

**Gender Quotas, Autocracy, and the  
Status Quo:  
Explaining Why Morocco has had a  
More Positive Quota Experience than  
Jordan or Egypt.**

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How can society achieve progress while women, who represent half the nation, see their rights violated and suffer as a result of injustice, violence and marginalization?  
—King Mohammed VI, opening of Moroccan Parliament, October 2003.

The reason there are so few female politicians is that it is too much trouble to put makeup on two faces.  
~Maureen Murphy, Politician, Cook County, Illinois.

**Abstract:**

The Arab world has the lowest percentage of female political participation. While the global average of women in parliament is just over 18%, the Arab region's average is only 9.5%. Certainly many Arab countries resemble each other in their long histories of patriarchy and authoritarian regime tendencies, and these similarities often prevent women's active participation in politics. However, one cannot claim that all Arab countries have identical experiences with gender quotas. Arab countries differ in their quota experiences, but few comparative studies have been conducted. In my research, I study the quota experiences of Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco.

I discuss arguments that have been made as to why women should hold parliamentary office, why quotas are necessary, and how these arguments relate to Arab countries. While not enough time has passed to determine whether or not quotas in these countries are successful or if they empower women, I argue that as yet Morocco has had a more positive experience with gender quotas than either Jordan or Egypt. This may be explained by discrepancies between the countries' political institutions, including electoral systems, the autonomy of the women's movement and by the attitudes of the regimes toward gender quotas. Quotas have succeeded to a greater extent in Morocco than in the other two countries due to each of these factors, most importantly the regime's support for quotas. The strong Moroccan women's movement builds off of this support, or perhaps permissiveness, to give quotas a greater significance and impact than is found in the other cases. Quotas themselves are not capable of closing gender gaps and empowering women, but when applied in ideal circumstances they can bolster efforts to improve the status of women.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

Within the last century, women around the world have both attained the right to vote, and are generally granted the right to run for public office. Unfortunately, while women have these legal rights, in many countries there persist large gender gaps in the political arena. As a result, despite the large strides they have made in the last hundred years, women still remain underrepresented in the body politic.

Seeking to address this gender gap, many societies with representative institutions have sought the implementation of gender quotas. Gender quotas are an electoral strategy enacted with the intent to “recruit women into political positions and to ensure that women are not only a few tokens in political life”(Dahlerup 2009). They are argued to expedite the narrowing of the political gender gap, putting women on a “fast track” to gender equality(ibid, 2003; Goetz and Hassim 2003; Krook 2004, 2005). Electoral quotas can take many forms, reserving either a specific number or a percentage of seats for women. They may be mandated by law or agreed upon on the level of political parties. Quotas are both democratic in that they ensure that women, who comprise roughly half of all populations, are represented in government; but they are also undemocratic in that they limit the choice of the electorate.

**Figure 1. Women in Parliament**

	Before Quotas*				Under Quotas**			
	IPU Rank	% Female Parliamentarians	Total Seats	Total Female Seats	IPU Rank	% Female Parliamentarians	Total Seats	Total Female Seats
<b>Jordan</b>	120	1.3	80	1	121	6.4	110	7
<b>Egypt</b>	132	1.8	454	8	N/A	12.4	518	64
<b>Morocco</b>	119	0.6	325	2	96	10.8	325	34

Source IPU 2010

\*Before quotas refers to the following times: Jordan and Morocco: June 2002; Egypt: February 2010

\*\*After quotas refers to February 2010 for Jordan and Morocco and projected November 2010 for Egypt

The Arab World has the smallest percentage of women in government, falling below the global average of 19.5 percent of all political seats filled by women, at 10.1 percent (IPU 2010). This is not surprising, given the region's long history of patriarchy and the overall weakness of its democratic institutions. Politics in the Arab world have historically been and continue to be dominated by male elites. This makes the implementation of electoral gender quotas particularly interesting in the Arab world. In many ways this particular democratic reform contrasts with the existing culture and political institutions of the region. Many studies on gender quotas either consider all Arab nations as part of a whole, ignoring variations between Arab States, or they examine the quota experiences of Arab states individually and fail to reveal any overarching trends concerning Arab gender quotas through comparative analysis. There is a need for comparative analysis among Arab states so that specific factors that lead to quota success in this region may be identified.

### **What can be gained from comparative analysis of Arab states?**

This work examines the quota experiences of Jordan, Egypt and Morocco at the parliamentary level to explain why Morocco has experienced greater success than its fellow Arab nations. Such a comparison illuminates factors that contribute to quota success in the Arab world, allowing for the identification of specific factors that contribute to positive quota experiences. Once these factors are identified, they may be considered when designing quotas so that they are better structured to improve the status of women in these nations. If quotas are not designed to improve the lives of women, that should also be noted as it reveals the underlying character of these regimes. Understanding the character of a regime is useful when evaluating its policies and in anticipating both domestic and international actions of the state. It is useful to know whether regimes that implement quotas are doing so in an act of genuine liberalization or if they are using gender quotas to hide more illiberal policies. If a state implements gender quotas without any genuine liberal motivations, further liberal reforms should not be expected.

### **Guiding Research Questions**

A comparison of the quota experiences of Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco is best guided by the following questions:

#### ***Why do Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt Implement Quotas?***

To answer this question, I address the theoretical benefits of quotas by citing existing literature on the subject. I compare these theories with the political realities of these countries. This helps to determine why these autocracies would engage in quotas.

*It is important to understand why quotas are implemented because it provides insight into the effects they are likely to produce.*

For the purposes of this thesis, Morocco, Jordan, and Egypt will be considered autocracies with authoritarian tendencies. The words autocratic and authoritarian are used often interchangeably to describe the political systems of these countries. An autocracy is a government in which power is centered on a single actor who “sharply restrict[s] or repress[es] political participation,” and whose “executive exercises power with few or no institutional restraints”(Jagers and Gurr 1995). Authoritarian regimes may be classified as having a “lack of regulated political competition and a lack of concern for political and civil liberties”(ibid). Authoritarian regimes are lead by singular personalities which tend to be intolerant of political or ethnic diversity, favor strong leaders, and extol hierarchy, authority and status.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Catering to the Women’s Movement?*

It seems unlikely that an autocracy would implement gender quotas solely for the benefit of women in their countries. Autocrats are concerned with the self-preservation of their own regimes, rarely taking on liberalization programs lightly, as liberalization could lead to a loss of their power. In the Arab culture, women are not viewed as a particularly menacing to autocratic power, but expanding the political rights of any group seems to contradict the authoritarian character of these regimes. Because women are not seen as a formidable political force, it is also unlikely that these states implement gender quotas in response to the women’s movements in the societies. Autocrats are in no way obligated to comply with the demands of civil society forces like a women’s movement.

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<sup>1</sup> For more on authoritarianism see (Farnen and Meloen 2000, 6. In this description of authoritarian tendencies, the authors include that authoritarian personalities “exploit women(who they see as inferior).”



In addition to a benign elevation in the status of women, two other significant motivating factors can explain the implementation of gender quotas by these regimes: pressure from the international community and the direct political benefits to regimes from quotas within domestic political systems.

#### *International gains*

Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco are all relatively resource-poor nations and they do not generate the large amounts of income that oil-rich states do. As a result these nations rely heavily on international aid for their economic wellbeing. Regimes benefit from a positive image in the international community (Hamzaway 2009). Donor nations are more likely to give aid to countries they see as upholding their human rights ideals.<sup>2</sup> Support for women's rights can be used by autocratic regimes to create a guise of liberalization that appeals to wealthy Western nations. When considering women's rights, gender quotas make governments seem progressive, open to liberal form. However, openness to female political participation often contracts with repressive currents regarding political opposition and the media, as seen in many Arab states.

#### *Domestic gains*

Regimes not only benefit internationally from quotas, but domestically as well. Within their countries, the image of autocrats may be improved by public support of women's rights. Additionally, gender quotas often are filled by women who support the elites who designed the quotas. Support for the ruling regime in parliament is often increased through gender quotas. Rather than opening politics up to underrepresented

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<sup>2</sup> This generally refers to Western nations giving aid to nations that conform to Western standards of human rights. An Example of this in the region is Israel. It is the only true democracy in the region and receives more American aid than any other country in the world.

groups, quotas often result in increased support in government for the status quo in which the autocrat enjoys a monopoly of power.

### *How quotas relate to existing political environments*

Certain factors such as patriarchy, the prevalence of Islam, and a lack of genuine democracy may be found across the Arab world, but such generalizations do not explain the differences between the quota experiences of Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco. The autocratic nature of these three cases mitigates the effects that democratization, civil society and the quality of life would have on quota experiences. These factors do not sufficiently explain the differences of quota experiences because their influence on quotas is ultimately determined by the ruling regime. Though all three cases are autocracies they do not have identical political environments. As a result they do not have the same quota experiences. To explain why quotas have different effects in these three case studies, I examine the political cultures and institutions, the natures of the women's movements and the regime's attitudes towards quotas.<sup>3</sup> Because the regime determines the context in which quotas are implanted in these cases, its attitudes offer the best explanation as to why Morocco's quotas have been the most successful.

### **Preliminary effects of quotas and what it means to have a successful quota**

#### *Quota Objectives*

For this thesis I identify the primary objective of quotas as incorporating more women into political institutions than would otherwise be present in the absence of quotas. Quotas are meant to include more women in government and facilitate the future

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<sup>3</sup> Nature in this usage refers to both the character of women's movements—what their objectives are in society, and their capabilities—what they are able to accomplish within their societies.

entry of women into politics. Parliamentary quotas are created to provide women a gateway into national politics. In the right conditions they may lead to female empowerment<sup>4</sup> and eventually greater female political effectiveness<sup>5</sup>, but this goes beyond the fundamental objectives of quotas.

This work uses a narrow definition of quotas but acknowledges that they have a greater societal importance. They are auspicious if women who benefit from them become capable leaders.<sup>6</sup> It is not the inherent goal of quotas to create effective female political leaders however they are meant to inspire women to participate in politics. If quotas help to modify the cultural biases against women that prevent their political participation then I argue they are more successful than those that result in token female representation. Quotas are meant to first create female legislatures, then the modest presence of female politicians should propagate and lead to increased percentages of women in politics.

### *Assessing Quotas*

Because the most significant effect of quotas—greater cultural acceptance of women as politicians—is a cultural factor, effects of quotas must be measured over long periods of time because cultural norms are slow so change. The effectiveness of quotas

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<sup>4</sup> Zahur defines empowerment as “a condition in which women hold or are in the process of obtaining education, legal and political rights that are equivalent or nearly equal to those of men”(Zahur 2003). This is the definition I will use for this research, although it should be noted that the definition of female empowerment is contested in whether or not it should include the establishment of a woman’s positive self image, specify if it refers to political or economic power, implies either more or less exploitation of others

<sup>5</sup> For women, political effectiveness is understood as “the ability to use voice to politicize issues of concern to women, to use electoral leverage to press demands on decision makers, to trigger better responsiveness from the public sector to their needs and better enforcement of constitutional commitments to women’s equal rights(Goetz and Hassim 2003; 29). A distinction must be made between simply filling a seat and “toeing the party line,” and using an elected position to affect the political system and the lives of constituents(Abou-Zeid 2006).

<sup>6</sup> . According to Gary Wills, a **leader** is “one who mobilizes others towards a goal shared by leader and followers”(Wills 1994). To mobilize, a leader must possess voice to express her political agenda, and the opportunity for her voice to be heard by those who influence policy(Phillips 1995).

cannot be assessed over mere months or years, but must be evaluated over decades. Quotas have not lasted for a single decade in any of these cases, so only the preliminary effects of quotas may be evaluated. From this preliminary analysis it is possible to predict the likelihood of quotas to affect real change in these societies. A preliminary evaluation of quotas in the current political environment of Arab states grants valuable insight into the future of Arab women, as well as their representation in government. By examining these factors it is even possible to assess the most recent realization of quotas in Egypt, though they have not yet been implemented.

### **Why Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco?**

The Arab world's percentage of female parliamentarians is significantly less than the rates of Nordic countries, which hold the highest average at 42.1 percent. This figure might—on the surface—suggest that Arab culture is not particularly supportive of gender quotas, but this does not explain variations of women's involvement among Arab states. Attributing low rates of women in government to “Arab culture” oversimplifies a remarkably complex issue. To assess Arab quotas, an inter-regional comparative analysis must be undertaken. (IPU 2010)

#### ***Defining “Arab”***

While this discussion focuses on the role of gender quotas in three specific Arab states, one should note that the Arab World and the Middle East are not interchangeable. The Middle East refers to the geographic and political region spanning from Pakistan in the East to Morocco in the West, from Turkey in the North and Yemen in the South. Most people inhabiting the Middle East are Muslim, however there are Jewish, Christian

and other religious minorities. Muslims fall under different sects, mainly Sunni, Shia, with different sub sects such as Wahhabi, Alouite, and Twelver Islam. Even though the populations of Middle Eastern states are not unanimously Muslim, they may be classified as Muslim societies, provided it is acknowledged that religious minorities exist.

Morocco, Jordan, and Egypt all have Sunni majorities.

During the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, Islamization was synonymous with Arabization, which resulted in an expansion of the Arab culture from its origins in the Arabian Peninsula to an area spanning from Morocco to Iraq. As the case studies used for this thesis, Morocco, Jordan, and Egypt, all fall within these borders, they may be described as Arab states. There are significant numbers of non-Arabs in these states<sup>7</sup> but Arab culture largely dominates and defines these societies. An Arab state is a Middle Eastern state, but a Middle Eastern person may not be an Arab. Middle Easterners or Arabs may not be Muslim and a Muslim is not necessarily Middle Eastern.

### *Selection of Case Studies*

The countries of Morocco, Jordan and Egypt were carefully chosen among the region to illustrate trends within the Arab World regarding gender quotas. They are examples of how authoritarian regimes can vary within the Arab world. Despite the fact that it has a democratically elected executive and is considered a republic by the United States State Department, Egypt receives lower Freedom House Scores than both Morocco and Jordan, which are broadly considered to be liberal monarchies. The Moroccan regime is able to be more progressive than the Jordan because it has greater cultural

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<sup>7</sup> In Morocco the most noticeable minority is the indigenous Amazirighi or Berber population. In Jordan there is a significant Cissarian or Chechen population. In Egypt there are several non-Egyptian groups such as the Nubians, as well as a community of Coptic Christians.

legitimacy. This means its power is deeply ingrained in Moroccan society, and therefore it fears democratization less.

Egypt instated quotas in the late 1970s, but abandoned them after seven years, and today less than 2% of national legislators are women. Egypt has proposed a new round of quotas for its 2010 parliamentary elections that would reserve 12% of all seats for women. Egypt was and in many ways continues to be an example of an environment in which quotas cannot succeed. Morocco is one of the most liberal Arab regimes and has the highest percentage of women in national government of these case studies at just over 10%. Jordan bears many similarities to Morocco but only boasts a lowly 6% female participation in the lower house of parliament. Studies of these three countries can provide valuable insights into the impacts of specific authoritarian regimes on civil and political societies, within a common culture. These countries can reveal under what conditions can gender quotas benefit the lives of women in authoritarian Arab societies. (ibid)

### **Findings**

The effects of quotas in Jordan, Egypt and Morocco must be limited in scope because the authoritarian nature of these regimes prevents quotas from leading to complete female empowerment. Despite this, quotas can elicit positive effects if implemented under the right conditions. **In these regimes, the autocrat determines these conditions, so the success of quotas in these countries is ultimately determined by the regime under which they are implemented.** Regimes control the effects that civil society, democratization and the overall quality of life may have on quota success. Differences in quota experiences between these authoritarian regimes may be explained

according to the political structures, the nature of the women's movements, and the attitudes of the regime toward gender quotas. Regime attitudes are the most important variable, explaining why Morocco has had a more successful experience with gender quotas. King Mohammed VI permits a political environment more open to quotas and a more autonomous women's movement to exist in his country. He himself supports genuine female political participation to a greater degree than his fellow autocrats in Jordan or Egypt, and therefore quotas have a greater likelihood of success in Morocco.

### **Thesis Plan**

This work begins with a description of my research methodology in Chapter II. Much of my research builds off of work already conducted, which I expand upon by consulting relevant statistics and by conducting scholarly interviews with regional experts in the Washington, DC, area. In Chapter III, I engage existing literature to describe the current status of women in the Arab world and discuss the theoretical argument for gender quotas. Much research exists on gender quotas, which is important to understand before embarking on any case study. In Chapter IV I explain why civil society, democratization and the quality of life of women cannot serve as independent variables to explain the differences in quota experiences among Arab autocracies. Chapters V-VII feature case studies of Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco. The political climates, nature of women's movements, and the attitude of each regime are examined to explain why Morocco has had the most successful quota experience. In Chapter VIII I conclude that because these cases are autocracies, the nature of the regimes is the determinant factor in the degree to which quotas succeed in these societies.

## Chapter II: Methodology

The central research question of this thesis is what factors explain why Morocco has a more positive experience with gender quotas than Jordan or Egypt. In this thesis I look to identify which factors have contributed to Morocco experiencing greater quota success than the other two Arab nations. First, I must explain why the countries are ranked from best to worst in terms of quota experience as Morocco, then Jordan, and lastly Egypt. I review existing literature related to the status of women in the Middle East and draw upon the extensive scholarly literature that addresses gender quotas. By understanding the theoretical argument quotas the general context in which they are implemented, more thorough analysis of gender quotas in the Arab world may be made. Before examining each case individually, I discuss how civil society, democratization, and overall quality of life help to explain why the quota experiences of these countries but independently do not explain why Morocco has had the most positive quota experience. Next, each country is examined individually guided by variables that apply to each case. By comparing the individual experiences of each country, a research-based explanation as to why quotas have been most successful in Morocco may then be reached.

### **Why are they ranked Morocco, then Jordan, then Egypt?**

As noted in Chapter I, quotas are measured in their effectiveness over long time frames. They are almost generational projects whose effects become apparent gradually, over extended periods of time. Quotas have existed for less than a decade in these cases and, due to their relative newness, data simply does not exist that would sufficiently



reveal to what extent they have been effective in these countries. This lack of statistical data, while inconvenient, should not discourage an initial study of gender quotas in these countries. It is important to understand the quota experience as it unfolds, for such observation may reveal what works when implementing quotas and what does not.

Quotas have not yet proven to be dramatically beneficial to women in any case in the Arab world. It can be argued that quotas have had little effect on the lives of women in these countries because quota women in parliament have been conspicuously passive.<sup>8</sup> In the rare event that these women use their voice in parliament, they do not use it to represent women's interests in most cases. Because of this, comparative analysis of these cases relies on subtle, often nuanced, factors.

Despite the fact that quotas have not been incredibly effective in any of these cases so far, a preliminary analysis of these countries can reveal that Morocco has had the greatest success with gender quotas because on both the national and local levels, quota numbers have been surpassed. This will be further described in Chapter VII, but surpassing quotas implies that women are involved in government because the electorate sees them as capable of good governance. In Morocco female legislators are not solely the result of governmental legislation requiring a certain number of women in governmental bodies—Moroccans seem to accept women as legislators in certain cases and will elect them on their own accord.

In Jordan quotas have not failed, simply because they have created seats for women in Parliament. They have not been revoked, nor have they achieved as positive an experience with gender quotas as Morocco. Jordan has the lowest quota percentage of

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<sup>8</sup> "Quota women" is a term used to refer to women who have benefited and attained electoral office due to the quota system.

female parliamentarians, but the Jordanian women's movement is active and women are significant force in Jordanian public life. Jordanian women do not appear dramatically oppressed by their society, even though few women represent them in government. There are no strong female parliamentarians currently, and often quota women are used to expand the power of tribal leaders in government. Women are used as a result of quotas to perpetuate the status quo, rather than women using quotas to overcome the patriarchal status quo.

Quotas failed in Egypt when they were revoked in 1986, and quotas for the November 2010 elections seem doomed disappointment. As will be made clear in Chapter VI, little bodes well for Egypt's quota success. Its quotas are the worst structured of the three case studies to facilitate genuine female political participation, and its political culture offers the least support to quotas.

Though statistics that could assess quotas in comparative quantitative terms may not exist, many scholars have been monitoring the effects of quotas in these countries.<sup>9</sup> I further support my ranking of quota experiences with Morocco having the most positive and Egypt the least successful off of the opinions of experts who specialize in the region (Farrell 2010, Houel 2010, Liddell 2010, Hamid 2010, Maaty 2010, Clinton 2009<sup>10</sup>).

This ranking employs an almost tacit understanding of the social and political climates of these countries. While inappropriate in other studies that relate to economics or voter turnout, a qualitative analysis is fitting for a study of gender quotas because their

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<sup>9</sup> Quantitative data may not exist for gender quotas both because of the relative newness of quotas, and because many of the effects of quotas, like improved female perceptions of themselves as leaders, may not be quantifiable.

<sup>10</sup> Clinton, H. "Remarks at the Forum for the Future." Marrakech. November 3, 2009.

most tangible effects may not be able to be expressed through quantitative analysis. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact factors that determine quota success because quotas are influenced by many variables and in different ways in different cases.

Success is not measured by which country has greatest percentage of female parliamentarians because Egypt will surpass the percentages of Jordan and Morocco when quotas are enacted. A ranking of quota experiences cannot be based off of percentages of females in parliament because numbers do not equate empowerment. Percentages mean nothing if women in parliament do not have any real power to legislate effectively. In none of these countries have quota women been outstanding, progressive legislators. Given the autocratic political cultures of these cases, regardless of gender, it is unlikely that any individual member of parliament has any real impact on government. Generally the atmosphere toward female politicians is more positive in Morocco than in Jordan or Egypt, as proven by the electorate's choosing of more women than were mandated by quotas. Jordan and Egypt have experienced no such victory.<sup>11</sup>

### **Literature Review Methodology**

In my literature review I begin by addressing the status of women in Arab societies and their roles in both public and private life. In doing so, I illustrate certain cultural obstacles women face in engaging in the political sphere. Attention is given to the key role NGOs play in improving the lives of women and facilitating their engagement in public life. I then explain the theoretical motivations behind implementing quotas and articulate in which contexts they work best. Women's status in

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<sup>11</sup> According to the structure of Jordan and Egypt's quotas, women cannot surpass quota limits. Quotas essentially serve as a restriction to female legislative participation as well as an enabler.

society must be understood, as well as quotas themselves, in order to comprehend why quotas are implemented and what factors contribute to their success.

Next I discuss three independent variables that alone do not sufficiently account for the particular differences in each country's quota experience. These independent variables are civil society, democratization, and the quality of life of women in these countries. Here, I explain what comparative analysis of information related to these variables reveals about quota experiences in these countries.

### **Case Studies**

I order my case studies as follows: Jordan, then Egypt, and finally Morocco. In each case study I examine the political institutions of each country, the nature of the women's movement and the regime's attitude towards quotas. These factors help to explain why Morocco has been the most successful of these three cases. I begin with Jordan because, as neither the best nor the worst of the three, it provides a baseline off of which the other case studies build. Morocco is discussed last, so that it is the most revealing case study, drawing comparisons from the other two cases. In each case study I address the political institutions of the country, the electoral systems, the role of political parties and the overall political culture. I examine quotas by including the motivations behind implementing them, their structure, and their preliminary effects. These factors are addressed in relation to the three primary variables that explain why quota experiences vary within the Arab Region and why Morocco has been the most successful. These three variables are the political climate, which includes governmental institutions, political parties, elections, and the overall scope of politics, the nature of the women's

movement—what it aims to do and is able to do, and the attitude of the regime towards quotas. This last variable is the most important as it trumps all other variables attributing to quota success in authoritarian regimes. In the case of Egypt I include predictions for the effects of quotas in lieu of a description of their consequences because quotas will not be enacted in elections until November 2010. This does not pose a significant methodological problem because the environment and motivations behind Egyptian quotas may still be evaluated and compared to those of Jordan and Morocco.

### **Sources**

This paper draws heavily upon existing literature regarding gender quotas and the political and civil societies of Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco. To further my research, I conducted interviews with experts on Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt and Middle Eastern Politics. I traveled to Washington, DC, from January 18-21, 2010, to conduct interviews with experts in the Washington, DC area. I was also able to conduct interviews over the phone. All interviewees were given copies of my interview notes and made changes where necessary. These interviews compliment the fieldwork I conducted in Morocco in the Spring of 2009. In Morocco, I interviewed female politicians and active female political party members as well as many Moroccans with no political background. In Morocco I conducted research primarily out of Rabat, the capital city, but also spoke with people from a small, rural village called Feryat and from major cities such as Casablanca and Marrakech. For quantitative data, such as standard of living statistics, I consulted reliable sources such as UNDP Pogar, the CIA World Factbook and the World Bank. I also utilized the Freedom House and Polity IV indexes. I relied heavily on information

provided by the Inter-Parliamentary Union Website, QuotaProject.org, and iKnowPolitics.org. I also consulted Arab news sources translated into English. Information was amassed from a variety of sources as to provide a comprehensive analysis of quotas in these three countries.

## **Chapter III: Literature Review**

### **An Arab Need and the Benefits of Quotas**

Both the Arab world and gender quotas have been the subjects of much academic research. This thesis builds off of research conducted in both areas as to provide a comprehensive understanding of the conditions in which women enter into politics under quotas in the Arab world, and the theoretical objectives of quotas. This literature review addresses why quotas are necessary in the Arab world and what they ideally hope to achieve.

The first section of this chapter addresses cultural views in the Arab world toward women, the role women play in Arab societies, and the nature of women's participation in public life, namely through women's movements and NGOs. This reveals certain economic and cultural barriers to women's political participation. Institutional barriers also exist, but as those are more country-specific, they are discussed in the case studied in Chapters V-VII.

The second section of this thesis discusses existing literature on quotas. Ideal situations for quotas are identified and experiences in other regions are briefly discussed. Theoretical benefits are outlined, and provide necessary background to analyze the motivations behind implementing gender quotas in Jordan, Egypt and Morocco.

#### **Culture: where quotas fit in**

The overall culture of the Middle East presents women who wish to enter politics with certain challenges. The culture may consider itself protective of women, but this ostensible benevolence discourages women from becoming active members of the civic

environment. Western scholars generally note that Women are generally viewed as inferior to men, and in need of male guardianship in the Arab world(Mohanty 1991; Tucker 1993; Ahmed 1993). Traditional views of women in the Arab world do not lend themselves to descriptions of strong leaders, thus the culture of the region severely inhibits the potential of women to reach positions of political power. These challenges are not insurmountable, but they must be addressed when examining the political roles of women in the region.

*Mothers, not MPs*

Traditionally women in the Middle East have played largely domestic roles in society. Women are seen as caregivers, wives, mothers, and managers of the household, while men are the societal actors involved in public matters such as politics and the economic market(Inglehart and Norris 2004). Such distinction between gender roles is not unique to the Arab World, and is found around the world throughout history.<sup>12 13</sup> Many scholars have noted that simply because women's primary role is in the household does not mean that women are powerless in society(Shafer Davis 1979, Nelson 1974, Farnen and Meloen 2000, Altemeyer 1996). This power may not be the same economic or political power that men have in society, but it does allow women to control matters within the household to a large extent. The role of a mother is widely respected in Arab cultures, and through this maternal status, a woman may exert significant influence over the public affairs of men. Women oftentimes manage a household's budget, and advise

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<sup>12</sup> Examples include such iconic cases as 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, America in the 1950s, and even as far back as pre-historical, pre-agricultural society when men would hunt for food and women would remain in a certain place and tend to children.

