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Democratization and Gender Inequality in Egypt

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By

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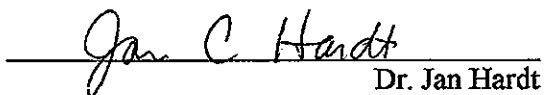
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Abstract

This thesis offers a qualitative interpretive case study of the condition of women's social and political roles in Egyptian society prior to and during their current transition to a legitimate democracy. It argues that without mitigation of the patriarchal structures shaping the ideological framework dominating Egyptian society, democratization will not succeed. Examination of both the orientalist and Islamist arguments regarding the incompatibility of democratic values in Arab/Islamic society reveals both their insufficiency at explaining the barriers keeping Arab society at the fringes of modernization and their contribution to the overall problem. In addition, investigation of these Islamist and orientalist theories demands the evolution of a more robust theoretical evaluation as to why democracy has remained largely absent in the region. Using international human development theory in conjunction with feminist theory, this thesis seeks to to show how intimately linked gender relations are to the progression or stagnation of a society. Specifically, how the patriarchal state, radical Islamist movements, and personal status laws have created a formidable opposition to the freedom and equality of women in both the public and private spheres. One obvious consequence of the sustainment of gender inequality as a social norm is a political and cultural atmosphere resistant to any legitimate attempt to liberalize society. Due to the lack of information on democratization from a gendered perspective, this paper will analyze data and theories pertaining to gender relations, human development and democratization in Egypt from the start of the Mubarak era in 1981 up to the Arab uprising in 2011. By interpreting existent generalizations from both international human development and feminist theories, this paper contributes a unique theoretical juxtaposition by which future researchers may analyze democratization.

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I. Introduction

Research Questions/Hypothesis

The central premise of this thesis is that without mollification of the extreme patriarchal ideology shaping social norms about gender relations, democratization in Egypt will be ineffectual. The research conducted in this case study is exploratory, as well as descriptive in nature. Its aim is to examine information and data on democratization and gender relations in Egypt collected between 1981-2012. Hopefully this research will lead to a more holistic understanding of gender disparity in Egyptian society, and potentially answer some of the questions surrounding the implication of gender inequality on the success of democratization. Specifically, what are the underlying causes of gender disparity within Egypt? Does a discernable correlation exist between gender disparity and the failure of democracy in Egypt? Moreover, what should the promise of democracy mean for the role and status of Egyptian women? These are the central questions addressed in this thesis.

Theoretical Framework

While both the qualitative and quantitative research conducted on transitional democracy is exhaustive, a majority of the data has neglected to include any substantive information regarding gender inequality's role in the democratization process. Due to the scarcity of research concerning gender inequality and democratization, this paper contributes to international developmental and feminist theories on democratization by presenting a thoroughly investigated case study of Egypt which explores the effects of democracy on the rights and status of women. Building on international development, modernization, multicultural and post-colonial feminist theories, this thesis seeks to reveal how fundamental cultural identity is in developing and

controlling gender relations and norms, and the role of those norms in determining a society's capacity for adopting any semblance of truly democratic reform.

Summary of Arguments

Survey data and human development indicators show that women living in Arab majority countries are disproportionately disadvantaged compared to women in other countries with similar educational background and economic development (Assaad et.al. 2007). The same sources suggest that the patriarchal paradigm, responsible for controlling sociocultural norms via religious and governmental institutions within Egyptian society, is primarily responsible for depriving women of the same developmental and normative opportunities as men (HDR 2005, 2011; Word Bank Report 2012). There is no question that men have always dominated the public and private spheres in Egypt, but it is important to note that gender imparity is by no means unique to Egypt or the Arab world. The exploitation of cultural norms as justification for denying women the same social and political freedom as men is not new.

Time and time again history repeats the same story whereby men dominate women, and women concede out of economic, sociopolitical, and/or cultural necessity. It was not until late into the 19th century that women in the United States gained legal reprieve from the constraints of coverture, and not until the mid 20th century that women in the United States or Great Britain gained full suffrage (Braukman et.al. 2000). Still, further analysis is needed to understand why women in Egypt remain one of the most disproportionately disadvantaged groups in the developing world. How has this phenomenon endured for so long despite liberalizing reforms and universal norms favoring gender equality?

Recent feminist scholarship has pointed to social constructs and cultural norms as responsible for the standardization of gender inequality (Lerner 1986; Phillips 2001; Majed

2005; Moghadam 2003). The implication being that cultural norms are instilled to justify the continued subjugation of women, most notably through "appeals to the authority of God, of custom and tradition... and of masculine authority" (Rizzo et. al. 2007). History suggests that during times of rapid modernization societies tend to resist normative changes, resulting in a shift toward conservative, even extremist ideology. There emerges a kind of "cultural dualism" where those in favor of cultural values like democracy, freedom, and women's rights are fighting against patriarchal forces determined to maintain the normative status quo (Majed 2005). Egypt is no exception.

Modernization, by definition, is the *progression* toward a more liberalized society; the implication being the establishment of a more advanced and egalitarian social structure. This definition has led some theorists to argue that modernization invariably leads to democracy and vice versa.[1] Due to the appeal of the values promised by modernization and democracy, there has been an expansion of democratic governments in countries across the globe since the 1950's (Huntington 1996). The universality of this phenomenon seems to suggest an overwhelming human desire to achieve a freer more egalitarian social structure. However, the notion of gender equity as a self-evident feature of democracy did not exist until very recently. Scholarship on democratization, heavily influenced by modernization theory, focused almost exclusively on economic development as indicative of a country's progression (Inglehart and Norris 2000; Lipset 1963; Przeworski et. al. 2000). Even in the rare instances when other variables were used to measure the advancement of society, gender equality was frequently, if not always absent (Kuhn 2011).

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[1]Lipset pointedly argued, "all the various aspects of economic development, industrialization, urbanization, wealth, and education are so closely interrelated as to form one major factor which has the political correlate of democracy." (Lipset 1994)

International development theory argues that while measuring a country's economic and technological progress is important, it is far from sufficient. Human development is equally as vital to the implementation of democracy and the modernization of a state (Moghadam 2003; Hatem 1992). This notion is reiterated by international development theorist and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Amartya Sen, who argues, "the central objective of development is not income growth, industrialization, or employment *per se*, but capabilities in a much broader sense, defined in terms of what people are actually able 'to do' and 'to be', or the substantive freedoms – the capabilities – to choose a life one has reason to value" (Sen 1999: 74). This paper adopts a similar definition of development and argues that democratization is unachievable without broadening the definition of progress to include the right to personal dignity, equality of opportunity, and freedom from harm for women[2] as well as men.

An adversarial relationship has always existed between modernization and cultural tradition within the Arab world; however, this contentious relationship reached its peak in Egypt in the beginning of the 20th century. In the early 1980's[3] issues addressing gender norms, especially those regarding women's social and familial roles, grew increasingly politicized, highlighting the polarizing effect of modernization. More importantly, it illustrates the use of women as the litmus test for determining a society's moral vigor with the 'moral authority' (i.e. the patriarchy) equating the purification, obedience, and piety of women within society with cultural supremacy. Unfortunately, while women are pressured to abide by certain cultural norms in order to fulfill their role as the standard-bearers of a 'virtuous' society, they are concurrently deprived of many fundamental public and private rights, rights enjoyed by a vast majority of

[2] While the need to advance equality for minorities within Egypt and across the globe is immensely important, the scope of this paper is limited to the analysis of gender equality.
[3] See, Development Report Office Cairo, Egypt, 2006.

their male counterparts most of whom are not required to maintain anywhere near the moral stature expected of women. This paper argues that the politicization of gender and its perpetuation of social, political and economic parity was driven most vehemently by two incidents: the revival of Islam as a political and cultural force in Egyptian society, and the Mubarak regime's rollback of important women's rights in an attempt to reestablish state legitimacy by assuaging Islamist groups (Moghadam 2003). In order to portray this argument, this paper sides with and builds on international developmental feminist theory, and addresses the validity of multi-cultural/post-colonial, orientalist and Islamist theories in arguing against democratization in the Arab world, with the emphasis on Egypt as the case study of analysis.

The remainder of this section will examine the theoretical reservations about whether or not democracy can or should exist in Arab/Muslim majority states, specifically the orientalist and Islamist perspectives. It will look at post-colonial, multi-cultural, and developmental feminist theories concerning gender relations and democratization; specifically, focusing on the contentious relationship between cultural identity and universal norms. This section will close by addressing the state's role in maintaining the suppression of women in both the private and public spheres by upholding personal status laws, and failing to implement the explicit as well as implied right to equality derived from the letter and spirit of the constitution, and the likely repercussions it has had on the democratization process in Egypt. The potential effects of the recent uprising on women's social and political roles are also considered.

The second section examines relevant literature and research on international developmental and post-colonial feminist theories regarding the case of Egypt, including the presentation of information and data from numerous qualitative and quantitative studies taken between 1981-2012, where data is reasonably available, regarding the social, political, and

economic status of women from all classes in Egyptian society. Data analysis will offer empirical evidence to underscore the subjugation, domination, and marginalization of women in Egypt, the consequences of which have effectively halted the democratization process. Section three describes the methodology used by the survey data conferred in this paper. Section four offers a qualitative analysis of the data provided by the surveys, ethnographies, and interviews addressed in the previous section. In conclusion, there will a discussion regarding possible policy implementations at the state level and normative changes that could be made in private and public spheres to positively induce gender parity and the legitimation of democracy in Egypt. This is namely the importance of human development via gender-conscious democratization in a way that respects cultural identity and national sovereignty.

II. Islam and Democracy

America does not presume to know what is best for everyone, just as we would not presume to pick the outcome of a peaceful election. But I do have an unyielding belief that all people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed; confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice; government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose. Those are not just American ideas, they are human rights, and that is why we will support them everywhere.
 - Barack Obama, Cairo Speech June 4, 2009

Many articles and countless hours of research and theoretical inquiry have resulted from the Western[4] world's fixation on the dynamic relationship between the seemingly incompatible concepts of democracy and Islam. Theoretical generalizations from many Western academics (Huntington 1993; Lewis 2003; Lipset 1994; Inglehart 2000, 2004; Moghadam 2003) have argued that the potential implementation, cultivation, and survivability of this particular symbiosis is highly improbable in the Arab world. This is because of what they argue is the inherent incompatibility resulting from the contradictory nature of the ideals espoused by democracy versus those endorsed by Islam. The previous statement begs the question, what makes democracy so much better than other systems of government? Indeed, there are many political systems in existence; however, the decision to promote democracy as superior to others is due to the fact that it serves to reinforce and promote liberalism, a philosophy based on the notion of equality, toleration, pluralism, and individual liberty within a political framework.

While the definitions of democracy are manifold, for the purposes of this paper, democracy is seen as a process by which all eligible citizens are given equal opportunity to participate collectively in the development and implementation of policies and laws affecting their lives. This democratic process, in turn, is the mechanism through which principles espoused

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[4] The term "Western," for the purpose of this paper, is used in reference to the concept of the West as a monolithic civilization & culture denoted by its free market capitalist economy, Freedom of religion, and pluralism; this includes the United States, Canada, the U.K. and most of Europe (among others).

by liberalism are perpetuated. It is important to underscore and acknowledge that this philosophy is far from perfect, and its Western origin undoubtedly makes it susceptible to egoism. Nevertheless, the arguments presented in this paper hinge on the notion of equality between the sexes and this epistemological foundation is arguably well suited to introduce the ideal of equality into a non-democratic, authoritarian society.

