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## The impact of islam on women in the middle east a discussion of the political role of islam in turkey, saudi arabia, and lebanon

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THE IMPACT OF ISLAM ON WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE EAST: A DISCUSSION OF  
THE POLITICAL ROLE OF ISLAM IN TURKEY, SAUDI ARABIA, AND LEBANON

by

ELISE BARIMO

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in International and Global Studies  
in the College of Sciences  
and in the Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

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Thesis Chair: Dr. Houman Sadri

## ABSTRACT

The social instability of the Middle East is often assumed to be consequential predominantly from the influences of extreme traditional Islamic practices; with substantial prominence placed upon the treatment of and violence against Middle Eastern women. This discussion seeks to directly prove the prevalence of Islamic influence on Middle Eastern politics and the resulting social instability. This assessment is designed around an interdisciplinary examination of coalescent factors. By assessing the political history, social and cultural lifestyle, and political and legal situation of the region, the assessment examines the contributors to the social instability of Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Turkey. The principal conclusion of this narrative is that the influences of extreme traditional Islamic values have a direct influence on the social instability and gender equality exhibited in Islamic Middle Eastern nation-states.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## I. FRAMEWORK OF DISCUSSION

### [A] Thesis

As a young Arab-American woman, I have been raised within the Lebanese and Syrian cultures. I have seen first-hand how the people of these cultures coexist and treat each other. How their values center on family and love. I was baptized in the Catholic Church; however, it was under the Maronite Rite. I have learned that being of Middle Eastern descent has also exposed me to racism and hatred for my ethnicity from others. Through my experiences as an Arab-American, I have been exposed to racism, misconceptions and hatred towards my ethnicity from others. My experiences have sparked a great interest in the Islamic culture and have thus rendered this discussion. However, there was one event that catalyzed my thirst for knowledge about this topic; my experiences during a family vacation to Europe in the summer of 2010 fueled my fire to know more.

Before my family and I left for our summer vacation to Europe, my father pulled me aside to have a serious discussion. He warned me that I may come across some Islamic women who may direct negative looks my way. Because I am of Middle Eastern descent, I am expected, by their norms, to wear a *hijab* or *burka*. However, due to my mixed culture and the fact that I was raised as a Christian, I have never adhered to these traditions nor do I concede to their gender roles. It was because of this that I might not be necessarily welcomed by traditional Islamic women. I, however, brushed off his words and didn't think

of it again throughout my trip until one evening when I was walking with my family in the *Piazza di San Marco* in Venice brought back my father's warning. We were passing through an alley when we crossed paths with two Islamic women. I noticed that they had stopped to look at me and that they had looked a little upset. After we passed, I turned back and saw them still looking at me. However, this time, I noticed that they looked more hurt and disappointment than upset and realized that my father had been correct in warning me.

I had always heard of restrictions placed on Islamic women, however, after the incident in Italy, I wanted to learn more. This experience, as well as others throughout my life, is what inspired me to perform this narrative. The narrative focuses on the effect that Islam has on the governments of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon, and therefore, the effect this has on women there.

The conclusions of this discussion have proven that there is hardly, if any, separation between Church and State in many Middle Eastern countries. This results in a government and society that is very much influenced and molded by the Islamic religion. Many aspects of a Middle Eastern Islamic woman's life are controlled by the literal translations of the words of the Qur'an. For instance, in certain Middle Eastern countries, women are not allowed to drive, nor are they allowed to marry outside of their Islamic religion, or even marry a man from outside their own country. Islamic women are required to adhere to a strict dress; if they fail to follow it, the woman will then face the consequences of severe punishment. The idea that interpretations of a holy text can determine the lifestyle of a person is a shocking one. This is due mostly in part to the fact

that a sacred text is expected to propose life values and morals to religious followers, not dictate the quality of life for a group of peoples.

Often overlooked, are the women who hold the belief that their Islamic faith is equitable, free and that their lifestyles are the will of Allah. These women believe that any oppression they are faced with is not due to the Qur'an, but is instead due to economic circumstances; these women further believe that they are spiritually equal to men since the Prophet Mohammed preached that women were created from a rib.<sup>1</sup>

I hold that with a clear distinction and separation between Church and State, Islamic Middle Eastern women will be able to live freely and justly. These women will be able to work where they please, drive a car, choose who to marry, choose what to wear, and even make their own decisions regarding their education. Without the literal translations of the Qur'an, success in social development would be more feasible. Proof lies in modern Turkish culture where women are mostly free to live their lives as they please; this is due to the removal of Islamic influence in politics. The removal of said influences and the resulting positive Turkish social development verify the main points of this discussion.

Moreover, throughout the course of the discussion, the reader will encounter comparisons between the westernized world Middle Eastern countries. For the purposes of this discussion, I consider westernization to be synonymous with secularism, or the separation of church and state and hold that secularism is equivalent to liberation since in

countries, such as the United States or European countries which are secular, women have full social and legal liberties.

Though it took many years for the proper enfranchisement of women to be granted, they now experience such rights such as the right to vote, the right to proper schooling, and basic freedoms such as making their own decisions regarding their lifestyles. I believe that the freedoms allotted to these women is due directly to the existing separation of church and state in the above-referenced regions.

In choosing the topic of this discussion, I considered following: if the influences of Islam were to be removed from the governments of the Middle Eastern Countries, then would the everyday lifestyle of Middle Eastern women be different? Therefore the varying factor examined within this narrative is the influence of Islam on Middle Eastern governments, and the consistent factor examined is the everyday lifestyle of Middle Eastern women. The relationship between the factors is a strong one. For example, without the cause, the effect would not be an issue. Further, my personal opinion on the matter is that the correlation between the two factors is a negative one.