<sup>13</sup> This is not to imply that this public-man, domestic-woman paradigm should be perpetuated in the modern day. Many societal and technological advances have been made since ancient times that allow men and women to escape from these utilitarian societal gender roles. I am merely pointing out that the Arab world has much in common with other societies on this issue.



their husbands and sons. Within the home, mothers are respected and their opinions influence their male family members. Some would argue that is how women interact with greater society—by influencing those who actively participate in the public sphere. It is an ancillary involvement, but far from the isolation and seclusion many Orientalists and Western-biased scholars described in their writings.<sup>14</sup> Women are not entirely removed from the political and civil societies of their countries; they simply engage in society in a different way.

Though women are not powerless, exercising authority in one's home can result in very limited empowerment for Arab women because it does not protect their rights or ensure their interests are represented in government. The status of women within the home varies between households, and often women are unaware of their legal rights. Domestic violence is widespread; its prevalence highlights women's lack of power in society(Zahur 2003). The predominance of patriarchal norms discourages women from asserting themselves in civic society. Active participation in public life can be interpreted as a challenge to the masculinity of a woman's husband or other male kin. A man is responsible for providing for his female relatives, so if a woman is engaging independently in public life this may imply that he is not fulfilling his masculine duties. This threat often generates male resentment of women who involve themselves in public life. This resentment is a significant disincentive for women to broaden their traditional roles in society. If active engagement in society generates hostility directed at them, many women understandably would opt to abstain from it.

Domestic violence and its repercussions must be mentioned when studying a part of the world that has a history of honor killings and female infanticide(Faqir 2001,

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<sup>14</sup> An example of such a scholar is Simone de Beauvoir. See S. de Beauvoir. *La Deuxieme Sexe*

Doubki et al. 2003, Alhabib 2009, Yount 2009, Al-Nsour 2009). The prevalence of these crimes is indicative of a latent hostility towards women in Arab society. Severe domestic violence is the exception rather than the norm, and some husbands actively support their wives participating in civic activities. However this underlying hostility poses a significant disadvantage to women who wish to enter politics, particularly those who compete in elections. According to the 2009 United Nations report on Human Rights in the Arab World, laws against women are prevalent in many Arab states”(UN 2009). These laws may be prevalent because, women are at a significant political disadvantage and are not a part of the lawmaking process.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Barriers to Political Participation*

Women are viewed in Arab societies largely as “pure, saintly, feeble-minded irrational and just simply weak”(Abou-Zeid 2006). Their primary role in society is to manage the household, and while this may lead to women being respected as wives and mothers, this patriarchal tradition prevents women from being active participants in politics. It is important for women to be involved in politics so that political institutions may address issues relevant to women that would otherwise be ignored.

As in many societies, traditionally an Arab woman’s place has been in the home.. While ideal Arab woman is one who “leaves her house only when absolutely necessary”(Sadiqi and Ennaji 2006), women are not entirely separate from public life. This idealized separation of women from public life poses a significant barrier to the political aspirations of women.

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<sup>15</sup> Women are disfavored by popular negative perceptions of women as weak and incapable of performing traditionally male duties, such as lawmaking. Also women who wish to participate in politics must contend with issues, such as childcare, that men are not burdened with.

In many ways women are discouraged from entering public life, even if they may desire to. Whether a position in the local council or a clerk job at the post office, instances of women moving beyond their traditional place in society can be threatening to men who, as a result, take out their aggression and hostility by harassing women when they enter the public sphere, in order to assert their machismo (Zahur 2003). If simply walking in the street is an ordeal for Arab women, the role of a politician may be particularly undesirable because it is a necessarily public position. Many women who wish to engage in public life have found recourse through the women's movement.

### **Active Women in Public Life: Women's Movements**

Women's movements in the Middle East have called upon the shared experiences of subjugation to unite women within countries with little else in common (Brand 1998). The forerunners of women's movements are often highly educated urban women. These women are atypical when considering the demographics of women in Middle Eastern countries. A few privileged women attempt to serve the interests of hundreds of thousands of rural uneducated women in civil society. They represent women who may be semiliterate at best, while they themselves are college-educated, often well-traveled and enjoy greater economic prosperity than the majority of women in the region (Ottaway 2004). There is clearly a disconnect between female activists in civil society and the greater female population, which can be problematic, especially when these leaders are considered to be Western-influenced.

Women's movements in the Arab world have been accused of trying to impose western ideas about women's rights on their societies (Zahur 2003). Some see the

women's movement and the feminism that drives it as a form of neo-colonialism. By lobbying for the emancipation of women, certain Arab women are forsaking their culture in favor of Western ideals, namely female emancipation.<sup>16</sup> Mona Lena Krook defines feminism, not as a western value, but as a movement that aims to improve the status of women in some way (Krook 2008). This view of feminism as a movement for universal human rights for women is useful in Arab societies, as it presents women's rights as a human right not a Western value. Arguing that women's rights are human rights depoliticizes the issue to some extent and allows women's groups--which cannot be overtly political given the authoritarian regimes in which they operate—to functionally work toward them. These groups avoid the term feminism due to the Western-sigma associated with it and prefer to label themselves as advocates of women's rights (Golley 2004).

Because women's groups must avoid ideological conflict with the regime, they do not actively attempt to impose a feminist agenda on national politics. Instead, women's groups work within the confines of the political status quo in order to improve the status of women in their country in some way. As not to appear pro-Western and anti-Arab, women must find a balance in their efforts where they work towards the betterment of women's status, with respect to the existing culture and traditions. This is problematic because the culture and traditions of Arab societies are patriarchal and do not promote women assuming greater roles in public life. This patriarchy stems from Arab tribalism and pre-Islamic society. There is nothing in Islam that dictates that women are inferior to men (Golley 2004).

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<sup>16</sup> Emancipation in the Arab world would refer women shedding the restrictions placed on them by culture and achieving parity with men in all aspects of society. Fatima Mernissi advocates this to a certain extent (1987).

***Women: the anti-Islamists?***

In general, women's movements have positioned themselves in opposition to traditional Islamists who advocate traditional societal structures and the implementation of Sharia, or Islamic law. Sharia law in its modern interpretations has been criticized for oppressing women. Many prominent women in the Arab and greater Muslim worlds, such as Shirin Ebadi, a Nobel Laureate from Iran, advocate a reinterpretation of Sharia that would involve greater justice towards women.<sup>17</sup> They argue that Islam does not disfavor women, but that the men who interpreted Sharia law did so in a way that has proven to be anti-woman in many ways. Some women do not support such reforms and advocate a strict interpretation of Sharia law in society. Islamist political parties have been very successful in their outreach to women, yet the majority of women support a moderate but secular women's movement that respects Islamic traditions and their Arab identity, but is not co-opted by either.

Successful women's movements have managed to incorporate women from a broad range of backgrounds--from the very poor to the elite, and from the secular to the religious. Women of high social status lobby for women's rights and representation in government, while poor rural women work to improve their communities by participating in microfinance collaboratives, sending their daughters to school, and generally supporting the efforts of the women activists.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> One World Gender Guide. <http://uk.oneworld.net/guides/gender>

<sup>18</sup> Poor women are the majority of the women's movement and they are the lifeblood of grassroots women's organizations. The female elites depend on these non-elite women to give their movement political clout, just as the female masses rely on these elites to represent their interests

## NGOs

A fundamental aspect of Arab women's movements is the presence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Many NGOs have been founded within the last 30 years in the Middle East and now play a pivotal role in civil society, providing public services where the government cannot (Civicus 2010)<sup>19</sup>. A significant portion of these NGOs focus on women's issues ranging from education to the economic empowerment of women. Women's issues are an especially popular issue among NGOs because women are not viewed as a particular threat to the ruling regime, thus their activities are less likely to be blocked by authoritarian censorship. In civil societies stifled by government censorship, women are able to actively participate in public life through NGOs, working to improve the lives of women within the limits set by the regime.

The spread of indigenous NGOs has been a great asset to the women's movement because it bolsters the legitimacy of the movement in Arab societies. If the women's movement is mainly allied with foreign NGOs such as UNIFEM<sup>20</sup> the negative stigma of feminism being a form of Western neocolonialism targeted at women is exacerbated. Most NGOs active on the societal level receive some amount of funding from foreign aid. Foreign aid is better received than a foreign NGO implementing programs in an Arab society, understandably. The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) is indirectly a great source of aid for indigenous NGOs in the Arab World, particularly those that address women's issues.

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<sup>19</sup> Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt are not wealthy nations in terms of resources and capital, so governments often lack the financial means to enact social service programs like those promoting literacy and educate or to provide a social safety net for disadvantaged members of society like the elderly who do not have families to support them and single mothers.

<sup>20</sup> The United Nations Development Fund for Women.

The NED funds the National Democratic Institute(NDI) and the International Republican Institute(IRI), two major American NGOs that promote democracy and women's right around the world. NDI focuses its efforts on the national level, where IRI is more concerned with local politics and grassroots reform movements. These NGOs provide much needed grants to Arab NGOs.<sup>21</sup> According to members of these organizations, grants are awarded to organizations with goal-oriented programs, as opposed to more idealistic associations(Farrell 2010, Hadji 2010, Maaty 2010). Grants are awarded discretely as not to discredit the efforts of the NGOs that receive them. NDI and IRI fund NGOs that are consistent with their ideology of strengthening democratic institutions and protecting the rights of citizens regardless of gender; they do not support radical political groups.<sup>22</sup> Many NGOs in the Arab world can attribute much of their success to the financial baking they receive from NDI and IRI.<sup>23</sup>

NGOs offer significant support to women, mentoring them while working for and with civil society to provide “a solid base to gain awareness and knowledge of public issues”(Abou-Zeid 2003). Such guidance is necessary in order for women to overcome centuries of exclusion from direct involvement in public life. Many NGOs aspire to increase the participation of women in public affairs through their work(ibid). This base relies on education, because if women are not aware of their rights, they “lack self-confidence and fail to claim their rights,” which, if not claimed, are lost(Sherbini 2007).

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<sup>21</sup> Governments in these case studies lack the resources to provide adequate funding to NGOs.

<sup>22</sup> According to USAID, to receive funding from foreign donors, NGOs must register with the government in Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt. These governments do not grant radical groups NGO status, so they cannot receive foreign aid(Riley 2010).

<sup>23</sup> Arab NGOs receive funding from other sources as well, most notably the Saudi Government. Saudi funding is directed more towards promoting Wahhabism, not women's rights. This funding may go to organizations that oppose gender quotas, but the effects of Saudi funding on Arab societies lies outside the scope of this paper, though it merits further study.

NGOs have been essential for women's political participation because they "create women who can critically assess their own situation and create and shape a transformation of society"(Sadiqi and Ennaji 2006). NGOs help create active citizens out of passive subjects, and therefore could pose a threat to the authoritarian character of ruling regimes(Chazan 1992). Successful NGOs are careful to avoid being seen as a threat by the regime so that they are able to operate in these societies. Through improving the lives of women and promoting democratic values, their work could lead to greater liberalization of society. (Allen 2008;<sup>24</sup> UN 2009; Gershman and Allen 2006)

In the Arab world, NGOs, not governments, have played the primary role in advocating the elevation of women's status in society. They sponsor programs that give women some economic independence, offer education, and provide health services. These efforts appeal to women, regardless of political beliefs. Economic efforts have had a noticeable effect on the lives of women, but they alone do not lead to empowerment(Zahur 2003). The political culture must be addressed because only by participating in politics can women determine what is on the political agenda(ibid).

### **The Need for Quotas in Arab States**

Quotas are arguably necessary in the Arab world because they allow women to enter politics when otherwise they would not be able to do so. Women are needed in government because issues relevant to women, such as domestic violence, will not be adequately addressed in parliament without female legislators. Quotas are needed for women to overcome existing cultural biases against women so that they may enter

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<sup>24</sup> Democracy Digest is a blog run by the National Endowment for Democracy(NED).



parliament. There, women may raise female-relevant issues to perhaps improve the status of women in society.

Women's involvement in politics has been an issue in the Arab World for longer than their current underrepresented status would suggest.<sup>25</sup> Marina Ottaway notes, "Arab nations generally recognized the political rights of women around the same time as other countries in the developing world"(2004).<sup>26</sup> This time period spans from the independence wave of the 1950s and 1960s, until the UN's Decade of the Woman(1975-1985). While encouraging for the overall status of women, acknowledging political rights does not mean accepting women as leaders, or even political participants. Women in the Arab world experience great difficulty when entering politics which results from the nature of the existing political systems, as will be discussed further in Chapters V-VII, and from the traditional attitudes towards women in the Arab world. Arab society as a whole seems to present women with cultural, institutional and economic barriers to their political engagement.

### **Economic Barriers**

Aside from cultural biases against women—and due in part to these biases--female political potential suffers because women predominantly lack economic independence. This means that women rely financially on male relatives, which is a major detriment for women who wish to participate in elections. Electoral campaigns require significant monetary resources in the Arab world as a result of the prevalence of vote-buying in elections. Candidates must have access to significant personal fortunes so that they may be able to secure an electoral majority(Blades 2006). There is a market for

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<sup>25</sup> Reference to Inter-Parliamentary Union percentages of women in government. See figure 1. IPU 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Maria Ottaway is a senior researcher at the Carnegie Institute for International Peace.

votes in which the candidate who offers the highest incentive to voters will win the largest percentage and gain an electoral seat (Errebah 2004, Majed 2005, Brand 2008). Women are thus dependent on their husbands or on other males who are willing to fund their campaigns in order to run for election. Women may control domestic budgets, but as they do not generate income they cannot invest it in a political campaign.

It is almost impossible for women to independently generate the necessary funds for a political campaign because they are significantly disadvantaged in the workplace and Arab inheritance laws favor men over women. Women in most cases earn less than men do and are oftentimes the most harshly hit by financial crises, even in liberal societies that have made significant strides to close the gender gap (Bertola, Blau, and Khan 2007; Treiman 1975: 38).

Without economic independence it is difficult for a woman to be seen as a political actor in her own right. Women must overcome the cultural biases that inhibit their political participation as well as those that keep them from economic success in order to become effective empowered leaders in government. Currently women may run successful campaigns, but often in order to do so they rely on the economic support of men. This is often problematic because it creates female politicians who are indebted to the men who funded their political campaign. A man is unlikely to invest large sums of money in a female candidate unless he thinks she will serve his interests. If women are much less likely to win in an election, it may not be worth the investment to support a candidate who is unlikely to win. Quotas help women navigate around this economic problem by mandating that some women must enter the legislature, even if they do not independently have the funds to run a successful campaign. If a female legislator is

inevitable, men may benefit from supporting a female candidate so that when she reaches parliament she will serve their interests.

Gender quotas have been proposed as a way for women to overcome traditional biases against them and become active participants in government. To understand how quotas could accomplish this in the Middle East, quotas will now be further examined.

### **Quotas: An international phenomenon**

Quotas have been implemented around the world and have been the subject of extensive scholarly work. Despite their prevalence in academia and in international politics, or because of it, there is no paradigm quota structure or universally identified objective. The purpose of the following section is to show that quotas are a complex topic, involving much more than simply giving a few parliamentary seats to women, and that quotas could help remedy the under-representation of women in Arab politics.

The literature on gender quotas is extensive, yet far from complete. It is important to study the effects of gender quotas in semi-democratic countries because, as noted, they are a prominent policy choice, especially in the Arab region(Schmidt 2008). Quotas in the Middle East have been the subject of many studies(Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2003; Abu Rumman 2004; Errebah 2004; Sherbini 2007). Most literature focuses on national politics because more information is available on that level, and national quotas are currently more common than local quotas.

The consensus is that women face specific difficulties entering politics and quotas are a good way through which women can overcome these challenges and attain electoral office. Quotas mandate that a certain number of women will be “elected,” whether or not

the electorate wants women present in those numbers or not. Given this undemocratic nature, they are not implemented without debate. Proponents of quotas within the region argue that compared to other prevalent non-democratic practices such as cronyism and vote buying, quotas are a step in the right direction towards democracy because they involve more of the electorate (UN 2009). Quotas also provide regimes with the opportunity to limit the democratic power of their countries while hiding behind a guise of liberalization.

Most scholars agree that quotas are a success if they achieve a 30% threshold of women in legislature (Gilger 2009). This threshold is considered a “critical mass” or number at which women can cause real change in parliament (IPU 2006). The more women involved in legislatures, the more power these women have if they unite and form a coalition or all decide to support a bill. According to this, none of the quotas in Arab states are successful. When Morocco is referred to as a success, it is in relative terms, compared to the experiences of Jordan and Egypt.

### *Quotas around the world*

Quotas vary from country to country because political cultures are unique to each country (Caul 2001). They have been touted as a success in Scandinavia (Friednvall 2003), and in recent decades they have been positively received by the developing world, from the patriarchal Catholic societies of Latin America (Jones 1998, *ibid* 1999, Htun and Jones 2002), to Southeast Asia (Rai et al. 2006) and tribalistic Sub-Saharan Africa (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2003; Tripp, Konaté and Lowe-Morna 2006; Powley 2006).

*Political systems in which quotas thrive*

Quotas have been most successful in Sweden and in Rwanda, which are both atypical cases of quotas. Rwanda has the highest percentage of female parliamentarians at 56.3%, which is well above the global average. Unfortunately this number is the result of the near-complete obliteration of Rwandan society during the 1994 genocide. In the immediate aftermath of the genocide, women comprised 70 percent of the population. They were seen to have borne “the brunt of the genocide and therefore deserve[d] a significant and official role in the nation’s recovery”(Powley 2006). In 2003 a quota of 30% was implemented, but women surpassed that number significantly winning 45% of all parliamentary seats. While it is discouraging to note that Rwanda’s extremely high female political participation is the result of an atrocity, positively one can note that since 2003, female political participation has only increased and women are proving themselves to be capable leaders(ibid). In Sweden women also have a high rate of parliamentary participation at 45%(IPU). There are no national quota laws and only some of the political parties employ quotas, yet the majority of parties enjoy high female participation(Freidenvall 2003). In Sweden quotas appear to have succeeded as they are no longer necessary within many political parties. Since the 1970s Swedish culture has been particularly open to the idea of female legislators and this cultural trend is reflected in current rates of female participation. In both successful cases of Sweden and Rwanda, quotas have succeeded largely due to cultural factors unique to their country. They should not be used as an exact model for other countries to imitate in their quota experience, but analysis of them and other countries can reveal which circumstances are particularly well-suited to gender quotas.

Culture is not the only deciding factor in quota success however, as Latin America proves. Latin American political culture is characterized by patriarchal norms, similar to the Arab world. However political parties were able to implement gender quotas that have overall led to greater female empowerment(Htun and Jones 2002). The democratic institutions and a political culture open to liberal reform allowed such progress to occur as a result of quotas. Women are still a minority in government at 20%, but they have made significant gains due to quotas(IPU 2010).

*Assessing the logistics of quotas: What works best?*

Despite the range of societies in which quotas are applied, the broad consensus among scholars is that, the most widely used electoral system in the world, proportional representation(PR), has the most success for women seeking political office, as opposed to plurality or first-past-the-post systems(Rule and Zimmerman 1994; Squires 1996: 86; Matland 1998; Bacchi 2006; Schmidt 2008). Variables within PR systems, other than quotas, also facilitate the election of women, such as closed or open electoral lists, the magnitudes of districts and parties, and placement mandates(Schmidt 2008, Matland 1998, Htun and Jones 2002, Ballington 2005, Norris 2004).

Whereas in plurality systems the candidate and party who receives a majority of votes wins an election and all the seats that go with it, in PR systems, seats are “allocated in accordance with their respective shares of the vote. Voters choose candidates from lists, which may be closed, open or flexible. These lists are usually nominated by political parties, but can also be “drawn up by alliances of parties or even factions within a party.”(Schmidt 2008) . If a community is socially or ethnically heterogeneous, as many

nations are, governments are likely to choose a PR system because it facilitates the inclusion of minorities and conflicting groups(Lijphart 1977).

Closed lists are the most agreeable to gender quotas(Jones 1998, Matland 1998, Jones and Navia 1999, Htun and Jones 2002, Htun 2005, Norris 2004, Ballington 2005, Schmidt 2008). Districts with large magnitudes are also favorable because they have more seats open for candidates. Electing a woman for one of several seats is less controversial and more feasible than having a single woman represent an entire district when historically such a role has only been filled by men(Jones 1999). The success of quotas depends on electoral systems moving away from single-member district systems, so that women may compete in a more pluralistic environment(Sherbini 2007). Closed lists are also the most common form of electoral lists(Schmidt 2008). Open lists and flexible lists, where voters can either vote for a specific candidates regardless of party affiliation as in open systems, or vote for a party list, may not allow women to gain office either because women do not attract a significant number of votes in open systems. A combination of the pitfalls of closed and open lists affects women in flexible-list electoral systems, where they have neither the support of the people nor their parties(ibid). These lists are less common than closed PR systems, and therefore this have not been studied extensively and are often misunderstood(ibid).

It is not sufficient for women to be placed on lists, but they must also be placed in electable positions. Some quota architects have proposed a “zipper system” where every other candidate is female, thus ensuring that a significant percentage of electoral winners are women.<sup>27</sup> Zipper systems would result in women consisting of half of all elected officials. Given the histories of Arab societies, which have largely excluded women from

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<sup>27</sup> The Zipper system has been used successfully in Germany and in Sweden(Davidson-Schmich 2005).

political participation until the post WWII era, this egalitarian system would be a radical political change and is not feasible. Placement mandates ensure that women are not clumped together at the bottom of closed party lists. Without placement mandates it is unlikely they could gain office under a PR system, barring the unlikely event that their party won an overwhelming majority. Placement mandates are crucial to the success of gender quotas, for without them women have no guarantees to be considered as a serious candidate for an elected office.(Schmidt 2008)

Beyond electoral systems, quota architects must ask whether it is easier to convince voters to vote for women candidates on their own volition, or if it is more plausible to convince party gatekeepers that “including more women on the party lists in prominent positions is both fair and more importantly, strategically wise(Schmidt 2008, Matland 1998).

### **The Argument for Quotas**

In the cases of the developing world, quotas have been implemented in traditionally male-dominated societies without inciting great social upheaval. However, in each case study quota seats were mostly filled with women who politically supported those who designed the quota. Quotas are often used to extend the power of the elites who implement them. In many instances quota women do not prove to be strong legislators. Despite the popularity of gender quotas, globally they do not appear to have a great effect on individual political systems. Exceptions to this are Sweden and Rwanda, the countries with the two highest percentages of female parliamentarians.



Quotas in the Middle East are an example of regimes mirroring the policies of many socialist nations during the Cold War, who “claimed to promote the rights of women better than Western nations, but really just curtailed [the rights of] everyone”(Ottaway 2004). Regimes wisely omit references to the West into their argument for women’s rights, for the same reasons that Arab women’s movements must avoid being perceived as neocolonial vehicles of Western feminism.

Some proponents of women’s rights may see quotas as patronizing(Phillips 1993). By instating quotas, the assumption is made that women are incapable winning elections in their own right. If women cannot be elected then it could be argued that they are not fit to govern. Perhaps a better approach would be for women to work within the system and prove their competency independently. In the Arab world, this argument does not give sufficient weight to the various forces previously mentioned working against women’s political participation. Arguments have also been made about the constitutionality of quotas. If equality is guaranteed under the constitution, do quotas violate that equality by favoring women, or could they neutralize these many inequalities that disfavor women in their societies?

***Should women be involved Middle Eastern in politics?***

Though they may share the common struggle against patriarchy in the Middle East, there is a broad spectrum among women across class, education and personal freedoms. However, there are some generalizations that can be made about women as a whole because they are so prevalent in society that even women who do not adhere to them are conscious of them. For instance, a woman’s primary job traditionally is that of

caretaker, and she may pursue other interests only if it does not interfere with her spousal or motherly duties(Jensen 2008, 111).

Women not only need to be capable of leadership, but must work twice as hard to overcome the stigma that women are inferior(Zahur 2003). Because culturally women are subordinate to their male relatives, particularly their husbands, there have been “misgivings” about women as leaders because their husbands would have significant impact on office. Even in electoral systems this logic survives to the modern day. It may seem disingenuous and precarious to elect a woman to political office if her husband, who was not democratically elected will determine her agenda. (Jensen 2008; 4).

To be an effective leader in the Middle East especially, women must overcome negative gender stereotypes concerning their competency in addition to braving the same difficult trail of politics upon which many men stumble. Women in other regions of the world, like Scandinavia and Rwanda, have proven that political ability is not determined by sex, but in order to realize their full potential, special programs must be enacted to help women overcome the many challenges pitted against them on their path to power.

Quotas are designed to increase the percentage of women in political institutions. To explain why quotas are beneficial to society, an argument must be made as to why women should be involved in politics. Anne Phillips reasons this best, saying there are four main arguments for quotas which center around the benefit women’s political participation provides to society.

- 1) Quotas lead to justice between the sexes. The political experiences of women in the Arab world proves that there is a significant gender gap

that must be addressed if the status of women is to improve.(Hausman, Tyson and Zahini 2007).

2) Female politicians are needed to identify particular interest of women that would otherwise be overlooked(Pitkin 1967). Women in politics increases the likelihood that “equal opportunity” measures will be passed. These measures include skill training programs for women, financial aid, and forms of “caring” leave, such as maternity leave(Norris and Inglehart 2003:3, Bacchi 2006).

3. Women have a different relationship to politics. Arguments have been made that women have unique leadership strengths because they are more selfless, putting the needs of the community over her own political aspirations, as a mother prioritizes the wellbeing of her children(Powley 2006). This argument is somewhat flawed in that it assumes all women have maternal instincts, but it is valid in that women can bring different perspectives and approaches to politics, thereby enhancing the quality of political life.

4) Lastly, quotas are important because they create role models. These role models will inspire more women to enter into politics which will further the other three arguments(Jensen 2008, 226). (Phillips 1995)

The argument for quotas stems from the ideas that female political participation benefits society and government as a whole and that in existing conditions women are unable to enter politics in sufficient numbers for these benefits to be realized. An important aspect of the argument for quotas is that women genuinely want to participate

in politics. Because Arab states seem to offer at least superficial support of women's rights, often working against centuries of paternalistic tradition, young women now place "enormous faith in the ability of the political system to address existing social ills and institute reforms(Reyes 2002)<sup>28</sup>. No country in the Middle East has struggled to find women to satisfy quotas, even in the most isolated rural communities, which means that many women are eager to enter politics but in the absence of quotas are unable to do so.

Poor women, the majority of the female Arab population, are as important to national politics as they are to civil society movements in the Arab world, even if they cannot read and have no prior leadership experience. These women are "often seen as trophies of legitimate grassroots political involvement"(Goetz and Hassim 2003). Even if the government manipulates the electoral system so a poor woman wins a seat on a local council of little political importance, symbolically, her presence in government can inspire other poor women to become more active members of their community. The counterargument to this is that incorporating women as such is a form of exploitation and that quotas do not actually provide any benefit to women. Even if women are currently exploited by the system, their simple presence be an inspiration to other women.

Sometimes politicians will support women's involvement to "prop up sagging or divided parties or aid troubled governments(Jensen 2008, 60). This helps explain how quotas were instated as early as the 1930s. Prior to the 1990s, most quotas were voluntarily enacted by political parties whose ideology was consistent with women's political participation or who wanted to appeal to women(Krook 2004). These political parties incorporated women because they needed their numbers to compete in the

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<sup>28</sup> This is interesting given that most sources attribute a prevalent apathy to these societies. This quote could indicate a political rejuvenation in the younger generations.

political arena. The most recent, government-sponsored, wave of quotas marks a shift in regimes, as opposed to individual parties, to include women. After the 1995 Beijing Conference calling for greater female political participation, governments could benefit from the positive international image generated by implementing gender quotas.

