which is the zipper-list rule which ensures that names on ballots alternate by gender.⁴³ Tunisia's system was attributed to their largest number of women being elected in the Arab world by the National Democratic Institute.⁴⁴ However, Tunisia has longer history of legally empowering women whereas Egypt been more conservative in this respect.

Liberal parties, such as the Free Egyptians Party and others from the National Salvation Front, who generally promote women's equal representation, have had recent difficulty in establishing constituencies. At a lecture I attended for this research at the Wilson Center called "Opposition Strategies," President of the Free Egyptians Party, Amr Hamzawy, remarked that liberal parties have been inactive for a long time before the uprising due to disillusionment.

⁴¹ Dalia Ziada, From Revolution to Parliament: A View from the Campaign Trail.: *Atlantic Council*, November 28, 2011, <http://www.acus.org/egyptsource/revolution-parliament-view-campaign-trail>.

⁴² Lourdes Garcia-Navarro, "In Egypt's New Parliament, Women Will Be Scarce, *NPR*, January 19, 2012, www.npr.org/2012/01/19/145468365/in-egypts-new-parliament-women-will-be-scarce.

⁴³ "NDI Tunisia Preliminary Election Statement," *National Democratic Institute*, October 24, 2011, www.ndi.org/files/tunisia-preliminary-election-statement-oct-24-2011.pdf.

⁴⁴ "NDI Tunisia Preliminary Election Statement," 2011.

Liberal parties are thus having difficulties with legitimacy and building constituencies, especially outside of Cairo, because people are not used to their agenda or even their rhetoric. By contrast, more religiously conservative parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood have been on the ground in these areas for a long time but according to Hamzawy “not necessarily in a democratic way.”⁴⁵

Statistical Analysis: GDP & Gender Gap Index (GGI)

Methodology & Hypothesis

Using the World Economic Forum’s GGI and countries’ GDP as reported by the World Economic Forum I produced a linear regression data analysis to attempt to find a correlation between the two sets of data. The GGI is a new index; it has been evaluated for the years since 2006 for 135 countries. My analysis will use all 135 countries.⁴⁶ The index is created to measure for a gender gap on a basis of resources available and therefore is independent of development indicators. It measures access to resources between the sexes within a country independent of the level of a country’s development.⁴⁷ The GGI is derived using a number of indicators including educational attainment, economic participation and opportunity, health and survival and political empowerment.

Education attainment is measured by the literacy rate, and enrolment in three levels of education those being primary, secondary and tertiary. Economic participation and opportunity is found using labour force participation, wage equality, earned income (adjusted for purchasing power parity), managerial and senior official positions and professional and technical workers.

⁴⁵ Amr Hamzawy, “Opposition Strategies in Egypt: How They Can Contribute to the Democratization Process,” Lecture, The Wilson Center, April 26, 2013.

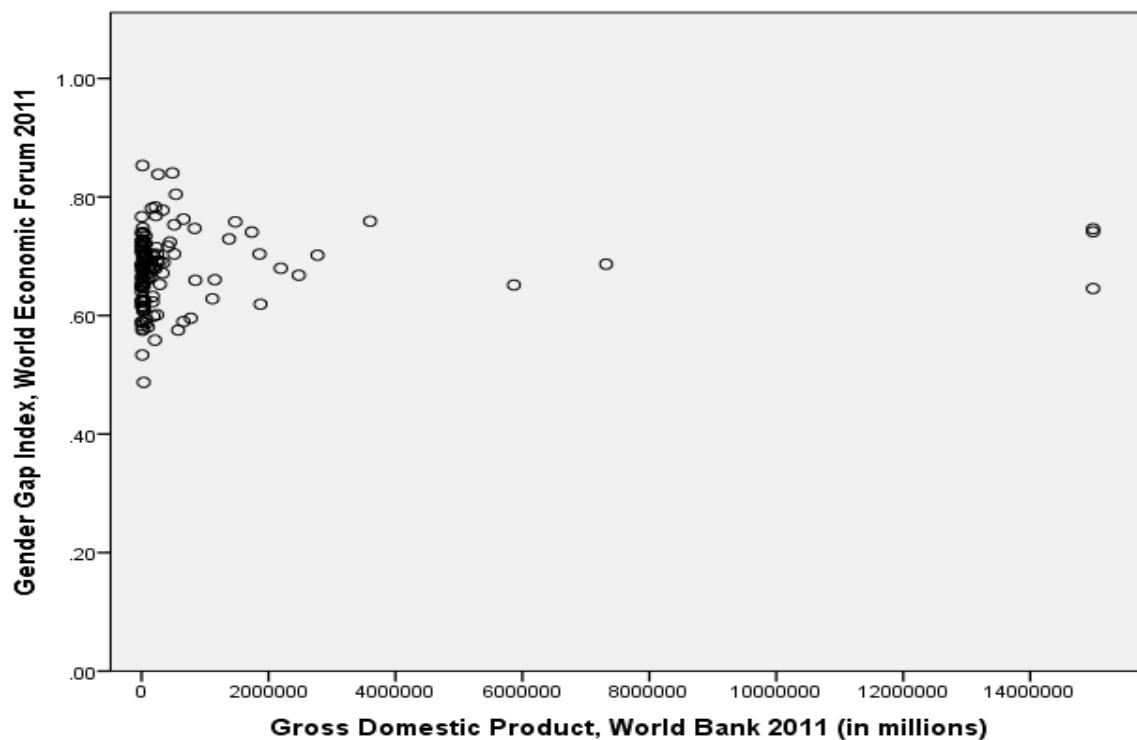
⁴⁶ Yasmina Bekhouche and Saadia Zahidi. “Users Guide: How Country Profiles Work,” *World Economic Forum*, 2012.

