SOCIETAL VIEWS OF WOMEN AS POLITICAL LEADERS IN THE

ARAB WORLD

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

Societal Views of Women as Political Leaders in the Arab World

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The Arab World is notorious for its poor track record on issues of women's rights and women's representation in society, particularly in the public sphere. Yet women are making gains, particularly in countries such as Tunisia and Algeria where strong laws supporting women in politics have led to substantial numbers of women in the legislature. Furthermore, women have served in national cabinets throughout the region. Does this increase in women's political participation, especially as officeholders, have an effect on the perception of women's roles in government and society? This question is explored through a cross-national analysis of 13 countries using public opinion data to analyze the relationship between women in political positions in legislatures and cabinets and citizens' view of women's political leadership. I find that in the short term, greater numbers of women in government do not necessarily correspond to greater public support for women in politics, particularly when a legislative gender quota is in place.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

The greater Middle East[1] is widely known as an unpleasant place for women: harassment is not uncommon, the respect afforded women is sometimes appallingly low, and, in some cases, women's legal rights trail far behind those elsewhere in the world, as is the case in the infamous refusal of Saudi Arabian authorities to issue driver's licenses to women. Yet many governments in the region boast numbers of women in their national legislatures that far exceed those of the United States; currently, Tunisia and Algeria exceed 31% in their lower houses, and many countries in the region have appointed several female cabinet members – in one case, as many as five at once (see Appendix A). How do these facts compare with the treatment women experience in society, and what will it take to change the way that women are viewed as members of society and cause them to be perceived as political equals of men? I argue that there are multiple factors at the level of both the individual and their political environment that contribute to citizens' views of women as political leaders in their country.

In 2011, the Arab Spring set in motion a wave of political upheaval that many hoped would result in democratization throughout the Arab world. While democracy saw some success (most notably in Tunisia), for the most part the Arab Spring failed to achieve the effects that were hoped for. Some change has occurred, however, and several Arab countries have adopted gender

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[1] While many cultural facts referred to in this paper are characteristic of the Middle East and North Africa as a region, I refer to the Arab world throughout as a distinct set of countries that has much overlap with the Middle East and North Africa, but excludes non-Arab states such as Israel, Iran, and Turkey. The data examined in this paper are specific to the Arab world.

quotas either shortly before 2011 or in the time since, changing the game for women's representation in politics in the region significantly in a relatively short time period. At present, 9 of the countries for which ArabBarometer survey data were obtained have quota laws in place at the national level, and quota implementation has been discussed – although faces varying degrees of probability – in the remaining countries (*al-Raida* 2009). The four that have not implemented parliamentary gender quotas at this time are Palestine, Yemen, Kuwait, and Lebanon, although not all other countries in the dataset had implemented quotas at the time of each survey wave (see Appendix B).

The adoption of quota laws has been a major focus of the literature on women in politics in the region. A 2006 study of the state of quota laws around the world noted that the Middle East was among the regions in which reserved seats, as opposed to candidate quotas, were common (Krook 2006: 310). At the time, this was true (Morocco and Jordan have had reserved seat systems since the early-mid 2000s); more recently, countries such as Algeria and Tunisia have seen success with candidate quotas. A later paper comparing gender quotas in Iraq and Afghanistan contributes to the literature on women in government in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) as well as the literatures on quota "diffusion" (also called contagion) and the role of women's movements in getting women into government (Krook, O'Brien, and Swip 2010). While international actors played a significant role in pushing for the adoption of a quota in Afghanistan, "women in the transitional government and grass-roots women's organizations" were key players in guaranteeing a quota for women in the Iraqi government (Krook, O'Brien, and Swip 2010: 74). The impact of foreign support for women's representation on domestic support for the same is explored further in the case of Jordan, with the finding that, while the

evidence does not support any influence by foreign support for women's representation, "support

or opposition to the regime determines how receptive respondents are to endorsements of an

authoritarian regime's policies" (Bush and Jamal 2015: 42).

A 1990 analysis of Egypt's quota law, implemented in 1979 and removed in 1986, brings to light

several interesting things about this particular case: the presence of a women's movement that

was relentlessly "coopted" by the regime, regardless of which regime was in power; the fact that

it was possible for women to win election "on their own" at this time and develop such

significant power bases "that the women proved to be needed by the ruling party rather than the

reverse;" and the important questions raised by the removal of the quota about the incentives of

women running for party nominations to represent certain groups (Howard-Merriam 1990: 38-

39). Each of these aspects of the issue contributes to a different subset of the literature, but the

case overall is an interesting contribution to the literature on women's representation in MENA

particularly because of the presence of a quota in Egypt much earlier than in most countries.