Most research on quotas assumes that quotas are a positive political strategy. Quotas foster women's involvement in politics which enhances political life, helps democratization and has positive effect on women, without stripping men of power, a form of raising equality (Sherbini 2007). They may not radically improve the lives of women or bring about democratic reform, but they in effect cause little harm to any parties.

*Are quotas necessary for women to enter politics?*

Norris and Inglehart note that overall, the status of women is improving but "gender gaps persist" worldwide (4). Gender gaps are discrepancies in rights, status or freedoms that can only be attributed to a person's gender, spanning socioeconomic and classifications. These gaps do not seem likely to disappear naturally, so action must be taken to improve women's status (ibid). Women have more obstacles than men in attaining political office, so when male and female candidates compete under the same rules, men have a significant advantage and defeat women candidates in most cases (Jones 1998, 1999; Htun and Jones 2002; Dahlerup 2003; Tripp, Konaté and Lowe-Morna 2006, Goetz and Hassim 2003; et al.).

Political motives aside, it may be argued that quotas are implemented in the Arab world to serve two objectives: to incorporate more women into

government and the greater political sphere, and to help women who wish to enter politics overcome the cultural and institutional factors that prevent them from doing so. Very few women may be able to overcome patriarchal norms and break into politics without the help of quotas. The process of bringing more women into governmental institutions is dramatically expedited by quotas. It is not a matter of life or death that women are put on the “fast track” to gender equality through quotas, but overall it is to their advantage (Dahlerup 2003).

### **Broader implications of quotas**

One of the central ways feminism seeks to improve the lives of women is through empowerment.<sup>29</sup> An empowered leader has sway in determining the political agenda. Here, the political culture must be addressed because only by participating in politics can women determine what is on the political agenda (Zahur 2003). Once in politics, women need support, both from their parties and from civil society because in societies with weak legislatures and democratic institutions, it can be difficult for women, or any members of parliament (MPs) to introduce legislation (Jensen 2008). When a strong leader like those of Morocco, Jordan, and Egypt determine the political agendas, MPs may be generally ineffective, regardless of sex. This means that, due to political environments, quotas may not contribute to empowerment

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<sup>29</sup>See Simone de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*. Vintage Books, New York. 1953. Empowerment is not solely a political term, extending beyond the reach of governments. It incorporates an augmentation in women's shared knowledge of the history of women in their own country or region, framing women as separate, whole, independent entities. In this sense women surpass the limited definition of man's “other” In this case, using Simone de Beauvoir's terminology is acceptable in describing a non-Western culture because, as previously stated, women in the Middle East define themselves mainly as wives or mothers. One cannot be a wife or a mother in these societies without a man. Women define themselves by what men make them, thus the terminology of “other” is appropriate. However this is the only case in which Simone de Beauvoir or any Western feminist should be used to analyze Arab women, because these women tend to propagate Orientalist biases.

For women, political effectiveness is understood as “the ability to use voice to politicize issues of concern to women, to use electoral leverage to press demands on decision makers, to trigger better responsiveness from the public sector to their needs and better enforcement of constitutional commitments to women’s equal rights(Goetz and Hassim 2003; 29). A distinction must be made between simply filling a seat and “toeing the party line,” and using an elected position to affect the political system and the lives of constituents(Abou-Zeid 2006). It would seem natural for women to champion causes that concern their sex. However this can be politically detrimental because women’s issues are often seen as “soft issues,” not fit for a serious forum like national legislature(ibid).

Theoretically the argument for quotas is strong, and it seems there is a need for them to facilitate women’s political participation in the Arab world. Ideally quotas would be able to fully realize their main objective of incorporating more women into the body politic in Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco. However, the complexity of quotas dictates that mere implementation does not satisfy their objectives. It is necessary to identify determining factors to quota success in these nations in order to understand why they have experienced different levels of success with quotas.

## **Chapter IV: Factors to Arab Quota Success, but not Determining Factors**

### *Civil Society, Democratization, and Quality of Life*

Quotas are an intricate electoral strategy designed to incorporate more women into government. They are inherently complex because their structure is dependent on the political societies in which they are implemented<sup>30</sup>. In each case quotas are designed specifically to fit the electoral systems and governmental institutions of a state. They are affected by the types of electoral systems, the power of the institutions in which they are used, who implements them, and numerous other factors. This complicates comparative studies of quotas. No universal model can exist for how quotas should be structured or determine the effects they should produce because quotas are the products of the political environments in which they are implemented.

Quotas are dependent on many variables; no single variable can sufficiently account for quota success. Differences between states' nature of civil society, level of democratization, and the quality of life of women each help to explain why some quotas have more positive effects than others. However, none of these factors provide a sufficient explanation as to why quotas have been more successful in Morocco than in the other two Arab regimes. To only attribute the affects of quotas to one factor is to oversimplify quotas. Quotas must be understood in a broader context. They must be studied on a case-by-case basis that addresses why quotas were implemented, who decides who fills quota seats, and how the overall political culture reacts to quotas, among other factors.

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<sup>30</sup> The complexity of political socities due to the interplay between many aspects of society, such as political institutions, political competition, interests groups, laws, and rights.



To show why a single-variable analysis of quotas does not sufficiently explain variations in quota success, I now identify three likely independent variables and explain why they alone do not lead to a deeper understanding of quotas. Civil society, democratization, and the quality of life of women in the cases of Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco, do not independently explain why Morocco has enjoyed greater success. In the following sections I will explain that comparing each of these factors in the three cases does not provide sufficient explanation for the differences between their quota experiences because they are not true independent variables. These factors and their effect on quotas are shaped ultimately by the regime in which they are implemented.

Though they are limited in the explanations they can provide, it is helpful to account for the effects of civil society, democratization, and quality of life when understanding quotas in the Middle East. These variables help explain the societies in which quotas are implemented, though they do not fully explain quota success. It is necessary to understand the environment in which quotas are enacted because it not only determines the structure of the quotas, but their probability of success. However, these societal factors should not be given too much weight in their importance, as it is necessary to account for other factors to generate a comprehensive understanding of quotas.

## A. Civil Society

In examining Jordan, Egypt and Morocco, the autocratic regime arises as the pervasive force. The civil societies of Jordan, Egypt and Morocco are not sufficiently different to account for Morocco's relative quota success. Of course there are variations, as will be discussed in Chapters V-VII, but the natures of these civil societies are fundamentally the same in that they are controlled by the state. Because the inherent nature of civil societies in the Arab world do not differ greatly, they are unlikely to provide strong evidence as to why Morocco has the most successful quotas.<sup>31</sup> In this section, civil society is first defined, then the involvement of women and the nature of civil society under authoritarian societies are discussed to explain why civil society is not the most important factor when studying gender quotas.

### What is Civil Society?

Civil society is defined by Malena and Heinrich to "be broadly understood as the space in society where collective citizen action takes place"(2005). For the purposes of this paper, civil society is related to voluntary associations and actions, lying outside the spheres of the state, the economic market and the family. Religion is not always included in civil society, but, when examining Arab states, Islam must be factored into the definition because of its central cultural role and the social services it provides<sup>32</sup>. Civil society differs from political society where involvement is generally driven by a desire for power, and from the economic market where activity is directed towards material gains. Engagement in civil society is voluntary and often motivated by a desire to form associations and perhaps work towards a common goal, such as female empowerment. Civil societies are country-specific,

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<sup>31</sup> In cross-regional studies of gender quotas it is useful to examine the effect of civil societies. In these three cases, civil society is a fundamentally static variable due to the authoritarian nature of society, so it is not useful when comparing such similar countries.

<sup>32</sup> For more information about the central role of religion in Muslim societies see Ayoob, M. "Political Islam: Image and Reality." and Nasr, V. "The Rise of 'Muslim Democracy.'"

so it is difficult to create comprehensive cross-national studies of civil society(Heinrich and Fioramonti 2007; Hawthorne 2004). Civil society is difficult to measure because it involves many variables and complex relationships, manifesting itself in many ways.

Civil society is relevant to the study of gender quotas because it is the primary arena for the women's movement.<sup>33</sup> It can either promote female involvement in public life or discourage women from actively working to improve the status of women in society. Women who are active in civil society often become the most qualified candidates for quota seats.<sup>34</sup> Women as whole are remarkably functional in civil society, considering that they are not a typical civil society bloc. Women are not a homogenous social class, having different identities and commitments, and are more likely to align themselves with the "men of their class, religion, ethnicity, tribe or family than with other women across social boundaries"(Joseph 1999, 11; Spelman 1988, Kandiyoti 1998). It is difficult for women to unite as a viable force in civil society because women encompass a broad spectrum of experiences.

Civil society in an authoritarian environment, like that of Jordan, Egypt, or Morocco, differs from that found in a democratic environment. Authoritarian regimes determine the extent to which civil societies are active in voicing the interests of certain groups and providing social services. Furthermore, not all civil societies found in authoritarian environments are the same. As a brief analysis of the civil societies of three Arab nations will show, civil societies under autocracies are not identical.

### **The Impotence of Authoritarian Civil Society**

In her book, *Accountability without Democracy*, Lily Tsai examines the affect of civil society on local politics and government effectiveness, concluding that while there may

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<sup>33</sup> The women's movement is important to gender quotas because both involve the active participation of women in their societies. Women's groups are often the primary advocates of gender quotas.

<sup>34</sup> These women are qualified according to their personal merit, not to their connections to political elites.

be no institutional checks to ensure government officials are accountable to their electorates, government officials who are “embedded in the social networks of their communities” are likely to feel obligated to provide public goods because it is what their fellow group members expect from them. These groups may range from religious communities, recreational associations, like bowling leagues, or more informal networks, such as members of the same neighborhood (Putnam 1995). This neo-Toquevillian concept argues that officials feel as if they have a moral or social accountability to their communities. In this sense, the electorate yields a sort of soft power, which may serve as a check over the officials, ensuring their interests will be represented in government. Tsai underscores the importance of civil society in undemocratic systems for an effective government that is able to provide essential public services to its people<sup>35</sup> (Tsai 2007). Her work refutes exaggerated claims by scholars like Farnen and Meloen that civil society does not exist, or that it does not matter, in illiberal societies (2000). Civil society matters in the Arab world, but it does not determine the outcome of quotas. That function is performed by the autocratic regimes.

Civil society has made little impact in the authoritarian aspects of Middle Eastern regimes. A strong independent civil society “could be a democratizing force, but is not inherently one,” according to Malena and Heinrich (2005). Though civil society exists, the government determines to what extent and in what forms it exists. Civil society is not inherently democratic, and can be dominated by “apolitical, pro-government, or even illiberal groups,” such as radical Islamists or political elites allied with the regime (Hawthorne 2004).

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<sup>35</sup> “Essential public services” include water allocation, road building, and other services whose benefits are dispersed throughout an entire community, so that no privatized service would consider providing it (Tsai 2007, 5).

## Disproving de-Tocqueville

The neo-Toquevillian belief that a strong civil society will lead to a strong democratic government, argued by scholars such as Putnam, Kornhauser, and Arendt, could be furthered to say that the stronger a civil society, the stronger the democratic institutions, and the more likely a democratic strategy like gender quotas is to succeed.<sup>36</sup> This assumes that reforms building upon strong institutions are more likely to have a greater positive impact than reforms implemented in weak institutions.

This logic should not be applied to the case studies of Jordan, Morocco and Egypt, because this theory of civil society has a Western bias and does not fully encompass or address the realities of the current Middle East, such as Islamic revivalism. Furthermore, even without this bias, the correlation between civil society and democracy has not been proven. Sheri Berman argues contrary to the neo-Toquevillians, that civil society growth will not lead to a strong democracy, especially in countries where a “population increasingly perceives its government, politicians, and parties to be inefficient and unresponsive.” In such an environment, which Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco resemble, “diverting public energies and interest into secondary associations may only exacerbate the problem, fragment society, and weaken political cohesion further.” Civil society may not only not be a democratizing force, but it may prevent the democratic success of policies like quotas (Berman 1997). According to Berman’s theory, civil society does not strengthen democracy, but “the associational vigor” resulting from strong civil society, can “further undermine and delegitimize” a state’s already weak political structures<sup>37</sup> (ibid). If civil society is strong, it could be said to counteract the empowering effects of quotas by weakening parliament. In addition to detracting from democratic institutions, civil society

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<sup>36</sup> Putnam, R. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton University Press 1993.; Kornhauser, W. *The Politics of Mass Society*. Free Press. Glencoe. 1959. And Arendt, H. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Harourt Brace Jonaovich. New York. 1973.

<sup>37</sup> In societies with weak legislatures and democratic institutions, it can be difficult for women, or any members of parliament (MPs) to introduce legislation (Jensen 2008). When a strong leader like those of Morocco, Jordan, and Egypt determine the political agendas, MPs may be generally ineffective, regardless of sex.

often helps to sustain liberalized autocracies, by serving both the opposition and the ruling elites (Brumberg 2003).

### **Irrelevance: civil society in authoritarian regime policy**

For civil society to be a driving factor behind political reform, such as gender quotas, then regimes must be held accountable to the demands of civil society. In these Arab authoritarian regimes, autocrats have no such obligation to civil society (Farnen and Meloen 2000). The government controls civil society, permitting some associations and banning others, according to its interests. This severely weakens civil society and further prevents it from influencing national politics.

Though at times different sectors of civil society are able to work together in the Arab world, civil society is “deeply fragmented.” Different sects have been unable to “coalesce in a sustained fashion” in these societies (Hawthorne 2004). Civil society exists in all three countries, and it is necessary for gender quotas to genuinely succeed, but simply the existence of an active civil society combined with gender quotas is not enough to ensure the goals of quotas are met. Civil society must have the power to ensure that the interests of women are served by gender quotas.

The authoritarian nature of these societies means the government is ultimately in control of what is permitted in civil society, so civil society must be contextualized. As discussed, civil society cannot exist without the support of the government in these Arab states. Because it is dependent on an outside factor, it cannot serve as an independent variable for quota success. Because civil society does affect quota experiences, the regime is indirectly the independent variable in these cases because civil society depends on the nature of it.

## B. Democratization

Democracy may appear to be a crucial factor in determining quota success, as electoral quotas are designed for democratic systems. In these Arab cases relying on democratization to explain quota outcomes is inappropriate because none of these countries are democracies or in the process of becoming one. As the democratic institutions of these countries are under the complete power of the head of state, it is more useful to focus on the extent to which the regime allows democracy to exist than how democratic these countries are in relation to one another. As will be shown in Chapters V-VII, electoral quotas were not implemented in any of these countries to achieve democratic objectives, so the actual role of democracy should not be overemphasized when studying Arab gender quotas. Democracy is not genuine in these countries, so it cannot be a determining variable for quota success in Jordan, Egypt or Morocco.

### Democratic Indices

Morocco tends to score higher on democratic indexes than Jordan or Egypt. Freedom House, who provides one of the most basic indicators of democracy, ranks Morocco as partially free, and the other two countries as not free, with Egypt being slightly more not-free (Puddington 2010). From this data one could infer that the more democratic a country is, the more successful its gender quotas will be.

**Figure 2. Freedom House 2010 Survey**

	Status	Political Liberties	Civil Liberties
<b>Morocco</b>	Partially Free	5	4
<b>Jordan</b>	Not Free	6	5
<b>Egypt</b>	Not Free	6	5

Source Puddington 2010

To make such an inference from a single ranking risks oversimplification, as gender quotas are a complex topic, motivated by, implemented through, and affecting various parts of society. To deepen this analysis it is useful to consult the Polity VI survey, which provides a more comprehensive analysis of political climates than simply “free” and “not free.”

**Figure 3. Polity IV Index 2009**

	<b>Morocco</b>	<b>Jordan</b>	<b>Egypt</b>
<b>Fragility Index</b>	6	6	13
<b>Effectiveness Score</b>	4	3	5
<b>Legitimacy Score</b>	2	3	8
<b>Security Effectiveness</b>	No fragility	No Fragility	No fragility
<b>Security Legitimacy</b>	Low fragility	Low Fragility	Moderate fragility
<b>Political Effectiveness</b>	No fragility	No fragility	Moderate fragility
<b>Political Legitimacy</b>	No fragility	Moderate fragility	High fragility
<b>Regime Type</b>	Institutionalized Authoritarian	Informal authoritarian	Informal authoritarian
<b>Economic Effectiveness</b>	Moderate fragility	Moderate fragility	Moderate fragility
<b>Economic Legitimacy</b>	No fragility	No fragility	Moderate fragility
<b>Net Oil Production</b>	Moderate consumer	Moderate consumer	Low petroleum profile
<b>Social Effectiveness</b>	Moderate fragility	Low fragility	Moderate fragility
<b>Social Legitimacy</b>	Low Fragility	No fragility	Moderate fragility

Source: Marshall and Jagers 2002

Jordan and Morocco have the same fragility index, but Morocco scores higher in terms of political legitimacy, which is consistent with democracy. As will be shown in Chapters V-VII, autocrats are more willing to allow democratic reforms and institutions if they are secure in their power base. To an autocrat who fears opposition forces, democratization is a threat because it could empower the groups he wishes to suppress.

In these cases one cannot draw a strong link between the success of gender quotas and the level of democracy of a country. Saying that gender quotas succeed in proportion to democracy, assumes that democratization is a genuine phenomenon in these three



cases and that democracy precludes gender quotas<sup>38</sup>. Morocco's regime type is classified as institutional authoritarian as opposed to the informal authoritarianism of Jordan and Egypt. If the institutions present in Morocco were actually democratic, this would indicate that democracy was a determining factor for quota success. For electoral quotas to exist, a political system needs to have minimally democratic structures like an elected legislature, but structures alone do not make democracy, particularly when these structures have little power. To this point, these structures do not have to be democratically functional, fair or effective, but without them the electoral quotas discussed here could not exist. If stronger institutions lead to stronger quotas, this cannot be used to justify democratization as a determining factor in quota success because it involves the incorrect assumption that these institutions are democratic.

### **The Political Significance of Democratization in the Middle East**

Democratic tendencies could be a possible predictor of countries' success with quotas. If democratization alone factored into quota success, the more democratic a country is, perhaps the better it receives gender quotas. There is some merit in this argument, but it is insufficient to explain the discrepancies between Morocco, Jordan and Egypt. These countries are established autocracies, yet one must understand the role of democracy and democratization in the Middle East to understand quotas. As democracy is a salient issue in the region, understanding its relation to gender quotas could reveal interesting information about quotas overall in the region.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> A gender quota could be satisfied entirely by undemocratic appointments.

<sup>39</sup> Following the invasion of Iraq ensuing from the Bush rhetoric of democracy promotion, Arab states were pressured by Western powers like the United States to implement democratic reforms. Quotas could be considered to qualify as such reforms.

Quotas are often lauded as a step towards democratization(Mullen 2008). That is not to say that quotas themselves lead to more democratic political practice, but they can be used to facilitate it(Dalherup 2007). Many western scholars prescribe democracy as a remedy to the illiberal practices of the Middle East.<sup>40</sup> Women's rights often are grouped with democratic citizens' rights, and democratic movements usually include an effort to incorporate women into politics.

Quotas are often argued to be a sort of democratic aid, but in fact quotas do not inherently serve any democratic objective(Huang 2002). Though they bring women into government, this does not mean that the presence of quota women equates a more representative political body.<sup>41</sup> Politics in these countries is concerned with maintaining the status quo, not with representing the interests of citizens. If democratic reforms are implemented, they are not intended to bring about real democracy, but because such reforms are seen to be in the interests of the ruling regime.<sup>42</sup>

Morocco, Jordan and Egypt are not democracies; at best, they are liberalized autocracies, in which the "internal rules and logic not only serve the interests of rulers but also those of many (but not all) mainstream opposition elites"(Brumberg 2003). These autocracies all seek legitimization from multiple sources allowing for both democratic and anti-democratic ideas and elements to coexist in the political order(Warrick 2009, 5). Democratic ideas prevail where they favor the regime; otherwise anti-democratic views thrive in the political culture. As long as these autocrats are concerned with the security and preservation of their regimes, "prospects for democratization are severely

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<sup>40</sup> American promotion of democracy in the Middle East has been prevalent since the Eisenhower Doctrine (1957) and was especially prevalent under the Bush doctrine.

<sup>41</sup> Women who fill quota seats often do not serve as representatives of all women in parliament, as will be further discussed in Chapters 5-7.

<sup>42</sup> How quotas serve the interests of each ruling regime will be discussed in Chapters 5-7

limited”(16)<sup>43</sup>. These countries have taken small steps toward political liberalization, such as permitting the establishment of parties and making efforts, albeit limited ones, to discourage underhanded electoral processes like vote-buying and falsified voter registration.

Though there have been attempts at democratization in almost all of the Arab nations, no country is classified as free. This is central in gender quota success because quotas are more likely to produce effective female representatives in government in societies with greater freedoms(Krook 2008). Legislators of either sex are severely limited from representing their constituencies if they lack the freedom to use their voice in parliament. The cases of Morocco, Jordan and Egypt are alike in that genuine democracy does not exist in these societies. Because true democracy is not present in any of these cases, it is not the best factor to consider when comparing quota experiences.

### **Authoritarian “Democratic Reform”**

At the urging of international organizations, some states have taken up liberal causes such as minority and women’s rights movements to appear legitimate on the global stage. Women’s rights is a popular cause for regimes to champion, especially when the regimes are domestically faced with the threat of Islamism, but advocating women’s rights is necessarily a method of democratization. Quotas are a somewhat misguided means of democratic reform. The exclusion of women, while not ideal, does not account for a lack of democracy, nor will an inclusion of women lead to greater

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<sup>43</sup> Freedom House’s analysis of the region finds that in nowhere the Middle East, “is there a democratic political system in which the government [is] accountable to [its] own people; the rule of law prevails; and freedoms of expression, association, and belief, as well as respect for the rights of minorities and women, are guaranteed.” In most Arab countries, the laws “have failed to find the required balance between security of society and presence of individual freedoms” (Freedom House<sup>43</sup>).

democracy. Among other reasons, Arab states lack democracy because “elected institutions have very little power and impose no effective checks on monarchs who govern as well as rule and on presidents whose power base is in the security forces or strong party”(Ottaway 2004). Reform is necessary in these societies, but it must be reform from within, as one cannot import democracy “wholesale” from other countries(UN 2009).<sup>44</sup>

The lack of democracy in Arab states explains why quotas have been largely ineffective as a democratic reform, but it does not explain why Morocco has had a more positive experience implementing them than Jordan or Egypt. Democratic institutions and reform movements exist in the Arab world, but, as with civil society, they are only as effective as autocrats allow them to be. The ruling regimes of these countries determine to what extent democracy exists in their societies. Democracy can significantly impact the outcome of gender quotas, but as the regime controls what kind of impact democracy can have, again the nature of the regime seems to be the best determinant of the impact of gender quotas

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<sup>44</sup> Quotas could be an example of a western import.

## C. Quality of Life of Women

Another subject to consider when comparing quotas in Morocco, Jordan, and Egypt is the quality of life of women in these nations. For the purposes of this paper, quality of life statistics refer to literacy rates, GDPs, and gender specific data such as female professional involvement, gender gap statistics and any other factors that contribute to variations in standards of living. In this section I first explain how the quality of life of women in these societies could affect quotas, then discuss select quality of life statistics and why they are not particularly useful in these case studies.

### **Education**

It is generally accepted that a higher standard of living correlates with higher education rates. Because education is an “especially powerful predictor of political participation” it should follow that the greater education levels and literacy rates for women will lead to an increase in their political participation (Burns, Schlozman and Verba 2001; 286). Increased political participation is likely to lead to a greater demand for female representation in government; therefore, the better the average quality of life in these countries, the greater the demand for gender quotas.

Quotas in other parts of the world are likely to have the greatest support in countries where the female population is overall better educated, and more women are active in public life, be it through civil society or in the economic market (Berinsky 2008). However, public support for governmental policies does not ultimately matter in Arab autocracies, therefore, the level of education, which contributes to the overall quality of

life of women in these countries, does not directly relate with the outcome of gender quotas.

**Figure 4. Literacy Rates**

	Total Literacy Rate	Male	Female
<b>Jordan(2003)</b>	89.9	95.1	84.7
<b>Egypt(2005)</b>	71.4	83	59.4
<b>Morocco(2003)</b>	52.3	65.7	39.6

Source: CIA World Factbook

A major flaw with using quality of life statistics to explain why quotas have had different success rates in societies that are so similar is that a single statistic cannot be representative of the complete status of women in a society. The literacy rates of the countries may seem to reveal something about the societies, but this data set does not seem to correlate with Morocco having the most positive quota experience. If quotas were impacted by female literacy rates, then seemingly Jordan would be the best suited for them. Morocco's rate of female literacy is not even half of Jordan's, yet experience proves that it has been the best-suited for gender quotas of the three cases. It is apparent that another approach must be used to explain gender quotas, and a multivariable analysis must be undertaken.

### Key Human Development Indicators

**Figure 5. Quality of Life**

	Morocco	Jordan	Egypt
<b>Human Development Index Ranking (2009)*</b>	130	96	123
<b>Female economic activity (as % of male rate, ages 15 and older) [2004]</b>	33	35	28
<b>Female Labor Force(as % of total labor force 2006</b>	26.05	25.44	21.72
<b>Ratio of Estimated Female to Male Earned Income 2006</b>	.25	.31	.25
<b>Per Capita GDP(2009)* *</b>	\$3800	\$4800	\$4900

UNDP Pogar 2010

Source: World Bank

\*Out of 182 countries

\*\*CIA World Factbook,

By looking at Figure 5 one can see that in some cases the differences in human development and gender development statistics between each country are almost negligible.<sup>45</sup> In all three cases women's economic activity, which consists of generating income and purchasing goods and services, equals roughly one-third of male economic activity. Egypt's percentage is a few points short of one-third and Jordan's very slightly surpasses the ratio. These percentages all indicate that in all three societies men are twice as involved economically than women. I argue that more economic activity makes men larger players in the marketplace, which leads to greater economic power. The slight differences in the percentages are not significant for these figures and many other sets of data regarding the status of women in the Arab world.

Morocco performs better than Jordan or Egypt in its female involvement in the labor force. Again, the figures for all three countries are so close in value that they cannot sufficiently explain why quotas have been more successful in Morocco than Jordan or Egypt. Even if statistics prove that Morocco outperforms the other two countries in other aspects, the overall experiences of women in these countries bear great resemblance to one another. The Human Development Index (HDI) does not coincide with quota experiences, ranking Jordan highest and Morocco lowest of the three. As the HDI is a widely respected source, this must indicate that quality of life does not determine quota success. Perhaps the standards of living and levels of development vary between Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt, but they are all grouped by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) as medium development countries. To place too much

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<sup>45</sup> Many more gender development statistics can be found at the UNDH's Human Development Index website. I selected a few statistics to include in this paper as opposed to the entire data set because they are not central to this thesis and the statistics are inconclusive for this paper.

emphasis on statistics in these cases risks distracting from the greater meaning of quotas with minute details.

### **Significance of Quality of Life**

Ultimately the quality of life of women in these cases does not factor into the success of quotas because women themselves have little influence on the outcomes on quotas in these societies. The case of Jordan proves that high levels of female education and involvement in society are not enough to ensure that quotas succeed. Morocco shows that the regime's attitude toward quotas is paramount to their success. Autocrats determine the effects that democracy and civil society have on quotas. In this environment there is little room for the female population to impact quotas, whether they are economically successful and educated or not.