#### [B] Theoretical Importance

The theoretical importance of this narrative lies within the country studies performed that enable the reader to further understand the types of laws and rules the women in Lebanon, Syria, and Saudi Arabia must abide by. Unfortunately for many women living in the Middle East, the Islamic religion has been glorified to the point where it

directly influences governments and government officials. The fact that a number of states do not practice a political separation from religion, affects the ways in which the law both punishes and protects women; it even goes as far as governing their lifestyles. In support of this idea, it has been quoted that, “No political power can ignore the fact that religion, and especially Islam, is a crucial element in the cultural and spiritual make-up of the Arab people,”<sup>2</sup> thus further proving that traditional Islamic influence has directly molded the Arab people.

However, according to the Arab Human Development Report 2005: Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World, in regards to human development, the “rise of women” necessitates the following:

- Equal opportunity between both men and women in employment
- Guaranteed equal citizenship rights between men and all women
- Recognition of, and respect for variances between the two sexes. Despite the fact that men differ from women, there is no insinuation of a deficiency between the two.
- Under no circumstances is it okay to use differences in gender as a justification for sexual inequality or for any kind of sexual discrimination.

Unfortunately, many Middle Eastern governments do not recognize the accurate degree of women’s involvement in both economic and social activities and in the fabrication of the workings of the human well-being, and it most certainly does not recompense them amply for such involvement. Women in Middle Eastern countries fall victim to excessively high

rates of risk of morbidity and mortality. The mortality rate of women in these countries has risen, due to women succumbing to diseases, that in a different setting, would have an easy fix. Fortunately, this is not caused by standards of living or deaths due to pregnancy or childbirth. Unfortunately, however, the increasing morbidity and mortality rates are accredited to the lifestyles that discriminate against women in Arab countries.

### [C] Importance in Regard to Policy

According to the Arab Human Development Report of 2002, the inequality between genders is the most inescapable exhibition of inequality of every kind in a society because it generally affects half the entire population. There have, however, been many improvements in gender equality in the past few years. For example, according to the 2002 report, Arab countries have provided that quickest developments in female education out of other regions; literacy rates amongst women in Arab countries have expanded by three times since 1970 and primary and secondary enrollment rates have more than doubled amongst women. On the other hand, regrettably, the accomplishments above have not succeeded in repelling attitudes towards gender that place pressure on the reproductive role of women. The 2002 report also states that because of this, despite the developments, more than half of Arab women remain illiterate. In addition, the mortality rate in Arab countries is twice that of Latin America and the Caribbean and four times the mortality rate of East Asia. Due to the limitations placed on women's lifestyles, "about 65 million adult Arabs are illiterate, two thirds of them women."<sup>3</sup> This quoted fact further supports the argument of the consequences of these women's restrictions. Additionally, in addition to

inequality in regards to literacy, women suffer from inequalities in citizenship and legal matters, such as suffrage and legal codes for example, “the utilization of Arab women’s capabilities through political and economic participation remains the lowest in the world.”<sup>4</sup>

The policies implemented in Arab countries infringe on women’s rights and place huge obstacles in the efforts of women activists to gain equality. In order for there to be advances in social development in the lives of Middle Eastern women, Middle Eastern governments should implement a greater distinction between religion and state.

Further, the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) region of the world consists of an abundance of historical, cultural and religious heritage. Over the last couple of decades, MENA countries have made great progress in social development. Advantages have been launched for (a) the addition of women, the youth, and other defenseless groups; (b) the rejuvenation of local communities; and (c) improving citizen access to information about government related opportunities and benefits. However, this region still endures social development challenges and obstacles and The Human Development Report of 2002 cites women as victims of discrimination in opportunities; this discrimination is proven through employment status, wages and gender segregation.

#### [D] Review of Existing Literature on Women and Islam

There exists an extensive amount of literature on the topic of this discussion. Scholars have written many articles and books on the topic of discussion ranging from interpretations of the Qur’an to question-and-answer books on why women live the way

they do. The research for this discussion begins with the year 1965, when *Time* published Stewart Desmond's *Turkey*; Desmond portrayed the ancient and modern Turkey as well as a detailed insight into the evolution of modern-day Turkey. Further, written in 1975, *The United States and Saudi Arabia: A Policy Analysis*, authored by Emile Nakhleh, offers an insight into the country origins of Saudi Arabia and the policies and historical significances that have molded the state into what it is today. *Princess: A True Story of Life Behind the Veil in Saudi Arabia* authored by Jean Sasson in 1992 gives a secret insight into the life of the Saudi Princess and the inequality and unfair treatment she faced, even as royalty. In 1993, Jan Goodwin, in her book, *Price of Honor*<sup>5</sup>, wrote the seminal work on this topic and takes the reader on a journey into the lives and homes of Islamic women. The women in her book tell stories of how politics dictate their lives, leading them to exist in confined and oppressive conditions. Also in 1993, *The Making of Saudi Arabia, 1916–1936: From Chieftancy to Monarchical*, authored by Joseph Kostiner, provides an in-depth analysis of Saudi Arabia's origins. *Saudi Arabia: The Coming Storm*, written in 1994 by Douglas Graham details the social issues faced by the Saudi people and the resulting inequalities and social turmoil the people must live with.

Adding the topic of Goodwin's study, Geraldine Brooks, in 1995, wrote *Nine Parts of Desire: The Hidden World of Islamic Women*<sup>6</sup>, about her journey to understanding the women of Islam and the societal factors that affect their lives. Throughout her journey, Brooks tells of the women she meets and of their stories.