Whether or not Egyptians choose to adopt holistically the concepts advocated by liberalism is up to them; in fact, democracy has proven an extremely fallible, unreliable institution of inequality, and even a breeding ground for autocracy, e.g. Latin America (Waylen 1994). Nevertheless, the process is not to blame for the faults of humanity. The notion of collectivism is merely logical; it has the potential to provide the necessary tools to institute equality, whether or not these tools are used to achieve that end is where the uncertainty lies. What is certain is that all modern systems of government were created by the patriarchy, for the patriarchy, and the only way to elicit a more equal society is by reevaluating gender relations. Having adopted a Hobbesian stance on human nature, this paper asserts that because humans are notoriously self-interested and resistant to change, it takes the institution of an organized, legal framework from which to engage, deliberate, and implement policies that support the freedom and rights of all citizens equally.

Determining how those freedoms are defined is dependent upon context, i.e. the history, religion and culture of the people in question. What is essential is not that a society blindly adopts a Western interpretation of freedom or democracy, but that the universal values espoused by democracy —the importance of human life, the fundamental role of pluralism and the inclusion of all factions of society in the discussion and formation of normative values—become the framework from which the unique historical, political and cultural milieu of that society

operates. This point is eloquently summarized by John Stuart Mill in his speech before Parliament in 1867, in which he argued "I am convinced that social arrangements which subordinate one sex to the other by law are bad in themselves and form one of the principal obstacles which oppose human progress; I am convinced that they should give place to a perfect equality" (Stuart-Mill 1825).

Democracy does not lead to equality, nor does equality lead to democracy; rather, people create a social construction of normative behaviors that in turn instill or repulse the notion of equality, liberty, civil rights, and protection. This paper does not suggest that Egypt must adopt a purely Western understanding of democracy or democratic ideas, but it does suggest that the only way for a society to progress is through the mutual respect, toleration and equality of opportunity of all citizens; concepts that are central to liberalism and democracy. Having adopted the premise that the values espoused by democracy are universally desired and democratic governance universally recognized as a legitimate system of rule, I remain unconvinced that Islam is incompatible with liberalism. A person is more than capable of being a devout Muslim who respects the rights of others to adhere to an alternative set of beliefs. The issue lies in the socialization and enculturation of patriarchal predominance and indiscriminate authoritarianism by the state. Religion has been nothing more than an exploitative mechanism of control by the upper echelons of the government and society.

Nevertheless, the idea that Islam is ideologically irreconcilable with democratic values like egalitarianism, surfaced most notably following the (in)famous article "The Clash of Civilizations?" by Samuel Huntington, and remains one of the most controversial theories to address the democracy deficit in the Arab Middle East (Huntington 1993). The problem with this

culturalist or as some have challenged, "orientalist[5]" generalization is its tendency to incite a dichotomy of 'us versus them'' (e.g. secular/religious, West/East, good/bad, moral/immoral), something that has resulted in a kind of self-righteous and egocentric interpretation of democracy and its compatibility with Islam. While *dēmokratia* may have originated in the West, we do not have a monopoly on its defining features. That has been an ongoing democratic process in itself for more than two millennia. Illustrative of the orientalist's oversimplification of the causal factor for the lack of democracy in Islamic states is the fact that despite Huntington's argument that Islamic culture's clash with Western democratic values render them unable to grow and develop, the two fastest growing economies today are Islamic democracies: Turkey and Indonesia. Seven others are in Africa (Zakaria 2012). Developmental and multicultural/post-colonial theorists further criticize the orientalist argument, condemning them for their Western egoism and insistence that all cultures structure their values in accordance to Western standards (al-Ali 2000; Said 1979; El-Saadawi 1997; Sen 1999). This argument will be more fully evaluated in the next section.

Still, many "orientalist" and developmental scholars continue to subscribe to the notion that Arab/Islamic ideologies are intrinsically incompatible with Western democratic values, but why? Of course a number of factors contribute to the authoritarianism pervading Arab/Islamic countries like Egypt, the breadth of which is outside the scope of this paper; however, several studies conducted in an effort to find potential causes contributing to the Arab world's resistance to liberalization appear to reinforce the notion that gender inequity correlates to the lack of liberal democracy in the region. Entranced by the staying power of authoritarian regimes in the

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[5] Edward Said first used the term "orientalist" to describe Western scholars who study and make assumptions regarding Middle Eastern culture, he argued that their views were "inextricably linked to imperialist and colonialist ideals" and did not accurately represent the Arab or Islamic culture. Said, Edward. 1978 *Orientalism*. Vintage Books: New York.

Arab Middle East, scholars have spent decades postulating as to why the so-called "third wave of democratization" (Huntington 1993) has yet to reach Arab countries (Fish 2002; Stepan et. al. 2003; Talbi 2000). Nevertheless, whether adopting structural or normative epistemologies, the majority of scholarship on the failure of democracy in the Arab Middle East tends to focus on religious and cultural norms, and their natural antipathy toward the principles espoused by liberal democracy, including conflicting and conflating viewpoints about the propulsion of women's rights in the region (Abu-Zayd 1998; Huntington 1993; Inglehart and Norris 2003; Lipset 1990; Rizzo et. al. 2007).

What the Orientalist's argument fails to recognize is how blinded they are by their own conflated ideals about who and what are capable of adopting and sustaining a democratic government. Unfortunately, this mentality is not only self-defeating, but it also neglects that democracy is a process, a mechanism by which a government may adapt and evolve into a more egalitarian structure. Amartya Sen made this point in his article dispatching Samuel Huntington's orientalist assertions regarding the inability of Arab nations to democratize:

> Throughout the nineteenth century, theorists of democracy found it quite natural to discuss whether one country or another was "fit for democracy." This thinking changed only in the twentieth century, with the recognition that the question itself was wrong: A country does not have to be deemed fit *for* democracy; rather, it has to become fit *through* democracy.... It [democracy] cannot be disposed of by imagined cultural taboos or assumed civilizational predispositions imposed by our various pasts. (Sen 1999:3).

Studies conducted by Inglehart and Norris use the "position of women, and attitudes toward sexuality" within Arab society as representative of the cultural indicators of "tolerance and egalitarianism", finding that "Muslim nations have remained the most traditional societies in the world", especially in relation to gender equality and women's liberation (Inglehart and Norris 2003: 65-67). As a result they argue that Arab societies have been unable to sustain democracy.

Another similar study conducted by Steven Fish, measured using the Freedom House Index, looked at why Arab states are so resistant to democracy; his findings suggest that gender inequality positively correlates to the lack of democratization in Arab states (Fish 2002).

Fish concluded that "women's status is, on the whole, inferior in Muslim societies and this factor appears to account for part of the link between Islam and authoritarianism" (Fish 2002: 5). While undoubtedly informative, these studies fail to recognize what an important factor culture is regarding the status of women. Religion may play a transitory role, but cultural socialization is the primary reason for the recurring gender inequity and lack of democracy. Culture represents the shared historical experiences of people as they are reflected in institutions and practices (Zakaria 2012). More importantly culture is malleable; it changes. Therefore, the cultural norms within Egyptian society can and must be reformulated to accept and appreciate the significant role of women in the public and private spheres (Zakaria 2012). It will take a systematic restructuring of state and social institutions as well as normative re-socialization in order for a truly democratic brand of Islam to prevail in Egypt.

Egypt is home to the founding fathers of one of the largest, most influential Islamist movements in the world, the Society of the Muslim Brothers (الإخوان المسلمون اع٥), more frequently referred to simply as the Muslim Brotherhood. Started by Hassan al-Banna in Cairo in 1928 and popularized with the help of Sayyid Qutb, the Brotherhood was founded on a platform calling for "the establishment of an "Islamic order" based on strict conservative and traditional interpretations of the Quran and the Sunna" (Rosefsy-Wickham 2011:174). This leads to the second generalization regarding democratization in the region, the argument espoused by Islamists. In discussing sociocultural evolution and the arguably entropic role of modernization, one would be remiss not to reflect on the Islamist ideology and its seemingly emphatic resistance

to it. First, it is important to define political Islam, or Islamist ideology, so that there is no conflating the fact that there is no such thing as a monolithic Islamist philosophy; rather, there exist several variants under the same rubric. Mohammed Ayoob provides the most succinct and practical definition of political Islam as "a form of instrumentalization of Islam by individuals, groups, and organizations that pursue political objectives....using concepts borrowed from the Islamic tradition" (Ayoob 2008:2).

This definition encompasses a broad spectrum of political and ideological thought; however, the problem lies less with moderate adherents to this philosophy, and more with the extremist faction's antipathy toward democratic values. Nevertheless, realistically speaking, while reconstruction of the cultural narrative shaping normative behavior is undoubtedly possible, custom and culture are not easily altered. The fact remains that, as with the Bible and Torah, ideals espoused within the Qur'an plainly violate fundamental democratic values, among them "restricting the civil and political rights of women and religious minorities" (Rosefsky-Wickham 2011:172). The more fundamentalist factions completely dismiss the very notion of democracy, seeing it as a blasphemous and adulterated import of Western imperialism. It is their [fundamentalists] belief that democracy absolutely does not and cannot reconcile with Islam or the ideal Islamic state; for them, Allah alone has authority over the moral and political realms. When undemocratic ideals like these influence the beliefs of leaders who in turn shape the normative behavior of society, there is no hope for equality or liberalization, only perpetuation of the same patriarchal authoritarianism (Sabbagh 2007).

Following years of authoritarian repression and economic collapse, the societal and political influence of conservative Islamist movements like Salafism, Wahhabism, and the (more moderate) Muslim Brotherhood (MB) have grown exponentially. This point was made clear by

the recent election of a long-time member of the Muslim Brotherhood and self-proclaimed Islamist, Mohammad Morsi, earlier this year. The politicization of Islam, coupled with increasing public support and unprecedented political power of Islamist groups like the MB over the last decade have caused alarm among secular and religious minorities. Following the ouster of Mubarak and the democratic election of Morsi, as well as the Brotherhood's sweeping victory in parliamentary elections, those concerned about the implication for democratization following the election of Islamists to power looked to the previously published party platform of the Brotherhood for insight. The platform revealed a rather conservative and undemocratic set of beliefs aimed at marginalizing women and minorities. Not surprisingly, secular and religious feminists throughout Egypt found its stance on women disconcerting, and a significant threat to the already fragile democratization process.

On the issue of women running and/or holding the office of president, the Brotherhood's platform stated its belief that "the burdens of presidency must not be placed on a woman's shoulders – any more than supervising and leading the army – since they contradict her nature and the rest of her social and humanitarian roles... [p. 103]." The platform continues by insisting that the way to "ensure equality and equality of opportunity is to grant the woman all rights due to her in a way that does not undermine basic values in society [p. 23]." While emphasizing "equality between men and women in terms of their human dignity," the platform cautioned against "burdening women with duties against their nature or role in the family" (Muslim Brotherhood Party Platform MBPP 2007: 23-25, 103). This excerpt reveals more than a movement's political views it substantiates the notion that socialization is not simply the continuation of cultural tradition but a potent political force. Clearly, even an all male, widely popular, and politically powerful movement like the Brotherhood is well aware of the influential

role social norms play and the immense authority wielded by shaping and controlling those norms.