In an ideal situation, higher qualities of life may lead to a greater likelihood to be interested in politics, which could then lead women to demand the opportunity to serve in parliament. A strong civil society may respond to the demands of women and become a proponent of quotas, lobbying for their implementation in government. Eventually democratic institutions would respond to civil society and quotas would be able to provide women with the opportunity to enter and fully participate in politics. The Arab world is far from an ideal environment for quotas. Civil society, democratization, and the quality of life all are prevented from impacting the overall outcome of quotas because the autocratic regimes of these countries solely determine their success and impact on society. The regime is the predominant determinant of quota success, but it must be considered alongside other factors in these societies, such as the nature of the women's movements and the political climate, to provide a comprehensive understanding of



quotas. Civil society, democratization and the quality of life of women in these societies may be dependent on autocratic regimes in these cases, but addressing them serves to deepen the understanding of the contexts in which quotas exist.

## **CASE STUDIES: JORDAN, EGYPT, AND MOROCCO**

Gender quotas are a complex electoral strategy to examine because they are affected by many different factors and may vary greatly depending on the circumstances—political and cultural--in which they are used. No single independent variable determines their success and there is no set mold for what a gender quota should resemble. While theoretical arguments can be made for the abstract idea of quotas, no standardized research framework exists for assessing quotas worldwide. There is no universally accepted paradigm for what form a quota should take or what kind of effects it should produce. When studying quotas, it is best to examine entire political and civil societies and assess if and how they have been affected by quotas and how quotas are shaped by the context in which they are applied.

Chapter IV argued that quotas are too complex for their success to be explained by a single factor or set of factors, largely because the same factors do not appear consistently in every country. In the cases of Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco an exclusive focus on how democracy relates to quotas would be problematic not only because these countries are not democracies, but because it largely overlooks significant factors that account for quota success. To explain the quota experiences of these countries, the regimes' motivations for implementing gender quotas, the status of women in each case, and the institutions and political environment in which they are implemented must be examined.

Quotas are country-specific, catered to individual electoral systems, political institutions and political climates of each country. They must first be understood as individual cases before comparative analyses may be made and trends identified. Therefore, when studying quotas in the Arab region, countries must first be evaluated individually, then they may be compared and perhaps regional trends regarding gender quotas identified.

Quotas and their potential for success depend on the societies in which they are implemented. This paper aims ultimately to deepen the understanding of quotas in the greater Arab world by examining each of the three case studies individually. In these case studies, I evaluate the governmental institutions and the status of women in these countries and their compatibility with gender quotas. I investigate their political climates to explain the structure and preliminary effects of gender quotas in each country. In this analysis I identify the ruling regime's attitude towards gender quotas and their implementations, the nature of the women's movements, and the structures of the political systems in these countries as the factors that account for Morocco having a more positive experience with gender quotas.

## **CHAPTER V: JORDAN TRIBAL LEADERS AND POLITICAL PROXIES**

According to quality of life statistics mentioned in Chapter V, Jordan initially may seem to be a favorable environment for Arab women, but from a political perspective, power lies out of their grasp. This is not to imply that compared to men, Jordanian women are significantly disadvantaged. In Jordan, political power eludes either sex, with the exception of a select few with ties to the monarchy. Jordanian women have a higher standard of living than women in many other Arab states, including Egypt and Morocco, but they are still prevented from serving as democratically-elected female leaders. While most Arab women are in some ways confined and restricted by their gender, in Jordan women operate within more comfortable parameters, but they are confined, nonetheless. The restrictive cultural and economic factors discussed in Chapter III, as well as institutional factors, are still impediments to female political participation and the elevation of the status of women.

### **Women and Jordanian Society**

Women in Jordan are relatively highly educated, active in the professional world, and benefit from family code reforms passed recently to raise the minimum age of marriage from 14 to 18, give women recourse to file for divorce, to grant women greater property rights, and to combat violence against women. Despite these commendable strides towards the elevation of their status in society, a cultural bias against women persists. It is evident in the discrepancies between male and female education and the preference of employers to hire women because they will accept lower wages than men

that gender parity does not exist in Jordan.<sup>46</sup> This bias is furthered in the view, especially prevalent in rural areas, that a woman's place is in the home and her primary duties are to her children and husband. (El-Azahry Sonbol 2003; Mahdin 2004; Abu Rumman 2007)

Despite the small progresses towards liberalization in Jordan, especially regarding the status of women, the regime does not encourage a true liberalization of society. To succeed, liberal reforms like gender quotas must coincide with a larger process of liberalization that manifests itself in all aspects of society, from freedom of speech to greater accountability of elected officials. Organizations like Freedom House have taken note of Jordan's resurging illiberalism, and demoted Jordan from a partially free state in 2009 to a not-free state in 2010. The dissolution of Parliament in late 2009 provided further evidence to what appears to be a regression of liberalism in Jordan. King Abdullah II seems to be undertaking increasingly authoritarian policies, which refute any rhetoric of promoting democracy and liberalizing society propagated by the palace(Hamid 2010).

### **How Quotas interact with the existing structures**

Despite its democratic institutions, Jordan is largely un-democratic. This is not surprising considering that Jordan's governmental institutions are not indigenously Jordanian, but the imports of foreign powers.<sup>47</sup> The relatively young Hashemite dynasty came to power during the British Mandate, following the withdrawal of the Ottoman

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<sup>46</sup> Statistics show that Jordanian women are exceptionally well educated, especially for the Arab world. Jordanian girls are educated according to a different curricula than boys. The boy-focused curriculum places a greater emphasis on math and science. Boys are educated to have professions more so than girls who are given a less professional-oriented education.

<sup>47</sup> While true that former colonies of Western powers like India, Canada, and Jamaica are successful democracies, this paper assumes that in most cases, democracy is best developed within a country's borders, rather than imposed on a society by an outside force.

Empire after World War I. Jordan's borders as they exist today were created by the British with "scant respect" for tribal traditions and boundaries (Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe 2001: 21). Parliamentary districts were drawn as arbitrarily as the national borders. From its inception, Parliament was inherently weak because it was not created to represent established communities in government. The electoral districts used to elect MPs do not provide democratic legitimacy to MPs, who are not seen by constituents as representing their interests. Gender quotas do nothing to address this major flaw in Parliament. They are designed to increase female representation specifically, not transform Parliament entirely into a more representative body.

The Hashemites were able to secure power by allying themselves with the British and through a series of treaties with local tribal leaders, not through democratic means. Today, much of the monarchy's legitimacy still stems from the support of these tribal leaders (Warrick 2009: 14). In terms of legitimacy, tribal relations almost always trump democratic grounds. Power in Jordan is not derived from popularity among the electorate but from connections with those in power, namely the monarchy. The informal nature of Parliament, where power stems from personal relationships and tribal alliances, disadvantages women because they are often not privy to these connections.<sup>48</sup>

The British created the Jordanian Parliament, which is currently disbanded, but usually consists of an upper house, or Senate, and a Chamber of Deputies. The upper house of Parliament consists of 55 members appointed by the King. The Chamber of Deputies is elected by universal suffrage, with quotas in place not only for women, but

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<sup>48</sup> In certain cases women can gain power through these male power connections, but in those cases they are not legislators in their own right, but through proxy.

for Christians and the minority Cissarian, or Chechen, population as well.<sup>49</sup> Parliament is headed by a Prime Minister who may request the King to dismiss cabinet members, but the final decision, as is the case with all matters of state, rests with the King.<sup>50 51</sup>

On paper, Jordan has an at least quasi-democratic political system, but in reality the regime is centered on the King(State Department). Even though elections are held regularly held in Jordan, “the country cannot be considered a democracy” largely because of the absolute power of the monarchy and because “Parliament is dominated by independents[as opposed to parties], and governments are formed and dismissed without reference to it”(Gharaibeh 2010).

#### *Women in Government Before Quotas*

Before electoral quotas, a woman was much more likely to be a senator than a deputy. This is still true as women make up 6.4% of all seats in the lower house and 12.7% in the upper house.(IDEA 2010). The first woman appointed to a governmental post was the cabinet member Inaam Mufti in 1976, and all governments formed since 1993 have, almost by tradition, included a female member(Attiyat 2005). The first female senator, Leila Sharaf, was appointed in 1989 as a founding member in the reestablished body. Leila Sharaf is an example of the typical female proxy politician in the Arab world. Before his death in 1980, her husband--not coincidentally the King’s cousin--was a

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<sup>49</sup> Parliamentarians must be Jordanian citizens with no prior criminal charges(Sweiss 2005). This stipulation prevents many opposition members and progressive reformists from gaining a seat in parliament because they are more likely to be charged with crimes against the regime than those who conform to the status quo

<sup>50</sup> Samir al-Rifa’I, was appointed by the King on December 14, 2009, and leads the Council of Ministers, or the cabinet. He does not head Parliament currently because neither house exists.

<sup>51</sup> The king may veto laws passed by parliament, amend the constitution, command the armed forces and appoint and dismiss judges through the Ministry of Justice’s presence on the High Judicial Council. The King’s veto may be overrode by a 2/3 majority in both the upper and lower houses of parliament. This is not a very effective legislative check, however, as the king can navigate around opposition to his policies by dissolving parliament and passing emergency laws in the interim period before a new parliament is convened.

powerful member of the government. Though Ms. Sharaf has proven herself to be a capable bureaucrat, heading the Jordanian environmental department, her appointment was most likely more the result of her connections to powerful men than of her personal ability. Proxy female politicians do serve some of the aims of quotas, such as allowing women to prove that they can perform traditionally male duties competently, but women cannot hope to achieve the same numbers in Parliament through proxies as through quotas. Because elections have little to do with which women fill quota seats in Jordan, as will be described later in this chapter, quota women can be likened to proxy politicians, rather than minority representatives. Tribal leaders appoint women to quota seats, making the quota elections mostly for show. Though democratic reforms have been in place for over two decades, little positive change has resulted from them.

### ***The need for reform in Jordan***

1989 marks the beginning of Jordan's, albeit modest, modern attempts at liberalization. In 1967, after the Arab-Israeli War, King Hussein imposed martial law on Jordan. After Jordan's defeat in the war, Muslim Brotherhood(MB) candidates won the greatest percentage of seats in the 1967 parliamentary elections.<sup>52</sup> The Islamist Muslim Brotherhood's performance was bolstered by their advocacy for the Palestinian cause, which echoed popular support in Jordan. Ever-concerned with securing the legitimacy of the monarchy, the King feared the popular Arab Nationalism affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood and the widespread anger that ensued from the loss of the Six-Day War. This, coupled with memories of an attempted coup by Arab nationalists in 1957, explains King Hussein's declaration of martial law, as well as the paranoia of the monarchy towards strong movements in civil society.

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<sup>52</sup> Jordan lost the territory of the West Bank to Israel as a result of the war.



Under martial law, Parliament was disbanded, political parties were banned, and no elections took place. Gender quotas were unthinkable in such a repressive political environment until 1989, when a fiscal crisis required King Hussein to implement liberal reforms or risk severe civil unrest.<sup>53</sup> Traditionally, Jordan has acquired much of its revenue through tourism and aid from other nations. However, in the mid 1980s, these sources decreased their monetary supply to Jordan, and as a result, the overall weakness and inadequacy of Jordan's economy was exposed. Jordanian industry depended on foreign revenue sources and in the late 1980s it became clear that the economy could not sustain itself. To receive necessary funding from the International Monetary Fund(IMF), Jordan was obliged to implement liberalizing reforms in society. The regime implemented democratic reform because it wanted the foreign aid they promised, not because it genuinely desired a more democratic system.(USAID<sup>54</sup>)

This first set of elections in more than 30 years divided the country into 45 electoral districts, which were neither equal in size nor population, and did not allow political parties<sup>55</sup>(Sweiss 2005, Office of King Hussein I). These districts are considered unfair because “there is a lack of balance between the population and number of seats per district(Majed 2005). Though a handful of women ran for election in 1989, the only woman to join Parliament that year was the well-connected Leila Sharaf.

### ***Women and political reform: progress?***

As will be discussed later in this sections, political parties in Jordan have little political power or significance, but one party worth mentioning when discussing the

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<sup>53</sup> Widespread civic unrest is scary for an autocrat. No ruler wants to meet a fate similar to Shah Reza Kahn of Iran.

<sup>54</sup> [http://www.usaid.gov/stories/jordan/cs\\_jordan\\_economy.html](http://www.usaid.gov/stories/jordan/cs_jordan_economy.html)

<sup>55</sup> Independents campaigned for election under a block voting system, where electors could vote for as many candidates as there were seats in the district.

status of women in Jordan is the Jordanian National Party(JNP). The JNP was established in 2007 and became first political party in the Arab world to be headed by a woman.<sup>56</sup> Muna Abu Bakr, the secretary general and founder of the JNP, believes that all Jordanian parties encompass women, that quotas are unnecessary because Jordan has overcome gender discrimination, and that quotas are a detriment to women because they discourage them from competing in general elections which makes them less competitive overall.<sup>57</sup> Ms. Abu Bakr is perhaps overly optimistic. If Jordan had indeed overcome gender discrimination, mothers would be able to pass their nationality to their children, and women would be able to compete in elections on par with men. The low numbers<sup>58</sup> of female parliamentarians both before and under quotas suggest that the political system is skewed in favor of males.

It could be argued that Ms. Abu Bakr owes her political success in some part to quotas, even though she did not benefit directly from them. Quotas have resulted in more women in government, which has helped to normalize the idea of women in politics in Jordan. Perhaps certain women have been able to succeed in a patriarchal society, but as a whole, women do not have parity with men in the Arab world. The greater the number of women who are able to overcome the cultural and institutional barriers and enter politics, the easier it will be for more women to do the same.

Although the presence of a female party leader is symbolically significant, it has little political significance because parties mean little in Jordanian politics. There are

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<sup>56</sup> For more information about the JNP's party platform and the platforms of other parties, see [www.jordanpolitics.net](http://www.jordanpolitics.net).

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Muna Abu Bakr by Rania Tadrus, published in *Elaph*, a Saudi-owned news source September 10, 2007. Retrieved on Mideast wire.

[http://mideastwire.com/index.php?action=timesearch&news\\_day=11&news\\_month=9&news\\_year=2007](http://mideastwire.com/index.php?action=timesearch&news_day=11&news_month=9&news_year=2007)

<sup>58</sup> In December of 2002 women were 1.3% of all parliamentarians in the lower house. Currently they are 6.4%.

around thirty political parties in Jordan, and not one of them is central to the Jordanian political process. The IAF could be an exception to this, but its ideology is so determined by what the regime deems acceptable and much of its power comes from the support it receives from powerful tribal leaders that it does not appear to have the autonomy necessary for political power.<sup>59</sup> This is no accident, as the electoral system that emerged from martial law in Jordan was carefully designed to pose no real threat to the regime(Warrick 2009).

### **Embarking on a new Path of Liberalization and the Emergence of Quotas**

#### *Electoral “reform:” the SNTV system*

In 1992, the King lifted the ban on parties with a new political parties law and in 1993, he implemented the Single Non-Transferable Vote(SNTV) system<sup>60</sup>. At first, the allowance of parties to form may seem to indicate that Jordan was truly making steps toward liberalization, but such an assumption is false. The SNTV system does more to weaken democracy and to restrict political discourse than to advance it.

The regime has used the phrase “one man, one vote” to promote the SNTV system. This is used in other contexts to refer to each voter’s equality under democracy, but in Jordan it means that every voter is equally limited in how he or she can participate in elections. Each member of the electorate has a single vote and cannot vote for multiple candidates even when there are multiple political offices in his or her district to be filled(Warrick 2009, ACE 2010). The electorate may be egalitarian in the sense that

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<sup>59</sup> Being a puppet of political elites does not equate having political power. To have political power, an individual or a group must have the freedom to be in control of the decisions it makes and the actions it performs. The IAF does not entirely have either.

<sup>60</sup> For more information about voting systems see Norris, P. 1997 and Schmidt 2008

each vote has equal impact on an electoral outcome, but, among its many shortcomings, it presents a significant barrier for female candidates. The phrase “one man” is appropriate for this slogan, as no woman benefits from the SNTV system. According to an official at the NDI, specializing in the electoral processes of Jordan and other Middle Eastern nations, neither sex is likely to cast their single ballot in favor of a woman when there are male candidates.<sup>61</sup>

The reasoning for the change in electoral system to SNTV is generally held to be that the King considered Block Voting to benefit Islamist Muslim Brotherhood candidates, whose popular appeal is often viewed as a threat by autocrats in the Arab world.<sup>62 63</sup> SNTV reinforces the tribal system, which tends to favor male candidates over females. Because voters worldwide would tend to cast their single vote for a man rather than a woman, women are put at a distinct disadvantage under the SNTV system(Majed 2005). The SNTV system may be an electoral method, and elections may be a fundamental part of democracy, but the SNTV system does not contribute to democracy in Jordan.<sup>64</sup> The electoral reforms of the 1993 show how the Jordanian monarchy uses faux-liberal policies to strengthen its power while masking its authoritarianism.

The SNTV system was arguably implemented to counteract the liberalization of the reinstatement of political parties, which the regime feared would empower opposition forces, most notably Islamists. Political parties were allowed in 1992, but by the 1993 elections, parties had been rendered impotent by the change in electoral law. SNTV

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<sup>61</sup> Interview with Karen Farrell, Program Officer of Jordan, conducted by author. NDI headquarters, Washington, DC. Jan 20, 2010

<sup>62</sup> Block voting is an electoral system where ballots are cast for multiple candidates and whichever candidates receive the largest blocks of votes are declared the winners(Schmidt 2008).

<sup>63</sup> Egypt is a prime example of this and will be discussed in the next section.

<sup>64</sup> Freedom House’s 2006 *Countries at the Crossroads* report on Jordan advised the country to adopt either a proportional or mixed voting system(Jarrah 2009, Freedom House 2006)

favors pro-monarchist independents because most Jordanians feel loyalty to familial relationships and tribal bonds over political ideology, and are more likely to cast their single vote along tribal lines. Due to the Jordanian power network, tribal leaders nominate candidates who will preserve the status quo, which means they support the monarchy, as it is currently the source of all Jordanian political power. As Zied Majed emphasizes, “elections are at heart a tribal affair(Majed 2005). Tribes themselves are patriarchal constructs, so favoring tribalism often leads to disfavoring women(Slymonics and Joseph 2001). Votes along tribal lines are almost exclusively votes for men, given the patriarchal nature of the tribes. (Elklit and Reynolds 2002)

Though the regime discourages powerful political parties in Jordan, elections are not exclusively a tribal affair, and alternative political groups factor into the political atmosphere. Through tradition and tribal bonds, the monarchy has largely absorbed the tribal system so that is not in opposition with its power(Warrick 2009: 28). Political opposition parties, however weak, have not been incorporated into the status quo elite structure and the government fears the threat an opposition force, empowered at the grassroots level, could pose to the regime. An opposition party without widespread support is easily brushed aside by the regime, but, if supported by the majority of the population, an opposition party presents the usually fatal problem of a monarchy in contention with its people. To avoid this, the monarchy makes strategic ploys, such as providing social services to Palestinian refugees and implementing gender quotas, to win and secure the support of the people, not just the tribal leaders. In Jordan only one party is strong enough and has sufficient popular support to pose such a threat to the monarchy.

*Political Parties, or simply the IAF*

The strongest Jordanian political party is the Islamic Action Front (IAF). It is the particularly well-adapted political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan. Not only is it much more moderate than its sister branches in Egypt and Lebanon, but it supports the monarchy and the political status quo in Jordan. This political conservatism is necessary to participate in a political area like Jordan's where the King wields all the power and does not permit any real opposition.<sup>65</sup> The IAF provides a political alternative for the more conservative sects of society. Like the monarchy, it derives much of its support and power from the tribal system, appealing to tribal leaders with traditionalist ideologies. In this sense, the IAF is not ideal for women activists, although it does attempt to involve women, provided they adhere to party guidelines. Islamist parties can provide great opportunity to a certain kind of woman, one with more traditionalist views. However, they are unlikely to attract activists and the type of women who lobby in urban areas for legal reform and affirmative action programs. This is a problem because these women are arguably the most qualified for political office, having leadership experience and knowledge of how to navigate civil society (Abu Runman 2004; Majed 2005; Sweiss 2005; Farrell 2010). For Jordanian Feminists and advocates for elevation of the traditional status of women have no political organization to represent them. Most women see the monarchy and its puppet political institutions as a more favorable outlet to power than the Islamists.

Because the monarchy and the IAF draw from the same power base,<sup>66</sup> they cannot be considered truly in opposition with one another, and because of this, the IAF has been

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<sup>65</sup> Conservatism is necessary for political environment because the regime does not permit ideologies that challenge the status quo.

<sup>66</sup> The monarchy and the IAF both appeal to traditionalists in Jordanian society. The IAF appeals to the religious community, as does the King who traces his lineage to the prophet Mohammed.

able to be relatively successful for a political party in Jordan's politically stifling environment(Wiktorowics 1998). Its success as a party could explain why the IAF has the largest percentage of female participation of all Jordanian parties, despite its more traditionalist platform. Not only is it easier for women to enter politics when they can go through political mechanisms like parties but perhaps the more successful a party is, the more likely it is to attract aspiring female candidates<sup>67</sup>(Clark 2008).

Besides the IAF, considered "the most organized and coherent political movement in the embryonic party system," other political parties exist in Jordan, but they bear little significance on the political scene(Reynolds and Eklit 2002). There is no strong genuine opposition party, nor, to be fair, is there a strong pro-regime party. Most parties have similar ideologies to one another, and in turn to the monarchy. This lack of a strong party system results in a substantial tribal influence on politics. Those wishing to enter politics, especially women, cannot do so through party mechanisms because parties, even the IAF have little influence in politics.

Tribal leaders serve as the gatekeepers to Jordanian politics. They are arguably much more crucial to Jordanian democracy than electoral results, as they determine who is placed on electoral ballots. This poses a large problem, as tribes are, by definition, exclusive institutions, often in contention with democracy. Tribes value tradition, and the idea of women in politics in many ways breaks with tradition. The regime in Jordan did not implement quotas in order to reform the patriarchal ways of tribes. Provided the tribes continue to support the monarchy, the King is content with the tribal status quo.

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<sup>67</sup> Here I assume that the greater the perceived likelihood of victory, the higher probably a candidate will campaign.

Quotas were implemented as to diffuse potential popular support for opposition movements, particularly those with Islamist leanings like the IAF.

Given the continued weakness of political parties in Jordan and the problems posed by the SNTV system, the “reforms” of the early 1990s have had little positive effect on Jordanian democracy.<sup>68</sup> This is not surprising given that these policies were implemented to qualify Jordan for international aid and ultimately perpetuate the status quo with the monarch having absolute control.<sup>69</sup> Even though these reforms did not result in ideal outcomes, they did, however modestly, open Jordanian political society to liberalization.<sup>70</sup> This opportunity was seized by the strong women’s movement in Jordan, which helped lead to the instatement of quotas in 2003. However the women’s movement’s strong ties to the monarchy prevent it from causing any real political empowerment for women, even when given the opportunity of quotas.

### **Women’s Groups**

The women’s movement in Jordan has made good use of the space given to it by the regime. The limited nature of its capabilities, as determined by the palace, allows the movement to make modest reforms in favor of women but forces it to perpetuate the authoritarian status quo. Women may now be able to open their own businesses in their names, but they cannot actively participate in politics freely and independently in most cases. Though the rights of women may be improving due to the women’s movement, the

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<sup>68</sup> The term democracy and only be applied loosely to Jordan.

<sup>69</sup> The influence of international aid on the implementation of gender quotas is a worthy subject for further research, but for the purposes of this paper it is not significant because it is absorbed by the motivations of the regime as a deciding factor in quota implementation.

<sup>70</sup> Ideal outcomes in this situation would refer to the establishment of democratic institutions in Jordan and more government accountability to its people



rights of both sexes in Jordan are still largely restricted. Women need the endorsement of powerful males to participate in politics and they can only express themselves in ways that will not challenge the regime. Men face these same problems in Jordan, implying that this political suppression of women is the result of the repressive environment, not of some flaw in the quota design.

Beyond politics, Jordan is often praised for its efforts to protect the rights of women and for the efforts of royally sponsored civil society organizations to foster a symbiotic network where women collaborate to help one another succeed (Farrell 2010). There is general cooperation between the major women's groups who focus largely on civil society issues rather than politics. In Jordan this is somewhat problematic because it implies that women's groups unanimously support the King and his agenda. Recently more women have eyed politics as another route through which they can improve the status of women. In reality women do not use politics to improve the lives of Jordanian women; the political system uses women to perpetuate the status quo.

Women's groups in Jordan rallied around the idea of a quota in 1997 after none of the 17 female candidates won a seat in the parliamentary elections. Not only were new female candidates not elected, but also Toujan al-Faisal, the first female member of Parliament elected in 1993, failed to be reelected.<sup>71</sup> She received thousands of votes in the elections,<sup>72</sup> but it is speculated that government intervention prevented her from winning a seat.<sup>73</sup> In 1998 women's groups demanded that Parliament instate a quota of at

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<sup>71</sup> Toujan al-Faisal subsequently attempted to form an opposition political party. It has been speculated that this open opposition to the regime led to the

<sup>72</sup> Under the SNTV system thousands of votes is a highly significant amount, especially considering Ms. Faisal was campaigning in a small district with relatively few voters.

<sup>73</sup> Such intervention could have ranged from anything from voter intimidation or purposefully miscounting votes. Between the 1997 and 2003 elections, Ms. Faisal was convicted of voicing opposition to the monarchy. This legal offence disqualified her from running in the 2003 elections.

least 20 percent, which the prime Minister “rejected outright.”(Ciriaci 1998).<sup>74</sup> This is not surprising considering that 20% is an almost revolutionary high percentage when compared to the low numbers of women in not only Jordan, but across the Arab world at that time.<sup>75</sup>

This blatant refusal of the women’s groups’ demands shows both that Parliament is not an institution that has great concern for the demands of the Jordanian population, and that the women’s movement in Jordan may be strong in its societal impact, but it is not powerful within the political system. To fully understand the quotas in Jordan, the Jordanian women’s movement and its relationship to the monarchy must first be understood.

*Under Royal Authority: NGOs*

Over the past 50 years the status of women in Jordan has improved drastically(Mattar 2003, Jordanian National Commission for Women, 2004, UNIFEM 2002). Female education has flourished to the extent that there are more females in Jordanian Universities than males.<sup>76</sup> Reforms have been made to the family code and overall Jordanian women are enjoying more legal rights and freedoms in public life than in the past few centuries. The women’s movement in Jordan has been a large factor in these improvements, but Jordan lies far from gender equality and the women’s movement is seriously limited by the monarchy. The movement is composed of civil society organizations like NGOs, but also largely dominated by RONGOs, or royal NGOs founded and operated by the monarchy. This cooption of the women’s movement by the

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<sup>74</sup> Source: *Arabic News* “New Jordanian Party Established by Toujan al-Faisal.” December 30, 1998. <http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/981230/1998123013.html>

<sup>75</sup> In 1998, no Arab country exceeded 5% of female participation in parliament(IPU)

<sup>76</sup> Salwa News

monarchy severely limits what the women's group can accomplish because it can only succeed in areas where the King permits. These organizations are encouraged to advocate women's rights to education and their rights to work, but it is almost unthinkable for them to address human rights abuses by the monarchy or to advocate freedom of expression.