Egypt has reverted to relatively low levels of women holding national political office since the

removal of this quota decades ago, and had a relatively small number of women candidates –

although a large number of women voters – in its most recent parliamentary elections (Mecky

2015).

Jordan's quota for women on municipal councils[2], implemented in 2007, is discussed in David

and Nanes's 2011 work, with the reservation that the quota could create positive change for

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[2] In addition to reserving approximately 30% of municipal council seats for women, Jordan has
also implemented a reserved seat system at the national level for women and other ethnic and
religious groups (quotaProject).

women but could also result in backlash because "it is not clear how committed the Jordanian women's movement is to supporting women on the municipal councils" (David and Nanes 2011: 296). David and Nanes also discuss the manipulation of quotas by semiauthoritarian governments such as Jordan's to change the way they are perceived internationally. In an analysis of Morocco's reservation of seats for women in its legislature, which began in 2002, Sater asserts that "the presence of women in parliament is understood as an important symbol of the Kingdom's effort at democratization" (Sater 2007: 737). In both cases, the authors hold that quotas are one way for semidemocratic governments to look more favorable, contributing to this widely-supported discourse.

While there has been research on clientelism in MENA and its place in legislative elections, this research has not focused on women's performance as candidates in a heavily clientelistic electoral system (Lust 2009). However, research has shown that for women voters, clientelism can have serious implications, as clientelistic systems encourage disadvantaged women to "sell" their votes for economic gain (Blaydes and Tarouty 2009). This will assuredly have consequences for the "representation" of these women in the legislature, although the research has not yet determined what those consequences may be. Furthermore, Benstead (2015) argues that while women have historically had less access to clientelistic networks, gender quotas create a mandate for MPs to provide access to these services and benefits for women. The question remains, however, of whether those elected under a quota will have the requisite access to clientelistic resources which would enable them to be seen as capable political leaders in such contexts (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008).

Quotas and their effects have been studied extensively; their implementation, the "diffusion" of quotas across countries, potential changes in the types of legislation produced when "quota women" are elected, and comparisons of these women to their colleagues in the legislature, among other topics, have been the subjects of extensive research. Until recently, however, very little research existed studying the changes in societal attitudes toward women in politics that may occur when more women are elected to office.

As recently as 2010, a conference paper studying this potential effect of quotas in the Muslim world noted that "there are no studies of the impact of quotas on the perceptions of ordinary people about women as political leaders," an outcome that might seem to be an obvious choice of topic for study (Benstead 2010: 6). The paper's conclusions "suggest that levels of women's formal representation and the implementation of quotas play a role in shaping individual-level attitudes about women in the political sphere," with higher levels of representation and the presence of a quota resulting in higher levels of disagreement with the statement that "men make better political leaders than women" (Benstead 2010: 21-22). The paper also compares support for quotas in a case study of Morocco and Algeria, the latter of which had no quota at the time but did have a notable female political leader who vocally opposed a quota, incorporating the recurring theme in the literature of a lack of support by women's movements or female political leaders for quotas in some countries. However, the political situation in the MENA region has changed substantially since 2010; highly relevant here is the fact that Algeria has instituted an effective gender quota since this time. Thus, the topic is ripe for further study.

Increased women's descriptive representation has been shown to have positive effects on women's political engagement (Burchard and Barnes [2012] show this effect in sub-Saharan Africa). While "the comparative literature largely confirms the symbolic importance of [increased descriptive representation of women] for women's political interest and participation, but the question of women's beliefs in women's ability to govern is understudied" (Alexander 2012: 460). A study of 25 geographically and developmentally diverse countries found that increased women's representation was positively associated with greater women's beliefs in the ability of women to govern, but had no finding for men's beliefs (Alexander 2012). However, research shows that in Indian villages with randomly assigned reservations for women's representation on village councils[3], while these reservations do not "make male villagers more sympathetic to the idea of female leaders," they do make men "more likely to associate women with leadership and [improve] their evaluation of female leader effectiveness" (Beaman et al. 2009: 1533). While these effects were not demonstrated by research in the same context, it can be concluded that increased levels of women in government, particularly in visible roles, has a positive effect on citizens' confidence in women as political leaders, at least in some contexts.

In 2013, a paper studying attitudes about women in politics in Latin America pointed out that compared to other research topics regarding quotas, "fewer attempts have been made to understand the factors that facilitate or undermine public support for women in politics, particularly outside the developed world" (Morgan and Buice 2013: 644). Diverging from previous research on the subject (Alexander 2012; Inglehart and Norris 2003), this study found

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[3] Reservations in this case were made such that women served as one third of the councilors on each council, and as one third of chief councilors across all councils (i.e., with each village council having one chief councilor, one third of these were women).

that the gains made by women in Latin America may be reversed because of a lack of conviction in society in regards to gender equality. However, the authors do suggest that "female representation in the top echelons of national government could serve as a catalyst engendering male support for feminist political goals" (Morgan and Buice 2013: 660), suggesting that women's descriptive representation in visible places in government does have an impact.