*Politics in Lebanon*, published in 1996 by Leonard Binder, exhibits a unique insight into the politics that govern Lebanon and how these state affairs therefore impede social development. *History of Turkey*, written by Serif Yenen in 1997, provides a comprehensive historical study of the origins of the Turkish Republic. Next, John Esposito, in his book, *Islam: The Straight Path*, written in 1998, took it upon himself to write on the Islamic way of life providing enlightenment and understanding to this controversial religion and lifestyle. Esposito introduces the practice and beliefs of Islam from its beginning up until its current day practices. This work covers the development of Islam and its influences on history, politics, and follows the struggle of Muslims to live under the Islamic way of life. Also in 1998, Robert Max Jackson authored his work, *Destined for Equality: The Inevitable Rise of Women's Status*, in which he examined the biological significance of Arab women. In 2000, Carl Brown clarified Esposito's argument and examined the notion that in Islam, there is no separation between religion and politics. In his book, *Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics* the author reveals both the endurances between pre-modern and modern Islamic political thought as well as modern Muslim experiences<sup>7</sup>. Following in 2001, the reader is introduced to *Portraits of Two Islamist Women: Escape from Freedom or from Tradition?* by Janet Afary in which the reader is provided alternating views on the causes of oppression on Middle Eastern women. Successively, in 2011, Anne Sofie Roald carried this concept further with her book, *Women in Islam: the Western Experience*<sup>8</sup>, by going into detail about the ways in which the Islamic views of women and the differences in gender tend to change vastly in Muslim communities in the western world. She shows how the cultural differences of Islam and the West results in new interpretations of Islamic texts

which render new understandings of the Islamic religion in regards to gender issues. Also in 2001, Jennifer Hurley provided an insight into the Islamic world far beyond how women live; in *Islam: Opposing Viewpoints*<sup>9</sup>, she offers access to a wide range of opinions on the Islamic community. It also stimulates the reader to go further into his or her research and educate themselves further about the Islamic community. Hurley also includes complete articles and speeches, book excerpts, cartoons, and quotations to achieve her mission of making the reader raise questions and want them answered. John Esposito wrote yet another great work when he went on to write further on the Islamic religion in 2002. Esposito's book, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*<sup>10</sup>, goes more into detail on Jennifer Hurley's topic and provides information in a question-and-answer form, offers concise, easily-accessible questions about the Muslim community and faith from general questions to the more specific ones. Esposito has made the book easy to understand by separating questions by topic such as, but not limited to Customs and Culture, Violence and Terrorism, Society, Politics and Economy and Muslims in the West. Also in 2002, *Turkish Law Recognizes Women, Men as Equals* introduces a study on the equality of men and women in Turkey and how their equality has resulted in the modernized society envisioned by the founders of the Republic. Further, in 2004, *Woman's Identity and the Qur'an: A New Reading*<sup>11</sup>, penned by Nimat Hafez Barazangi explored the roles the Qur'an plays in women's lives within the Islamic community. In her book, Barazangi claims that higher learning within Islam is a human right and that women have as much authority as men do to interpret the Qur'an. Barazangi asserts that Muslim women can be just as spiritual, independent, and intellectual as Muslim men. Published in 2005, Yesim Arat wrote

*Rethinking Islam and Liberal Democracy: Islamist Women in Turkish Politics*, which gives the reader knowledge as to how Turkish women participate in Turkish politics and how this has benefited the female population of Turkey. Translated in 2006 by Ali Ünal, her version of The Qur'an offers an insightful translation and modern-English version of the text that provides for easy understanding of the verses. *A Legal Guide to Being a Lebanese Woman (Part 1)*, authored by Maya Mikdashi in 2010, provides insight into the legal rights of Lebanese women and legal inequalities between the sexes in Lebanon.

Eleanor A. Doumato's work in country specific studies seems to have opened the door for and expansion of in-depth national subject studies. In 2011, she wrote *Women and Work in Saudi Arabia: How Flexible Are Islamic Margins?*<sup>12</sup> This source centers on Saudi Arabia's education system which is producing more employment-seeking graduates than the current economy can handle, while for the women in the country, cultural and legal constraints further deter the growth of new employment options. The author raises questions such as, "Can the Saudi regime respond to women's desire for more job options and still be credible guardians of society's 'Islamic margins?'" The book answers these questions with both political and economic reasoning. The year 2011 introduced a digital newspaper article written by Clare Richardson for *The Huffington Post* detailing a Saudi Arabian woman who was brought to trial for driving a car. Also in 2011, the journal article, "Sexual and Bodily Rights as Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa"<sup>13</sup> written by Liz E. Amado and printed in *Reproductive Health Matters* discusses a regional workshop on sexual and bodily rights as human rights in the Middle East and North Africa which was held in Malta in 2003. The meeting aimed to develop strategies for overcoming human

rights violations in the region with reference to law and social and political practices. The article brings up that topics included sexuality and gender identity; sexuality and sexual health; sexuality and comparative penal law; sexual rights in international documents; advocacy and lobbying. Sexual rights, sexual health and education, sexual violence and adolescent sexuality were explored in depth, including taboos and emerging trends. Again, in 2011, yet another great article was written. "Economic Rights of Women in Islamic Law<sup>14</sup>" printed in Economic and Political Weekly and written by Flavia Agnes goes into detail of how women stand within the economy in Islam. It discusses the regulations on the economic transactions of Islamic women, their rights to marriage agreements, property management, morality, and public policy. The year 2011 introduced a comprehensive encyclopedic entry in regard to the North Yemen Civil War written by D.M. Witty that offers an analysis of the role the war played in the creation of Saudi Arabia. In 2011, *Reuters* offered an article written by Asma Alsharif analyzing the right to vote given to Saudi women by the Saudi king.