In 1947 Jordan's first women's group, the Jordan's Women's Union (JWU), was founded. It was dissolved in 1957, after the attempted coup when the emergency law banned all civil society organizations. It reconvened in 1974 and was the only women's organization that focused on women's rights and an end to gender discrimination from 1974-1981<sup>77</sup>. Currently a similar NGO is the Arab Women's Organization(AWO), which has been instrumental in calling for quotas, denouncing violence against women, and advocating greater legal rights for women. The AWO, like its sister organizations is free to draft memos to Parliament and lobby their issues to politicians, but there is nothing to force and little to entice politicians to take their concerns into consideration. Because of this, these women's groups have negligible political power. They cannot influence legislation, although they can be used by the monarchy as a vehicle to exert his influence.

The women's movement is strong largely because it is not solely focused in politics. The Jordan Forum for Business and Professional Women (JFBPW) was created in 1976. This is a non-governmental organization like the JWU that aims to connect professional women, building a women's network that Jordanian women can use to help one another. NDI, an American NGO, has established a similar program in Jordan called Women Helping Women(WHW). This network purposefully includes female members

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<sup>77</sup> Official website(English version): <http://jordanianwomenunion.org/>

of government so that they may be able to hear and subsequently represent the interests of Jordanian women in their legislative processes(Farrell 2010).<sup>78</sup>

Working alongside these NGOs are the RONGOs, women's organizations connected to the palace. RONGOs are not ideal because they cooperate with authoritarian power, rather than limiting it(Warrick 2009, 151). These organizations such as the Jordan National Commission for Women(JNCW), the Jordan National Forum for Women(JNFW) and the General Federation for Jordanian Women(GFJW) benefit from the extensive resources of the palace, but are more likely to address "big picture" ideas than NGOs, many of which have specific aims, such as increasing female literacy in a small community, or operating shelters for abused women. This is a weakness because overarching ideas need specific policies and projects that can be implemented in order to have a real impact on society. RONGOs were a major supporter of gender quotas because they are a somewhat abstract, societal program aimed at redressing inequalities in the political system that affect women.<sup>79</sup> More importantly, they supported gender quotas because the palace supported them.

### ***Women's Issues in Civil Society***

Civil society in Jordan flourishes as long as it does not challenge the existing power structure. Regarding women's issues and other topics not inherently threatening to the regime's power, "debate is lively and far from one sided" (Warrick 2009, 6). Dozens of apolitical, truly non-governmental NGOs have a positive, significant impact on the lives of Jordanian women, but their impact is limited by the repressive society in which

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<sup>78</sup> Interview with Karen Farrell, Program Officer for Jordan, NDI. Conducted 1-20-10 at NDI headquarters in Washington, DC.

<sup>79</sup> RONGOs view issues on a national level, as do NGOs, but NGOs are also more likely to focus on specific projects in specific areas.

they operate. RONGOs are restricted for the same reason, but they have even less autonomy because they fall under the direct influence of the palace. Unable to address issues like the repression of the press or to make demands for democratic reform, NGOs and RONGOs devote much of their efforts to denouncing violence against women with an emphasis on honor killings.<sup>80</sup> On average, there are 20 honor killings per year in Jordan, which is nonetheless unacceptable, but it is not the widespread societal epidemic that the actions of the women's movement might imply.<sup>81 82</sup> Women's groups are active, but they are perhaps prevented from channeling their efforts in ways that would be most meaningful to society as a whole.

The women's movement in Jordan is affected by major issues in Jordanian politics even if it does not have a major affect on politics in return. Identity is a salient factor in politics, as will be discussed further in the next section, and thus is relevant to studying gender quotas in Jordan. As noted, Jordanian politics is built largely around the existing tribal system. However, since the 1967 war many Palestinians have migrated to Jordan. Palestinians represent a significant minority in Jordan, yet there is no recognizable Palestinian face to the Jordanian women's movement. This is because the regime does not want to encourage its citizens associating itself with identities other than Jordanian. The women's movement serves this objective through its homogeneity—activists in Jordan are typically upper class Jordanian women with connections to the elites. For the past three decades “the existence of two conflicting national identities

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<sup>80</sup> Honor killings refer to the murder of a girl or woman by her male kin on the grounds of having shamed her family in some way, intending to restore honor to the family.

<sup>81</sup> Her Majesty Queen Rania of Jordan. Youtube Video April 16, 2008.  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/queenrania?blend=1&ob=4#p/u/24/jyCB-ULChV4>

<sup>82</sup> Every women's group website mentions honor killings specifically in some way. There are numerous demonstrations against the practice, and it is the most prominent subject of legislation proposed by women's organizations.

occupying the same space and issues factoring in regime survival have led to the adoption of politics of marginalization of women,” meaning that the political atmosphere has significantly shaped the women’s movement in Jordan(Mahdin 2004).

The women’s movement can be seen as a diversion of civil society interest away from issues that are more controversial, such as the legitimacy of the King, freedom of expression, and political ideologies opposed to the monarchy. As Shadi Hamid, a deputy director at the Brookings Institute and a former Chief Researcher for the Project on Middle East Democracy(POMED), notes, Jordan, and other countries in the Middle East, have much more pressing problems to address than women’s political participation, such as human rights abuses, censorship, a lack access to information, terrorism, and violent fundamentalist Islamists(Hamid 2010). This is not to trivialize women’s political participation, but with these other issues, lives are often in danger and they stand in the way of democracy much more dramatically than the absence of women in an ineffective parliamentary body.

### **Royal Motives**

King Abdullah II may not be a liberal world leader, nor a feminist with a moustache, but given the autocratic nature of his regime, he is solely responsible for the implementation of quotas. Women’s groups, both royal and non-governmental, raised the issue of quotas beginning in 1997, but the issue of gender quotas was not an identified item on the legislative agenda until 2003 when King Abdullah decided to implement them. The Monarchy has long encouraged the women’s movement, provided it acts in

accordance with the regime's political agenda, as seen through the establishment of RONGOs.

RONGOs were formed by the palace to create the impression that the monarchy is allied with the women's movement. Such an alliance generates a positive view of the monarchy as a liberalizing institution without necessitating it to cede any of its power.<sup>83</sup> Women do not suffer directly as a result of this, although the women's movement sacrifices some autonomy and is, as a result, restricted to complying with the royal agenda. This is problematic because the monarchy wishes to perpetuate the status quo, but the status quo, characterized by tribalism and Arab-Islamic traditional paternalism, is biased against women. The regime may not actively lower the status of women through the women's movement, but it allows for societal factors that disadvantage women to persist.

The creation of RONGOs was arguably more of a symbolic gesture than a genuine attempt to improve the status of women. Neither Hussein I nor Abdullah II can be said to be unconcerned with the status of women in Jordan, but it would be absurd to label either even loosely as a feminist, bent on advancing women's role in society. Overall, the state is neither a staunch opponent of women's rights nor a promoter of gender egalitarianism" (Warrick 2009, 177). The King did not implement gender quotas because he wanted women to be active participants in politics, for arguably he wants to be the sole political actor. Like the RONGOs, gender quotas were created to serve the interests of the regime.

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<sup>83</sup> For liberalization to take place in Jordan, power would need to be decentralized and the palace would have to transfer some of its power to elected bodies. Liberal reforms are meaningless if the institutions affected by the reforms have no power.

The Jordanian women's movement succeeded in an effort to expand the opportunities presented to women further, when quotas were implemented on the municipal level in the 2007 elections. A memo to the Prime Minister<sup>84</sup> in 2005 from the Arab Women's Organization(AWO) demanded that 20 percent of municipal seats be reserved for women. The memo claimed that it is "impossible" for women to be elected in any significant percentage on the municipal level without quotas, especially under the SNTV system. The AWO claimed that quotas were necessary because women who had been elected to municipal councils had proved themselves capable, but the patriarchal culture prevents many women from being elected(ad-Dustour 2005). King Abdullah II supported this extension of the quotas and a municipal law that created a 20% quota for women. This law was quickly passed by a Parliament comprised of numerous MPs (including the 6 quota women) with ties to the monarchy. The ensuing 2007 elections were by no means more democratic as a result of female involvement,<sup>85</sup> but this is not surprising because the quotas, as all governmental policy, were enacted primarily to serve the interests of the palace.

Though the women's movement exists, primarily to benefit the ruling regime, it also works to improve the lives of women,. In this it succeeds in many ways, and is sponsored by the monarchy because the monarchy sees an alliance with the a movement concerned with improving the lives of its people as beneficial. Jordan's alliance with the women's movement generates a valuable positive image of the monarchy, both internationally and domestically.

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<sup>84</sup> Dr. Marouf al-Bahkit was Prime Minister of Jordan from November 2005-November 2007

<sup>85</sup> As polls opened in 2007, the IAF withdrew from the elections, boycotting the fraud and manipulation sponsored by the government, particularly the military, and targeted against the Islamists.



*Why would the regime support quotas?*

The majority of women's groups supported the quotas in both 2003 and 2007. Polls taken in 2005 reported that 74% of all respondents, male and female, supported quotas for women in all elected offices, but it would be mistaken to say that quotas were instated in Jordan as a result of public opinion in favor of them. For Jordanian citizens, the past five years have been marked by a regression of their political rights, and "the national momentum required for democratic transformation" has been "completely paralyzed" by restrictive policies of the regime (Jarrah 2009). While the quota law of 2003 predates this civic liberal freeze, it is not unreasonable to assume that the regime was not solely concerned with liberal issues like women's rights and government accountability to public opinion when creating the quota.

The prospect of instating gender quotas originally gained momentum during the suspension of Parliament from 2001-2003, under the royal "Jordan First" initiative, which was policy reform aimed at strengthening the power base of the monarchy. The Jordanian Embassy's Web describes the program as an "attempt to define a new social accord between Jordanians, as it emphasizes the pre-eminence of Jordan's interests above all other considerations and reformulates the state-individual relationship."<sup>86</sup> The initiative was intended to strengthen the Jordanian nationality, in an attempt to neutralize the threat opposing identities in Jordan pose to the crown. Jordan First was implemented so that Jordanians viewed their Jordanian citizenship as their primary identity. Citizens of Jordan are by definition, ruled by the King. People living in Jordan may be members of certain clans or have Palestinian origins, but their most important identity, according to the regime, is their Jordanian nationality. As Jordanian citizens, their primary loyalty

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<sup>86</sup>Jordanian Embassy to United States. Official website. <http://www.jordanembassyus.org/new/index.shtml>

should be to the King.

Jordan First was the overarching political program under which the government aimed to promote Jordanian nationality by presenting the state as an institution that is concerned with meeting the economic, medical, and educational needs of its people(www.jordanembassy.jo). The reasoning for providing services to the people was to unite the population as Jordanians in that all Jordanians benefit from state-provided services, and thus prosper under the King's benevolent rule. Quotas were a specific outreach to women, showing that the government was representative of all Jordanians, male and female.

***The formation of quotas, engineered by the King***

The concept of quotas is far from groundbreaking in Jordan, as they have been institutionalized in Parliament for the Christian and Cissarian minorities since the 1920s. Some women, most notably Toujan al-Faisal and Mona Abu Bakr, and a number of men oppose quotas on egalitarian grounds. However, as no woman has been elected independently, the argument for their necessity for women to gain an elected seat generally rings true.<sup>87</sup> Quotas were not as controversial in Jordan as they were in Egypt in the 1980s<sup>88</sup> because “the government was in no position to dismiss the concept outright because of the existing quotas”(Warrick 2009 129).

During the 2001-2003 suspension of Parliament, King Abdullah II was eager to prove himself to the international community as a liberal autocrat. He may have dissolved Parliament, but he did so in the interests of liberalizing society and reforming the electoral process, which the palace argued, would have been impossible to do through

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<sup>87</sup> Toujan al-Faisal won a Cissarian quota seat in 1993. She did not win her seat in general elections.

<sup>88</sup> These quotas will be discussed in the following chapter.

parliament. Quotas were far from revolutionary and there was an apparent need for them in Jordan. These factors, coupled with the global trend to increase female political participation inspired by the 1995 Beijing Conference account for why King Abdullah enacted quotas in 2003.

Jordan's quotas have been criticized because they tend to disfavor urban women with leadership experience within the women's movement in favor of conservative women from rural districts. Because these women often are not political in their own right, they owe their parliamentary seat to tribal and familial connections. They are likely to perpetuate the existing power structure through their legislative actions, or lack of them,<sup>89</sup> which offsets one of the theoretical objectives of quotas—to modify the status quo by incorporating more women.

In both national and municipal elections, women have two opportunities to be elected. They first compete with men in general elections and then, if they do not win, they may be considered for a quota seat. There is no minimum number of votes needed for quota seats. Whichever women secure the highest percentages of votes cast for women win a quota seat. Women require very little number of votes to win quota seats, especially on local level where very few voters will choose to cast their single vote for a woman. Quota seats are determined by which female candidates receive the highest percentage of votes<sup>90</sup>. To illustrate how this system works, it is easiest to consider an election in which there are three candidates and a total of 100 votes cast for all of them combined. If two candidates receive 33 votes each and the third wins 34 votes, that

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<sup>89</sup> Quota women in Jordan have been noted for their lack of active legislation. They do not raise issues and they rarely address Parliament (Farrell 2010).

<sup>90</sup> To determine this percentage, the number of votes received by a female candidate is divided by the total number of votes cast for all women in elections.

candidate receives the highest percentage, thus wins the election. Problems arise because the difference of one vote, or 1% of the total ballots is not large enough to indicate that this candidate is actually preferred any more than the others. Also, if these candidates are competing for more than one seat, problems arise on how to select who, among candidates who received the same percentage of votes, will attain political office.<sup>91</sup>

Under this system, candidates who do not have popular support may attain parliamentary office due to the ambiguity of the electoral system, not to their democratic appeal. This particularly serves the interests of the monarchy, as it facilitates the “stocking” of parliament by the King with pro-monarchy MPs.

Because of this pro-monarchy limitation in the democratic process of Jordanian parliament, particularly regarding the arbitrarily drawn districts for quota seats, quota women have no real constituencies and are relatively disconnected from the larger population(Hamid 2010). Quota seats may be occupied by any woman without regard to her membership to any sect of the population for which a quota already exists(Sabbagh 2004). This means that in elections, a candidate’s primary identity is her gender, followed by her ethnic identity. A Christian female politician if elected through quotas is much more likely to fill a female quota seat than a Christian quota seat(Warrick 2009: 78). In this way, women’s quota seats somewhat diffuse the ethnic pluralism of society’s effect on politics. Women do not win seats under the quota due to their ethnic background, but through their Jordanian nationality. They owe their seats to the King’s progressivism regarding women and to tribal elites, both of whose interests they must represent in parliament.

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<sup>91</sup> In this situation percentages are often manipulated to favor whichever candidate the regime favors.

### **Seven years of Accomplishment?**

Women have been active and successful members of Jordanian society for decades, but it remains to be seen whether or not gender quotas have helped women, or if they have created more problems than they have solved. Some argue that quotas have presented women with new responsibilities, which they have proved themselves capable of handling. In 2006 Falak al-Jama'ani became the first Deputy Speaker of the House in the Chamber of Deputies. The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs paints a glowing picture of what they call the "First Class" or Jordanian female parliamentarians, profiling the group of 14 women.<sup>92</sup>

These women deserve praise for their accomplishments, especially for successfully overcoming many cultural and political barriers to gain a seat in parliament. However, overall, Jordanians have a negative view of women in Parliament, according to Karen Farrell, Program Officer of Jordan at NDI headquarters in Washington, DC.<sup>93</sup> Many view quota women as weak, ineffective, and only in power because of the generosity of the political elites. These women, many feel, have done nothing to advance the women's movement through their positions, and because many quota women must learn how to legislate after being instated in office, they are unable to focus on specific programs or legislation, at least for the first few months. Quota women are almost bound to fail, given the weak and ineffective nature of Parliament, so blaming such shortcomings on these women's gender or the quota system is not entirely fair.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> 6 MPs, 8 Senators.

<sup>93</sup> Opinion polls do not always coincide with this observation, however their credibility is in question and Jordanians fear being caught criticizing the monarchy and the current regime.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Karen Farrell, by Author at NDI Headquarters, Washington DC. January 20, 2010.

Though it is premature to fully assess the effect of gender quotas in Jordan, preliminary analysis does not indicate that they have had a significant impact on society. Indeed, there are more female members of Parliament, but given the political weakness of the institution, this has little effect on society as a whole. Women who wish to enter politics must largely do so through tribal connections, so that the quota system becomes merely another extension of the political elitism of tribal leaders. Women are not changing the status quo, but simply modestly altering its appearance.

Though the King appears to be making some effort towards liberalization in instating gender quotas and encouraging women's political participation, his actions and policies in other areas disprove this progressive façade. Quotas have not made Jordanian politics more democratic and they have done little to liberalize the political culture in Jordan. Quotas were never intended to democratize Jordan but have been used by the monarchy to project a more liberal image to the international community. This has not been entirely successful as Jordan is now considered a "not free" country by freedom house, despite its gender quotas. Even though Jordan now boasts the first political party to be headed by a woman, this means little because Jordanian political parties are inherently weak.

Women have not brought reforms into the political system by joining it; rather they have adapted to Jordanian politics so that its flaws, such as lack of accountability, dominance of the elites, and overall ineffectiveness, have become their own. Women have not changed politics; yet perhaps politics has changed the image of women. Because quotas are not designed to place the most qualified, but rather the most politically pliable, women in office, women are now thought to be incompetent as

leaders, by members of society who are not aligned with the women's movement, such as many men in rural communities and those who hold more traditional views of women. Quotas so far have not been to the benefit of Jordanian women, but that should neither be attributed to the Jordanian women themselves or to the theoretical arguments made for quotas and discussed in Chapter Three.

Quotas are not succeeding in Jordan because they were never intended to succeed. They were instated by the palace to rejuvenate the image of the status quo, and the women's movement lacked the political autonomy to capitalize on the opportunities presented by quotas. Quotas in Jordan were designed to benefit the ruling elite and women lacked the capabilities due to their movements close connection with the elites to benefit greatly from quotas. The women's movement in Jordan is active in civil society, and through it does not operate under an environment as welcoming of quotas as Morocco, it has a positive impact on the lives of women in Jordan. Quotas may not be succeeding in Jordan, but they are not a failure, due to the efforts of the women's movement to empower women to some extent. Egypt has a significantly weaker women's movement and because of this has had and will most likely have again the most negative experience with quotas of the three case studies.

## **Chapter VI: Egypt History Repeating Itself**

Egypt was the first Arab country to implement gender quotas in 1979. Quotas were deemed unconstitutional in 1986, and today Egypt places below Morocco(104) on the Gender Development Index, ranked at 107.<sup>95</sup> <sup>96</sup> While Egypt's earlier experience with quotas is valuable for studying quotas in the Middle East, this study focuses primarily on the quotas that will be enacted in the November 2010 elections. These quotas are not only presently relevant, but also contextually and chronologically better suited for a comparison with Jordan and Morocco's quotas.<sup>97</sup> A history, however brief, of quotas has not had a positive effect on female political participation in Egypt. This is a case where quotas have failed, and where again quotas seemed doomed to fail, given the motivations behind implementing them, the political and civil culture, and the undemocratic political institutions of Egypt.

### **Political Issues of Note**

In a technical sense, Egypt is considered an electoral democracy, but this is a euphemism at best. Since the 1952 overthrow of the monarchy and establishment of the

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<sup>95</sup> Rankings out of 109.

<sup>96</sup> The GEM, produced by the United Nations Human Development Program is a fair indication of female empowerment in that it indicates that women in liberal societies like Sweden(ranked #1) are more empowered than women in Yemen, which is ranked last. However, I find the ranking overly simplistic for comparing 3 Arab nations. The ranking takes into account numbers of women in powerful positions such as parliamentarians, governmental ministers, and business managers, but does not account for how effective these women are in these positions. Jordan is not ranked on this index, though it may be assumed that it would rank above Morocco, as it has higher rates of female education and of professional employment, but as we have seen, this does not cause real political empowerment.

<sup>97</sup> I use the modern inception of quotas as opposed to the earlier experience for comparison with Jordan and Morocco because all three countries currently contend with the treat of Islamists, pressure to liberalize from the West and all have been influenced by the 1995 Beijing Conference and ensuing global movement to improve the status of women.



Arab Republic of Egypt, the president has enjoyed “near-absolute powers”(State Department) The president is not only commander in chief of the armed forces, but dominates all state authority as the head of the police, head of the Higher Council on Judicial Bodies, and is the highest executive power in Egypt(Shukor 2005). Titles aside, President Mubarak of Egypt has much in common, in terms of power, with his royal contemporaries in Jordan and Morocco. He may be considered a king without the job security, constantly attempting to suppress any political challengers to compensate for the cultural legitimacy he lacks.<sup>98</sup>

Since the 1967 Six-Day War with Israel, the Egyptian presidency has been able to become a political behemoth largely because the country has been operating under a state of emergency for over four decades.<sup>99</sup> Presidents under the state of emergency have been able to pursue autocratic agendas without intergovernmental checks. The current president, Hosni Mubarak assumed the presidency in 1981 after serving as vice-president to Anwar Sadat who was assassinated earlier that year. President Mubarak is Egypt’s longest standing president, and since coming to power has shown little propensity to relinquish any of it. There has been speculation that he is currently grooming his son Gamal to succeed him, even going so far as to offer a strong opposition candidate, Mohammed ElBaradei, the post of Prime Minister in exchange for not running for the

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<sup>98</sup> King Abdullah II and King Mohammed VI are draw much of their legitimacy from the cultural significance of the monarchy in their countries. Their importance to the national identities softens many of their authoritarian tendencies in the eyes of the people and allows them to enjoy public support despite mildly oppressive policies. Mubarak has no such popular support and, as a leader of a democracy, fears those who could garner it.

<sup>99</sup> This parallels Jordan’s post-war declaration of martial law in 1967.

presidency against the regime's chosen candidate.<sup>100</sup> The regime is concerned primarily with perpetuating itself, not with implementing democracy or liberalizing society.

### **Political Institutions in Egypt: “Democracy?”**

Democratic institutions exist in Egypt, but they are of almost trivial importance as the President and political elites wield all of the power, united under the National Democratic Party (NDP). The President has the power to appoint and dismiss his prime minister and the prime minister's deputies. When appointing governmental ministers, the president should consult the Prime Minister, according to the Constitution, but such a consultation is unlikely to be a genuine form of policy evaluation because the Prime Minister has significantly less power than his president and to openly critique or oppose a president's decision could cost him his post (ACE). The Prime Minister is also almost assuredly to come from the ruling National Democratic Party. As the NDP is headed by Mubarak, the PM's views are unlikely to conflict with those of the president. Under the state of emergency the president has extended, largely unchecked, informal powers (UN 2009). The façade of democracy exists in Egypt for the benefit of the regime.

The legislative branch of the Egyptian government is bicameral, like those of Jordan and Morocco. The lower house, or People's Assembly, has the actual legislative powers, while the upper house, or Shura Council, serves an exclusively consultative role (Ibid.). As of May 2010, the People's Assembly consists of 454 seats, 10 of which are appointed by the President and the 444 directly elected by an absolute majority of valid votes from 222 constituencies. Each constituency elects two members, one of whom

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<sup>100</sup> Bakr, Mona (Secretary General of Jordan National Party and first female party leader in the Arab World. Interviewed by Rania Tadrus for “Elaph,” a Saudi-owned news website. London. September 10, 2007

must be a worker or farmer. The Shura Council has 264 members, 88 of whom are appointed, and the rest elected by councils of political elites.

### ***Political Parties***

Political parties have been permitted in Egypt since 1976, although they must adhere to certain norms which are set by the government.<sup>101</sup> This leaves little room for real political discourse or opposition to the regime. As a result there is one dominant political party in Egypt, the NDP, and weaker parties like the New Wafd and Egyptian Youth parties, which are largely irrelevant to the study of Egyptian gender quotas because they are of little political consequence (Blaydes 2006). One of the most significant obstacles to liberalization in Egypt is not only the anti-democratic system, but also the undemocratic practices and character of the existing political parties. This refers mainly to the NDP as it is the only party with power and allowed by the regime to operate.

The party system in Egypt can best be described as “controlled pluralism,” where the regime is in control of all political life (Shukor 2005). In the 1970s the autocratic regime chose to implement a limited multiparty system as a “process of managing the contradictions of political society and the country’s development” (ibid). This was not meant to foster discourse between opposing groups in Parliament, thereby more completely representing the interests of the population. Gender quotas are consistent with the idea of controlled pluralism in that they bring more political actors (women) into the political arena but their involvement is regulated through the regime. The women’s

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<sup>101</sup> These norms do not pose a significant threat to the regime. Parties are either a part of the regime, as is the NDP, or too weak to serve as any viable opposition. “Opposition” parties like the Wafd party, do not have a clearly defined political platform and generally are in accordance with the regime on most major issues.

movement itself is an example of controlled pluralism because it allows women's issues to be discussed in politics and civil society, but through state-sponsored organizations, it is largely controlled by the ruling elites.<sup>102</sup>

The ruling party in Egypt, the NDP, has remained the majority party in all governmental institutions. The 2005 parliamentary elections resulted in candidates affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood winning 88 seats, a viable threat to the regime, resulting in the largest opposition block to ever exist in Parliament of 20%(Antar 2006). Even though the constitution guarantees the right of political parties to gain power through electoral rotations, this is not a reality in Egypt. Other parties, most notably the Muslim Brotherhood but also the Communist Party, who are by definition opposed to the ruling NDP because they are not a part of it, remain on the periphery of state power(Shukor 1994).

Parties are not avenues for citizens to enter politics and have their interests represented in Egypt. The successful parties are both traditionalist, supporting the authoritarian status quo, and authoritarian themselves, regarding relations between the top, middle, and lower levels of the party(Majed 2005).<sup>103</sup> This makes the parties inherently weak and ineffective in the face of the state who encourages this weakness as it prevents parties from encroaching upon its power(Rabi' 2005). Though the NDP has recently made efforts to incorporate more women and address women's issues, Egyptian parties are generally biased against women because they support the patriarchal status quo. Parties are by nature weak and ineffective because to exist, they must support a system that is hostile to strong parties.

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<sup>102</sup> These state-sponsored organizations are discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>103</sup> By successful I mean parties that are permitted to exist, not parties that have actual power in the political system.

Parties are formed mostly through a top-down approach, thus have little grassroots support and only minimally involve the majority of Egyptians. The Muslim Brotherhood is an exception to this, having wide popularity across Egypt, due in large part to the social services it provides (Houel 2010, Majed 2005). However, the Muslim Brotherhood is not officially allowed to participate in elections, though its members have been elected to posts as independents.<sup>104</sup> The NDP is fully backed by the regime so it is almost assured to dominate politics on all levels, from pushing legislation to coercing voters to select its candidate at polling stations. More often than not, thugs who intimidate voters with the threat of physical harm carry out this coercion (Blaydes 2006). The Egyptian system is so undemocratic that these thugs can arguably be considered government employees.

Women are only weakly involved in the political process as a whole (Hafez 2001). They are underrepresented in Parliament and constitute only relatively small minorities in political parties<sup>105</sup> (Majed 2005). If women are to assume a greater role in Egyptian politics, there must be significant reform on the party level aimed at including women. This reform must include the allowance of actual parties besides the NDP and its satellite “opposition” groups to exist. The regime is not particularly motivated to reform the party system because it would almost certainly incur a loss of power for its NDP. Egypt’s approach to gender quotas does not require any dramatic change for the regime, so in their case reform is encouraged. This unwillingness to reform if it means losing its monopoly of power is most evident in Egyptian elections.

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<sup>104</sup> The 88 MB candidates who won seats in the 2005 elections ran as independents.

<sup>105</sup> Underrepresented in this sentence refers to both women’s percentage of the total population, and in Egypt’s low rates of women in government compared to the other geographic regions averages and to its fellow Arab nations.