Research based on a 2012 study of "candidate electability" in Tunisia post-Arab Spring builds on the notion that the number of women represented in government may affect the perception of women's ability to govern by testing how likely respondents were to vote for a list headed by a particular candidate based on appearance alone (Benstead, Jamal, and Lust 2015). The researchers found that, as their role congruity theory-based research hypothesis predicted, people were more likely to vote for candidates whose visual appearance resembled that of past political leaders: men with a "secular" appearance as opposed to a religious one, followed by "secular"-appearing women (Benstead, Jamal, and Lust 2015). The argument is then made that quotas are necessary to facilitate women's election and give them an opportunity to be seen as political leaders, thus increasing the electability of women candidates in the future (a conclusion also reached in Alexander 2012).

One supposed motive for why male-dominated legislatures would voluntarily pass quota legislation is that "political leaders pass quota regulations primarily because they want to get loyal women elected, women who will support the leader or the party," with Pakistan and Iraq specified as cases in which this likely occurred (Dahlerup 2008: 325). Because of cases such as these, it may be prudent to attempt to compare whether known or apparent motives for

implementing a gender quota have an effect on attitudes toward women as political leaders after its implementation. This is not addressed here, but should be considered in further research. Likewise, factors such as citizens' confidence in government institutions or other measures of attitudes toward gender equality (such as attitudes toward equality in education or in other realms of society) may be interesting to consider in terms of attitudes about women in government. While some research has been conducted on the relationship between women's descriptive representation and societal attitudes about women in government, the topic demands further study. Although we know about many of the other effects of quota implementation and increased women's representation, including increased women's political engagement, it is crucial to understand how to achieve gender parity in attitudes toward political leaders if we are to move toward true gender equality.

SECTION II

METHODS

Based in findings concerning the development of gendered stereotypes of leadership traits based in role congruity theory (Eagly and Karau 2002; Koenig et al. 2011), it is commonly asserted that increasing the number of women holding political office gives citizens the opportunity to see women as political leaders, thereby increasing support for women's political leadership (Alexander 2012, 2015; Beaman et al. 2009; Benstead, Jamal, and Lust 2015; Morgan and Buice 2013). To test this theory in the Arab world, I draw on levels of descriptive representation in parliaments and cabinets throughout the region and public opinion from the ArabBarometer survey, conducted in three waves: 2006-2008, 2010-2011, and 2012-2014. Each wave of the survey included a different set of countries; while some countries were surveyed only once, others are present in all three waves (see Appendix A).

The central question in this analysis is whether or not citizens hold egalitarian views of women in politics. To evaluate this, the survey data used are respondents' answers (strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree, recoded into agree/disagree categories) to the statement that "in general, men are better at political leadership than women."[4] The theoretical reasoning for this dichotomization is that the difference between agreeing (whether strongly or not) and disagreeing (whether strongly or not) with the statement offered is the main question of interest

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[4] This is how the question is phrased in the English translation of the codebook for waves II and III; in the translated wave I codebook, the statement is "on the whole, men make better political leaders than women do." The Arabic codebook also shows this statement as consistent between waves II and III, but checking for consistency with wave I proves impossible due to a codebook error.

for the purposes of this analysis. In addition, creating a dichotomous dependent variable

augments and clarifies the results. No neutral response was offered, and any respondent who did

not give one of these four answers is excluded from the model (a total of 783 missing cases due

to nonresponse). In order to answer the question of what determines support for women in

politics in the Middle East and North Africa, I consider data from thirteen Arab countries in the

period between 2006 and 2014.

Data on the proportion of seats in the national legislature held by women MPs are available from

the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) PARLINE database. In bicameral legislatures, data used are

from the lower chamber, as the lower chambers in bicameral legislatures are generally where

quotas are implemented and usually have higher proportions of women holding seats (which in

this case also provides greater variance across countries with respect to this variable). In all

cases, data are from the most recent parliamentary elections preceding the ArabBarometer survey

wave in each country (see Appendix A). Palestine is assigned a number of women in parliament

based on the number of women in the Palestinian Legislative Council (the legislative branch of

the Palestinian National Authority); for Saudi Arabia, the king's appointed Consultative Council

(Majlis a-Shura) is used.

Lists of cabinet ministers in the month prior to the beginning of that wave of ArabBarometer

surveys in each country are coded for gender of the full-cabinet-rank ministers (see Appendix

A). Data about cabinet members are obtained from the CIA World Factbook in all cases except

Palestine, for which data were collected from the government website's archived lists of cabinet

ministers. Deputy ministers are excluded, as are national positions that are not typically included

in the official cabinet (including the Prime Minister or President, head of the National or Central

Bank, UN Ambassador, and Ambassador to the United States)[5].