Discussion of the MB's party platform in light of the Arab Uprising is significant because it exemplifies one of the many ways that contemporary culture has begun developing and interacting with a modernizing economy and society, whilst colliding with conservative religious tradition (Ayoob 2008; Mustafa 2007). No where is this more apparent then with Islamists' use of the very system of governance they have traditionally deemed fundamentally incompatible to their beliefs in order to ensure that they are involved in the political discussion. The Brotherhood's desire to maintain such a staunchly patriarchal paradigm, despite its gaining freedom from the constraints of that oppression with the help of thousands of women, and as a result, actively engaging in a genuinely democratic process [elections] for the first time in Egypt's history, illustrates quite well the overt gender inequality pervading the social structure in Egypt. In short, the transition from conventionality to modernity is not easy, but Islamists' willingness to embrace democracy following the toppling of the regime strongly supports the argument that social mores do not exist in a vacuum; traditions and beliefs can be changed.

Nonetheless, evolution of civilization has been a gradual and nuanced process subsequent in part from our inclination toward conformity in an effort to avoid conflict. Much of this conformity results from the power derived from a central authorities (be it driven by state or religion) monopoly over customs, reforms, and overall normative behavior (Weber 1946). This allows the authority to determine what it deems culturally acceptable, which has historically been expressed as the locus of control or coercion used to limit the political and social mobility of the 'other' (women, minorities, political adversary). This tactic has been consistently and

disproportionately executed to subdue women repeatedly via patriarchal subjugation (Lerner 1989; El-Saadawi 1997).

That said there has been an ongoing evolution of ideologies all of which are at odds about how to correctly democratize their country (Mustafa 2007). Following the recent transition they have all been trying to make their voices heard and their needs met. Ranging from Islamic fundamentalists to moderate Islamists to secular feminists, there has been an ongoing ebb and flow between which ideological thought should dominate; however, many Arab intellectuals (Badran 2009; Cook 2012; Mustafa 2007; Sabbagh 2007; Majed 2005) have argued that while ideological polarization contributes to the stalled progression of many vital issues, among them improvements to the rights of women, it is pluralism that makes democracy so appealing. As long as there is an open dialogue, a legitimate forum and legal systems in place to ensure equality of opportunity for all, then diversity in opinion between various coalitions should be encouraged not scorned.

Unfortunately, the more orthodox and conservative veins in society have refused to concede to notion of compromise when it interferes with their ideological beliefs. They have determined that modernity equates to Western domination, and according to mainstream Islamist thought, they must rid their society of Western culture's adulteration and restore their state to its purist and holiest form, the Caliphate (Sharabi 1988; Ayoob 2011; Euben et. al. 2009). Considering the rise of more moderate Islamist thought, including Islamist women who have been advocating the use of *ijtihad*[6] abjure the notion of equality of opportunity for women, with many Islamist women publically renouncing the quota system and calling for its elimination (this wish came true after the ruling military SCAF abolished the quota system for women in 2011).

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[6] Ijtihad is the personal interpretation and examination of religious text to construct an argument for women's rights within an Islamic framework

Behind their opposition to the quota system was the belief that it discriminated against men and was not representative of true 'equality' this line of reasoning parallels those who argue against the retention of affirmative action in the United States. Furthermore, while Islamist women openly advocate women's rights, they do not question gender inequality in the private sphere (Badran 2009).

Nevertheless, there are many Muslim women who support gender equality in the private and public spheres while remaining 'loyal' to their religious beliefs. Advocates of this up and coming Islamic feminist coalition provide a great example of the compromise needed for democratization to succeed. While some argue that Islamic feminism is an oxymoron, their mission to coalesce religious fidelity with gender equality is extremely admirable. Islamic feminists offer an alternative interpretation to teachings about gender equality and women's rights within the Qur'an and Hadith. These women deplore the patriarchal exploitation of Qur'anic teachings in order to establish inequality between the sexes in the form of personal status laws, etc. Unfortunately, ethnographical studies, and survey data reveal how taboo feminism is conceptually as well as semantically. A fact that proves problematic for women vying for gender equality. Scholars Margot Badran and Nadje al-Ali have found that women who advocate for gender equality avoid being labeled feminists like the plague; this is due to its connection to Western feminist movements. As a result, the very concept of feminism provides Islamist extremists with ammunition to combat any attempt by Muslim women to contest the status quo; for if they do they are quickly labeled as Westernized interlopers (Badran 2009; al-Ali 2000).

The idea of willingly submitting to whatever political and social roles patriarchal society deems fit is difficult for an American liberal feminist to swallow; however, viewing the situation

subjectively and egotistically can be more of an encroachment on the rights of other women than an act of liberation. From the various ideologies existing *within* Islam presented above it is apparent that ideological homogeneity does not exist within Islam; therefore, consideration should be made for the diverse ideological differences among Muslims regarding women's rights. The cultural, religious, and political disagreements between so-called 'Western' and 'non-Western' or Arab women can be vast. The next section addresses the philosophical and epistemological arguments informing both the multi-cultural/post-colonial and universalist/cosmopolitan theories regarding democratization and gender inequality.

III. Multi-cultural and Universal Feminist Critiques

"The central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics, that determines the success of a society. The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself."
- Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Family and Nation (1986)

To reiterate a summation of the above argument, this paper is not suggesting that the only egalitarian ideology worth replicating is that of Western liberalism. In fact, liberalism as a concept is cumbersome and should be left to the state's society and political system to determine what merited features to adopt and which ones need cultural alteration. One society cannot merely thrust its ideological interpretations of a concept onto another; this implies moral and political supremacy, a notion with decidedly imperialist undertones. Nonetheless, there is a fine line between a sovereign nation's ethnocentrism and universally applicable human rights. While moral relativism is an important and valid perspective, there exist certain moral imperatives essential to the health and success of society; gender parity is one of them. This section intends to further address this argument.

Universalism and cultural relativism have been hotly disputed and popular topics of contention between postcolonial and liberal feminists over the years. While a culture is best understood by those internally engaged in it, there is also something to be said for universalism. It is difficult to argue entirely for one approach over another they are both important to developing a full understanding of women's issues and gender oppression across different cultures. The problem with cultural relativism lies in the fact that those actively involved within the culture in question are blinded by their own internal biases and may not be able to recognize certain injustices happening around them or even personally happening to them. Universal ideals are also problematic in that they imply a special understanding of what should be deemed just versus unjust behavior and that connotation is usually derived from the beliefs of whatever group

holds the most power (Phillips 2001). Because each society represents a different cultural and historical context, it is extremely important that those holding the most power and thus shaping universal norms "must always be regarded as open to contestation, reformulation and change" (Phillips 2001: 3).

No matter what it should always be assumed that the best way to establish egalitarianism and adopt an ideal of justice as defined by each society according to its cultural and historical context, is to include all "relevant groups" in distinguishing social principles and policies (Phillips 2001: 3-4). If no one is left out of the policy making process the likelihood of successfully capturing an equally representative cultural dynamic is greatly increased. Even then, it is always necessary to evaluate and criticize any behavior a culture deems 'normative' that seems universally contestable. The attempt by men to single-handedly shape and define the normative structure of society is unacceptable, which is why it is still important for the international community to monitor and criticize those cultures who leave half of their society out of the decision making process.

There is no society, Western, or non-Western that is the ultimate authority on what is universally acceptable normative behavior. Principles of justice and equality must be evaluated from a contextual and historical perspective. Still, the most obvious way to respect another society's culture, while ensuring that justice and equality are held up as pillars within that society, is widespread inclusiveness and participation (Phillips 2001). This is not to say that there is some democratic threshold a society can meet to become the all-inclusive utopia. In fact, quite the opposite is true; reaching a fully functioning, fully inclusive democracy is not a realistic goal. Rather, reaching for the establishment of a democracy that is what Anne Phillips calls "good enough," is more than noble (Phillips 2001).

Where many liberal feminists assert a more cosmopolitan ideal of the world and the application of human rights within it, post-colonial/multicultural [7] feminists adopt a multidimensional stance that embraces ethical relativism (Tong 2009). Post-colonial feminists (Mies 2009; Tonga 2009; al-Ali 2000) argue that there is a need to emphasize the differences that exist between so-called "third world" and "first world" women; the issues they face and the adversities they must overcome are so vastly different they cannot be thrown in with an all-encompassing universal definition of feminism. Cultural diversity is what makes humanity unique, embracing an identity defined by another society simply because it claims ethical superiority would be to deny your social origins and denounce your cultural individualism.

Such an act, according to post-colonial feminists, would unjustly propagate Western society's false sense of euro-centric self-righteousness. Ensuring that Western women understand that non-Western cultural traditions are equally as important and relevant to the lives of non-Western women, no matter how foreign or unseemly they appear is of the upmost concern for post-colonial feminists. That said, while post-colonial feminism emphasizes the importance of individualism and differences amongst women of varying cultural backgrounds, many realize that cultures "cannot be excused for traditions that wrongfully harm" or disavow other people (Tong 2009).

This makes cultural relativism seemingly contradictory; however, most post-colonial feminist theory's preoccupation with cultural relativism reflects a concern for retaining individualism while still understanding that although women share many global issues they do so in different contexts. Recognizing that not all women (Phillips 2001; Tong 2009) experience

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[7] The generalizations proposed by multicultural and post-colonial feminists regarding democratization are viewed as complementary and will therefore be used together throughout this paper.

"gender inequality to the same extent or degree" is a pivotal aspect of post-colonial theory; nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that women in "virtually all societies" are subjugated and treated as a "second sex" compared to their male counterparts. Be it the fight for women's political and civil rights or the fight for basic economic and social rights (e.g. human needs like food, shelter, clean water, and medical care), the latter of which are typically faced by non-Western women, people must unite while remaining respectful of the varying struggles people each face as individuals (UNHDR 2005, 2010; Tong 2009).

Post-colonial feminism argues that a major pitfall of liberal feminism is its tendency to project a sense of superiority and importance to the cause of civil liberties, independence, and freedom whilst trivializing a woman's right to shelter, clean water, food, and medical facilities (al-Ali 2000; Tong 2009). Depending on the cultural context some women may find the notion of limiting their role within the private sphere disconcerting and antithetical to their understanding of freedom. Many non-Western cultures, including Arab culture, view the family unit as the crux of society; they do not covet the notion of individualism on the same level as Westerners. Nevertheless, it is the responsibility of all women to strike a balance between (Tong 2009) liberal universalism and cultural relativism all the while maintaining a unified front against inequities that promote gendered subjugation. No matter where their differences may lie, it behooves women to "achieve unity in diversity" and at the same time avoid "losing sight of all commonalities" to the point of extremism (Tong 2009). For instance, Western women must accept that their cultural legacy includes a history of colonialism, a travesty that has played a major role in the deprivation and humiliation of other cultures.

Therefore, people must work to project moral objectivity rather than projecting a sense of cultural superiority. At the same time, while the promotion of diversity and difference can be

socially beneficial, when taken to the extreme, cultural relativism can be equally as harmful as the 'Westernized' universalization of morals. Throughout human history societies have deemed --be it by law, code, testament, or commandment-- certain behaviors taboo. While taboos vary depending upon the social and political context, globalization has created a succinctly interconnected world wavering between diversity and uniformity. Still, there is global acknowledgement and/or acceptance that certain conduct is universally unacceptable; no matter the context some cultural traditions are cruel and inhumane. Those traditions are not to be endorsed simply because they are "authentic" features of a culture; rather, they are to be criticized and denounced (UNHDR 2005; Tong 2009; El-Saadawi 1997).