This discussion will delve deeper into detail and cover the specific countries of Lebanon, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. Research will be conducted on the lifestyles and general living conditions of Islamic women living in these countries and will also explore the different restrictions and limitations placed on the women.

## [E] Discussion Design

Due to the extensive amount as well as the complexity of the research and sources currently available, it is necessary to narrow the focus of this discussion to three specific country studies. The discussion will be expand across five chapters; the first being the introductory chapter, the next three focused squarely on a different Middle Eastern country and their roles with the consistent factor discussed above, and the final being a comprehensive analysis of the information presented. Each nation in this discussion has been recognized as conservative, moderate, or liberal depending on the influence that Islam has on its government and thus women's quality of life in these states. A conservative classification denotes a country with a strong Islamic influence on politics and social practices which, for the purposes of this discussion, is the reasoning for Saudi Arabia's classification as a conservative nation. According to the United Nation's International Human Development Indicators Report, Saudi Arabia ranks as a fifty-six (56) out of one hundred eighty-seven (187) countries, ranking it lowly in regard to human development, on the Human Development Index<sup>15</sup>. Saudi Arabia is further ranked as a one hundred thirty-five (135) out of one hundred forty-six (146) countries in the Gender Inequality Index, thus rendering it quite high on the scale of countries that have gender inequality issues<sup>16</sup>. Further, according to the Amnesty International Annual Report of 2012 on Saudi Arabia, Saudi women continue to face extreme discrimination<sup>17</sup>. Also, in Saudi Arabia, 0.0 percent of Saudi Arabia's parliamentary seats are held by women 50.3 percent of women made it to either a secondary or higher education, or both, as compared to 57.9 percent of

Saudi men, and only 21.2 percent of Saudi women partake in the labor market, as opposed to 79.8 percent for men<sup>18</sup>. Next, in this discussion, a moderate classification denotes a country with a modest amount of influence. Throughout the discussion, the reader will learn that Lebanon is classified as moderate. Reasoning for this follows with data from the Amnesty International Annual Report of 2012 on Lebanon in which it is reported that women are still subject to much discrimination and inequalities, but that there are efforts, such as the appeals of Penal Codes and the labor law reforms, which are allowing for positive movement towards correcting women's rights within the country<sup>19</sup>. Further, Lebanon ranks as a seventy-one (71) out of one hundred eighty-seven (187) in the Gender Inequality Index ranking it highly in development progress in the Human Development Indicators<sup>20</sup>. Further, in regard to Lebanon's Gender Inequality Index rating, the country ranks as a seventy-six (76) out of one hundred forty-six (146), rendering a positively low rank in gender inequality<sup>21</sup>. Furthermore, 3.1 percent of Lebanon's parliamentary seats are held by women, 22.3 percent of women partake in labor market as opposed to 71.5 percent, and 32.4 percent of women have made it to either secondary or higher level of education, or both, as compared to 33.3 percent of Lebanese men<sup>22</sup> Finally, a liberal classification denotes a country with a mostly secular government that has taken steps to remove Islamic influence from its politics and social structure. For the purposes of this discussion, Turkey is classified as liberal. According to the Human Development Indicators report, Turkey ranks as a ninety-two (92) out of one hundred eighty-seven (187) countries, placing it in a decent position for human development and ranks as a seventy-seven (77) out of one hundred forty-six (146) countries on the Gender Inequality Index<sup>23</sup>. Further,

according to the Amnesty International Annual Report of 2012, Turkey's women's rights on the rise; especially since Turkey ratified

the Council of Europe Convention which prevents and combats violence against women and girls<sup>24</sup>.

Additionally, the reader will encounter references to extreme Islam. The reader will also find references to traditional Islam which is used synonymously with extreme Islam throughout this discussion. For the purposes of this discussion, "extreme," refers to the form of Islam that is viewed by others as being radical and extreme in its practices. Extreme Islamists consider women to be submissive and view and treat them as second-class citizens<sup>25</sup>. It is the author's belief that the status of women in Islam goes hand-in-hand with the laws influenced by extreme Islamists. It is evident that currently enacted laws, such as those that prohibit women from driving and those that do not allow women to make decisions without male approval, reflect the beliefs of these extremists. Such laws further oppress women and do not allow room for improving their status. Extreme Islamists are not open to altering the status of women or allowing them to have equal rights as men due to the possibility that women may feel more powerful and decide to challenge the way things are.

Each chapter will consist of a brief introduction with information as to what to expect and will then continue with a brief history of the country's origins followed by an insight to the lives of women there. This section will include information on laws in place

that prohibit men and women from leading equal lives. This section will also include personal stories and examples that show the struggles of these women. The first case study will focus on Saudi Arabia with specific consideration towards how directly influential Islam is on the Saudi governments, and the consequent lifestyle of Saudi women living in one of the most conservative Middle Eastern states. Next will be an analysis of the Lebanese republic which will follow a similar structure as the case study on Saudi Arabia, however, there will be specific emphasis on the fact that there have been many great and successful efforts for equality between the sexes. Final attention will be on the Republic of Turkey. This case study will too follow a similar structure to both studies on Saudi Arabia and Lebanon; however, much attention will be placed on results of the successful efforts of Turkish leaders to lead a secular government that promotes a westernized society.