Because trust in the government has proven to be a major issue in the region, it may be prudent

to address whether variation in respondents' trust in government institutions affects how they

perceive political leaders (i.e., if people do not trust parliament, why should electing female MPs

change their opinion of women in political leadership?). Therefore, I also compare levels of

respondents' trust in the respective institution (here, the parliament)[6] with levels of support for

women as political leaders. Individual-level data from ArabBarometer surveys are used that code

the respondent's level of trust in the parliament on a 4-point scale, with larger values

corresponding to lower levels of trust in the institution. It is expected that respondents with

greater trust in the legislature and whose respective legislatures have more female representatives

will exhibit more positive views toward women's political leadership. Furthermore, Polity and

Corruption Perceptions Index scores are included for the respondent's country in the year the

survey was conducted, with the expectation that respondents living in more democratic or less

corrupt countries will have higher levels of support for women as political leaders.

To determine what drives positive belief in women's political leadership, several other

individual-level factors are included from the ArabBarometer data, including the respondent's

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[5] See Appendix A for complete notes on positions included and excluded in this classification.
[6] This is also available from AB – for Waves II and III, the survey asks "I will name a number of institutions, and I would like you to tell me to what extent you trust each of them" and names, among others, the parliament; for Wave I, the question is not substantively different.
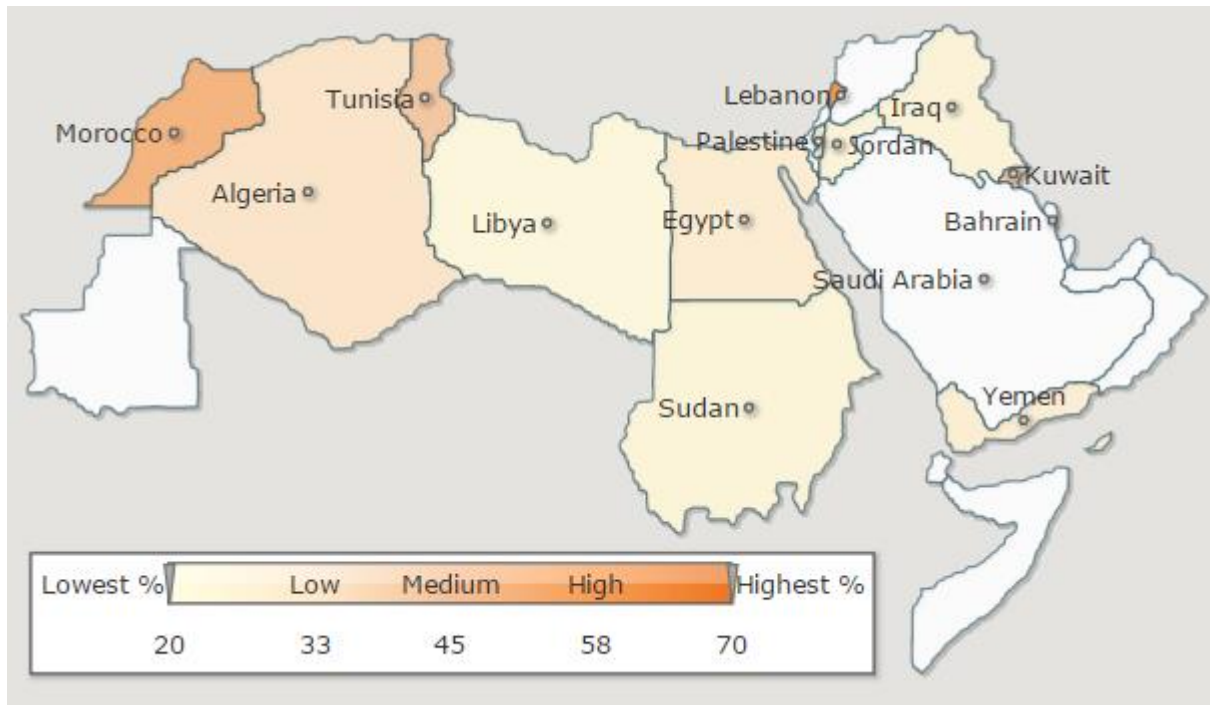
Figure 1: Percentage of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement that "men are better at political leadership than women" by country in Wave III surveys[7] (white represents no data). Generated at arabbarometer.org using ArabBarometer data.

gender (coded as gender in Waves II and III; the sex variable must be used in Wave I data)[8], age,

level of education, and self-identified religion. Education was coded on a 7-point scale ranging

from sub-elementary to post-baccalaureate levels of education

I analyze these relationships using a binary logistic regression model (with 0=agree, 1=disagree).