### *Elections*

Even though the NDP is the uncontested principal political party of Egypt, parliamentary elections are highly competitive. Candidates from the NDP must compete with independents--who tend to coincide with the NDP agenda so that they are almost unofficial party members--and the popular Muslim Brotherhood opposition(Blaydes 2006). Regardless of electoral competition, the NDP is almost assured to have a majority in Parliament. After the 2005 elections, the NDP had a majority of 4/5 of all parliamentary seats. The Muslim Brotherhood held the other fifth, with various independents present in almost negligible numbers(Morrow and Omarni 2009). Each of the four female parliamentarians elected to parliament in 2005 claimed NDP membership(Sharp 2006).

To ensure that the NDP wins the most seats in Parliament, districts are designed to put any opposition at a severe disadvantage. In addition to prosecuting opposition candidates for offenses varying from unsavory but common voting practices like vote buying to conspiring against the regime, districts are designed to give more seats to areas that will be more supportive of the NDP. These areas are rural and sparsely populated, as opposed to urban areas where the MB has a strong appeal.<sup>106</sup> Egyptians may abstain from voting as a sign of protest against the electoral system and the regime, showing that they do not trust the validity of the elections(Blaydes 2006).

Because the regime clearly wants only its own NDP to benefit from these elections, it may be assumed that elections serve as a tool to meet goals other than democracy. Elections allow the regime to get a sense of the opposition and who its

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<sup>106</sup> The MB has a particularly strong appeal in urban areas because that is where it provides many of its social services.

supporters are. This better enables the regime to combat the opposition. They also allow elites within the NDP to resolve conflicts, and they institutionalize the dominance of a single party in Parliament. Elections also “look good” to the international community. Egypt wants to present itself in a positive light to Arab nations so it can be seen as the leader of the Arab world<sup>107</sup> and to Western nations because they are a major source of aid. They serve as a “façade” for the “shadow game of graft and corruption” within Egyptian politics”(Blaydes 2006; 2007). Quotas seem to serve many of the same counter-democratic objectives as elections in Jordan. In many ways they are an extension of the electoral system in that they effectively aggregate the power of the ruling NDP and they project a positive image of democracy to the international community. However, quotas like elections are largely superficial processes that do more to reinforce the current system than to reform it.

Voter turnout in Egypt is one of the lowest in the Arab world at 20%,<sup>108</sup> indicating that there is little faith among Egyptians in their electoral system(Maaty 2010<sup>109</sup>). This is largely because of the prevalent cultural illiteracy and political apathy. Most citizens are unaware of the political issues at stake in elections, doubt the legitimacy the results of elections, and lack of confidence in the body that is being elected to create peaceful change(Rabi’ 2005). Illiterate citizens are “roughly twice as likely” to vote compared to literate citizens(Blaydes 2006). Seemingly the more one knows about elections and other matters, the less likely one is to deem it worthwhile to participate in elections. Egyptian

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<sup>107</sup> This is a national mentality present since the 1950s and Pan-Arabism under Nasser.

<sup>108</sup> According to International IDEA 2010, In the 2005 elections 19.75% of the voting age population cast a ballot, but voter turnout among all registered voters was 28.13%.

[http://www.idea.int/vt/country\\_view](http://www.idea.int/vt/country_view)

<sup>109</sup> Interview with Amira Maaty, Program Officer for Egypt at the National Endowment for Democracy. Conducted by author via telephone on January 29, 2010.

law mandates a fine of up to LE 20 if a registered voter does not cast a vote, but this law is rarely enforced. To register, many voters must go to a prison, which discourages many Egyptians from voting because prisons are culturally undesirable places to visit (Maaty 2010). In this sense, it seems as if the government does not want many Egyptians to participate in elections, despite the electoral law. This is yet another example of why Egypt is an autocracy, not a democracy.

Unlike in Morocco and to a lesser extent than in Jordan, political parties are not viable avenues of competition in elections. No opposition can truly compete with the NDP, so elections are largely candidate driven. It is particularly difficult for women to succeed in candidate-driven elections because they reinforce cultural biases, discussed in Chapter III, against women as leaders. Elections and the absence of strong parties strengthen patriarchal tribalism<sup>110</sup> and other types of solidarity, “which then creates an atmosphere of violence and bullying in the election process” (Majed 2005). Egyptian elections are known to feature thugs present at polling stations who coerce voters to vote for a certain candidate with the threat of violence (Maaty 2010).

Violence plays a greater role in Egyptian elections than in Jordan or Morocco (Blaydes 2006). This may be the result of the electoral vacuum that exists due to the absence of a tribal system as strong and central to the government as what is found in Jordan, and a much more oppressive civil society than that of Morocco. The fact that political parties are much weaker than those found in Morocco is also a factor. Besides the Islamists, political parties in Egypt do not run on any ideological platform (Blaydes 2006).

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<sup>110</sup> Tribes do exist in Egypt, but are much less prevalent than in Jordan. In Egypt it is more apt to talk of local elites, their power in their communities, and the alliances they have within the political system. These local strongmen operate in an environment reminiscent of tribalism.



Because elections are discredited in Egypt, electoral reforms like gender quotas are adversely affected. Women are at a disadvantage in its candidate-driven system and cannot look to political parties or local power structures to facilitate their entry into politics. Beyond electoral proceedings, quotas are further undermined by the political environment of Egypt.

### ***Political Culture, or Lack Thereof***

Political culture is similar to civil society in Egypt in that it is stifled, limited, and controlled by the state. Neither civil society organizations nor political parties are able to influence public opinion to pressure the regime to make concessions towards political and democratic reform (Majed 2005). Opposition parties have little chance of gaining real power in Egypt and suffer from the absence of a pro-democratic culture. Their participation in elections could be deemed the extent of parties' democratic practices, and there are no substantial calls from the general population for democracy.<sup>111</sup>

The lack of a grassroots movement toward democracy or any political reform can be best described by Egypt's "small and underdeveloped" civil society, of which women's groups comprise a sizeable portion. According to the 2003-2006 Civicus report on Egypt, civil society has a poor structure, limited citizen participation, and multiple political restrictions. This results in a largely insignificant impact on government and, to an extent, society. Civil society certainly exists in Egypt, both in centuries-old Islamic traditions and through institutions like NGOs that take after western models. Civil society organizations must register with the Ministry of Social Affairs but it is thought that nearly

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<sup>111</sup> This raises the issue of whether or not Egyptians (and other citizens of authoritarian Arab states) want democracy and are unable to voice their opinion, or if they have no interest in it.

half of the NGOs registered only exist "on paper" and do little in civil society(Civicus 2005).

An advocate for political reform in Egypt, the former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and a possible presidential candidate in the 2011 elections, Mohammed ElBaradei lamented the political culture in February 2010, saying:

"The Egyptian citizens who are seeking reform, justice and dignity are nowadays extremely frustrated... The political system in place was able to corrupt everything around it and infiltrate the intellectual circles and soil them, the political parties which were rendered a useless decorative item, universities, judicial institutions and their annexes, as well as the press which was turned into a stronghold for mercenaries."(Sultan 2010)

The Muslim Brotherhood has perhaps been the most successful actor in political and civil society in terms of serving the needs of its people and gaining popular support(al-Anani 2010<sup>112</sup>). The new leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Dr. Mohammed Badi has called for "women to take [up] their positions and play their role at the level of public action as sisters of men."<sup>113</sup> This is a shift in policy from the longstanding view, stated on September 8, 2009, on the Muslim Brotherhood website that women staying home and tending to their families as opposed to involving themselves in political life makes accomplishing her most important tasks unnecessarily difficult(Muslim Brotherhood 2009).

### **Women's Movement or Women's Stagnation?**

Historically Egyptian women have been some of the most civically active groups of Arab women, having participated in public life since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. High levels

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<sup>112</sup> Khalil al-Anani is senior scholar at the Institute for Middle East and Islamic Studies, Durham University, UK.

<sup>113</sup> "Muhammad Badi' to Quds Press: expect more MB openness." Posted on Mideastwire.com January 18, 2010.  
[http://mideastwire.com/index.php?action=timesearch&news\\_day=18&news\\_month=1&news\\_year=2010](http://mideastwire.com/index.php?action=timesearch&news_day=18&news_month=1&news_year=2010)

of female involvement in Egyptian society often coincided with waves of reform and liberalization, such as during the 1919 nationalist revolution.<sup>114</sup> Egypt's 1956 constitution was the first Arab governmental document to treat women as citizens, with the right to vote and stand for office, and in this regard was considered one of the most advanced constitutions (Mustafa 2005).

Women play an important role in the civic sector, though there are greater numbers of wealthier educated women than illiterate rural women who participate in civil society. In 2000 the state founded the National Council for Women to encourage women to participate in public life, voice their opinions in any area that affects their lives, and participate in politics (Mustafa 2005). Like those in Jordan, this is a state-sponsored women's organization, but receives a lesser degree of support in terms of resources and public endorsement, which, combined with the character of Egyptian civil society, has made it less effective.

### ***Women in Society***

It would be an overstatement to describe the current regime in Egypt to be a strong backer of the women's movement. The Mubarak regime permits the movement to exist under organizations like the National Council for Women (NCW) and the Forum for Women in Development (FWID), which is significant when considering the severe restraints on civil society.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> I classify the 1919 revolution as a liberal revolution because it is one of the first successful instances of civil disobedience, and it resulted in an Egyptian constitution and limited self-rule under a parliamentary system. Before the revolution, neither such institutions existed in Egypt, despite colonial rule by Great Britain, a liberal nation. Women were active in advocating the nationalist cause.

<sup>115</sup> The NCW was established by the NDP, and its relation to the state can be seen as similar to Jordan's JNCW. The NCW has not specifically been calling for quotas since 1986, because did not exist before Presidential Decree no 90, issued in 2000. Since its inception it has advocated increased female political participation.

It should be noted that little has been done in the past decade to improve the status of women. Egypt's first lady, Suzanne Mubarak, heads her Women's International Peace Movement, which seeks to "empower women and young girls as agents of positive change within their communities, engaging them socially and politically."<sup>116</sup> Surely the efforts of the first lady are well-intentioned but they lack the direction of more specific goals than general "female empowerment." The lack of goal-driven policy and the hostility of Egyptian civil society to ideological movements prevents Mrs. Mubarak's organization, and the women's movement from having a positive impact on civil society. The women's movement is also inhibited by its affiliation with the regime, which determines what issues it is allowed to undertake. Egyptians have a general distrust of the government, which they are likely to apply to organizations associated with the government like the NCW. Unlike in Jordan, the movement's image does not benefit from close links to the regime.<sup>117</sup>(Civicus 2005).

### **A history of quotas**

While Jordan and Morocco implemented quotas in 2003 and 2002, respectively, Egypt waited until 2009. Egypt has a prior history with parliamentary quotas under the former President Anwar Sadat. In 1979, largely due to the urgings of his wife Jehan Sadat who championed the right of women to be active and represented in the legislature, electoral law 114 was passed in Egypt, reserving 30 parliamentary seats out of 360 for women. Mrs. Sadat not only supported the establishment of NGOs concerned with women, spoke at international women's forums, and promoted laws and policies

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<sup>116</sup> The Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement. Official Website. <http://www.womenforpeaceinternational.org>

<sup>117</sup> In Egypt Suzanne Mubarak does not have the same celebrity status as the royal women of Jordan do in their homeland. This is largely due to Mubarak's unpopularity.

supportive of women, but she also had the ear of the ruling autocrat (Abu-Zeid 2003). This quota law was repealed in 1986 on the grounds that the quota violated the equality of all Egyptian citizens guaranteed by the constitution. It was deemed unconstitutional for women to have an institutional advantage over men in elections.

The repeal of quotas was likely motivated by the ruling elites' unwillingness to share their power. Opening the Egyptian political system to quotas for women presents the possibility of creating quotas for the Christian Copts as well, which would weaken the NDP's political monopoly. This NDP is still opposed to a quota for Copts, but as the women's movement has been co-opted by the state and the Copts have not, it is unlikely that quotas for women will lead to quotas for Copts (Morrow and Omrani 2009). Quotas could not have succeeded in the 1980s because women did not have the support from the regime that they now have, and, more importantly, Egypt lacked a strong women's movement to lobby for their continuation.

*Women: Powerless to revive quotas*

After the quota was abolished, Egypt went from showing the highest percentage of female parliamentarians in the Arab World in the early 1980s at 8.3%, to a meager 1.8% in 2009.<sup>118</sup> In Egypt it appears that women will not be elected in any more than negligible numbers without a quota. Women activists called for increased political participation, arguing that to be a good wife and mother a woman needs to be actively involved in the community around her (Hafez 2001, 72.). Understandably, the NCW supported quotas and lobbied for them, but ultimately the quotas were brought into

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<sup>118</sup> Out of 454 seats, 11 (4 elected and 7 appointed) were held by women in 2009. In 1986, the last year quotas were considered legal, women held 30 of 360 total seats. Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union.

existence because the regime permitted it. The NCW does not have the power to force legislation—that rests solely with the regime.

Since quotas were revoked in 1986, supporters of the women's movement, such as the NCW, the National Defense of Rights and Freedoms, Nazra for Feminist Studies, and the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, have continually advocated their reinstatement. After over twenty years, the regime seemed to hear the calls of these groups for gender quotas in 2009.

One could argue that the quotas to be used in the November 2010 elections in Egypt are less regime-driven because of this longstanding support from these different areas of civil society. Such an argument misunderstands the nature of these supporters in civil society. The NCW is the main proponent of quotas, but it should be considered an extension of the regime. Groups unaffiliated with the regime are easily ignored or silenced through censorship, through the regime-written law, or by force.<sup>119</sup> In driving Egyptian politics toward quotas, the NCW is performing a script written exclusively by the regime. They are an example of top-down reform, which also does not bode well for their success. As seen in Jordan and Morocco, civil society organizations are often more effective than the government on the societal level because they work at the grassroots level, noticeably taking action where the government produces abstract legislation which has little effect on daily life. If the movement to involve women to a greater extent in politics does not exist at the grassroots level, popular support of quotas is unlikely. One of the goals of quotas is to increase popular support for female candidates, so in this sense, too, quotas in Egypt hold little promise.

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<sup>119</sup> An example of such a group is the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU). Founded in the interwar period, in the 1970s the EFU adapted leftist policies, which resulted in the regime disbanding it. Discouraged by the experience of the EFU, other women's groups have been reluctant to engage in political issues (Ali 2002).

### **The regime revives quotas**

In spring of 2009, the government proposed quotas and in June of that year, legislation was passed to enact quotas for the November 2010 elections<sup>120</sup>. The idea of quotas was proposed through the NDP by the powerful Policies Secretariat, headed by Gamal Mubarak, the son of President Hosni Mubarak (Murrow and Omrani 2009). The timing of this legislation is significant because over the past decade, Egypt has felt pressure to implement liberal reforms from both the UN and by countries like the United States. Egypt is a major recipient of US foreign aid, as is Jordan, and while most of this aid goes to the military, \$200 million is reserved for economic and civil society projects.<sup>121</sup> Contingencies on this aid allow the United States to pressure Egypt to enact political liberalization and economic reform.<sup>122</sup> While increasing the number of women involved in government is generally considered a form of political liberalization, USAID does not list sufficient female participation in the government as a prerequisite for aid, nor does it explicitly support gender quotas. (Riley 2010).

#### ***Regime Benefits of Quotas and Incentives to Reform***

That the perceived heir to the Egyptian presidency proposed quotas is of utmost importance when understanding why Egypt enacted them (Murrow and Omrani 2009). In recent years, as his father grows older, Gamal has become more prominent in Egyptian political and civil life. He lacks the military background shared by every other Egyptian

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<sup>120</sup> "Egypt passes quota law for women MPs." Jun 15, 2009. Source: AFP <http://news.google.com/news?hl=en>

<sup>121</sup> 1.3 billion USD in 2009.

<sup>122</sup> Among other reasons, the United States supports political and economic reforms largely to combat against the threat of Islamists. By strengthening the ruling secular regimes of countries like Egypt, the United States hopes to exclude Islamists with undemocratic ideals from gaining power.

president and seems to be beginning to brand himself as a civilian leader with a progressive agenda. He remains widely unpopular with the population, a blatant embodiment of nepotism and government corruption, but he seems to be trying to replicate the reformist, even liberal image that Abdullah II and Mohammed VI projected upon coming to power. If this is the case, then gender quotas could be a ploy by Gamal Mubarak to improve his political prospects.

From a broader perspective, the positive image of a liberalizing political system resulting from quotas most likely was seen as a benefit of their implementation by the regime as a whole. Quotas are not the direct result of specific pressure from the international community on Egypt to increase female political participation, however. The international community, including the United States supports greater female political participation, but Egypt is by no means coerced, either militarily or economically through sanctions, to enact quotas. Quotas do provide an opportunity for authoritarian regime like Egypt to present itself as liberalizing. This is to its benefit as it can distract attention from the anti-democratic nature and practices of its “democracy”.<sup>123</sup>

Especially following President Barack Obama’s visit to Egypt on June 4, 2009, where he emphasized the need for Arab societies to liberalize and respect the rights of citizens, Egypt has been eager to present itself in a positive light.<sup>124</sup> As Hamdi Hassan, a leading MB parliamentarian(though officially he is listed as an independent) observes, the new law is a way of “proving Egypt’s liberal credentials to the West”(Morrow and

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<sup>123</sup> Egypt’s anti-democratic nature can be cited in innumerable examples, most noticeably the absence of any opposition to the regime and the fact that the president has acted as an autocrat under emergency powers for almost 30 years.

<sup>124</sup> Whereas in the post September 11, 2001 world, the Bush administration was more or less content to overlook repression of citizens by Arab regimes provided it did not strengthen Islamist parties or interfere with American operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Obama administration has outlined liberalization of these societies as one of its diplomatic goals. Democracy is no longer the ultimate objective, but liberal societies respectful of human rights(State Department).



Omrani 2009). Egypt wants to prove itself to the West because of the West's monetary support, and I argue, no autocrat in the Arab world wants to be targeted as the next Saddam Hussein.

Aside from the diplomatic motivations for quotas, they were made possible domestically through amendments to the constitution made in 2007. These amendments are generally viewed by those familiar with the Egyptian political system as the regime's strategy to "further discourage meaningful political reform in Egypt"(Hamzaway 2007). Allowing the government to pass special legislation in favor of women is one of the few positive implications of these amendments. The constitution now bans any political party from having a religious affiliation, a change specifically targeted at the increasingly popular and powerful MB. Another amendment was made that will most likely increase the regime's control over elections by replacing judicial oversight of elections with a "supreme judiciary body" chosen by the president(Hamzaway 2007). Expanding Parliament and reserving 64 seats for women allows these amendments, when grouped together, to be labeled as reforms. The fact that quotas were made possible amid such a truncation of Egyptian democracy also cast doubt on the democratic objectives behind implementing them and their likelihood to succeed.

### **Quotas within the Egyptian political system**

The 2010 parliamentary elections will feature an additional 64 seats in parliament reserved exclusively for women(Farouq 2009). These quotas add 64 seats to the lower house of parliament that will be reserved solely for women. This raises some concerns as

the quotas could simply provide 64 more seats to the ruling party,<sup>125</sup> but also prevents quotas from being stigmatized as giving seats to women that rightly should be held by men. This quota structure most likely reflects the regime's desire for a secure majority in parliament than its consideration for the perceptions of quota women. These 64 seats cover the same geographic area of the 454 existing parliamentary seats, meaning quota women are elected from much larger districts.

In effect, Egypt is holding separate elections to fill quota seats. Where general elections elect parliamentarians across 222 districts, quota seats use 32 specifically designed districts. Ballots exclusively for the quota seats will primarily feature female candidates, though male candidates can also run on them.<sup>126</sup> The large size of the voting districts and the arbitrary manner in which they are divided weakens the legitimacy of a quota seat by denying quota women a strong, defined constituency. Women need a clearly defined constituency whose interests they can represent in order to prove themselves as capable leaders. Whereas one of the primary objectives of quotas is to incorporate women into the existing political sphere, Egypt seems to be isolating women from Egyptian national politics by creating an entirely separate electoral process for quota seats. Women are not incorporated into politics in this system as much as they are regulated to a separate arena.

The electoral districts for quotas are not recognized by the Egyptian people, which weakens the perceived accountability between quota women and their constituents. If constituencies are unclear, it is difficult for a parliamentarian to represent the interests of constituents. Voters are unlikely to view these quota women as their legitimate

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<sup>125</sup> Interview with Amira Maaty. NED program officer of Egypt

<sup>126</sup> Men can run for quota seats, as not to violate the highly valued equality guaranteed under the constitution, however it is unlikely that many men will, given the stigma of quota seats as "women's seats."

representatives in parliament(Maaty 2010). If quota women are not held accountable by the people they are meant to represent, they cannot prove themselves as capable legislators in a democratic system through their actions. Therefore, these quotas cannot fulfill one of the primary objects of gender quotas: to challenge cultural norms and prove that women can be capable leaders and legislators.

### **Predictions**

Egyptian quotas are designed as a temporary measure limited to two terms, which will last approximately ten years. Even before their implementation, this stipulation virtually dooms these quotas to fail in facilitating women's entry into politics, or achieving any of the aims of quotas discussed in Chapter III. Quotas have been in effect for almost ten years in Jordan and Morocco, and as their case studies prove, quotas have had little effect on society over such a short time period. Quotas are a long-term strategy, especially in the Arab world, as shown by Egypt's own experience. One of the reasons quotas did not result in any improvement in the status of women in Egypt in the 1980s was because they were abandoned before they could lead to any real change. After quotas were revoked in 1986 under Electoral Law no. 188, women's political participation perpetually regressed to less than 2% in the People's Assembly in 2009.<sup>127</sup> No aspect of Egyptian society or the structure of the new quotas indicate that such a regression will not repeat itself once these quotas are no longer in just ten years.

Quotas will increase the number of members of the People's Assembly from 454 to 518, and insure that women hold at least 12.3% percent of the lower house. This is an improvement to the 1979 quota, which reserved 30 seats for women out 360. A further

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<sup>127</sup> Egypt has a lower percentage than Lebanon(3.1%), which has never had a gender quota. Source IPU.

improvement upon the first experience with quotas, is that the argument against quotas on the basis of equality has been somewhat neutralized. Egypt's first experience with quotas allowed women to run for any seat, as the constitution guaranteed, but restricted men from running for women's seats (Abou-Zeid 2003). The Egyptian constitution of 1956 places an emphasis on equality not found in that of Jordan or Morocco.<sup>128</sup> This was seen as the main constitutional violation but due to amendments made to the constitution in 2007 this no longer poses a problem.

However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the 2007 constitution amendments have done more to restrict the prospects of democracy in Egypt than to promote them. Even though women are being given greater political opportunity, Egypt remains an illiberal autocratic state. As in the other case studies, quotas are unlikely to bring about any real political reform, which is desperately needed considering the undemocratic nature of the political institutions. Given the repressive nature of Egypt's fragmented civil society, women's groups can hope to accomplish little as a result of quotas. Their actions and overall effect on Egyptian society are determined by the regime that allows it to exist.

Quotas do not appear to benefit the women's movement in Egypt, nor do they necessarily have any effect on the lives of most Egyptian women. The limited structure of quotas, combined with Egypt's stifled civil society, allows for the regime to be the primary benefactor from quotas. The ruling NDP will most likely gain 64 seats in Parliament, furthering its majority while generation a positive liberalizing image for the international community. Gamal Mubarak also stands to benefit from quotas if he

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<sup>128</sup> The importance of equality in Egyptian politics goes so far as to require that half of all elected members of the people's assembly be from the "worker" class, as to prevent elitism. Source: ACE Electoral Network.

succeeds his father as Egypt's next president. He has openly supported them and was an instrumental figure in their implementation so that he may present himself as a reformist and possibly win the support of the Egyptian people.

The percentage of female parliamentarians under Egypt's new quota is greater than those of either Morocco or Jordan, but that does not guarantee that the quotas will be successful and lead to women's empowerment. These quotas are inherently flawed because though these women are elected, they do not have constituencies. These quotas are an example of top-down reform and therefore have little meaningful effect on the population as a whole. Because they are not widely supported by the population, they are unlikely to generate any dramatic change in either the status of Egyptian women in society or the Egyptian political system as a whole. Egypt's political repression, lack of women's movement and the regime's self-serving attitude towards quotas account for the failure of quotas in the 1980s, and most likely will result in a similar outcome in the near future.

## Chapter VII: Morocco A Perfect Storm

While Egypt may seem to be a recurring nightmare for gender quotas in the Arab world, Morocco is by no means a dream, but closer to a pleasant thought. Its experience with quotas is not perfect or overall unpleasant and has led to some small, very modest improvements in the status of women while coinciding with the agendas of the palace and political elites.

Of the three case studies discussed in this paper, quotas have been most successful in Morocco, both for the regime and for Moroccan women. Quotas have bolstered King Mohammed VI's image both domestically and globally,<sup>129</sup> and, from a preliminary analysis, they seem to be bringing more women into government.<sup>130</sup> On both the local and national levels, women have surpassed the gender quotas and are present in greater numbers than are dictated. Quotas have been particularly successful in Morocco due to the support of the stronger, more autonomous women's movement, which is allied with the palace, yet outside of its direct control. To a greater extent than in Jordan or Egypt, the women's movement is a central, largely autonomous actor in the gender quota story.

Jordan and Egypt's women's movements are controlled to varying degrees by the regime, whose autocrats seem more concerned with using the women's movement to their advantage than promoting women's rights.<sup>131</sup> Morocco's relatively autonomous women's movement, the genuine progressiveness of the monarchy regarding women's

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<sup>129</sup> When speaking with Moroccan women, this author was struck by the seemingly genuine affection and gratitude they feel towards the King. They feel he cares about his female subjects and wants to provide them with opportunities to succeed in public life.

<sup>130</sup> Compared to before quotas were enacted.

<sup>131</sup> Morocco's regime also wants to benefit from the women's movement, but seems more genuine and progressive in its support of women than the other cases.

issues, and the political system itself--with a more democratic parties and electoral processes--has created what Gregory Houel calls a “perfect storm” for gender quotas(Houel 2010).<sup>132</sup> These ideal conditions explain why Morocco has had a more positive experience with gender quotas than Jordan or Egypt.

As explained in Chapter II, Morocco’s experience is more positive primarily because women have surpassed the quota on both national and municipal levels. This means that not every female legislator used the quota to be elected, which implies that to some degree Moroccans accept women as leaders. This is significant because one of the arguments for quotas in these countries is that, due to Arab tradition, women do not belong in politics. Quotas have resulted in few immediate gains for the women’s movement but the surplus of women in government beyond quota numbers indicates that quotas have lead to a greater acceptance of women in politics.

### **Women and the broader political spectrum in Morocco**

As in Jordan and Egypt, Moroccan women have not traditionally filled political roles in their society. In many ways this traditional view creates a reluctance on the part of women to campaign for an electoral seats *and* of the electorate to cast votes for a woman. Despite this reluctance, women have become increasingly more involved in civil society since Moroccan independence in 1956. Moroccan women received the right to hold political office in 1963, the same year they were granted the right to vote(UNDP 2009). Thirty years later, in 1993, two women, respectively representing the opposition Istiqlal(independence) Party and the socialist *Union des Forces Socialistes Populaires*(USFP), became the first women elected to Parliament. This lapse between

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<sup>132</sup> Program officer for Morocco at the National Endowment for Democracy

being granted the right to hold parliamentary office and actually holding the position coincides with the infamous “years of lead.” This was a period marked by severe oppression of any oppositional groups to the monarchy and by common state-sponsored violations of human rights, led by King Hassan II.<sup>133</sup> Thus, this political oppression created an inhospitable environment in which women could be elected.