Generally, factors involving the historical origins of each country will be examined with further attention given to the prominence of Islamic culture; specifically, the direct influence the Qur'an and Islamic values have on political leaders and how the influence has affected and produced inequalities between the sexes. Although there may be other components examined in any national case study, the majority of the selected research will fall specifically within the range of the above-mentioned factors.

#### [F] Chapter I. Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Fatima Tahassum Rehman, Sophia F. Dziegielewski, "Women Who Choose Islam: Issues, Changes, and Challenges in Providing Ethnic-Diverse Practice," *International Journal of Mental Health* 33.3 (2003): 31-49. Print.

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<sup>2</sup> *The Arab Human Development Report 2005: Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World*, (New York: United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Arab States, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> N. Farjānī, *The Arab Human Development Report 2002: Creating Opportunities for Future Generations* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Arab States, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> L. Amado, "Sexual and Bodily Rights as Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa." *Reproductive Health Matters*, 12, 2004, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/i291550>.

<sup>5</sup> Goodwin, J., *Price of Honor: Muslim Women Lift the Veil of Silence on the Islamic World*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> G. Brooks, *Nine Parts of Desire: The Hidden World of Islamic Women* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> L. C. Brown, *Religion and state: the Muslim Approach to Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> A. S. Roald, *Women in Islam: the Western experience* (London: Routledge. 2001).

<sup>9</sup> J. A. Hurley, *Islam: Opposing Viewpoints* (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> J. L. Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2002).

<sup>11</sup> N. H. Barazangi, *Woman's Identity and the Quran: A New Reading* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida. 2005).

<sup>12</sup> E. Doumato, "Women and Work in Saudi Arabia: How Flexible are Islamic Margins?," *Middle East Journal*, 53(4),1999 , < <http://www.jstor.org/stable/i399161>>.

<sup>13</sup> L. Amado, "Sexual and Bodily Rights as Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: A World Report."

<sup>14</sup>F. Agnes, "Economic Rights of Women in Islamic Law," *Economic and*

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*Political Weekly*, 31, 2011, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/i397483>>.

<sup>15</sup> "International Human Development Indicators - UNDP." Indices & Data | Human Development Reports (HDR) | United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), <<http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/SAU.html> (accessed November 15, 2012)>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> "Amnesty International | Working to Protect Human Rights." Amnesty International | Working to Protect Human Rights, 2012, <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/saudi-arabia/report-2012#section-31-6>>

<sup>18</sup> "International Human Development Indicators"

<sup>19</sup> "Amnesty International | Working to Protect Human Rights." Amnesty International | Working to Protect Human Rights, 2012, <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/lebanon/report-2012#section-19-7>>

<sup>20</sup> "International Human Development Indicators - UNDP." Indices & Data | Human Development Reports (HDR) | United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2012, <<http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/LBN.html>>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> "International Human Development Indicators - UNDP." Indices & Data | Human Development Reports (HDR) | United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2012, <<http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/TUR.html>>

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<sup>24</sup> "Amnesty International | Working to Protect Human Rights." Amnesty International | Working to Protect Human Rights, 2012,  
<<http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/turkey/report-2012#section-21-13>>

<sup>25</sup> Clarion Fund. "Women's Rights | #1 News Site on the Threat of Radical Islam ." #1 News Site on the Threat of Radical Islam. 2009,  
<<http://www.radicalislam.org/threat/personal-threat/women%E2%80%99s-rights>>.

## II. SAUDI ARABIA

### [A] Introduction

#### *i. Summary*

Many, but not all, Islamic societies practice gender segregation in public locations such as, but not limited to, universities, mosques and the marketplace. For example, in some mosques, men are separated by women by a curtain or screen. Unmarried men generally do not mingle with unmarried women unless they are supervised by a chaperone or are at a family party. Seclusion, or the practice of holding women within the home so they have no contact with the public, is practiced as well. Although many Muslim societies practice gender seclusion and segregation, men and women in many other societies, such as European and American, both study and work together breaking the traditional norms of “gendered space.”<sup>13</sup> Modern day opinions vary greatly about whether the separation of sexes is necessary. On one hand, many hold that separation is unnecessary; on the other hand, others hold that modesty can be upheld through dressing appropriately and the limitation of conversations between unrelated men and women to topics of education and work.

Further, it is believed that The Qur’an plays an integral role in the reasoning behind the treatment of Saudi women; literal translations and offbeat interpretations of the text’s verses have contributed to such speculation. “Women have been assigned second-class

status in Islam based upon Quran 4:34, which says, 'Men have responsibility for and priority over women, since God has given some of them advantages over others and because they should spend their wealth [for the support of women].'"<sup>1</sup> There are Muslims who campaign for the literal interpretation of the Qur'an. These advocates believe that the gender inequalities recommended by the Qur'an apply as God's social order. Biology is often used as a justification for the inequalities between men and women and is ultimately considered important because only women can produce children, the man must provide for the family and maintain it so that the woman can do what she is intended to do [raise and bear children]<sup>2</sup>.

## *ii. Discussion Framework*

Evidently, is it important to examine Saudi origin in order to further comprehend the source of social instability. Due to the origin of political ideals and cultural values, the historical background of the founding of Saudi Arabia plays a significant role in its modern structure. Additionally, an understanding of legal inequalities between the sexes is equally important to such comprehension.

This chapter will provide the reader with an opportunity to become familiar with the origins of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia as well as insight into how the kingdom governs over social issues such as gender equality and the rights of women.