⁴⁷ Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson and Saadia Zahidi, “The Global Gender Gap Report 2011,” *World Economic Forum*, 2011.

Health and survival measures indicate sex ratio at birth and life expectancy. Finally, political empowerment evaluates women in parliament, women in ministerial positions and years with a female head of state. My prediction is that there will be a positive correlation between GDP and GGI meaning that an increase in GDP leads to a reduction in gender inequality as measured by the GGI.

Results

Both the correlation coefficients and significance tests indicated a near-zero level of correlation. Therefore, there is no evidence to support a relationship between GGI and GDP. This does not mean that conclusively there is no relationship, but it means that given the data, there is not any evidence to support a relationship between GDP and GGI and over the alternative that there is no such relationship. The graph below illustrates the results.



What can be learned from this is that a low GDP is not a direct indicator of gender inequality considering that countries with low GDP have a variety of GGI's. The graph fails to take into account population size and Egypt has a large population. But the number of countries with GDP hovering around the same area of GDP but varying levels of GGI may indicate that rather than high GDP, targeted policy that aims to eliminate gender inequality is what will change gender gaps.

While traditional opinions and ideologies are still prevalent, Egyptian society has been significantly modernized, primarily in urban areas. There are currently more women enrolled in university than men in Egypt.⁴⁸ According to the 2010 World Bank indicator, 24% of women aged 15 and older were active participants in the labor force;⁴⁹ this number is low. However, unemployment in Egypt is high for all genders and ages.⁵⁰ Furthermore, this indicator does not take into account Egypt's informal sector where many poor women find opportunities for economic empowerment.⁵¹

Correlations			
		GGI2011	GDP2011
GGI2011	Pearson Correlation	1	.103
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.234
	N	135	135
GDP2011	Pearson Correlation	.103	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.234	
	N	135	135

⁴⁸ "Arab Republic of Egypt: Gender Assessment 2010, Narrowing the Gap: Improving Labor Market Opportunities for Women in Egypt," World Bank: *Social and Economic Development Group Middle East and North Africa Region*, 2010.

⁴⁹ "Labor Participation Rate, Female (% of the female population ages 15+)," *The World Bank*, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>.

⁵⁰ "Unemployment, total (% of labor force)," *World Bank*, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS>.

⁵¹ Blaydes and Tarouty, 2009.

Conclusion

I agree with the declaration of Alwis (2013) that it is vital for women to be at the decision-making table as Arab countries rewrite and reform their constitutions.⁵² Women should have a role in building the laws of the nations' that they inhabit. Underrepresentation of women is a problem all over the world, so although I single out Egypt no woman should be satisfied in comparing her plight. What is crucial about the Arab region is the momentous power vacuum and opportunity for reform that the courageous popular uprisings have brought about.

Egyptian women's struggles are separated by class and living in poverty is one critical barrier to political participation and to political efficacy. Patriarchal culture also prevents women's political advancement. Women are not seen as natural leaders but rather as care-takers and preservers of the family—an essential part of Egyptian and Islamic values. Patriarchal culture also influences interpretations of Islam that have a justifying effect for women's place in the private sphere. The Muslim Brotherhood's conservative leanings have led to the dismantling of parliamentary quotas for women but we have yet to see if further disenfranchisement is in order. Weak liberal political parties do not help women's representation. Since these parties are most likely to field female candidates, their weakness limits the ability to effectively challenge societal norms by putting women at the top of their ballot lists. Women's representation is thus sidelined for what are perceived as more pressing issue of constituency building.

Furthermore, from the statistical analysis we see that an increase in GDP does not guarantee more equality for women politically or economically. This finding is significant for policy makers who tend to sideline the women's equality agenda with the argument that building

⁵² Ragita de Silva de Alwis, "Enhancing the Primacy of the Constitution, the Rule of Law, and Equality before the Law in the Arab Region, in *Women after the Arab Awakening*, Wilson Center Middle East Program, Winter 2012.

the economy is a higher priority and who claim that economic prosperity will bring about increased rights for women. Rather, these findings indicate that social policy specifically targeted at improving social, political, and economic gender equality are needed to reduce the Gender Gap Index. A fully fledged women's movement across class lines might be what Egypt needs.

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