Criticism of inhumane treatment or economic, social, and political inequality is not inauthentic or treacherous. Instead, it makes you a human being fighting for the right to survival and betterment. The issue is not so much a matter of maintaining a cultural identity, as it is the acceptance of generations of theoretical, epistemological, and philosophical ideals shaping and influencing that identity. When it comes to basic human rights and responsibilities, irrespective of how each culture chooses to interpret or wield them, the protection of certain inherent universal human rights and responsibilities are a necessity regardless of gender, race, creed, or color. Without the universalization of social, economic, and political equality of opportunity, a civilization cannot truly flourish.

Women may not experience inequalities on the same magnitude as other women; nevertheless, women all over the world confront many of the same obstacles daily. Namely, women "throughout the world tend to have not only less sexual freedom and reproductive choice than men have but also worse socioeconomic and health status" (UNHDR 2005, 2010;Tong 2009; World Bank 2003). Having the opportunity and ability to influence policy decisions is

fundamentally important for women. In order to challenge the status quo and successfully implement changes that directly affect their economic and social standing within a given cultural setting there must be the political inclusion of women. Without political and civic representation by women, the continued abandonment of the issues most directly affecting them such as healthcare, reproductive, sexual, and personal freedoms is certain. The exclusion of women and women's issues is not always one of malice; nonetheless, in a society predicated on patriarchal supremacy, such is the unfortunate consequence. Therefore, it is up to women to demand social and political inclusion in order to contribute to the policy decisions affecting them and their families. One example of the importance of policy decisions on the lives of women can be seen in the "democratic" United States where more women died in childbirth during World War I than did American men from the actual war (Kristof and WuDunn 2009).

However, following the passage of the 19th Amendment granting women[8] in the United States the right to vote, the pool of voting constituents expanded greatly prompting the male dominated Congress to begin directing resources to maternal health (Fathalla 2006). In fact, according to a case study conducted by *Clinical Obstetrics & Gynecology*, between the 1920's and 1940's the "mortality rates plunged" (Fathalla 2006). It appeared as if the lives of women suddenly became important and "enfranchising women ended up providing a huge and unanticipated boost to women's health" (Kristof and WuDunn 2009). This example reiterates one of the countless reasons that women in Egypt must ensure that they too have a place within the new government during this delicate transition. If the government intends on adopting similar provisions on the unyielding equality of its people, it is imbued with a responsibility to protect the equality of all of its citizens in an even handed manner; including "refraining from

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[8] See, http://www.censusrecords.com/content/1920_Census - Women made up 45.8% of the U.S. population in 1920.

discriminating between citizens" (El-Sherbini 2005). After all, the most well intentioned theoretical rights and freedoms are less than worthless unless made manifest. Rights simply cannot "be granted to all people, and duties imposed upon them without mechanisms of control" (El-Sherbini 2005).

One such mechanism is a quota system requiring a minimum number of women in parliament. Reinstitution of the quota system until a time when women's involvement in political activity is no longer violently reproached but accepted is necessary if a culture of equality is going to be engendered into a society so deeply entrenched in patriarchal dominance. Women face a medley of sociocultural pressures and obstacles that undermine their political and human rights and freedoms. This is a notion steeped in the cultural belief that "men are superior and better suited to wielding economic authority by working outside the home......while a woman's identity is based on motherhood and her role in the home" (Sherbini 2005). Still, many post-colonial and global feminists (Tong 2009; El-Saadawi 1997; Sharabi 1988; al-Ali 2000) do not share in the same ethical or cultural framework as Western feminists and therefore resent Western feminists' treatment of their beliefs or desires as a universal whole.

IV. Gender Relations and the Egyptian State

"Fear is a social or collective experience rather than an individual state. But it is more than this — it is also a morality play and a product of the power relations that shape the moral codes of everyday conduct as well as those of international affairs"
- Rachel Pain, The New Geopolitics of Fear (2010)

Despite recent setbacks for the rights of women, Egypt does have a rich and robust history of women's movements dating back to British colonial rule; there is also a history of state support for women's political, economic, and social rights. This is a political strategy scholars have dubbed "state feminism" (Hatem 1992; Moghadam 2003; Pratt 2005). This state-led initiative went into effect following the Arab socialist and nationalist revolution under Nasser (Hatem 1992). State feminism was largely a result of the new socialist and Arab nationalist agenda implemented by Nasser after the 1952 *coup d'état* in which Egyptian's regained sovereignty from the British. It describes a state- mandated program, in this case one instilled by the Nasser regime, whereby the government made a concerted effort to remove the "structural basis of gender inequality" through employment and the institution of personal status and political rights for women (Hatem 1992; Sharabi 1988).

Women's legal and economic rights were greatly expanded under this new social welfare program. According to the historical comparative research conducted by the United Nations in the 2005 *Arab Human Development Report*, the inseparability of nationalism and feminism for Egyptian women was a determining factor in the shift in gender inequalities within the governmental paradigm. This was apparent during the numerous foundational policy changes that took place after the nationalist revolution against the colonial power of Britain in 1952, during which time women sought changes alongside their male counterparts with little gender specific opposition. In 1956 women gained the right to vote, the ability to become elected

officials, as well as championing the defeat of several personal code laws surrounding a woman's right to divorce, inheritance, and citizenship (Badran 2009).

There is no denying the positive benefits that the new state feminism provided for many women, including Law number 14 of 1964 which promised jobs in the public sector for all people who held a diploma or college degree, regardless of gender. In addition, there were labor laws implemented to help safeguard women's rights in the labor force, and a guarantee of fifty days of paid maternity leave (Hatem 1992; Human Rights Watch, 2002). For Nasser, the expansion of women's rights under state feminism served to legitimize his regime and its newly implemented policies aimed at modernizing the country. Nevertheless, this economic and political expansion of rights only went as far as the public sector, making the women who benefited completely interdependent on the state for economic security.

After Gamel Nasser's death in 1970, Anwar Sadat began a transformation of the country by implementing economic and political policies in stark contrast to Nasser's Arab nationalist and progressive socialist policies. His institution of the *Infitāh*, or 'open-door' capitalist policy and overall economic liberalization of the state, created a fundamental shift in the political, economic, and cultural ideology of the country (Cook 2012). While state feminism undoubtedly expanded the educational and economic opportunities for all women, the liberalization of the economy only helped a minority of upper class women while severely undermining "the prospects of lower-middle class and working-class women" causing a significant strain on and ideological fragmentation within the women's movement (Hatem 1992:231). The state's emphatic revocation of support for women's public equality was especially pronounced after the regime began working to mend its relationship with several Islamist groups in order to build a more conservative coalition to back the new open-door policy. Subsequently the regime

proceeded to crack down on the secular and socialist groups within the country, including women's organizations and NGO's, by evoking Article 2 of Law number 32 of 1964[9].

One of the most famous examples of state suppression of women's organizations occurred in 1982 with the politically driven disbandment of the Arab Women's Solidarity Association (AWSA), instituted and led by the famous Egyptian feminist Dr. Nawal al-Saadawi[10]. Sadat's regime began its reconciliation with Islamists by releasing many who were imprisoned under Nasser. They also ordered a complete purge of Nasserites from within the government. According to fieldwork conducted by Mervat Hatem, "these policies were identified with the development of conservative social, economic, and political systems that were hostile to state activism, in general, and state support of women's public equality" (Hatem 1992:231). The result was a steady rise in Islamic extremism and a rather stark shift toward a hard-lined conservatism within Egypt, much of which was the result of the conservative atmosphere encouraged by the Sadat regime to combat Nasserites and other leftist activists.

However, Sadat would come to regret his decision to appease Islamists following the assassination of the Minister of Religious Affairs in 1977 by a violent off-shoot of the Muslim Brotherhood called *Jama'at al-Muslimin*, or the Muslim Society (Cook 2012). Such a blatant challenge to the states power meant the end of the regime's campaign of peace and political solidarity with Islamist factions (Hatem 1992; Cook 2012). Dissolution of the state's coalition with several prominent Islamist groups was finalized after the regime began actively seeking support from secular groups. This was Sadat's attempt to reestablish political legitimacy using

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[9] "Government officials could reject a group's creation, its board candidates, and board decision-making for unspecified reasons. Officials could dissolve or amalgamate any groups at any time" (Human Rights Watch, 2002).
[10] See *Human Rights Watch*, "Egypt: Court Upholds Closure of Women's Organization," available at http://www.hrw.org/reports/1992/egypt/.

the same factions he so eagerly sought to eliminate following his ascent to power. The initial attempt to reclaim legitimacy was made through political reform of overtly discriminatory personal status laws addressing the rights of women. Among them, laws addressing women's right to divorce, the custody of children and polygamy (Hatem 1992; Badran 2009).

Sadat did not pursue a campaign to reform personal status laws in an attempt to help progress the rights of women (although as a consequence it undoubtedly helped expand those rights). Rather, by using women's rights as a platform for democratization, Sadat hoped to establish a more secular anti-Islamist political coalition. He needed to swing the political pendulum back to the ideological center/left, to those he initially fought so hard to remove as influential allies. In 1979, Sadat passed a series of presidential decrees aimed at reforming personal status laws. These laws became known as "Jihan's Law", named for his wife Jihan Sadat (Bernard-Maugiron 2010).

They included: the right of women to the family home following a divorce, the right of a woman to be notified before her husband decided to take on another wife, and a new interpretation of the law stating that the man's decision to marry a second wife caused "harm" to the first wife giving her the right to file for divorce pending her husband's marriage to the second wife (Bernard-Maugiron 2010). While these changes may seem minimal considering they in no way outlaw polygamy, religious and secular men alike viewed them as radical and actively worked to repeal the decree (Hatem 1994). Nonetheless, Sadat took the matter a step further with the adoption of law no. 21 of 1979 via presidential decree setting aside reserved seats for women in parliament (Sayed 2005; Mustafa 2009).

Adoption of a quota system made manifest Sadat's desire to increase the participation of women in political life in an effort to improve Egypt's image within the international community

and regain legitimacy at home. For Egypt was poised to become the beneficiary of a large annuity from the United States following Sadat's signing of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979, provided there was a concerted effort to liberalize Egypt. Egypt needed to improve its image within the international community and succeeded in doing so by appearing more democratized[11] in its treatment of women. Sadat's efforts paid off. According to the Pentagon, aid has been provided to Egypt in exchange for its geostrategic and political support in fighting terrorism and maintaining peace with Israel[12] since the signing of the treaty in 1979. Already angry about the recent liberalization of women's personal status laws, Islamists become enraged by Sadat's support of Western foreign policy, especially regarding peace with Israel; as a result, Sadat was assassinated by an Islamist extremist in 1981 and succeeded by Hosni Mubarak that same year.

Although many obvious strides were taken by Sadat to ensure the diffusion of women into public and political activity, the suppression of Islamists reached an obvious boiling point and Mubarak conceded judicial authority to the Supreme Constitutional Court, which led to the immediate revocation of the quota system as well as the revised personal status laws pending the adoption of Law no. 188 of 1986 and Law no. 145 of 1988 (Bernard-Maugiron 2010; Mustafa 2007; Sayed 2005)[13]. The Supreme Constitutional Court declared the laws unconstitutional, citing Article 8 of the 1971 constitutional provision declaring "the principle of equality for all citizens" (Bernard-Maugiron 2010).