1993 marked the beginning of the first of Morocco’s two recent liberalization phases.<sup>134</sup> During this period of political rapprochement, the status of women reemerged as a political and societal topic. Women played an active role in the independence movement, but after it was granted in 1956 society shifted towards a return to the traditional family-focused cultural normalcy of Morocco, rather than to the then-radical liberalization of women.<sup>135</sup>

The Monarchy has a history in the modern era of holding more liberal views towards women than perhaps the majority of Moroccan society. Hassan II’s predecessor Mohammed V, encouraged his educated, rather cosmopolitan daughters to be seen unveiled in public. During the years of lead, Hassan II would often punish male and female opponents equally. Female political prisoners could be given male names while in captivity so that their femininity would not elicit any leniency from their torturers.<sup>136</sup> Inadvertently, this could be argued to have legitimized Moroccan women as political actors: if women could receive the same punishment for their political activity as men, in

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<sup>133</sup> For examples of human rights abuses and the political oppression of this period told from a female perspective, see *Stolen Lives* by Malika Oukfir, and *Talk of Darkness* by Fatna Bouih.

<sup>134</sup> The second phase of liberalization coincided with the ascension of King Mohammed VI in 1999, but has since lost considerable momentum.

<sup>135</sup> After the French left Morocco, there was a general movement to distance itself from Western influence. Feminism and female empowerment is often argued to be a Western ideal, which, following independence, Morocco did not wish to propagate. To do so could have been seen as a form of neo-colonialism. (Golley 2004).

<sup>136</sup> See F. Bouih. *Talk of Darkness*.



a sense proving themselves to be men's peers, then arguably they deserve the same opportunities for political involvement as men.

Women's emergence on the Moroccan parliamentary scene in the early 1990s coincided with a larger movement within Morocco towards liberalization. The accomplishments of these women who managed to win parliamentary seats without the help of quotas are certainly commendable. These women have managed to rise within the ranks of political parties that tend to be patriarchal and undemocratic in their organization (Hadji 2010). One of these female MPs, Dr. Fatna Lhkail, says that she decided to enter politics not as a means to join the powerful political elite, but because she felt it would enable her to do more for her community. Indeed, she built a hospital in her rural community and has been able to appropriate funding for much-needed roads. In doing so, she has responded to the needs of her constituents, using her political power to meet those needs.

Women like Dr. Lhkail are exceptional, however, and few Moroccan women are able to receive the educational and societal opportunities from which she has benefited.<sup>137</sup> Though impressive, to cite her story and argue that quotas are unnecessary is to trivialize the significant obstacles that hinder female political participation. Not every female politician can mimic Dr. Lhkail's success, partly due to the nature of the political system, but her case proves that women can effectively serve in government.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Dr. Lhkail comes from a powerful family in her community that was able to send her to medical school in France and whose endorsement undoubtedly helped her overcome cultural gender stereotypes.

<sup>138</sup> This assessment relies on the definition of capable legislators given in Chapter One.

### **The Need for Quotas**

Though stories like Dr. Lhkail's prove that it is possible for women to be elected, and that they can be capable legislators once in office, politics remains a difficult field for women.<sup>139</sup> Female political candidacies in Morocco have increased steadily over the past two decades, but female representation, meaning the number of women candidates who become elected, has progressed at a much slower pace. In local elections in Morocco, female candidacies increased twelve-fold between 1997 and 2002, but the percentage of female representation only increased by 0.2% of all elected seats (Tahari 2003). Clearly the political institutions before quotas were not facilitating the involvement of women, and, women's groups argued, quotas were necessary.

As early as 1997, four women's groups proposed gender quotas to Parliament through an official memorandum (Variel 138). This proposition was largely ignored and had little effect, even symbolically or culturally. The movement for quotas did not gain momentum until Mohammed VI ascended to the throne and named women's rights as one of the important issues facing Moroccan society.

### **Benefiting from the King**

King Mohammed VI was the first monarch to recognize his wife publicly and give her the title of Princess. Before Mohammed VI, royal wives were simply called "mother of the princes" and played no role in public life to such an extent that no public pictures exist of the mother of Mohammed VI (Hegasy 2009). Princess Lalla Salma is the first royal wife to take a public role, which she uses largely to promote charitable causes. She is not a figurehead of the women's movement, unlike President Mubarak's wife or

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<sup>139</sup> It is difficult for women to enter, influence and succeed in politics, as Chapter Two discusses.

King Abdullah II's aunt.<sup>140</sup> The princess' distance from the Moroccan women's movement is arguably beneficial for the Moroccan women's movement -- her absence leads to a leadership composed of strong civil society actors. Princess Lalla Salma is a visible positive force in Moroccan civil society, but she does not co-opt civil society organizations under her husband's power as the do her peers in the other Arab countries.

The most important example of royal support (but not cooption) for the women's movement is the reform of the patriarchal family code. Mohammed VI sponsored the family code reform or *Moudawana*, passed in 2003. Women's groups had been pushing for such a reform for over a decade, but, as with quotas, the King's support was the primary factor into its manifestation. The King assembled committees of women's rights activists, members of government, and religious leaders to reform the family code in a way that would protect women under the law while respecting Islam. The *Moudawana* is currently considered as the most liberal family code of the Arab World, allowing women to file for divorce.<sup>141</sup> This revised code also frees them from requiring a male guardian to enter into legal contracts, and raises the minimum marriageable age from 16 to 18.

Many women's groups do not think the reforms went far enough, citing the inability of women to request passports for their children and the lax implementation of the reforms, particularly in rural areas (Ali 2009). Regardless, these reforms have improved the overall status of women in Morocco, though at the time of their inception they were widely contested. It has been argued that the only reason the *Moudawana* passed was because on May 16, 2003, a terrorist attack executed by radical Islamists occurred in Casablanca, which incited individuals to distance themselves from more

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<sup>140</sup> Suzanne Mubarak and Princess Basma are figureheads of the Egyptian and Jordanian women's movements, respectively.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with Professor Wilfred Rollman by author.

traditionalist sects who opposed the reform.<sup>142</sup> The *Moudawana* reform can be argued to have passed not because it was in the interests of women, but because it benefited from political circumstances surrounding its passage. However, the collaboration of the monarchy, the autonomous women's movement, and the religious authorities that brought about the *Moudawana* show that the Moroccan regime has a much more positive relationship to civil society than either Jordan or Egypt. In Morocco, the regime seems more willing to work with civil society and less preoccupied with suppressing it than the other cases.

Like the *Moudawana*, the movement for quotas may not have originated in the *Mahkzen*, or palace, but it is due solely to the King that they were implemented (Liddell 2010). Mohammed VI may have more liberal views on women than many of his contemporaries in the Arab world and his predecessors, but he is not obliged to meet the demands of any civil society group. This raises the question of what would motivate him to implement these quotas. Quotas in some way were seen to benefit the King. To understand this, the quotas themselves and the institutions and political climate in which they are implemented must be described to provide background for my analysis of the effects of quotas in Morocco.

### **Political Environment: more complex than simply royal**

#### *Elections*

Moroccan quota seats are filled at the party level-- not through official national legislation. In parliamentary elections there is no law that enforces quotas. However, if a

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<sup>142</sup> The Moudawana reforms were a divisive issue in Moroccan society. It is often presented as a war between the Islamists and the modernists. For more in depth information see Howe, M. *Morocco: The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges*. 2005. Chapter 6.

party does not comply with the quota and fails to name women on their electoral lists, the government is more likely to penalize the party for electoral violations like vote buying, which all parties do to some extent, but for which the government only selectively prosecutes (Hadji 2010). The problem of vote buying has improved in Morocco due in large part to the regime's efforts to appear more democratic to the international community.

Elections in Morocco are the most legitimate of the three case studies, yet they are far from ideally democratic. Electoral corruption is much less blatant and forceful than in Egypt, and elections are more competitive than those in Jordan. Recent reforms have made vote buying more difficult and, as a result, more expensive.<sup>143</sup> To win an election in Morocco, a candidate needs access to significant funding, and to have real political power one needs a personal fortune (Zaki 2009: 20). This is yet another difficulty presented to women who wish to run for office, as few women have their own independent funds, but rather rely on their husbands and families for money. Normally only upper class Moroccans can afford to run for parliamentary seats. Political parties can fund campaigns, but their funds stem from the wealthy party members, who are in turn, the political elite. Whereas tribal connections determine the elites in Jordan and NDP party membership in Egypt, elites, finances determine Morocco's political elites.

The House of Representatives, the lower house of Parliament, is universally elected, therefore the party that performs the best in legislative elections will have the largest and strongest presence in that particular body (Storm 2007: 82). As the party that

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<sup>143</sup> Often vote-buying can be as discreet as providing voters with a meal or a material good they may not be able to afford.

can afford to buy the most votes will probably win the most seats, wealth equates power in the Moroccan political system.

*The Gentlemen's Agreement to promote female political participation*

In 2003, Moroccan political parties formed a “gentleman’s agreement” that mandates that each political party includes women on their party lists.<sup>144</sup> Under the proportional representation system, votes are cast for a party list that includes the candidates from that party, ordered from top to bottom by the party leaders. Names at the top are more likely to win a parliamentary seat than those at the bottom. Women may campaign on these party lists but it is more difficult for them to be elected. Some women, such as Dr. Lhkail prefer to run on party lists because they have a good relationship with their constituency and their party and feel they can better serve their district as a district representative rather than a representative of all women in government, which quotas seats tend to create. Also, local party leaders have recognized Dr. Lhkail as a political asset, earning her respect and elevated status on the party level, which few women enjoy.<sup>145</sup> Again, Dr. Lhkeil is an exception and she is not a quota woman. Quota women, or women who gain office through the quota, do so by being placed in a national list of female candidates by party leaders. Her story should not be used to argue against the need for quotas, but should be cited to prove how women can be capable legislators if given the opportunity to do so. In Morocco, this opportunity to enter politics occurs most often at the party level, which is why quotas are implemented through parties.

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<sup>144</sup> A gentleman’s agreement means that there is an unwritten understanding between Moroccan political parties that they will send women to parliament in proportion to their electoral resorts so that in total, at least 30 parliamentary seats will be held by women. No law dictates this.

<sup>145</sup> Instead of being shut out from the party hierarchy as many political aspirants, particularly females, are, Dr. Lkhail was solicited by party leaders due to her proven political competency.

Each party, under the gentleman's agreement for gender quotas, compiles its own national list of women. Quota seats are then filled based on the party's national electoral performance; the thirty quota seats in Parliament reserved for women are distributed among the parties. The greater the percentage of votes a party wins, the more women from that party's national women's list will be given a seat in parliament. The higher a woman is placed on a party list, the more likely she is to win a seat in Parliament. The quota system is based along the party system so women who are well connected to party elites are more likely to be placed on a national list. In this sense the quotas are somewhat undemocratic and perhaps simply another outlet for elitism. The party elites choose who is on the party list and in what order they are placed; thus they determine who fills quota seats.

One of the leading opposition forces in Moroccan society, the Justice and Charity Movement<sup>146</sup>, termed elections in Morocco a "pointless step," saying they do more to reinforce the status quo lead by the King than to lead to greater democratic representation in government(Quds Press). Elections in Morocco, just like in its authoritarian neighbors Jordan and Egypt, are held fundamentally to benefit the autocrat. In this case, elections allow minor opposition parties to partake in the government without having any real sway because they lack both the numbers in Parliament and sufficient power to challenge the ruling regime.

***Parties and the promise of pluralism under the palace***

Women who are members of larger, more powerful political parties are more likely to become parliamentarians. There are so many parties in Morocco that it is

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<sup>146</sup> Justice and Charity refuses to be a political party because they do not want to be a part of a corrupt institution that offends their conservative religious ideology.

impossible for most parties to gain more than a few seats in elections at best. Even the largest political parties like the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM), led by Mohammed VI's schoolmate al-Himma cannot secure a majority in Parliament. This makes coalitions a necessity. In 2007, 33 different parties competed for 325 seats, and only 9 of these parties were able to win more than 3% of the vote. (Zaki 2009: 20; Vairel 2009: 137). Whereas Egypt restricts pluralism so that the state-sponsored political party dominates politics, Morocco encourages pluralism so that there are too many political parties for any single one to dominate.<sup>147</sup> No single party has been instrumental in implementing quotas, though the USFP and the PJD have been particularly welcoming to women.<sup>148</sup> Parties as a whole accepted and adopted quotas at the behest of the palace.

In Morocco, creating and sustaining a political party is done at "the will of the ruler who has always considered, and is still considering, that a party is a generous donation, not a right."<sup>149</sup> The Minister of the Interior has the power to shut down political parties, potentially for arbitrary reasons, such as vote buying<sup>150</sup> (Storm 2007: 141). Parties persist because the palace allows them to exist -- not because they have a right and a duty to represent their party members in politics.

Quotas in Morocco favor the most powerful political parties, which also tend to be the parties that are adept at not being perceived as a threat by the *Mahkzen*. Even the "opposition" parties that have significant representation in Parliament abide by the rules

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<sup>147</sup> As of 2009, Morocco's political strategy seems to be shifting away from a fractured pluralism to a state-sponsored dominant party somewhat like Egypt's NDP, with the establishment and strong electoral showing of the Authenticity and Modernity Party. This is troubling for democratizing efforts and Morocco and should be monitored closely within the coming months and years.

<sup>148</sup> The USFP and PJD are political parties and will be discussed several lines down.

<sup>149</sup> Fathallah Arslane (official spokesman of the Justice and Charity group) interviewed by Asharq al-Awsat. Rabat, May 27, 2009

<sup>150</sup> As every party engages in vote-buying, selective government censorship on these grounds is arbitrary, aimed not at ensuring fair voting practices, but at preventing a certain group from competing politically.



and agendas set by the palace, be they the conservative Islamist Party of Justice and Development(PJD)<sup>151</sup>, the leftist UFSP, or the National Rally of Independents(RNI). Though parties are restricted by the monarchy in many ways, the monarchy does not restrict the number of political parties. The more competing parties in parliament, the more diffuse their power and the less threat they pose to the monarchy. According to Morocco's Polity IV rating of "no fragility" regarding political legitimacy, allowing competitive political parties seems to serve the interests of the autocrat better than Jordan's one-dominant-party system and Egypt's one-party system. Jordan is scored as having "moderate fragility," and Egypt "high fragility."

*Parties and their benefits to the Monarchy*

The King uses political parties to increase his power, as the establishment of the PAM, led by a close friend of the King and formed arguably to extend strengthen the monarchy's power over government, shows. He also uses the sheer number of political parties as a way to dilute political opposition. As noted, there are so many parties that no one can win a majority under the PR system. The PAM also serves as a political bloc to combat the rising popularity of the PJD. The regime publicly encouraged this new party as a way to hopefully rejuvenate the party system that had become "ideologically and historically exhausted" by including new elites.<sup>152</sup> The creation of the PAM was necessary because such a task could not be filled by an Islamist party because the

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<sup>151</sup> I term the PJD Islamist here, but most Islamists think the PJD has made too many compromises and presents a diluted form of their ideology.

<sup>152</sup> These elites are likely to be loyal to the King for the same reasons quota women are loyal to the elites that put them there.

monarchy fears the popular appeal and often-radical ideology of Islamist movements.<sup>153</sup>  
(Bu-Sa'dan 2009)

Islam has been presented as somewhat incongruous with liberalization, largely because it discourages secularization and emphasizes tradition over progressivism (Ayoob 2004; Howe 2005). Yet in Morocco, as in Egypt and Jordan, the more Islamist political actors seem to offer the greatest promise for democratization, at least within the parties themselves (Houel 2010; Liddell 2010). The PJD, though it has compromised with the regime on many issues, such as gender quotas, which it opposed in 2000 and has since capitalized upon to send the most female party members to Parliament of any Moroccan party.<sup>154</sup> The PJD is arguably the most popular political party, especially in urban areas, but electoral results are often skewed as a result of electoral redistricting to disfavor the PJD so it does not become too powerful. It is no coincidence that the PJD, despite its popularity, is outperformed by the PAM, which has less popular support but is endorsed by the regime.

The party system in Morocco is clearly flawed because it is heavily influenced by wealth and directly subject to the monarchy's power. Morocco is by no means on a fast-track route towards democratization. Political elites stand in the way of real political reform. They do not want to sacrifice the power they currently have to political outsiders, be it an opposition member or a woman. Quotas are designed to incorporate more women into government, not reform the democratic system entirely. That Morocco

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<sup>153</sup> Islamist movements in Morocco do not necessarily advocate the overthrow of the King, as he has religious legitimacy as "commander of the faithful." They do, however, advocate a reorganization of government that would take power out of the hands of whom they see as corrupt secularists (i.e. Parliament) and transfer it to a council of Islamic scholars and spiritual leaders.

<sup>154</sup> Out of 45 total seats held by the PJD in Parliament, 6 are held by women. The PJD has more women MPs than any other party. Inter-Parliamentary Union, Parline Database, Morocco, House of Representatives, Last Elections, [http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2221\\_E.htm](http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2221_E.htm).

is not a full-fledged democracy is by no means the fault of quotas. By allying themselves with the King and by capitalizing on what democratic opportunities are available through women's organizations, women have been able to enjoy greater political success than in Jordan or Egypt. The King presents himself as above the party system. He is its arbitrator, but he, like the political elites, wishes to perpetuate the status quo.

### **Quotas Emerge**

In 2003, 697 women and 23 men vied for 30 seats on the national list.<sup>155</sup> (Storm 2007: 85). There is no cap for women in Parliament, so five more women were able to compete and win a parliamentary seat without the help of quotas. Because of the centrality of parties regarding quotas, few female activists win quota seats and oftentimes passive women connected to ruling elites will assume office and do little more than toe the party line. In this sense, Morocco faces many of the same problems as Jordan regarding quotas. However the electoral system in Morocco is more accessible to female candidates with its use of closed party lists as opposed to the SNTV system, and women have overall a greater likelihood of being elected according to their own merit, without the help of quotas. Parties in Morocco, even those with patriarchal structures, are more democratic than the NDP is in Egypt and the tribes in Jordan that serve many of the same functions. The competition of the parties in Morocco can also bode well for women, as parties can compete for strong female members so that they can fill their quota seats while appealing to the female demographic.

The quota system in Morocco, though more successful and better structured than those of Jordan and Egypt is not without its problems. The parties that win the greatest

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<sup>155</sup> Men are allowed to run on the national quota list.

percentages of votes and thus produce the greatest number of quota women are unlikely to pick an activist to run on their national list (Rollman 2009). In doing so, parties exclude the women's movement from active participation within government. These parties have power, are content with the status quo and are reluctant to empower any outsider groups like the women's movement. An opposition party that is not connected to the political elite and may wish to promote women's rights and send an activist to parliament is unlikely to have either the financial resources or the popular support to perform well enough in elections to secure a quota seat for a female candidate.<sup>156</sup>

Abdelali Benamour, the founder of a Moroccan think tank called Alternatives, notes that there is a disconnect between parties and civil society. As seen in the case of Egypt, it is problematic when politics places itself in contention with civil society. This often leads to repression to civil society, which has a negative impact on society as a whole, and severely limits society's capacity to liberalize. Benamour sees his organization as "a motor to put pressure on the political parties" (Howe 2005: 268). This is necessary because "parties are afraid of NGOs; they see [them] as competitors when they should use [their] assistance" (ibid). Benamour, recognizing the problems pluralism poses to the democratic process in Morocco, advocates a reorganization of political parties into two groups representing the Left and Right (ibid). Indeed, the political system in Morocco is overly pluralistic and would most likely benefit from greater cohesion among the many different groups. The very existence of Benamour's think tank again shows the greater freedoms granted in civil society by the regime in Morocco than Jordan or Egypt.

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<sup>156</sup> I would argue that this influenced parliament's decision to instate a quota of 30 seats as opposed to the 60 seats originally proposed by the women's movement.

### **View from the palace: regime perspectives**

As in Jordan and Egypt, quotas were designed primarily to benefit the ruling regime. Quotas are not exclusively advantageous to the heads of states, but the benefits to the state are the most convincing explanations as to why quotas were enacted by these autocratic rulers. In Morocco, because quotas were not officially legislated but strongly advised through a “gentleman’s agreement” to be implemented by parties. Because parties are fundamental actors in the Moroccan quota story, they must be taken into consideration when discussing the regime’s motivations for implementing quotas. In effect, quotas are designed to give politically non-threatening (if not pro-monarchy) parties more seats in parliament. Parties abide by quotas because it is in their self-interest to be in the King’s favor.

### **The women’s movement: autonomously active**

Moroccans are encouraged to vote by the monarchy, state programs, and NGOs. Motivations for this encouragement range from the King wanting to affirm his authoritative power to NGOs wanting to increase political participation -- a necessary step towards democratization or to improve the relationship between the government and the people. NGOs like the Democratic League for Women’s Rights(LDDF) and Association Chaml have taken a particular interest in encouraging women to vote. These associations work to educate women on political issues so they may cast informed votes. These organizations encourage women to vote so that they may be seen as political actors that deserve representation in government. If women are a large part of the electorate, ideally the representative bodies will address issues that are relevant to women, such as

the legal rights of women and children. As incentive for women to register to vote, these NGOs host clinics for women to come receive basic healthcare for themselves and their children. These associations do not endorse a particular candidate, so the services they provide to women to encourage them to vote cannot be considered vote buying, provided volunteers for these organizations can present themselves as politically neutral.<sup>157</sup>

Organizations like Chaml and LDDF work to ensure that women are not exploited as vote reservoirs as they are in Egypt, but able to approach voting as an opportunity to elect someone who will represent their interests in government.<sup>158</sup>

Women in Morocco may not be inclined to vote for other women (Sherebini 2007), but incorporating women on the party level often makes women feel more connected, more represented, to a party and thus more likely to vote for it, thus increasing that party's likelihood of winning seats in parliament. In a highly competitive party system, women may serve as vote reservoirs. In Egypt women are ideal vote reservoirs because their votes are easily influenced within the political system.<sup>159</sup> In Morocco, due to the multiparty system, parties compete for female votes to a greater extent. This competition does not exist in Jordan or Egypt, where political elites have no incentive to cater to women--particularly when women are expected to follow the political agenda of men who put them in quota seats.

Despite the efforts of LDDF and many other NGOs, many Moroccans choose to abstain from voting. Some would argue that this is not terrible because absentation can

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<sup>157</sup> Even if such services did influence how women vote, this is a much softer and benign form of voter intimidation than bribes or threatening violence.

<sup>158</sup> Female votes are a valuable commodity to parties because they can supply a party with the votes necessary to win elections

<sup>159</sup> Women may be threatened with violence against themselves or their family members if they do not vote a certain way, or they may willingly vote for a less expensive bribe than males.

be considered “*le prix à payer pour la democratization*<sup>160</sup>”(Zaki 2009). The more democratic and functional a society is, the less people may feel they need to vote because they are content with the status quo.

### **The nature of the women’s movement and how it benefits from quotas**

As in the other cases, quotas were implemented (in theory) to address the problem of very few women being elected, though one cannot ignore that quotas served the ruling power’s self-interest. The general arguments for gender quotas<sup>161</sup>, such as female empowerment, democratization, and overall political progressivism, apply to Morocco. Whereas a common Egyptian viewpoint is that quotas are a violation of equality, Khadija Errebah, a scholar of Moroccan quotas, distinguishes quotas from discrimination against men in terms of voting because quotas “break the vicious cycle produced by inequality and create new political relations based on true fairness and democracy”(2004). Such a quota could be said to stem from the already strong women’s movement in Morocco. The idea of women deserving places in government and the concept of tying women’s empowerment with democratic and liberal ideals has existed since at least the 1980s when Fatima Mernissi first published her influential work on Moroccan feminism and the need for a strong women’s movement(Rollman 2009).

The women’s movement is more political in Morocco than in Jordan or Egypt partly because it is independent of the regime and its policies, and because it has largely political roots. The women’s organizations most central to Moroccan politics such as the Democratic Association of Moroccan Women(ADFM) and Union of Women’s

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<sup>160</sup>Taken from the French-language Moroccan publication, *Liberation* published on 9/11/07

<sup>161</sup> See Chapter 3.

Action(UAF) grew out from political parties(Howe 2004: 270)<sup>162</sup>. Women who wished to be active members of society but who were unable to truly take part in politics channeled their efforts towards the women's movement. Empowered by their successes in civil society, such as increasing female literacy and supporting microfinance collaboratives, these women began to seek seats at the political table, beginning in 1993. That year, revision of the family code was first made a political issue and it became evident that women needed to be present in government to ensure that women's interests were addressed.

### *Women and Islamists*

The Moroccan women's movement has largely positioned itself in opposition to the Islamists, which accounts for much of its success. In the 1980s Fatima Mernissi, a pioneer in Moroccan feminism blamed Islam for the oppressed status of women in the Arab world. She argued that Islam perpetuated traditions that disvalued women and denied them equal status to men. This is especially harmful to women because women themselves believe these negative views of women as an aspect of their spirituality and in turn pass them unto their children. The religion itself is not to blame for this misogyny; instead men who interpreted Islam to be exploitative to women should be accredited.

(Mernissi 1984)

Moroccan feminism largely follows in Mernissi's school of thought, advocating a break from traditional views of women and a reinterpretation of Islam that is less biased against them(Howe 2005: 270). These women tend to advocate a more secular society in which religion does not dictate all matters. This angers some women who support the

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<sup>162</sup> Fatima Daaif is a member of the *Mouvement Populaire*, one of the leading Moroccan political parties. She is an active member of civil society and works through her political affiliation to advocate women's rights. She herself is not a politician, but she is an active member of political and civil society.



implementation of *Shari'a* or Islamic law, in Morocco. These women belong to the ever-growing Islamist movement and advocate a more religion-based society. The women's movement is essentially divided in two camps: the secular feminists and the Islamist traditionalists. Such a division exists in the women's movements of all Arab societies, but it is much less noticeable in Jordan and Egypt because they are extensions of repressive regimes, which do not foster opposition, especially from Islamists. The women's movement in Morocco is not controlled by the monarchy and it operates in a society relatively more tolerant of oppositional forces. A divided women's movement arguably is a positive sign because it shows that multiple perspectives are represented and offers the opportunity for discourse between the two sides within the movement.

As noted before, Morocco is only "partially-free" according to Freedom House and it clearly favors the secular side of the women's movement, as do Western donors. Because of this, the secularists are more prominent in society and their NGOs are given funding from larger NGOs like the International Republican Institute(IRI) and the National Democratic Institute(NDI). Women seem to connect more to the women's movement in Morocco than in Jordan or Egypt, so it is natural and somewhat encouraging that the movement would feature opposing viewpoints. All Moroccan women do not have the same opinion and that is reflected in the women's movement. All women may not be represented in the actions of the women's movement, but the majority of Moroccan women stand to benefit from the its campaign against violence against women, the economic opportunities it can provide through microfinance collaboratives, and the services it provides to society such as literacy and voter education.

Not all women are in favor of gender quotas, but, as the King decided to implement them, women's groups were in no place to refuse them. Women's groups need the support of the palace to implement their literacy and other societal programs. The King is the ultimate political force in Morocco so it serves the women's movement to be allied with him. In return, the palace derives certain benefits from its relationship with the women's movement.