## [B] Country Origins and Political History

Saudi Arabia is a relevantly new nation. The roots of Saudi Arabia lay within the 18<sup>th</sup> century Wahhabi movement which rendered the commitment of the very powerful and influential Saud family of the Nejd region, in central Arabia. The Sauds, supported by a strong Bedouin following, brought most of the Saudi Arabian peninsula under the family's control. However, between the years of 1811-18, the Wahhabi movement was brought to a halt by the sons of Muhammad Ali and the Egyptian expedition that they were leading. Although the Wahhabis once again gained control and influence in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, they were defeated by the Rashid dynasty in 1891, which ended up gaining the most effective power and control in the central Arabian region.

The foundation of the present nation we know as Saudi Arabia was laid by a descendant of the first Wahhabi rulers, Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud. Starting with Riyadh in 1902, he reconquered the region and was the chief of Nejd by 1906. Right before the First World War, Ibn Saud took over the Al-Hasa expanse from the Hejaz, which had been ruling the area since 1916. The Hejaz were soon crushed by Saud in the years of 1924 and 1925. It was not until 1932 that the Al-Hasa region was combined with the Nejd in order to form the Saudi Arabian kingdom which was ruled under Islamic law.

### *i. National Advancements*

In the coming years, many changes and developments were in store for Saudi Arabia. In 1936, oil was discovered by the Arabian Standard Oil Company and

commercialized production was started in 1938. In 1945, the kingdom joined the Arab League and made an agreement with the United States in 1951 which allowed for an American air base in the city of Dhahran in the Eastern Province. In 1953, Ibn Saud died and was succeeded by his oldest son, Saud<sup>3</sup>.

At first, Saud supported the Nasser regime of Egypt; however, in an act of opposition to Nasser in 1956, Saud entered into close affairs with the Hashemite rulers of Jordan and Iraq, who were considered enemies of the Saudis up until then. Saud's opposition of the Egyptian and Syrian merger to become the United Arab Republic in 1958, as well as his dispatching aid to the royalist troops in Yemen, caused the Saudi family to oust Saud and replace him. Faisal, Saud's brother, took his place in November of 1964. Although relations with Egypt were disengaged after Israel defeated Egypt in June of 1967, an agreement was made between King Faisal and Present Nasser<sup>4</sup>. The agreement stated that the Egyptian army was to withdraw from Yemen and in return, Saudi Arabia was to stop helping the royalists in Yemen. By the year 1970, Saudi Arabia had to withdraw all its troops and it had agreed to give \$140 million a year to both Egypt and Jordan<sup>5</sup>. With regard to the withdrawal of Britain from the Persian Gulf region, King Faisal entered into a friendship with Iran, and encouraged Arab "sheikhdoms" that were under British control to form the United Arab Emirates.

Saudi Arabia launched itself into the oil industry, having a tighter hold on its own oil as well as participating in the oil businesses of foreign companies. In June of 1974, Saudi Arabia reached an arrangement with Aramco (the combination of several American oil

franchises). This arrangement was developed by the Saudi Arabian government as another option to nationalization and stated that the Saudi Arabians would have a 60% majority ownership of Aramco's enterprises and properties. King Faisal played a prominent role in the Arab oil embargo of 1973 which was focused against the United States and any other country that supported Israel. Fortunately, in 1974, the cease-fire agreements between Israel, Egypt, Israel and Syria were signed and relations between Saudi Arabia and the United States were amended<sup>6</sup>.

#### [C] Women in Saudi Arabia

“Saudi Arabia is the only country in the world that bans women – both Saudi and foreign – from driving. The prohibition forces families to hire live-in drivers, and those who cannot afford the \$300 to \$400 a month for a driver must rely on male relatives to drive them to work, school, shopping or the doctor.”<sup>7</sup> Further, though it is a United States ally, Saudi Arabia has no written criminal code and relies on judges' interpretations of Islamic Sharia Law.

Recently, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, who is considered a reformer, pronounced that women would be allowed to vote and run as candidates in municipal council elections starting in 2015 and promised to appoint women to the Shura Council (an all-male counseling body with no legislative power) after two years<sup>8</sup>. Although the king promised all these positive reforms, there is still much discrimination against women as well as much room to improve in regards to social development in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia is regarded as one of the most conservative of the Arab states. Conservative, in this context, denotes a nation with an extremely traditional Islamic foundation and therefore allows for the religion to dictate social and political procedures. In Saudi Arabia, differences between the sexes are taught to children at a very early age.<sup>9</sup> According to an al-Saud princess, who secretly and dangerously dictated her story for the book, *Princess: A True Story of Life behind the Veil in Saudi Arabia* written by Jean Sasson:

“Convinced that women have no control over their own sexual desires, it then becomes essential that the dominant male carefully guard the sexuality of the female. This absolute control over the female has nothing to do with love, only with fear of the male’s tarnished honor. The authority of a Saudi male is unlimited; his wife and children survive only if he desires. In our home, he is the state. This complex situation begins with the rearing of our young boys. From an early age, the male child is taught that women are of little value: they exist only for his comfort and convenience. The child witnesses the disdain shown his mother and sisters by his father; this open contempt leads to his scorn of all females, and makes it impossible for him to enjoy friendship with anyone of the opposite sex. Taught only the role of master to slave, it is little wonder that by the time he is old enough to take a make, he considers her his chattel, not his partner.”<sup>10</sup>

#### *i. Social and Legal Limitations*

The social limitations on Saudi Arabian women are vast, and the Saudi government defends these limitations by saying that they are a part of Islam’s doctrine; in Saudi Arabia,

the Islamic religion acts as a major influence when defining the standards, assemblies, and arrangements of society.<sup>11</sup> “Islam is not only a religious ideology, but a whole comprehensive social system embracing detailed prescriptions for the entire way of life.”<sup>12</sup>