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[11] Studies suggest that a majority of authoritarian countries institute more liberal laws regarding women's rights in order to posit a more democratic façade and improve their standing in the international community. See, *United National Development Program* (UNDP), 2003. See, <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2003>.; *World Development Report* (WDR) 2012.

[12] See, http://gbk.eads.usaidallnet.gov/data/files/us_military_const.

[13] In 2010 then President Mubarak reinstituted the quota system to guarantee women would hold 64 of the 518 seats; this law was recently overturned by the SCAF military power following the ouster of Mubarak and the dissolution of parliament in June 2012.

Ironically, despite the all-male court's argument that the decree promoted the unequal treatment of others by guaranteeing women a fixed number of seats in parliament, the cultural, social and political gender inequality inherent in the system is well-established in Article 2 of the Constitution. Article 2 states that "Islam is the religion of the state and the principles of the Islamic Shari 'a are the main source of legislation". The interpretation of the Shari'a is dependent upon the all-male Supreme Constitutional Court whose sole influence is the cultural and tribal understanding of personal status laws. As many of the laws deliberated on are not found within the religious text and those that are were written in a social context unbefitting the modern era, i.e. women are guaranteed equality so long as that equality does not interfere with the patriarchal paradigm (Article 2, Egyptian Constitution 1971). Despite this, Mubarak argued that Egypt had been undergoing democratization since the death of Nasser.

Through historical and textual analysis, historians (Foucault 1966; Kuhn 1962) attempt to trace the evolution of certain beliefs and practices within a society. They do so by recognizing the value of subjectivity and cultural context for interpreting and gaining insight into the development of certain social phenomenon (Kuhn 1962). Having used elements of historicism to gain insight into how and why Arab and Islamic cultures like Egypt's chose to adopt a gender hierarchy, some feminist scholars (El-Saadawi 1997; Lerner 1986; Waylen 1996) argue that archeological and historical evidence suggests that gender inequality's cultural genesis occurred after it became socially institutionalized within ancient slave societies[14]. Established in tribal, nomadic, heavily male-oriented cultures, Abrahamic religions (e.g. Judaism, Christianity, Islam) were naturally at odds with the notion of egalitarianism. The result (El-Saadawi 1997; Lerner

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[14] See, the Code of Hammurabi

1986) was the widespread acceptance of gender discrimination as a normative practice within all of the Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.[15]

Regarding Islam itself, the early goddess figure plays a prominent role in the story, especially within ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian societies. Some feminist scholars argue that the presence of the goddess is evidentiary support for the existence of matriarchal societies or at the very least a more dominant role for women before the advent of Islam (El-Saadawi 1997; Lerner 1986). Dr. Nawal El-Saadawi discusses the great respect and equality bestowed upon women in early Islam because of the Prophet Muhammad's sincere conveyance of God's love for all of humanity equally. She does this by citing numerous examples from which the Prophet insists, through both action and word, upon providing women the same social respect and legal freedoms as males, i.e. marriage and divorce (El-Saadawi 1997). Nevertheless, there are numerous gender inequities that contradict the aforementioned examples and are either present in the Qur'an or have been interpreted and advocated by Islamic leaders over the centuries.

One such example is that nowhere in the Qur'an does it support or oppose the use of contraception; however, many Muslims believe that the Qur'an does in fact denounce the use of contraception because of their personal ideological understanding of the passage *"You should not kill your children for fear of want"* (Qur'an 17:31, 6:151). In addition, there are several instances in the Qur'an where women are clearly granted certain rights, such as the right to inheritance; however, through patriarchal interpretation "the share of a woman was later defined as being half

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[15] This is not to say that many other major and/or minor religions escaped this fate. Most religions across cultural and naturally barriers tend towards patriarchal dominance and gender inequality. The focus of this paper is on Egypt thus Islam will be focal point of any religious discussion. Also, it is important to note that while all three religions practice gender discrimination, they do so at varying degrees depending upon context and culture.

that of the man" (El-Saadawi 1997). Yet, anthropological and sociological studies suggest that this particular norm is likely connected to earlier tribal culture and its patriarchal traditions toward women regarding property (al-Ali 2000; Badran 2009; HDR 2005). In addition to property rights, there are other gender inequalities that exist in Egyptian society that are not necessarily related to Islam itself; rather, they are connected to earlier ancient tribal norms. These oppressions include: forced veiling, polygamy, and vaginal circumcision among others (Badran 2009; El-Saadawi 1997).

The exploitation of women is not a new phenomenon. It is an age-old tradition that has been well documented in all three Abrahamic religion's holy texts and/or teachings. In discussing the nature of Islamic fundamentalism and gender inequity, it is important to bring to light the neglect by many to acknowledge the universality of fundamentalism; it is not an exclusively Islamic enterprise. There is an abundance of fundamentalism in all of the major religions. Many Christian fundamentalists in the United States and around the world actively campaign for more oppressive measures restricting women's rights; i.e. repealing laws on abortion, not allowing female clergy (El-Saadawi 1997). In their research, both El-Saadawi and Gerda Lerner assert that all fundamentalists, whether "Christian, Muslim, Jewish, or otherwise – are partners in the attempt to breed division, strife, racism and sexism," and that their oppressive close-mindedness only helps to further the socioeconomic deprivation caused by neocolonialism (El-Saadawi 1997: 23-25; Lerner 1986). This point is driven home by the fact that Islamists are often pitted against left wing or Marxist groups by regimes in an effort to divide and conquer. This tactic was seen with Sadat's use of Islamist coalitions to combat Leftist Nasserites in the 1970's and later the use of secularist groups to combat Islamists (El-Saadawi 1997; Cook 2012).

This unfortunate reality has been ingrained and repeated cyclically for centuries by both men and women. Simply put, the indisputable truth is that patriarchal societies are not conducive to gender equality. Therefore, it is not only imperative that men and women be educated about the social, economic, and political benefits of adopting a more progressive democratic system that impels gender equality throughout society, but that a new normative framework permeate the private as well as the public spheres. In order to achieve such a tall order, a new cultural narrative must be written and transmitted throughout society. A recently published article for the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) describes data collected over a five-year study of women's political participation in the MENA region. It states how "on paper in many states, women are declared to be citizens, but there are many social rights and benefits that remain inaccessible to women except through the medium of the family".[16]

This article articulates perfectly how vital the home is to the realization of gender equality. Both socially and domestically, the home is the heart of Arab culture, and the family the "main unit of society" (Sabbagh 2007). The role of women in Egyptian society is made clear in Article 11 of the 1971 Constitution which "considers women as the sole responsible party for the family and moves away from considering the family a mutual obligation of men and women (Bernard-Maugiron 2010). Sadly, the suppression of a woman's right to move freely between the public and private spheres due to the inherent gender inequality espoused by cultural norms defining women as mothers, wives and homemakers adversely affects men as well.

Because personal status laws are not codified in Egypt, and are simply interpreted by the Supreme Constitutional Court and its resulting case law in accordance with Shari'a and tribal laws, (i.e. patriarchal normative frameworks), "divorced fathers almost never retain custody of

[16] United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), 2004. *Progress of Arab Women 2004*. Amman: UNIFEM Arab States Regional Office.

their children and are granted visitation rights only three hours a week, in a public space. They have no right to residential visits by their children" (Bernard-Maugiron 2010). Therefore, one cannot underestimate the important role that women, the primary inhabitants of the private sphere, play in re-writing the narrative. This is why women must overcome their ideological differences in order to stand united on the most fundamental and rudimentary human rights issues affecting them all. Only through unification, motivation, and dedication will women be granted the educational, civic and political opportunities publically that are so intrinsically necessary to defeat a deep-seeded patriarchal paradigm privately.

Amal Sabbagh sheds light on the transition from "traditionalism to modernism" underway in Egypt and the sociopolitical and cultural obstacles hindering its completion (Sabbagh 2007). One of the primary issues at hand is the patriarchal predisposition toward undemocratic ideals, much of which influence their beliefs regarding women and minorities, that in turn shape the normative behavior of the society (Sabbagh 2007). When looking at factors that potentially lead to the exclusion of women and the perpetuation of gender inequality, a categorical distinction can be made between factors originating from the public and private spheres; with personal status laws representing the private sphere, and the public sphere encompassed by the government and its political appendages, society and social norms (Sabbagh 2007).

Data suggests (UNHDR 2005, 2010; UNIFEM 2004; WDR 2012) that the progression of a society is measured according to the role of women in that society, the implication being that neither genuine political democratization, nor social advancement is possible without the full contribution and participation of women. Modernity itself hinges on the very notion of equality and the inclusion of all in the educational, political, social, and economic spheres of society.

Society must unite to advance the rights of women by increasing their social mobility and educational opportunities, as well as their political participation, i.e. more representation in political parties, as well as governmental positions in the judicial and executive branches (Mustafa 2007; Donno et. al. 2005). Through political inclusion and participation women can regain control over their personal status rights in the private sphere.

V. Literature Review

Over the last few decades, support for the Islamist ideology has been on the rise throughout Egypt, a notion that some find indicative of the Clash of Civilizations theory espoused by Lewis and Huntington (Lewis 2003; Huntington 1996). However, democracy must be viewed as a universal concept that reaches across cultures, religions and ethnicities. While there are numerous theories generalizing about democratization in Islamic states, they fail to consider how vital gender equality is to the core values espoused by democracy and the intrinsic necessity to include women in the political process. Institutional definitions of democracy not only fail to consider classic liberal definitions, but they inadequately address many of the issues raised by feminist theorists, especially the incorporation of a gendered perspective. Feminist theorists argue that this omission of a gender perspective inevitably leads to gender inequality in society. Francine Deutsch defines gender inequality as the socially constructed development of differences that "legitimate discrimination and inequality based on sex category" (Deutsch 2007: 133). Given these definitions, it is easy to assume that any theoretical analysis of democratization that does not include a gendered perspective lacks validity as that analysis is not technically democratic (Waylen 2005).

Sylvia Walby lays out her theoretical contribution to the issue of gender and democratization using a qualitatively framed poststructuralist analysis of gender mainstreaming (Walby 2005). Invoking the theory of gender mainstreaming, Walby introduces an alternative conceptual framework from which to analyze gender inequality within the sociopolitical system. It is a subset of the overall feminist theory, in which social scientists attempt to uncover what policies/procedures best mediate the transition or inclusion of gender equality within the overall social, political, and economic paradigm. This new theoretical construct emphasizes policies that

promote a gendered perspective from which to grow a more equal social construct in order to reevaluate the concept and practice of democracy to include gender equality (Walby 2005).

Research conducted by the United Nations using sixty civil society leaders in eighteen different countries, Egypt among them, attempted to instill policy and civil society initiatives promoting gender mainstreaming into society (UNHDR 2005). The data reveals that democracies act as political incubators for women's rights and gender equality by slowly introducing progressive modes of political expression. This makes the introduction of gender mainstreaming a bit more palatable within the democratic context. Despite the clear advantages that democracies provide women, the transition from autocracy to pseudo-democracy in no way alleviates the countless issues women face in an effort to gain equal footing both politically and socially to their male counterparts. Workshop participants in Egypt's study sited a massive void in the public role of women in society and the need for them to "build their presence and capacity in public decision making" as a primary obstacle in their battle against power politics (U.N. News Centre 2011). In Egypt, the UN Democracy Fund (UNIFEM) has been funding a watchdog organization in an effort to ensure that women are granted access and freedom to participate in the political system[17] (U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon 2011). After all, having a more genuine representation of the population will help to establish principles and rights that are more reflective of that population rather than merely a reflection of the male majority.