As mentioned above, I recoded the question into agree/disagree, combining answers of agree and

strongly agree, and answers of disagree/strongly disagree. To show the distribution of responses

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[7] Similar maps were unable to be generated using data from Waves I and II.
[8] It is unclear whether the respondent was coded according to gender identity or biological sex, but it is likely that in these cases biological sex is a significant variable influencing one's lived experience and thereby social identity.

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across countries, the proportion of respondents in the latter (disagree/strongly disagree) category in each country is shown in Figure 1.

I present more than one model because the more complete model (e.g., including variables such as "All Parties Compete" and "Islamic Parties Compete") causes a substantial number of survey respondents, including entire country-waves, to drop from the analysis. Several variables of interest must be excluded in some models due to concerns about the number of available cases due to respondents who are missing country-level data or any other variable.[9] The total number of respondents who participated in the three waves of ArabBarometer surveys is 34,928; this drops to 34,493 with the exclusion of 435 Wave I respondents who are coded inconsistently for the country in which the survey was done. The models presented do not include that number of respondents for various reasons. 5,829 respondents are missing individual-level religion data (the primary reason that only 28,084 cases of the initial 34,493 are included in the final model). 5,253 respondents have no response data for "trust in parliament" because of the absence of a parliament at the national level at the time the survey was conducted,[10] thus these missing respondents are in no way random, and instead represent the loss of several countries from waves of the survey. Results of the logistic models produced (see Table 1) were cross-referenced with results of an ordered logistic regression model (using the 4-point version of the dependent variable) for further validation.

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[9] Although survey data is available in Wave II for Mauritania and Syria, these are excluded from both models due to political instability.

[10] These include Egypt, Tunisia, and Saudi Arabia in Wave II (although I use data from the Consultative Council, which is appointed by the king, for Saudi Arabia, this does not appear to be considered a legislature for the purposes of this survey question).

RESULTS

		N=28,084		N=21,296	
		Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error
Individual Level	Gender (1=female)	0.608 (***)	0.027	0.645 (***)	0.031
	Religion (1=non-Muslim)	1.335 (***)	0.055	1.131 (***)	0.063
	Education Level	0.044 (***)	0.008	0.041 (***)	0.009
	Trust in Parliament			0.049 (***)	0.016
(AB Survey Wave)	Wave I – reference category				
	Wave II	0.479 (***)	0.050	0.488 (***)	0.064
	Wave III	1.042 (***)	0.048	0.922 (***)	0.061
Country Level	Polity Score			0.035 (***)	0.004
	Corruption Perceptions Index			0.180 (***)	0.015
	Quota Presence	-0.417 (***)	0.039	-0.519 (***)	0.059
	% Women in Parliament	0.001	0.002	0.007 (**)	0.003
	# Women in Cabinet	-0.099 (***)	0.011	-0.046 (***)	0.015
(Constant)		-1.749 (***)	0.064	-2.366 (***)	0.113

$* = p < .10, ** = p < .05, *** = p < .01$

Table 1: Logistic regression model output. Data: ArabBarometer, Polity IV, Corruption Perception Index, PARLINE, Chiefs of State and World Leaders, quotaProject.

The results (Table 1) are generally cross-validating with and without the presence of Trust in Parliament, Corruption Perception Index, and Polity Score as independent variables. While age was included as an explanatory variable in preliminary analysis, it was shown to be statistically insignificant and has been excluded from the final model, and the inclusion or exclusion of the

age variable had no meaningful effect on any others in the model. Results for the included explanatory variables should be interpreted as follows.

Gender: With men coded 0 and women coded 1, women are more likely to believe that women can be political leaders of equal or higher caliber than men, as expected. This is consistent with previous findings in the literature (most notably Alexander 2015, which also uses the dependent variable statement in question here).

Religion: As this variable is coded 0 for Muslims and 1 for other religious groups ("Christian," "Other," and "Jewish," all self-identified), Muslims are most likely to believe that men do make better political leaders than women. Although this categorization for religious groups is not ideal (as it does not account for religiosity or for anything beyond overly general groupings of religious beliefs), the result is clear that members of non-Muslim religious groups are far more likely to support women as political leaders.

Education Level: As expected, higher levels of education correspond to greater belief in women's ability to serve as political leaders, consistent with previous research.

Trust in Parliament: The scale of responses to this question runs from 1, the greatest amount of trust in the institution (in this case, parliament), to 4, no trust in the institution. Respondents who trust parliament more are also more likely to believe that women make better political leaders.

Wave (I-III): As expected, the passage of time accounts for an increase in the number of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement in questions, and therefore corresponds to greater belief in women's political leadership abilities.