### **The palace's position on quotas and women in politics**

Mohammed VI has been a major proponent of women's rights since ascending the throne, in part, for many of the same reasons that other autocrats support women's rights. They see empowering women as posing little threat to their power base. Women can provide a wealth of votes and support to a regime, thereby increasing its legitimacy, but it is unlikely that women will band together and form a revolutionary movement to seize power from the government.<sup>163</sup> *Quotas are a simple way to generate a positive image for the regime without undertaking reforms that would rob the autocrat of any of his powers.*

Quotas serve the interests of the King in three main ways:

- a) they create a guise of liberalization that Morocco can present to the international community to detract from its more illiberal practices;
- b) they bolster the public image of the King;
- c) quotas extend the King's support base within Parliament.

### **Guise of Liberalization**

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<sup>163</sup> Women come from a myriad of different backgrounds so diverse that it is very difficult to mobilize women solely around their shared experience of being women. They can mobilize around specific issues like reforming family codes, but they do not have sufficient common ground on which to form a real political party. Women can be a political force, but they are not a political bloc.

Morocco benefits from being perceived as a relatively liberal society. In modern times, “the kingdom has looked unambiguously to the West—first to Europe and to a lesser extent to the United States—as its principal economic partner and road to modern progress”(Howe 2005: 302). Even during the French and Spanish occupation of Morocco, the country has had a positive relationship with the Western-world, which has resulted in Western powers investing in Morocco. The United States will donate \$131.5 million between 2009-2013 through USAID largely to bolster Moroccan agriculture(USAID 2010).<sup>164</sup> <sup>165</sup> This is significantly less than either Egypt or Jordan receives from the United States, but the amount of USAID assistance to Morocco was recently increased. A USAID desk officer, Bill Riley, speculated that this increase was inspired by Hillary Clinton praising the work Morocco has done to support women’s rights<sup>166</sup>(Riley 2010). He also notes that while aid to Morocco is increasing slightly, aid to Jordan and Egypt has been cut back modestly.

*“Getting Worse”*

Secretary Clinton may approve of Morocco’s outreach to women, but Morocco shows signs of a regression in terms of its citizens’ freedoms. Morocco has received criticism in the international press recently for its oppressive treatment of journalists,<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Lecture given by J Babhaji, Director of USAID Morocco. 2/26/09, Rabat, Morocco.

<sup>165</sup> In its mission statement USAID names its primary goal as the promotion of American interests by investing in developing economies and providing aid to nations in need of funding. By fostering strong economies USAID hopes to generate political security in developing nations by preventing social upheaval and economic collapse.

<sup>166</sup> Clinton, H. 2009. Speech presented at Forum for the Future November 4, 2009. Marrakech, Morocco.

<sup>167</sup> For more information about the “steady and alarming decline of freedom of expression“ in Morocco see the Committee to Protect Journalists’ letter to Secretary Hillary Clinton, October 30, 2009. Available online at <http://cpj.org/2009/10/morocco-censors-jails-journalists-as-forum-approac.php>

and regarding the issue of Western Sahara.<sup>168</sup> Quotas detract from these blemishes on Morocco's international image.

Politically, the most concerning aspect of Morocco is currently the establishment of the PAM party and the instatement of al-Himma as Prime Minister. Fouad al-Himma, is a former schoolmate of the King and head of the newly formed, pro-monarchy PAM. He has been labeled the "*emissaire du souverain*," and the fact that he has risen so high in his political power is an indication of the extensive power of Mohammed VI (Zaki 2009, 43). Recent political events in Morocco, such as the recent crackdown on journalists, have coincided with al-Himma's recent rise in prominence. Members of Middle Eastern think tanks fear he is leading a new wave of repression, as Hassan II's minister of the Interior, Driss Basri, engineered the years of lead (Hamid 2010; Liddell 2010). It is illegal to criticize the monarchy and as recently as November 2009 two journalists were imprisoned for speculating about the King's health without the authorization of the palace (Reporters without Borders 2010). As opposed to progressing towards a more liberal and perhaps democratic society, the political situation in Morocco seems to be "getting worse" (Arslane 2009). The regime can argue that it is in no danger of ushering in a new age of political oppression because it clearly is working towards liberalization in the form of women's rights. In 2010, Morocco received a downward-pointed arrow in addition to its "partially free" status from Freedom House. While Morocco is still viewed as more free than Jordan or Egypt, recent consolidations of power within the hands of

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<sup>168</sup> Western Sahara raises issues of self-determination. They want independence; Morocco refuses to grant it, saying they are historically a part of the greater Morocco. Activist Aminatou Haida underwent a well-publicized hunger strike in November 2009, which criticized the Moroccan government's stance on Western Sahara.

elites close to the monarchy, like al-Himma, do not bode well for the country's liberalization prospects(Puddington 2010).

### **Roi des pauvres: the palace and public image**

Moroccan political culture is somewhat paradoxical in that most Moroccans are not interested in politics and generally distrust politicians and governmental institutions, yet they widely respect and support King Mohammed VI, who is head of the government(Houel 2010).

As in Jordan, the King is considered the primary motor behind liberalization. As the arbitrator of political parties, he is above their greed and corruption. Moroccans attribute problems like poor road maintenance and insufficient housing to corruption in the state and private sectors(Katilis 2004). Essentially Parliament and the bureaucracy are to blame for the needs of the population not being met by the government. The King is above blame.<sup>169</sup>

The King has substantial cultural appeal as commander of the faithful and the *roi des pauvres*. He owns the largest share of all capital and industry in Morocco, but he is perceived as caring about the poor and suffering in his country. He is a father figure to the entire nation, with a particular appeal to women in this sense. Most Moroccan women would not dream to criticize the King for not making sufficient reforms in the family code or doing more to increase the status of women. Parliamentarians will be blamed for neglecting to address their needs and promoting patriarchal institutions that repress women, such as its refusal to pass any legislation protecting the legal rights of single mothers. Moroccans have always loved their king, and women reflect this sentiment now more than ever since Mohammed VI has presented himself as a champion

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<sup>169</sup> To blame the King would be borderline treason and likely result in a hefty fine or a prison sentence.

of women's rights. Even the most progressive activists and female politicians love and respect the King, at least publicly. Mohammed VI has a deeply ingrained popularity that is inherent in the Moroccan identity. Abdullah II, because the Jordanian nationality is not as strongly culturally established as Morocco's, enjoys this popularity to a significantly lesser extent.

***Cultural appeal and a ploy for power***

While naturally a positive public image bolsters the King's legitimacy and his support base, the King can accrue even more power in other ways from implanting gender quotas.

Radical dissidents, such as Sheik Yassine<sup>170</sup>, leader of the Justice and Charity Movement, exist in Morocco, but most opposition forces advocate reform of the current system in some way, rather than the complete dissolution of the monarchy and the current political system. The King is the only political actor with enough power to enact change in Morocco. Parliamentarians are generally weak and unpopular; the Prime Minister is entirely subject to royal power, and enjoys scant popularity himself, as he presides over a largely disliked body.<sup>171</sup>

Though the King is widely popular, Mohammed VI has been politically savvy and made efforts to ensure that such popularity continues. He has made public efforts to redress the human rights abuses committed under his father, establishing the Consultative Council on Human Rights(CCDH). He has reached-out to the Amazirighi, or Berber,

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<sup>170</sup> Sheik Yassine himself does not advocate a dissolution of the monarchy, although he is critical of it and would like to see a dramatic reorganization of Moroccan politics.

<sup>171</sup> The Prime Minister can make recommendations to the King, but no structure exists that would require the King to heed the PM's recommendations. The King appoints legislative council members, ministers of government and ultimately oversees all governmental affairs. The Prime Minister may be the most powerful member of Parliament, but in no way is he on par with the King. This is yet another indication of the weakness of Moroccan parliament.

population establishing IRCAM, an institute for the preservation and study of Amazirighi culture and language. The King adeptly courts public opinion from all aspects of society. He even has a religious appeal, with his title of “commander of the faithful” established centuries ago by the monarchy. He is cognizant of the fact that the environment in which he rules is different from that of his father. While Hassan II consolidated power through fear and intimidation, Mohammed VI presents himself as a more paternalistic figure with a progressive inclination, acting in the best interests of his country.

He presents this image to counter the popular Islamist movements, such as Justice and Charity. Moroccan Islamists are less militant and overall more accepting of the current regime than those in Egypt and Jordan. The monarchy has co-opted much of the Islamist movement by incorporating the moderate PJD into politics, excluding more radical Islamists. Egypt and Jordan have been politically maneuvering around the Muslim Brotherhood for the past five decades because their political systems do not allow for opposition, yet opposition exists and is often channeled through the MB.

By incorporating women into politics and actively seeking their support, the King hopes to neutralize the Islamists in some way(Howe 2005, 270). With gender quotas, not only does he alienate the Islamists from the popular support of many women, but he creates 30 seats in Parliament that are almost guaranteed to adhere to his agenda and express a certain kind of loyalty and gratitude to the palace. Moroccan women know that quotas did not stem from Parliament itself, and they also know that though women’s movements have been active, they owe much of their overall elevation of status during the past decade to the King.

### **A perfect storm for the King, a welcome rainfall for women**

In Morocco, the King has been an instrumental part in the success of gender quotas. It can be argued that quotas have been more successful here than in Jordan or Egypt because Mohammed VI wanted them to succeed. The other regimes are primarily concerned with how quotas can serve their interests and perpetuate the status quo, and while Mohammed VI of course is motivated by potential political gains from quotas, he seems to genuinely support women's the women's movement. This women's movement is of course the secular feminist branch, not the Islamtist sect, and its successes help alienate the threat of Islamists in society.

It is significant to note that while the palace supports the women's movement, it does not control it. The women's movement is a collaboration of women active in civil society. The women's movement can appeal to all Moroccan women because it is a place where their interests can be represented in civil society and the movement has wide-reaching affects on society, such as improving the economic status of women, operating schools, educating women, and providing a security network to abused or abandoned women.

Because Parliament is not an effective or powerful governmental institution, quota seats in Parliament will not prove to be particularly effective or political empowering for women. Quotas do allow women entry into the party system, which is important in Morocco because political parties are the gateways into Moroccan politics. Symbolically, women are seen in a place of power and this can have a positive effect on other women who see these women legislators. It challenges gender norms that tell young girls their place is in front of a stove, not behind a podium. This may appear to be



an underwhelming effect, but could be the most significant in years to come. The unprecedented success of female candidates in the 2009 municipal elections indicates that the political culture of Morocco is changing to feature greater female participation.

## Chapter VIII: Conclusions

### Summary of Findings

By comparing the quota experiences of Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco it becomes evident that quotas do not have a dramatic immediate effect on Arab societies. Egypt's quotas have been the least well received, having failed in the 1980s and are most likely doomed to fail in the current political environment when they are implemented in November 2010. Morocco has had the most positive experience, surpassing quota levels on the local and national levels, which indicates a larger cultural acceptance of female leaders as a result of quotas. Jordan is better suited for gender quotas than Egypt, but it has not experienced the same success as Morocco. Despite whether or not the implementation of the quotas are successful – they do not have a visible short-term on any of these three societies.

Jordan now has more women in Parliament, but these women are proxy politicians for the tribal leaders who dominate Jordanian politics. Quota women in Jordan are generally not recognized by their constituencies whose interests they do little to represent. In addition, quota women in Jordan have not advocated the interests of women in Parliament, which implies that is not a more representative body as a result of quotas. Quota women owe their seats to tribal leaders and to the monarchy-- the elites whose interests they serve in government. In doing so, quota women perpetuate the patriarchal status quo of Jordanian politics. Quotas in Jordan were implemented less through a genuine policy aimed at reform, and more in the interest of bolstering the support for the King and the elites allied with him. If quotas are meant to inspire change either in the status of women or the patriarchal nature of the political system, they have

not succeeded in Jordan. They have increased female representation, but female parliamentarians remain an exiguously small percentage of parliamentarians.

Egypt implemented quotas in 1979 and they were revoked seven years later. Officially, this was because the quotas violated equality guaranteed in the Egyptian constitution, but also because they lacked the support of a strong women's movement. Additionally, the political elites were hostile to sharing their power with women. The fundamental goal of quotas is to advance political gender equality to the point at which the quotas themselves are no longer needed. Thus, Egypt's prior experience with quotas indicates a total failure of quotas, as they were revoked before they could really take effect in a positive and sustainable way. Egypt has amended its constitution to allow for quotas and in 2000 established the National Women's Council to address women's issues, but such seeming progress for the women's rights has a darker side. The Egyptian regime is exploiting the women's movement, which it controls, in order to improve its image both internationally and domestically. Gamal Mubarak, the son of the current Egyptian president, particularly wishes to be seen as supporting the women's movement in the hopes that it will improve his popularity. In turn, Egyptians might see him as the legitimate successor to his father's office. Gender quotas are structured in Egypt to benefit the regime by generating a positive image of it and securing the ruling National Democratic Party's power monopoly. Given these motivations for implementing quotas, the nature of Egyptian society, and especially the two-term limit for the quotas does not bode well for women's political participation in Egypt.

Morocco has had a more positive experience than either Jordan or Egypt, but this should not be interpreted to mean that quotas have been an overwhelming success in

Morocco. Women have managed to surpass quota limits, and overall Moroccans seem more open to the idea of female legislators than before quotas, as indicated by their votes. This change in the perceptions of women's acceptable roles in society is perhaps the most significant effect of quotas in Morocco. Quotas are not implemented or designed to directly enact gender equality on all levels of society or to democratize the political system. In Morocco, they incorporate more women into government, and due to the support of the women's movement and political parties, many women have been able to generate a positive view of women in politics. Quotas are implemented in Parliament through a gentleman's agreement on the party level. Parties compete with each other for women's votes and women candidates to fill their quota lists, and in doing so make women a political asset to the parties. Patriarchal norms still pervade Moroccan society and the country remains undemocratic, but in helping to challenge the idea that women are unfit for politics, quotas have achieved moderate success in Morocco.

### **Explaining the Success of Gender Quotas in Morocco**

Morocco's success in comparison to Jordan or Egypt may be explained by three main factors: the political climate and institutions, the nature of the women's movement, and the regime's attitudes toward quotas. Ultimately the regime is the ultimate determining factor and influences all other factors that contribute to quota success such as civil society, democratization, and female quality of life, in addition to the political climate and women's movements. However, the inherent complexity of quotas requires that these other factors be examined in addition to the regime in order to gain a complete understanding of quotas.

### *Political Climate and Institutions*

Electoral quotas in these Arab regimes are inherently disadvantaged because they are all implemented under undemocratic autocracies. Like any ruling group, the regimes of these countries are concerned with their own self-preservation, but in autocracies self-preservation is often sought at the expense of citizens' personal and political liberties. The interests of certain groups such as women are secondary to the interests of the regime in all policy making. These regimes would not enact gender quotas if they did benefit them in some way. Political elites—tribal leaders in Jordan, the NDP in Egypt and wealthy party leaders in Morocco—use quotas to perpetuate the status quo by placing women who will respect and adhere to the existing power structure. Quotas do not empower activists in the women's movement, which is to the detriment of women. These activists have experience navigating the political environments, often collaborating with those in power, so they are often the best qualified for political office.

Gender quotas are not designed to reform an entire democratic system, so they should not be blamed if quotas do not lead to greater democratization. Electoral quotas are a strategy to be used in democratically-elected institutions; they are not a means of democratizing these institutions. The greater the strength of democratic institutions in which quotas are used, the greater potential quotas have for success. Morocco permits greater pluralism in civil society and has a much more developed and stable party system. This makes Parliament more accessible to Moroccan women than in Jordan or Egypt where there are only a select few political gatekeepers heading tribes and the NDP, respectively. Morocco's PR electoral system and use of closed-lists to fill quota seats has

also provided women a greater opportunity to capitalize on quotas. Quotas in these countries simply let women into their patriarchal political systems, but in Morocco the political institutions and electoral systems are naturally more advantageous to women. This has allowed women to benefit more from quotas.

In all three cases, quota women must comply with the status quo because they largely rely on the support of political elites to gain office. In Morocco, the status quo is more pluralistic, which bodes well for quotas because it provides women with options when entering politics. Moroccan women can choose among parties, where in Jordan and Egypt, in most cases, women must conform to a singular political ideology in order to enter politics. A greater variety of women may be represented due to this pluralism though all political candidates must be in accord with the status quo, even if they do not ascribe to a singular political party.

In cases like Jordan, quotas have perhaps been to the detriment of women because they have created a negative view of women in politics. Jordanian women do not have clear constituencies whose interests they can represent nor do they actively represent women in Parliament. In Morocco and Egypt too, women have been criticized for not being effective legislators. This critique should not be directed at the quotas, but at the political institutions in which they operate. If parliament is politically ineffective, then one cannot expect women MPs to have a dramatic impact on politics or society as a whole. Instead, a weak parliament could be indicative of a greater systemic problem such as embedded anti-democratic traditions and cultural norms, or poorly designed democratic institutions.

### *Women's Movement*

Women's groups contribute to the success of quotas in Arab regimes. Morocco has a relatively autonomous women's movement, which frees it from direct regime control and allows for a more democratic nature. The women's group in Morocco is divided between secularists and traditionalists. Though the monarchy clearly favors the secularists, this division of the women's movement allows for a more complete representation of Moroccan women within the movement. The case studies provided in this thesis prove that greater association of women with a women's movement bodes well for the movement itself. The Moroccan women's movement appeals to the greater female population, as opposed to the other movements, which primarily involve elite women. In Jordan the women's movement is largely controlled by the palace, and operated by the female members of the elite. While Jordanian women have succeeded in many societal programs such as promoting female education, the movement lacks the grassroots appeal of the Moroccan movement, and thus has less political power. The more powerful a women's group, the better it can support female parliamentarians. Female MPs need support when entering into male-dominated politics as not to be exploited by the system. The Egyptian women's movement suffers from even greater domination by elites, as its main organization, the NCW, is a branch of the NDP.

The closer women's movements are to the regime, the more likely they are to be used by to serve the objectives of the regime. A strong women's movement is insufficient to genuinely promote women's rights, as evidenced by Jordan. Jordan's movement is one of the strongest. Among Arab states, Jordanian women have enjoyed some of the greatest successes in the professional and civic realm, yet the women's

movement is constricted to what the regime permits it to do. Its effect in Jordan has been limited to areas that the regime does not perceive as threatening.

These autocratic regimes ally themselves with women's movements because women are not seen politically as a threat to their power. Support for the women's movement is often motivated by a regime's desire to neutralize the popular threat of Islamism. Morocco is a perfect example of this. It helps the secular women's movement to succeed so that the Islamists cannot. Liberal women's movements are often posited in direct opposition with traditional Islamists, against whom they act as a valuable ally for the regime.

### ***Regime Attitudes Towards Quotas***

The women's movement is not only a valuable asset to the regime's international image, but a cost-effective one as well. In supporting women's movements, and particularly by passing quotas, regimes present themselves as more liberal than they are in reality, with very little cost to themselves. With quota seats, the regime does not cede any power to women-- if anything it creates more pro-regime seats in parliament.

Because these countries are autocracies with authoritarian tendencies, the regime's attitude towards quotas is perhaps the most important factor in quota success. Women have called for quotas in all three countries, but the ruling regimes are not obligated to meet the demands of women, or any political actors as they are the ultimate political authority. All three regimes promote gender quotas in their own self interest. Quotas make the regimes look good, detracting from their authoritarian policies and subsequently garnering Western approval. Approval from the West is particularly important for these regimes because they are not resource-rich countries and depend



heavily on aid from foreign donors, who are predominantly Western. Quotas also allow the regime to extend its control over domestic politics, as quota seats are likely to be pro-regime seats.

Morocco distinguishes itself from its fellow autocracies in that King Mohammed VI seems support not just gender quotas, but the women's movement as a whole. He has political motivations for maintaining such a position, but overall he seems more supportive of women's rights. This is proven by his reforms of the family code in 2003 and the elevation of the status of his wife. While the leaders Egypt and Jordan fear independent civil society movements, Mohammed VI secures in his political position by attempting to co-opt the women's movement and exploit it to increase his regime's power. Because he fears political opposition less than the Egyptian and Jordanian autocrats, he can be more liberal in his policies. Jordan and Egypt attempt to suppress democracy through flawed electoral systems and a lack of political competition, but Morocco uses democracy to the King's advantage. Mohammed VI has made himself the champion of democracy in the eyes of the Moroccan people, and his genuine support of the women's movement supports this image. This increases his popularity, which lessens the threat of popular opposition to his power.

### **Broader Implications of Quotas in Arab Societies**

*Are they worth it?*

Quotas do not dramatically improve the lives of women in the Arab world, and their effect on politics is modest at best. The ruling regimes in Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco have adapted to quotas so that they bolster rather than challenge their power.

Quotas seem to have little democratic merit in these countries, and as they are created for largely ineffective institutions, little can be expected from them. It is not the job of quotas to democratize society, nor do they inherently entail gender equality.

There are many factors hindering the democratic institutions of these countries from actually being democratic. No quota, however ambitious could fully democratize these political systems. Before quotas can be fully effective and allow women to become effective legislators and reach political parity to men, the political systems of these regimes must be reformed to allow opposing political parties and for political discourse, to increase accountability of representatives to their constituents, and to foster free and fair elections that are not predetermined by the political elites. It is beyond the scope of quotas to address any of these issues. However in many ways these issues help determine the success of quotas, so they must be noted when studying quotas.

Because these countries are in need of such reforms, quotas have not exactly flourished in these societies. This lack of overall success of quotas should not be blamed on the quotas themselves, but the political systems and cultures in which they are implemented. Quotas are not responsible for the continued ineffectiveness of parliamentarians, both male and female.

Quotas do succeed in benefiting the regime in all three countries. They create guises of liberalization behind which these autocrats can hide their authoritarian policies. This raises the question of if quotas facilitate these authoritarian patterns by falsely presenting the regimes as liberal. Considering that these regimes find ways to push their agendas regardless of the circumstances, it is unlikely that in the absence of quotas these regimes would face greater accountability for their actions and feel increased pressure

from the international community to liberalize. The pragmatic nature of these regimes, which have survived multiple attempted coups and shut down numerous oppositional forces, suggests that if the regimes could not hide behind the liberalness of quotas, they would find another superficial reform behind which to do so.

Although quotas have not benefited the women's movement directly or improved the status of women overall, it is too soon to write them off as providing no benefit to women. Theoretically, quotas allow women to set precedents as political officeholders, which other women notice and internalize to mean that women are capable of filling roles outside of those of wife and mother. The simple presence of quotas in parliament, even if they are not passing feminist legislation, could inspire more women to involve themselves in politics. In these predominantly patriarchal Arab societies, the significance of such a change of cultural attitudes cannot be understated. Young girls who grow up seeing women in powerful positions are more likely to believe that they too could one day wield real power, both political and otherwise. They could even grow up to demand greater rights than their mothers enjoyed and further elevate the status of women.

The effects of quotas are measured over long periods of time. Quotas in the Arab world have not been established for a sufficient period that would allow for them to be accurately assessed. By comparing the quota experiences of these Arab states at this time, it becomes evident that quota success depends largely on the regime's attitude toward the policy and toward political participation as a whole. Autocrats who are not largely secure in their power are less encouraging of political participation, thus they use quotas primarily to strengthen their political power, not to increase female representation in government. Autocrats who are more accepting of political pluralism are more likely

to implement quotas with a more genuine desire to incorporate women into politics. Because the autocrat is the ultimate political power in these societies, his attitude towards quotas determines how successful they will be. If he wants quotas to incorporate more women into politics then they will, but if he only wants women to fill quota seats and back him politically in parliament, that is all quotas will accomplish.

The regimes of these countries are the primary determinants of quota success in these countries. Other factors that influence quota success, such as the nature of the women's movement and the structure of political institutions, are ultimately determined by the regime. The status of women may be improving in these societies, but it has its limits. In the absence of a free and open society female empowerment can only go so far. If women were to achieve parity to men on all levels of society, they would still be unable to express themselves freely, to influence the political agenda and to choose who ultimately leads their country. If the regime is concerned with perpetuating the status quo and does not allow any opposition, liberalization of these societies is nearly impossible, no matter how many women have a seat in parliament.

### **Areas for Further Study**

Because parliamentary quotas are limited in their effect by the ineffectiveness of parliament itself, greater insight could be gained by examining the effectors of quotas in municipal elections. Municipal elections have more of an impact on the lives of average citizens in these countries, and therefore could have a greater effect. Women may be able to accomplish more on local councils than in parliament, and seeing women in positions of power on the local level could have a greater impact on the cultural perceptions of women in government.

Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco are only a sample of the entire Arab world. Research should continue to be conducted on quotas in other Arab regimes. The greater the understanding of individual Arab states, the more can be revealed about the entire region. The more quotas are understood in particular regions, the greater the worldwide understanding of quotas may be. A better understanding of quotas around the world could equip policymakers to engineer effective quota systems and bring humanity closer to gender parity in politics.

The story of quotas in Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco has in no way reached its end. The effects of quotas will continue to become evident in the decades to come. Quotas should continue to be studied on both the national and local levels so that they can be understood and adapted to best affect the lives of women and the political systems in these countries. Quotas cannot succeed alone, but with support from ruling regimes, civil society, and existing political systems they can help to elevate the status of women in the Arab world.

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Zuhur, Sherifa. 2003. "Women and Empowerment in the Arab World." *Arab Studies Quarterly*. 25(4)

## **B. Interviews Conducted**

Rollman, Wilfred. 2009 Adjunct Associate Professor in Wellesley University's Department of History and a Fellow of the Center for International Relations at Boston University. October 21, 2009

Farrell, Karen, Senior Program Officer, Middle East & North Africa. National Endowment for Democracy. January 20, 2010

Hadji, Fatima. Program Officer, Middle East & North Africa. National Democratic Institute. January 20, 2010

Liddell, James Research Associate at Project on Middle East Democracy. January 19, 2010

Hamid, Shadi Deputy Director, Brookings Doha Center; Fellow, Saban Center for Middle East Policy. January 18, 2010

Houel, Gregory Program Officer, Middle East/North Africa at National Endowment for Democracy. January 21, 2010

Riley, William. Egypt Desk Officer, USAID. January 19, 2010

Maaty, Amira. Program Officer, Middle East & North Africa at National Endowment for Democracy. January 29, 2010

## C. Acronyms Used

ADFM—Democratic Association of Moroccan Women  
 AWO—Arab Women’s Organization(Jordan)  
 FWID—Forum for Women in Development(Egypt)  
 GFJW--- General Federation for Jordanian Women  
 HDI—Human Development Index  
 IAF—Islamic Action Front(Jordan)  
 IPU—Inter-Parliamentary Union  
 IRI—International Republican Institute  
 JFBPW--- Jordan Forum for Business and Professional Women  
 JNCW---Jordan National Commission for Women  
 JNFW--- Jordan National Forum for Women  
 JNP—Jordanian National Party  
 JWU—Jordanian Women’s Union  
 LDDF---Democratic League of Women(Morocco)  
 MB—Muslim Brotherhood  
 MP—Member of Parliament  
 NCW—National Council for Women(Egypt)  
 NED—National Endowment for Democracy  
 NDI—National Democratic Institute  
 NDP—National Democratic Party(Egypt)  
 NGO—Non-governmental organization  
 PAM—Authenticity and Modernity Party(Morocco)  
 PJD—Justice and Development Party(Morocco)  
 POMED---Project on Middle East Democracy  
 RONGO—Royal non-governmental organization  
 SNTV—Single Non-Transferable Vote (voting system)  
 UAF—Union of Women’s Action(Morocco)  
 UN—United Nations  
 UNIFEM—United Nations Development Program for Women  
 USD—United States Dollars  
 USFP—Union Socialites des Forces Populaires(Morocco)  
 WHW—Women Helping Women