Data presented by Teri Caraway in her historical comparative analysis entitled "Class, Gender, Race, and the Extension of Suffrage," she sheds light on the historical importance of political policy on gender equality. Caraway poses the question: "at what time did early

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[17] *The United Nations News Centre* (2011). See <http://www.un.org/news/>, "Remarks at Roundtable on Gender Equality and Democracy [As Delivered] by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon." 4 May 2011.

democracies extend voter participation to include all citizens?" (Caraway 2004: 444). She then analyzes and compares the historical timeframes when industrial countries claimed to be democratized before and after the adoption universal suffrage. According to Caraway's research, early Western democracies neglected to include women as equal citizens until long after the acceptance of suffrage for all "white male citizens" (Caraway 2004:446). As a result of her historical comparative analysis Caraway discovered evidence that the introduction of women's suffrage within these early 'democracies' completely changed the political equation, as well as the variables considered relevant to explaining democratization (Caraway 2004). Caraway's analysis is reinforced by the research conducted by Mahmoud Fathalla in his study of "Human Rights Aspects of Motherhood" in which he showed how the maternal death rate plummeted following the extension of universal suffrage to women in the United States (Fathalla 2006). A direct result of Congress' new found interest in policies benefiting women's health, an issue it had previously ignored (Fathalla 2006). Whenever women are included in the democratic process and they actively pursue policy goals, their presence is felt and they have the ability to institute changes.

Unfortunately, while many women are granted constitutional rights in Egypt, cultural socialization puts a stigma on women's participation in politics which in turn leads to a "lack of awareness" by women "concerning their legal rights" and/or an unwillingness to participate due to cultural norms (UNHDR 2010: 103). As a result, of the more than 14,000 interviewed in the Survey of Young People in Egypt (SYPE) less than 1% of young women "participated in volunteer work and only 11% voted in a previous election" (UNSYPE 2010: 93-94). Clearly, universal suffrage alone is not sufficient for instituting gender equality; re-socialization is necessary to combat the cultural inequality ingrained in society. Universal suffrage, now

considered a prerequisite for a country wishing to herald the epithet democracy, suggests progression within institutional democracy toward a visible form of gender equality.

Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris present a myriad of variables that continue to contribute to the lack of gender equality despite the institution of universal suffrage in Egypt. In their article, "Cultural Obstacles to Equal Representation" Inglehart and Norris provide several explanations for why gender inequities have persisted regardless of the universal trend toward democratization (Inglehart and Norris 2004:126). They begin their study by measuring women in political leadership as their dependent variable. They also had "socioeconomic development, proportion of women in professional and managerial occupations, electoral systems based on proportional representation, and the predominance of traditional attitudes toward gender roles" acting as their structural, political, and cultural independent variables (Inglehart and Norris 2004:126).

Inglehart and Norris' study uses both survey and aggregate data from 191 countries, including Egypt, to compare how cultural and traditional beliefs coincide with the "advancement of women in political office" (Inglehart and Norris 2004). Using data from the World Values Survey, Inglehart and Norris show a strong correlation between a state's support for gender equality in the political sphere and "the society's level of political rights and civil liberties" (Inglehart and Norris 2004). While societal support for gender equality is only one element affecting the cultural changes leading to democratization, Inglehart and Norris' findings suggest that "cultural variables show statistically significant effects" on women's political representation (Inglehart and Norris 2004: 8). Many theorists fail to pay attention to the important roles that policies and culture have on gender inequality when analyzing democratized countries; therefore,

it is important to determine how these inequities affect society, as well as why they emerge in the first place.

In his article "Inequality, Democratization, and De-Democratization," Charles Tilly argues that inequality manifests itself in some categorical way in all societies and has throughout history (Tilly 2003:37). Such a conjecture is neither profound nor surprising, but what Tilly asserts regarding the inevitable involvement of all governments, whether communist, Islamist, or democratic, in the "production of inequality" seems rather antithetical to the romanticized version of democracy shared by many in the West (Tilly 2003:37). Tilly further theorizes that a government's role is in essence, to "sustain the inequality already built into property and existing forms of social organization" (Tilly 2003). Regardless of the potential implications of such a theory, if faced with choosing among autocratic regimes, despotic leaders, or democracy, democracy, purporting to convey the most humane and liberalized ideology, wins popular support every time. Tilly focuses on finding a causal connection between democratization and inequality using a comparative method. He associates other regime types to democracies using five measures: governmental capacity, breadth, equality, consultation, and protection (Tilly 2003). Still, like other scholars who have contributed rich and revolutionary theoretical works about democratization and inequality, Tilly's work fails to recognize the importance of conducting thorough analyses concerning gender inequality and democratization.

One way that women's rights activists and NGO's within Egypt have been trying to instill gender equality in the public sphere is through an ongoing campaign to reinstitute the quota system thereby reinforcing the concept of equality of opportunity and equal representation of women within Parliament. According to the 2012 World Bank Data Report[18] on *Gender and*

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[18] World Bank Data on Gender and Development (2012) http://databank.worldbank.org.

Development, while Egyptian women make up 49.8% of the population and 37% of the electorate, they hold less than 2% of the positions in parliament. Faced with these results it is necessary to adopt a *temporary* measure (like the quota system) to compensate for the immense gender gap in Egypt's political structure. Although briefly reinstituted in 2009 and implemented in 2010, the quota system has for all intents and purposes been out of use since its 1986 revocation, and the number of women elected or appointed to parliament has yet to exceed or even match the number elected during the quota system's operational years (Mustafa 2007; Sayed 2005). Several Arab feminist scholars (Sayed 2005; Majed 2003; Sabbagh 2007) historical analysis of women's political participation in Egypt over the last several decades suggests that the nominal percentage of women represented in parliament versus the substantial percentage of women making up the country's population and electorate is paradoxical.

Interestingly, there has been a steady rise in the number of women registering to vote, with 1.56 million women registered in 1975 to an astounding 11 million registered in 2004, (Mustafa 2007; Sayed 2005) or around 37% of the total electorate. Although the increase of voter registration for women is positive and has undoubtedly "led to tangible progress" in the political situation for women, women's participation in politics is still greatly obstructed by cultural norms (Sayed 2005). Survey data from the 2010 Human Development Report as well as extensive interviews conducted by Margot Badran and Nadje al-Ali show that many in Egypt, both men and women, argue that the quota system is unfair and promotes biases against men (al-Ali 2000; Badran 2009; UNHDR 2005). Those in favor of this argument suggest that the removal of the quota system allows for an even playing field and equal opportunity for all. Unfortunately, this utopian mentality does not pair up with reality. The data shows a disconcertingly large gap in the number of male versus female participants in parliamentary elections, political parties, and

as candidates for public office; this includes both national and local demographics (UNHDR 2005).

Despite the negative views of the equality of opportunity provided by the quota system, the Human Values Report led by the PEW Research Center in 2011, conducted a large-scale survey throughout Egypt asking the Muslim population what they thought about democracy and Islam (see Table 1). The results showed that over 71% of those surveyed had a "continuing desire for democracy" (PEW Research Center 2011). The same sample was equally as supportive of key features of democracy such as freedom of speech (60%) and free and fair elections (58%), a fair judiciary (81%), and uncensored media (62%) (PEW Research Center 2011). Nevertheless, there is still very little attempt to reinstitute the quota system in order to help eliminate gender bias and promote equal opportunity within the political system, a notion inherently contradictory to democratic values. Also, when asked how they felt about gender equality 58% of those surveyed felt more needed to be done to implement gender equality in Egypt. This is a seemingly contradictory outcome considering that 100% of those asked said that a woman should not be allowed to run for president (Pew Research Center 2011).

Due to the cultural stigma tied to gender equality, especially regarding women's participation in politics, civil society takes on an extremely important role for women. Survey data collected from Freedom House and the World Values Surveys reveal that women's political participation and representation in the legislature, local councils, and political parties remain consistently low to non-existent. The marginal role women have played in Egypt's political sphere is obfuscated by the fact that they have played a significant part in Egyptian civil society. An influx in women's participation in civil society is due to many exogenous factors, among them: globalization, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's), and women's groups (UNHDR

2005; SYPE 2010). Over the last several decades, the globalization of so-called universal human rights has created a paradigm shift within the larger international community and its willingness to accept other countries blatant disregard for women's rights.

This has heightened the pressure on governments like Egypt to institute visible safeguards protecting the rights of women by increasing their participation in the political system. International insistence on human rights for all people has benefited the cause of women in Egypt by pressuring the government to make a visible effort showing its dedication to furthering the cause of women, and minorities. One such manifestation was the government's creation of an organization for women. The National Council for Women, created by the Egyptian government in 2000, has created a platform from which women may participate in public life, increase their political awareness, and extend their educational opportunities (Majed 2005)[19]. Civil society is extremely important and plays a fundamental role by helping to keep a democratic system healthy and legitimate.

In order to better understand how civil society helps to achieve gender equality and democracy in Egypt, an evaluation of a case study by Bineta Diop regarding the women and civil society in Egypt was conducted. Bineta Diop discusses the historic milestone reached in July of 2004 in which the African Union (AU) adopted the *Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality* (SDGEA). The adoption of SDEGA is a huge accomplishment for women and gender equality. It advocates the implementation of gender mainstreaming as a necessary mechanism to help reach the goal of gender equality throughout all of Africa. By insisting on gender equality in the AU as

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[19] The National Council for Women allows women to express themselves, and encourages them to enter public life. This has created an influx in public participation and has led to an increase in political awareness by women (Diop 2004).

well as at the national levels, the SDEGA has helped encourage women to join the public sphere as equals (Diop 2004).

Data gathered from case studies conducted throughout Africa regarding the gender mainstreaming and gender equality agendas suggest that without the overwhelming support and dedication of NGOs like the one Diop is affiliated, *Femmes Africa Solidarité* (FAS) and other civil society organizations, the adoption of the SDGEA would likely never have occurred (Diop 2004). Together, civil society organizations can be a powerful and effective lobbying force for gender equality, as long as their message and long-term goals remain unified (Diop 2004). With the formation of the AU and its self-proclaimed mission to "building partnerships between governments and civil society, encouraging solidarity, accelerating socio-economic development and achieving peace, security and stability[20]", NGO's like the FAS became embedded and began lobbying for gender mainstreaming and gender equality in the MENA region (Diop 2004).

Using a strategy of diligence, coordination, and unification of vision, more than forty NGOs came together to ensure that gender mainstreaming was a priority on the AU's agenda, and that after the SDGEA passed that the AU and all African heads of state followed through with the implementation of its core policy strategies (Diop 2004). The persistence was rewarded after the AU announced that it was setting up "an internal expert group" to determine what areas within Africa were most crucially in need of gender mainstreaming (Diop 2004). The expert panel joined forces with several heads of state to discuss policy strategies that would help guide African nations toward greater gender equality. The subsequent product was the *Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa* (Diop 2004). It included provisions on the promotion of gender equality in the AU and on the national levels, and for ratification of the Protocol to the

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[20] *See* African Union website, available at http://www.africa-union.org. 17 July, 2012.