Polity Score: A higher Polity score (and therefore a higher level of democracy in the respondent's country) correlates with disagreement with the dependent variable statement, as predicted – meaning that those in more democratic[11] countries, on the whole, have greater belief in women's ability to lead politically.

Corruption Perceptions Index: This index represents a country-level measure of perceived corruption in government, with a higher number representing less corrupt officials. Respondents living in countries with less perceived corruption were more likely to disagree with the dependent variable statement.

Quotas: Interestingly (and contrary to findings in Benstead 2010)[12], the presence of a national-level gender quota in the respondent's country reduces the likelihood that the respondent will believe women can be political leaders equal to or better than men. This could be due to a perception that women elected under quotas are not as qualified as their male colleagues and are not equally up to the task of political leadership, but could also be due to the fact that countries such as Lebanon and Kuwait have no quotas for women but relatively liberal views of women in

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[11] In the cases in this study, "more democratic" could be equated with "less autocratic" – see Appendix B for an explanation of Polity score coding.
[12] Benstead (2010) includes a logit model with an N of 21,869 across 20 Muslim countries.

society and politics, while countries such as Iraq have significant numbers of women in parliament but little respect for women as political leaders.

Women in Parliament: When compared between versions of the model, it is particularly interesting to note that this variable is statistically insignificant without the inclusion of Corruption Perception Index, Polity score, and the Trust in Parliament variable. Thus, one or more of the country-waves excluded from the model when these variables are included[13] causes this change. When this independent variable is significant, it behaves as expected, and a greater number of women in parliament corresponds to greater belief in women's political leadership.

Women in the Cabinet: Unexpectedly, a greater number of women serving in the cabinet does not correspond to greater belief in women's political leadership. Included in this model is the raw number of women cabinet ministers; the percentage of cabinet positions held by women was also tested, with similar results. As no attempt was made to code for the portfolios of female cabinet ministers, it is possible that because many of the women cabinet ministers in the dataset held stereotypically feminine posts (such as social, women's, or family affairs), the appointment of female cabinet ministers to such positions did not increase citizens' view of women's political leadership abilities.

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[13] Palestine is excluded, as it does not have a CPI or Polity score value; Egypt (Wave II), Tunisia (Wave II), and Saudi Arabia are excluded because they are missing the Trust in Parliament variable (explained previously).

While many of the independent variables presented are significant and have the effect expected, the overall predictive power of the model is low[14]; other variables are needed to fully explain what determines support for women in political leadership in Arab countries. Additionally, interactions between independent variables are not considered here, but may be relevant. There are also concepts absent from this model that could be significant determinants of views of women in politics: where quotas have been imposed, was this at the will of the people of that country or a heavy-handed suggestion by outside forces? Does the gender of the interviewer affect the answer of the respondent due to social desirability? Does the colonial history of the country matter? Do women leaders in other visible arenas (such as business, political parties, or monarchies) have an impact? These are questions to consider in future research.

The limitation of this model to the Arab world has the benefit of providing insight into a region not often examined in the women and politics literature, but also restricts the findings from being generalized or extrapolated. In addition, the limited number of countries in the dataset is statistically inconvenient, as a hierarchical linear model would be a more appropriate way to model both individual and country level sources of variation; however, a hierarchical linear model cannot be used without an increase in the number of country-cases examined.

Clearly, the variability in responses to the dependent variable statement is key to the behavior of the independent variables. As the MENA is not at all a homogenous region, there exists a wide variety of conditions affecting public perceptions of women's political leadership, with specific

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[14] As this is a logit model, an equivalent to an R^2 value cannot be obtained; pseudo-R^2 values are 0.069 (Cox and Snell) and 0.098 (Nagelkerke).

factors at play in each country. Although I hypothesize that greater women's representation in

parliaments and cabinets corresponds to greater support for women in politics, there are notable

exceptions. Lebanon, for example, maintains a very low level of women in its parliament – under

5%[15] - and yet has tremendous belief as a nation in women's ability to lead politically (see

Figure 1). As expected, these beliefs increase over the course of the three survey waves (Figure

2), and in fact Lebanese respondents have more commonly answered "strongly disagree" than