Additionally, there is much skepticism as to the teachings of the Qur’an in regard to gender differences. The Qur’an instills that women are inferior to men. The Bible, on the other hand, sanctions men to rule over women. The difference between the two, however, is that extreme Islamic traditionalists interpret the Qur’an’s teachings of inferiority to mean that their women cannot be granted equal rights to men and that they must not be treated equally. Conversely, the Bible, in teaching that men rule over women, suggests that a man should act as head-of-household. Nevertheless, in Saudi Arabia, Islamic interdictions are followed to their literal interpretations. For example, strict sexual segregation is practiced which deprives women of many educational and professional opportunities. On the following page is a chart showing just some of the differences between the rights of men and women in Saudi Arabia:

**Table 1. Differences between legal rights of the sexes in Saudi Arabia**

<u>Act</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
Driving	✓	✗
Marriage to a non-Saudi	✓	✗
Marriage to a non-Muslim	✓	✗
Divorce	Men can simply say, "I divorce you," three times	Women must assume a long legal process which is hardly ever successful
Child Custody	If he contests the case, the man always gets custody	Women will not receive custody if their ex-husband contests the case
Borrowing of money	✓	Women cannot borrow money under their own names
Opening a business	✓	Women cannot open a business without the approval of their husband or father
Loans	✓	Women cannot get home loans or land grants from the government
Employment	Men can be employed wherever they please	A woman must obtain her family' approval for certain jobs
Travel Abroad	Men can travel wherever they please	A woman must depend on her family's permission in order to travel abroad and must be in the company of a male of her family

In addition to the above discriminations, there is the issue of the dress code. The majority of women in Saudi Arabia are veiled. Although the veil was an invention of the Ottoman Turks and the Prophet Mohammed had said that a woman only had to cover her hair, many Saudi Arabian women are either forced, or choose, to wear a full veil which covers their entire face. In addition to the veil, Saudi women wear black outer garments made of either nylon or silk known as *abbayat*. The failure to dress according to appropriateness in Saudi Arabia can result in a switch from the religious police in Saudi Arabia known as the *mutawa*. In 1987, an extreme case of punishment overseen by the *mutawaeen* was documented in which they caused the wife of the Tunisian ambassador at the time, to have a miscarriage by pushing her because her hair was not covered by a veil.<sup>13</sup>

However, the fact that veiling does not automatically point to female oppression must also be addressed. It is important to note that Islam teaches modesty and that this is the reason for veiling. Islamists believe that women will not be characterized or perceived as sex symbols if they are veiled and dressed modestly. Therefore, though outside spectators way assume veiling to be an act of oppression, this is not always the case. Due to a strong faith and adherence to religious teachings, many Islamic women choose to veil themselves so as to protect their own modesty.

Although it still deemed as one of the most controversial and conservative of the Arab Countries, Saudi Arabia is working towards fixing issues with gender segregation and inequalities. In modern-day Saudi Arabia, a woman cannot be forced into a marriage, she has the right to property ownership and disposal before and after her marriage, she can

inherit from the males in her family, she has the right to an education, and right to work in many different professions (as long as it doesn't affect her responsibilities to her family).

In continuation, women have made very narrow advances towards their equality in the last 40 years, especially in family life and education. In regards to education, the first school for women was created by King Saud in the 1950s. In 1960, a royal directive was introduced to enable the beginning of women's education in Saudi Arabia. The number of schools for women in Saudi Arabia grew from zero to sixteen in the 1950s, and up to 155 schools ten years later.<sup>14</sup> Saudi women have been able to achieve much in the field of education despite the social difficulties that have been placed in their path to equality. For many women to have been able to surpass the extreme segregation in Saudi Arabia is certainly a feat that is not to go unnoticed. The following is a list of the differences in the education made available to men and women<sup>15</sup>:

- Many facilities that are open to men are not open to women
  - Women have access to libraries once a week while men have access six days a week
- Women's class sizes are larger than those of men
- Teachers for men are better trained and prepared than teachers for women
- The budget on women's education is less than that of men
- Curriculum for women centers more on the Qur'an and Islamic studies rather than on academics
- Women are forbidden from learning architecture, pharmacy, and engineering

Few women, despite the fact that they tend to score higher than men on standardized tests, are allowed to work within the private sector because of Islamic rules on segregation. These rules encourage businesses to hire men instead of women. In addition, many Saudi men refuse to marry an educated and employed woman.

Saudi Arabia has always been considered controversial in matters of human rights. In Saudi Arabia, there exists a direct link between Islam and the workings of society. The Saudi social structure is related to an array of types of religious beliefs such as religious philosophy, ethnic rules, and local customs and principles. In Saudi Arabia, Islam provides detailed conditions regarding the way of life. Though Islam is not inherently meant to oppress women, the previously-mentioned literal interpretations of the verses of the Qur'an by traditional followers lay out the status, responsibilities, and rights of women that then lead to such oppression.

#### [D] Suggestions for Future Social Reform

The suggested proper way to fix the gender inequality issues in Saudi Arabia starts at home. It starts with educating the youth with a positive mindset that rivals the current one that women are inferior to men. The youth should be taught that the sexual segregation and gender inequality causes strictness which leads to intolerance of the female sex and this is detested by the true and pure meaning of Islam. In addition, the existence and creation of women's groups in Saudi Arabia are important for the social development of gaining rights and equality for women. Groups such as Association for the Protection and Defense of Women's Rights in Saudi Arabia, who worked towards ensuring

the right to vote for Saudi women<sup>16</sup> and the “Women2Drive” campaign that fought for Saudi women’s right to vote<sup>17</sup> are important to identify. These groups are important for educating the public, especially men, of the inequalities between genders and how they cause hindrances to the development of women’s position in society.