African Charter on Human and People's Rights, on the Rights of Women in Africa, and the protection of women from violence and discrimination in the private and public spheres (Diop 2004). While the enormous efforts of the NGOs, local civil society organizations and UN agencies cannot be understated, grass-roots organizations, like the local women's groups who participated in helping push for the AU's acceptance of a gender mainstreaming agenda, must get involved and work together toward a unified vision of gender equality (Diop 2004).

Getting an abstract non-authoritative organization like the AU to adopt gender mainstreaming is monumentally important and historic; however, declarations alone do not ensure results. Without the cohesive, vigilant, and focused dedication of NGO's, civil society organizations, and local grassroots movements working together toward a single unitary cause, gender mainstreaming will never happen. The patriarchal power over society and government will not easily be rendered; only a unified and focused force stands a chance at having its voice heard. There is no better time to get the gender mainstreaming and gender equality agenda incorporated into the government apparatus than during a transitional period when the political script is literally being rewritten, as is currently the case in Egypt (Diop 2004). If anything, Diop's case study of the AU's adoption of the SDGEA provides clear qualitative evidence that "civil society agendas can be transformed into government priorities," as long as those organizations fighting for a cause remain coherent and united in their efforts (Diop 2004).

Still, maintaining a unified front is difficult when dealing with numerous organizations each representing a diverse and wide-ranging set of ideals and strategies. Nevertheless, while logic and rationality alone should sway even the greatest of cynics, evidence from countless case studies conducted in South America, Eastern Europe and Africa all suggest that "governmental bodies are more likely to listen to organized, cohesive civil society campaigns than to disjointed

ones" (Diop 2004; UNIFEM 2010; UNDEF 2010). With so many different sociopolitical and economic inequities plaguing women in Egypt, the thought of cohesively unifying numerous groups with varying ideological or political motivations is daunting.

However, survey data taken from the United Nations Arab Human Development Reports in 2002, 2005, and 2010 suggests that there are specific issues that join women together. These include: violence against women, property rights, and quotas while unification on issues such as reproductive rights and economic rights are far more difficult to achieve (UNIFEM 2010; UNHDR 2002, 2005, 2010). Still, whether directly or indirectly, all of these issues affect the lives of women in some way. Thus, they have the potential to act as the motivating force uniting women in the fight for gender equality within Egypt. Recognition of the universality of these issues is the primary reason for the recent politicization of women's rights by international organizations like the UN. International pressure coupled with the spread of democratic reform across the globe was fundamental to the Egyptian government's decision to implement so-called 'state feminism'. Its implementation was an important contribution to "the progressive image of the state" (Hatem 1992: 232).

State feminism, as was previously discussed, refers to a government's concerted effort to improve the lives of women in the public sphere by increasing their political participation via the implementation of quota systems or by passing legislation favoring women's healthcare or personal rights. This is not to say that the Egyptian government has opted to perform such deeds out of pure altruism or benevolence; rather, it has acted out of political strategy and would just as soon recoil those benefits if the change in the political tide favored doing so. The most prominent influences in favor of rescinding progressive legislative sanctions for women include those of a tribal or Islamist vein. Nonetheless, there is no denying how much those fleeting bouts of state

feminism have propelled the feminist cause by increasing women's participation in government over the years. For instance, while still in place, the mandated quota system in Egypt ensured that women were granted a greater share of seats in Parliament and thus more equal representation of their needs. As Table 2 illustrates, the participation of women in the Egyptian parliament is embarrassingly low[21]. While some men and women argue that quota systems are biased and unfair, in reality, the cultural dynamic has rendered the equal participation of women in the government impossible.

Logically, the only way to help compensate for the extreme gender bias inherent in Egyptian culture for hundreds, even thousands of years, is the instillation of mechanisms that provide equality of opportunity for women in the public sphere such as the quota system. Quota systems hold those in positions of political power accountable by forcing them to recruit women and include them in the political process from which they have been knowingly omitted (Dahlerup 2004).[22] Unfortunately, even with the successful implementation of a quota system and other 'state feminism' initiatives, there are still countless personal, familial, and cultural obstacles that Egyptian women must face in the private sphere before gender equality can ever be achieved (Sabbagh 2007). Among the many factors contributing to the low rate of political participation of women in Egypt, the cultural norms perpetuated in the private sphere are a great hindrance to the successful conglomeration of men and women in society. Qualitative data taken from the U.N. Arab Human Development Reports of 2005 and 2010 suggests that Egyptian women's lack of education, lack of skills, lack of familial support, lack of resources and lack of confidence are propagated by patriarchal and traditional norms, namely, economic insecurity and

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[21] Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 2012. "Women in National Parliaments" see, http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2374_E.htm. 17, July 2012.
[22] *See* http://www.quotaproject.org, 17, July 2012.

cultural norms that increase dependence on their male benefactors (Sabbagh 2007; UNHDR 2005, 2010).

Research conducted by Daniela Donno and Bruce Russett in their cross-national quantitative analysis of "Islam, Authoritarianism, and Female Empowerment: What Are the Linkages?" discusses this gender disparity in Egypt and the greater Middle East and how democracy does not make or break gender relations within an Islamic society (Donno et. al. 2004). Instead, it is the deeper cultural socialization that plays a pronounced role in determining gender inequality (Donno et. al. 2004:583). Inferential evaluation can lead one to argue that in the Middle East, the relational dynamics at work between cultural norms and the region's history of colonialism, may have led to intensified gender disparity. This is exactly what Steven Fish sought to prove in his quantitative analysis hypothesizing that there is a causal link between Islamic countries and the oppression of women (Fish 2002). Specifically, Fish theorizes that the oppression of women is not only more prominent in Islamic countries, but it is precisely how autocratic rulers maintain their power; rationalizing that with the empowerment of women democracy is sure to follow (Fish 2002).

Donno et. al.'s study challenges Fish's theory and findings by including additional variables and re-running the regression analyses. It is their premise that the "revised and additional variables will sharply reduce the explanatory contribution of Islam to regime type, making it no longer statistically significant" (Donno et. al. 2004:591). Using data derived from the *Human Development Report 1999-2001, Freedom House Report, and Polity,* they run a one-tailed test using all of Fish's key dependent variables— "literacy gap, sex ratio, and women in government" to measure women's rights; however, they add "life expectancy ratio, educational attainment ratio, ratio of economically active females to males," in order to make the test more

complete (Donno et. al. 2004:591). In short, the findings show that when democracy is omitted from the tests, "the results for all but one of the rights measures are substantively unchanged"; which shows that there is no loss or gain in statistical significance of the variables (Donno et. al. 2004:599). By including a more comprehensive statistical analysis of Fish's research, Donno and Russett find that while democracy is sometimes significant to the achievement of women's rights, especially regarding women in parliament, it is by no means contributive across the range of rights measures tested in their analysis (Donno et. al. 2004).

These findings are similar to those cited in Inglehart and Norris' study discussed above. However, Inglehart and Norris argue that while there is no direct correlation between the "percentage of women in parliament" and a "society's level of democracy," gender equality is nonetheless intimately linked to democratization (Inglehart and Norris 2004:21). Their findings are predicated on the notion that whenever a state moves from a "survival model" to a "self-expression model," there is an overall cultural shift within society (Inglehart and Norris 2004:21)[23]. They argue that gender equality is an intrinsic element of self-expression and self-expression leads to democracy; ipso facto, gender equality indirectly supports sustainable democratization. Clearly, as the cases become available, more quantitative research should be conducted. By using the works of these scholars and manipulating their methodological approaches and variables, future researchers will be able to include a more comprehensive gender-specific evaluation of democratization and inequality.

In her article "Women and Democratization," Georgina Waylen compares gender inequalities and democratization; specifically, the influence of women's movements during the

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[23] Inglehart and Norris describe the survival model as one that focuses on "economic and physical security" and the self-expression model as one that focuses on human development, well-being and "quality of life" (Inglehart and Norris 2004).

transition in Eastern European countries in the 1980's with those in 1980s dictatorial Latin American countries. She constructs her research around the questions: "why and under what conditions do women organize, and what impact does it have on prompting change in coercive regimes" (Waylen 1994:337). Her findings suggest that in both instances one of two elements were responsible for the minimal establishment of women's rights prior to the transition to democracy: 1) women's movements, and 2) top-down institutionalization of these rights by autocratic regimes (Waylen 1994:335). This phenomenon is similar to the one reported on by Margot Badran, Mervat Hatem and Nadje Al-Ali in their case and ethnographical studies of the Egyptian state's policies toward women. Prior to the transition in 2011 women's rights were granted almost exclusively via a top-down institutionalization by the state.

Waylen (1994: 338) also found evidence in her comparative analysis that in 1980s Latin America women's movements "played an important role in the early stages of transition in all of the countries". However, after the institutionalization of the new government, there was an increased marginalization of women's movements, with women largely left out of the political reconstruction process (Waylen 1994:340). Following the transition of power and the assignment of the constitutional committee assigned the task of re-writing Egypt's constitution, women have been completely edged out of the process (Rosefsky-Wickham 2012). The top-down effect seen in communist Europe, argues Waylen, was partially due to the regime's disenfranchisement of any oppositional force it deemed a threat, which usually translated into the overall elimination of *male* political participation. Thus, regimes found it necessary to gain political legitimacy using alternative means, e.g. a shrouded liberalization of social freedoms for women (Waylen 1994). The measure Waylen used to discover these linkages was an evaluation of policy patterns according to regime type (Waylen 1994).

Discovering whether a more generalizable theory could emerge out of this research is dependent upon the potential correlation between this cross-national analysis and other thoroughly researched regions. Nevertheless, this comparison is a good example of why researchers should have extensive knowledge about a country's historical and cultural background before voicing generalizable hypotheses. As prefaced by the aforementioned literature reviews, cultural norms and historically entrenched gender discrimination undoubtedly affect how gender inequalities transpire during democratization, while the exact causal means remain undetermined. A historical analysis of the political participation of women and the political policies regarding women in the last decade of Egyptian history could reveal more generalizable patterns that could be compared with other data sets.

With the recent uprisings in the Middle East, the world is increasingly fixated on the region, and whether or not countries like Egypt can successfully transition to democracy. In addition, the international community has become more concerned about gender inequality, specifically, the inclusion of women in the transitional process. The United Nations *Arab Human Development Report* (UNHDR) has published an extremely comprehensive intersection of qualitative and quantitative data regarding gender inequality in the Middle East and North Africa (UNHDR 2002, 2005, 2010). Beyond the implicit theoretical undertones, the *United Nations Arab Human Development Report 2005*, "Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World," uses both a longitudinal and statistical methodology to analyze the history of Egyptian women's involvement in politics (UNHDR 2002-2010). The data recording the parliamentary representation and electoral participation of women when the quota system was active versus the data collected after its revocation shows a clear disparity in the percentage of women Members of Parliament (MP's) following its removal.

Comparison of the thirty-eight women MP's elected or appointed in 1984 (at which time the mandatory allocation of thirty seats was in place) with the seven elected and four appointed seats held by women in 1990 following the cessation of the quota system (Badran 2009; Sayed 2005; Mustafa 2007) shows how greatly impacted women were by its revocation[24]. Time has not assuaged the political imparity felt by women since the 1990 election; in fact, very little has changed with only nine women MP's elected or appointed in 1995, and only eleven total women MP's elected or appointed in the 2000 election. In 2009, under the Mubarak regime, the quota system was reinstituted with sixty-eight women MP's elected or appointed; however, the system was revoked yet again in 2011 accounting for the disproportionately low five out of five hundred and eight seats currently held by women today (Badran 2009).