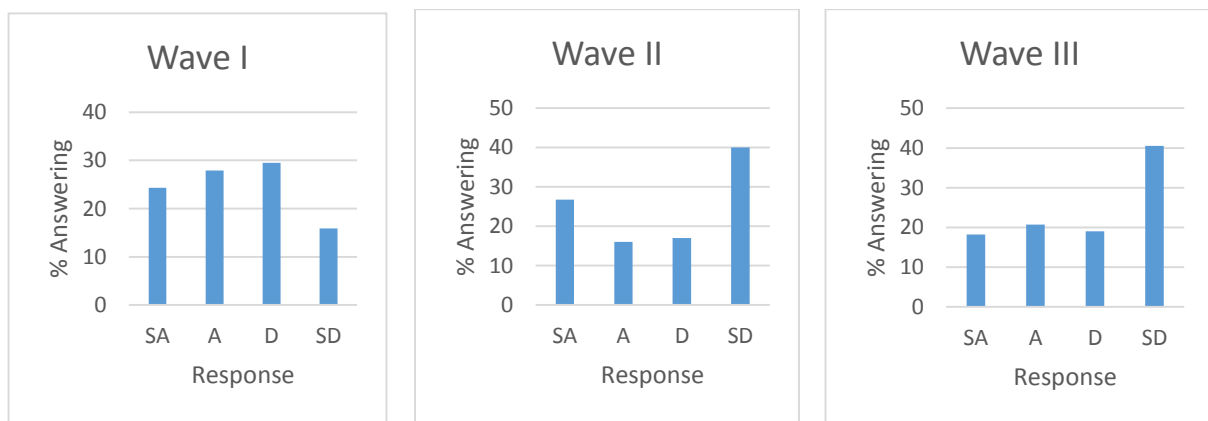any other response in both Wave II and Wave III surveys.

Figure 2: Percentage of respondents giving each response to the dependent variable statement for Lebanon across all three waves (strongly agree = "SA," etc.). *Note the difference in scale between Waves I, II and III.* Data from ArabBarometer.

Though it would be excessive to fully detail the specific circumstances in each country-wave,

another standout case is that of Iraq, a country which reluctantly implemented a gender quota in

2009. Although levels of women serving in parliament are above 25%, support for these women

remains low (Figure 3). Although there is a slight shift towards support for women in politics

(more respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing), the increase in the proportion of

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[15] Lebanon has no national quota for women, but attempts to balance sectarian divisions through the Taif Agreement, which dictates which political positions must be held by people of specific religions.
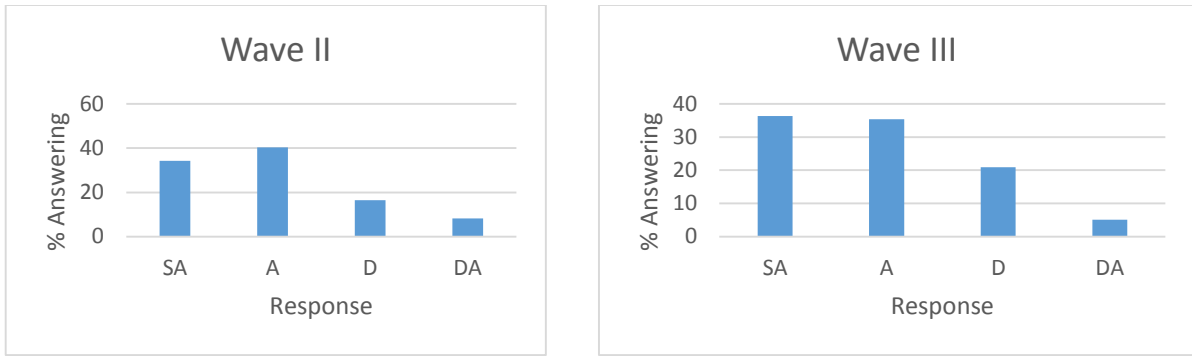
Figure 3: Percentage of respondents giving each response to the dependent variable statement for Iraq. *Note the difference in scale.* Data from ArabBarometer.

respondents who disagree or strongly disagree is not as substantial as this increase in other cases,

and overall levels of agreement with the idea that "men are better at political leadership than

women" remain high.

SECTION IV

CONCLUSIONS

The findings from this study largely confirm findings from previous research. Higher levels of education, a non-Muslim religious identity, and female gender all correspond to greater levels of support for women in government, in the form of disagreement with the idea that "men are better at political leadership than women." Additionally, the passage of time corresponds with higher levels of disagreement this this archaic idea, even across a span of only a few years.

However, several key assumptions may bear further examination. Some might assume the proverbial idea that "all publicity is good publicity" holds in the case of women's representation, and that the presence of female officials – including those elected under unpopular quota laws or appointed to cabinet posts in "weaker," stereotypically feminine policy areas – will have a positive impact on the whole. This analysis does not seek to disprove this idea, but to examine the conditions under which these assumptions do or do not hold.

One of the major obstacles in examining the results of this study is the relatively short period of time since the implementation of many of the national quota laws present in MENA countries. Beaman et al. (2009) report positive effects of exposure to women in a reserved seat system *after a decade of exposure to "powerful women"* – many of the quotas in this dataset were implemented or revised after 2011, and the latest surveys from which data were used were conducted in 2014. Algeria, with 31.6% women in its lower house, effectively implemented a gender quota only in 2012. Although I find a negative impact of the presence of a gender quota

on support for women as political leaders, Benstead (2010) finds the opposite among a large set of Muslim countries. We must continue to examine the relationship between quotas, levels of women's representation, and support for women in government, particularly in regions such as the Arab world, which have historically been under-studied with regards to women's representation. Hopefully, future ArabBarometer survey waves will continue to shed light on this relationship.