In its first Arab Human Development Report, the United Nations cited the lack of women's rights as "one of the three factors, along with lack of political freedom, and poor education" that hindered the progression of the region; this statement implies an implicit interdependence between women's rights and democracy (UNHDR 2002). Is this assumption warranted? The *Human Development Report* uses ordinal and integral level data to produce statistical information from which it formulates its hypotheses. During the research process, the United Nations includes many variables: "the years women gained the right to vote, the years women were allowed to hold political office, as well as the percentage elected to government according to year" (UNHDR 2002, 2005, 2010). The data reflected seems to suggest that following bouts of liberalization women gained rather than lost political rights.

Although women slowly gained political inclusion at the hands of an authoritarian regime seeking legitimacy, they nevertheless gained more public equality and were able to use their

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[24] *See* http://www.quotaproject.org, 17, July 2012.

newfound political inclusion to voice women's issues. Unfortunately, autocratic governments often provide women more political freedoms as a way to elicit the idea that they embrace democratic values in order to assuage international pressure. However, as was evidenced by Georgia Waylen's comparative study, the oppressive and brutal nature of the regime does not diminish, and men and women often join forces to overthrow the government resulting in a transition of power and the purported instillation of a democratic government. In her findings, Waylen (1994) demonstrates how a similar pattern emerged between her cases during democratization in which after playing a decided role in the uprising, women were effectively left out of the rebuilding process. As a consequence, women ended up having little or no say in the framing of the new government and its constitution, etc.

In fact, Waylen's study shows that women actually lost more rights following the transition because of the supposed skepticism surrounding any of the policies implemented by the ousted regime, including any political rights it granted women (Waylen 1994). From what little information there is regarding the current transition underway in Egypt, it appears that a similar pattern may be emerging. The initial uprising in Egypt represented both ideological and political unification of men and women who worked side by side to remove Hosni Mubarak from power. However, once Mubarak stepped down women were quickly swept aside. Following the transition the intermediary power, filled by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), implemented several institutional changes that have profound repercussions for women's rights; including, the decision to remove the quota for women in parliament and the designation of a one hundred panel Constituent Assembly tasked with writing a new constitution; of the one hundred appointed none were women (Brinkley 2012).

Borrowing from both feminist and international developmental theories, this paper seeks to contribute to the literature by analyzing and interpreting existent generalizations regarding gender inequality's role in the democratization process. It seeks to reveal how fundamental cultural identity is in developing and controlling gender relations and norms and the role of those norms in determining a society's capacity for adopting truly democratic reform.

VI. Methods and Data Analysis

Due to the scarcity of research concerning the relationship between gender equality and democratic transition, this paper solicits the use of existent generalizations about democratization framed within international development and feminist theories. Using these established theoretical generalizations, this paper presents a qualitative interpretive case study analysis of the effects of democratization on the rights and status of women. The data referenced for this paper focuses on a thirty-year time span ranging from 1981-2011. The data seems to confirm previous generalizations postulated by the international development and feminist theories on democratization; namely, democracy is not only possible, but is greatly desired by a majority of the population. It also confirms the theory's assertion that democratic governance alone is not sufficient and that gender equality must exist on some level both politically and culturally in order for democratization to be sustainable.

Democratization serves as the causal, or independent variable and gender relations the dependent variable. Among the many control variables used were female secondary education, the number of assets owned by women compared to men, female participation in political activity (voting record), women elected to political or managerial office, the average age of marriage for women, and the female infant mortality rate compared to male (UNHDR 2005; WDR 2012). Lastly, archival records were used to assess any potential changes in political, social, or economic dynamics within the country following the transition to democracy. The primary sources used include interviews with women who formerly held parliamentary and judiciary positions, inquiring about their individual experiences, as well as interviews with women regarding their feeling about feminism and the feminist movement in Egypt, with transcripts provided by the United Nations Arab Human Development Report, as well as Nadje

al-Ali's ethnography. In addition, survey data from the World Survey, Pew Research Center, and the Arab Human Development Report is used in order to garner a first-hand understanding of the sociopolitical and cultural beliefs of women in Egypt regarding gender equality and democracy. As for the sampling criteria, the surveys used a random sampling generated from the *Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics* annual list of villages and households (CAPMAS 2011). Samples of the survey and interview questions are listed below.

The data drawn from the United Nations *Arab Human Development Report* (2002, 2005, 2010) was ideal because of the specificity toward the Egypt, as well as its use of large sample sizes when conducting surveys, interviews, and/or empirical observations. Variables within the data include: education, economic inequality, and social and political reforms that promote or dismiss gender equality within the MENA region, as well as survey data about democracy and democratization. In order to quantify the data, researchers working on the Human Development Reports have introduced the Gender Inequality Index (GII). The GII looks at gender inequalities using five indicators within three separate dimensions (reproductive health, empowerment, and the labor market).

The five indicators include maternal mortality, adolescent fertility, parliamentary representation, educational attainment, and labor force participation (UNDP 2012). The indicators are meant to reflect a "loss in human development due to inequality between female and male achievements" within the aforementioned dimensions (UNDP 2012)[25]. The indices span from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating total gender equality and 1 indicating total gender inequality. Egypt's HDI is 0.644, ranking it 113 out of 187 countries with similar data (UNDP 2012)[26]. A qualitative analysis of this data enables a thorough examination of theoretically based

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[25] See, the Human Development Report GII http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/gii/ .
[26] See, UNDP on Egypt http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev/

generalizations regarding gender inequality and democratization, within the framework of a case

study (Lijphart et. al. 1996: 65).

VII. Conclusion/Findings

The ultimate show of gender equity was on display in January 2011 as men and women rallied together in massive protests, inducing an all out uprising and the ultimate ouster of Hosni Mubarak in February 2011. This unusual display of unification and equality, along with all of the empirical data and theoretical information postulated in this paper, provide evidence that there exists an inherent desire among women in Egypt to gain political and social freedom by instituting a democratic government. There is no doubt that the uprising in Taḥrīr and eventual ouster of Hosni Mubarak eighteen days later was a result of the widespread demand that democracy replace despotism. Thus the uprising presented a great opportunity for women to claim the same rights and opportunities as their counterparts; however, the normative structure of Egyptian society has proven severely resistant to gender equality despite the nationwide demand for a more open and liberated government. The political uprisings in Egypt and the Arab world will never result in systemic or meaningful change until gender equality is viewed as intrinsic to the instillation of democracy as are pluralism, accountability, transparency, and liberty.

So little research has been performed on the correlation between gender equality and democratization that it is vital to attain as many data samples as possible in order to produce a theory of genuine import that can be validated and tested. Nevertheless, the information presented in this case study is a valuable contribution to academic scholarship on democratization and gender studies. Understanding whether the progression toward a more democratic society causes a cultural reorientation in that society's acceptance of gender equity or if acceptance of gender equity in society is what spurns the institutionalization of more democratic ideals is extremely important.

Identification of such a distinction can help future researchers better interpret failed attempts to democratize and assist policy-makers in determining where to focus their efforts. It also contributes greatly to international developmental, feminist, and modernization theories. Furthermore, this analysis of the causal relationship between democratization and gender inequality within society presents a unique sociopolitical perspective, and the case study analysis of Egypt contributes important data and information for use in future cross-national comparative studies. Both of which will assist in the development of a more substantial theory regarding democratization and gender equality in the future. Nevertheless, due to the single state analysis of this study the assumptions posed in this thesis should be further tested both qualitatively and quantitatively using a larger sample size and cross-national studies.

Analysis of the current available data shows that democracy is the preferred form of government by a large majority of Egyptians, a preference made manifest with the recent Arab Uprising and the historic election of Egypt's first democratically chosen president. Both of these recent events show a unified desire for democratic governance among Egyptians that crosses both ideological and socioeconomic lines. Islamist groups are clearly crossing an ideological threshold in order to adopt a more moderate political stance that includes operating within a democratic structure. This in and of itself shows profound movement within the normative framework of Islamists regarding the role of democracy and Islam. These events as well as the data presented in this paper lend credence to the argument that cultural change, and gender equality are possible in Egypt. Whether or not democracy will act as the vehicle for implementing this change is yet to be seen.

Nevertheless, research shows that democracies tend to have more engaged citizens who hold their government accountable for their actions and this leads to a more restrained use of

state funds and resources. As a result, democracies "have the potential to put in place better education, longer life expectancy, lower infant mortality, and better health care than dictatorships" (WDR 2012). There is a profound need for open dialogue before society can ever achieve any kind of substantive equality. It is because of the importance of open dialogue and debate that feminist and international development theorists argue that democracy is the most logical mechanism by which to achieve the closest version of equality possible. Although democracy is messy and imperfect an inclusive deliberation process ensures that those who fail to get their needs met can be reassured that they will be given more opportunities to project their opinions and influence policy outcomes.

There is no perfect democracy, to assert such a thing would be naïve. Democratization is far from all that is necessary to ensure the implementation of gender equality; still, this paper argues that society should use democracy to hold its government accountable by whatever means necessary. As was on display with the protesters in Egypt this week, Egypt's citizens are engaging and holding the newly elected president accountable for his recent edict, in which he seized unprecedented unilateral power without any open debate or discussion with the people or their elected representatives. Democracy is merely a tool, it is up to the citizens to participate and make sure their voices are heard and that they are engaging in the decision-making process on some level.

Societies cannot legitimately determine which policies are the most fair without the equal involvement of members from all groups within society, women and men alike. Whenever women are excluded from (or significantly under represented) in the public policy and decision-making process the so-called cultural norms that emerge are immediately suspect and should be openly criticized. According to the World Development Report (2012), "societies with greater

equality achieve higher levels of social and economic rights fulfillment for all members" (WDR 2012: 22). In addition, the WDR argues that a relationship exists between gender equality and human development results with "increasing social and economic opportunities and political representation for women having a ripple effect on health, education, and socio-economic outcomes throughout society" (WDR 2012: 16). Therefore, democracy is the most ideal form of government by which to realize social, economic, and political rights for women as well as men, thus resulting in the overall development of Egyptian society.

VIII. List of Tables

Table 1. Pew Research Center's "2012 Global Attitudes Project" – Views on Democracy

	Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government	In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable	For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have	Don't Know
Views of Democracy in Muslim Majority States				
Lebanon	81%	12%	5%	2%
Turkey	76%	6%	5%	2%
Jordan	69%	17%	5%	13%
Nigeria	66%	18%	16%	1%
Egypt	59%	22%	16%	2%
Pakistan	42%	15%	21%	22%
Source				
2012 Pew Research Center "Global Attitudes Project" see, http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1874/egyptislamic-extremism				

Table 2. Women in Egyptian Parliament: As of September 30, 2012

People's Assembly/Lower House	
Distribution of seats according to sex	
Men	498
Women	10
Percent of Women	1.97%
Shoura Assembly/Upper House	
Distribution of seats according to sex	
Men	175
Women	5
Percent of Women	2.78%
Notes/Source	
On the Distribution of seats according to sex: Eight women were directly elected to the People's Assembly and two others were appointed by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 2012. "Women in National Parliaments" available at http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2374_E.htm. (12.05.2012)	

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