A key component of this study is my operationalization of "support for women in politics." As the ArabBarometer survey provided the greatest amount of public opinion data for this region, analysis was limited to the questions included in the survey, and the dependent variable statement selected was used because of its presence (in some form) in all three survey waves. However, the specific vernacular of the statement presented to respondents should be considered carefully: "men are better at *political leadership* than women" (ArabBarometer; emphasis mine). It is entirely possible that respondents would have a wide spectrum of views on whether or not holding a seat in their legislature or national cabinet constitutes *political leadership*, and therefore, not all respondents might equate higher numbers of women in government with more women engaging in political leadership – particularly if these women were selected under the presence of a quota.

In further research, it may be of interest to examine whether not only the respondent's religion, but his or her level of religiosity and beliefs about the role of religion in government are significant variables in predicting one's level of support for women in politics. Furthermore, the presence of women in other sectors of society from which they were previously excluded (either

in a *de facto* or *de jure* sense), such as business and education, could be examined as independent variables.

In conclusion, the treatment thus far of the MENA as an exceptional region for research purposes appears to be unnecessary. Although there are specific circumstances that unify the region, it remains heterogeneous in many ways, and the successful implementation of various types of gender quotas across the region makes it ripe for study with regards to women's representation. Although the circumstances for women in politics at present may appear less than favorable, support for women in politics has already begun to improve, and it seems that it will continue to do so.

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Country	% Women in Parliament (I)	% Women in Parliament (II)	% Women in Parliament (III)	# Women in Cabinet (I)	# Women in Cabinet (II)	# Women in Cabinet (III)	Quota? (year implemented)	Quota Type
Algeria	6.68%	7.71%	31.60%	1	1	1	Yes (2012)	CN
Egypt		12.70%	1.97%		1	2	Yes (2009)	RS
Iraq		25.23%	25.30%		0	1	Yes (2009)	RS
Jordan	5.45%	10.83%	10.83%	3	3	0	Yes (2003)	RS
Kuwait	1.54%		4%	0		3	No	
Lebanon	4.69%	3.13%	3.13%	1	1	0	No	
Libya			16.50%			0	Yes (2012)	CN
Morocco	10.77%		16.71%	0		1	Yes (2002)	RS
Palestine	12.90%	12.90%	12.90%	1	3	5	No	
Saudi Arabia		0%			0		Yes (2015)	RS
Sudan		25.56%	25.56%		2	3	Yes (2008)	RS
Tunisia		27.57%	26.27%		1	2	Yes (2011)	CN
Yemen	0.33%	0.33%	0.33%	2	2	3	No	

Parliament data refer to the number of women elected to the legislature or lower house in the most recent election preceding the AB survey wave noted in parentheses.

Cabinet data refer to the number of women serving in the month preceding the beginning of the AB survey wave.

Quotas present (yes/no) are as of 2015; refer to dates for presence of a quota in a given country-survey-year.

Quota type: CN = candidate nomination quota; RS = reserved seat system.

Blank indicates that the country was not surveyed in a particular AB wave (i.e., Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Tunisia were not surveyed in Wave I).

Country	Corruption Perception Index (I)	Corruption Perception Index (II)	Corruption Perception Index (III)	Polity Score (I)	Polity Score (II)	Polity Score (III)
Algeria	3.1	2.9	36	2	2	2
Egypt		2.9	32		-2	-4
Iraq		1.8	16		3	3
Jordan	5.3	4.7	48	-2	-3	-3
Kuwait			44			-7
Lebanon	3.0	2.5	28	6	6	6
Libya			18			-7
Morocco	3.2		37	-6		-4
Palestine	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Saudi Arabia		4.4			-10	
Sudan		1.6	11		-2	-4
Tunisia		3.8	41		-4	7
Yemen	2.5	2.1	18	-2	-2	3

Corruption Perception Index (CPI) data is available from Transparency International. The scoring system, previously scaled 1-10 in one-tenth increments, was shifted to a 1-100 scale (in whole-number increments) in 2012. Shown here are the actual scores as reported by Transparency International; Wave III scores have been adjusted to the 1-10 scale in the dataset for consistency within the variable. Higher CPI scores reflect lower levels of perceived corruption within the country's government.

Polity Scores (collected from the Polity IV project at systemicpeace.org) quantify the level of democracy or autocracy of the country's regime, scaled in whole-number increments from -10 to 10, with 10 being the most democratic.