[E] Chapter II. Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Ali Ünal, *The Qur’an*. Trans (New Jersey: The Light, Inc., 2006).
- <sup>2</sup> Robert Max Jackson, "Chapter 2: Analyzing the Persistence of Gender Inequality: How to Think about the Origins." *Destined for Equality: The Inevitable Rise of Women's Status*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1998): 29-49.
- <sup>3</sup> Joseph Kostiner, *The Making of Sa'udi Arabia, 1916–1936: From Chieftancy to Monarchical State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
- <sup>4</sup> Witty, D. M. 2011. North Yemen Civil War (1962–1970). *The Encyclopedia of War*.
- <sup>5</sup> "Saudi Arabia." *The Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 2012. Web. 29 Oct. 2012. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/countries/saudi-arabia.html>>.
- <sup>6</sup> Emile A. Nakhleh, *The United States and Saudi Arabia: A Policy Analysis*, (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1975).
- <sup>7</sup> Clare Richardson, "Saudi Arabia: Woman Driving Brought To Trial." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 2011. <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/09/26/saudi-arabia-women-driving\\_n\\_981351.html?icid=maing-grid7|main5|dl15|sec3\\_ink3|99214](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/09/26/saudi-arabia-women-driving_n_981351.html?icid=maing-grid7|main5|dl15|sec3_ink3|99214)>.
- <sup>8</sup> Alsharif, Asma. "Saudi King Gives Women Right to Vote." *Reuters*. Thomson Reuters, 25 2011. <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/25/us-saudi-king-women-idUSTRE78010Y20110925>>.
- <sup>9</sup> Peter W. Wilson, Douglas F. Graham, "Chapter 6: Social Issues," *Saudi Arabia: The Coming Storm*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994): 233.

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- <sup>10</sup> Jean P. Sasson, *Princess: A True Story of Life behind the Veil in Saudi Arabia* (New York: Morrow, 1992): 240.
- <sup>11</sup> Mona AlMunajjed, *Women in Saudi Arabia Today* (New York: St. Martin's, 1997): 7.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Peter W. Wilson, Douglas Graham. *Saudi Arabia: The Coming Storm*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994. Print.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> Wilson, Graham: *Saudi Arabia: The Coming Storm*, at 233.
- <sup>16</sup> Samia Abbass, "Saudi Arabian Women Campaign for the Right to Drive, 2007-2008." *Saudi Arabian Women Campaign for the Right to Drive, 2007-2008*. Global Nonviolent Action Database, 2010, <<http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/saudi-arabian-women-campaign-right-drive-2007-2008>>.
- <sup>17</sup> "Women2drive.com." *Women2Drive*. Women2Drive, n.d. 30 Oct. 2012, <<http://www.women2drive.com/>>.

### III. LEBANON

#### [A] Introduction

##### *i. Summary*

Though there are still many limitations placed on Lebanese women, there have been numerous NGOs that have successfully raised awareness in regard to violence against women and the discriminating inequalities between the sexes.

The following chapter will focus on women in the Republic of Lebanon and the effects that the lack of separation between church and state has on their daily lives. Due to the modest amount of influence the Islamic religious has on the role of politics and social structure in Lebanon, the nation is viewed as a more moderate Middle Eastern country.

#### [B] Country Origins and Political History

In the beginning, by the early Ottoman period, aside from Arabic becoming the common language in the area, there already existed three elements in the structure of Lebanon: the population, the lordship system, and the local rulers' autonomy<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, there exist today several common factors that barely or did not exist at all during the Ottoman regime. For example, there was not yet the existence of a hierarchy of families, the Maronite Patriarchate barely existed, and there did not exist a unity between the different parts of the modern-day Lebanon<sup>2</sup>.

During the next period, between the years of 1590-1711, the beginning of a ruling institution, or principedom, was the dominant feature. As written by *Binder*, the first lordly family to rise to supremacy over the others was the family of the Ma'n that became extinct in 1697 and was succeeded by the Shibabi family; during his lifetime, it was the Ma'ni Fakhr al-Din II who was the first to create a union of a number of previously separate lordships giving them a leadership that had a standing army as well as some form of regular administration that most of the lordships acknowledged. Although he did not establish the modern Lebanon, he did create the political institution around which Lebanon evolved<sup>3</sup>. It is recognized that the institution that he the Ma'ni Fakhr al-Din created was the principedom which personified the secular principle that to this day, it has been part of the Lebanese political tradition that, "the holder of authority, whether the local lord or the supreme rule, should stand in a sense above his own community, should protect the religious men and laity of faiths other than his own"<sup>4</sup>. Still, even with the creation of the principedom, the authority of the prince was not yet completely recognized. It was accepted when combined with the image of the Ma'ni Fakhr al-Din, but was not considered legitimate when standing without his image. In addition, the Ottoman government was able to intervene with the Prince's authority whenever it wished. The principedom did not become more completely autonomous and acknowledged as legitimate by most of its people until the eighteenth century.

Within Lebanon, the authority of the prince was challenged. The most serious challenge was that by the Druze family of Jumblatt. Their power and wealth had grown

drastically from the seventeenth century and they had become leaders of one of two parties involved with the “Jumblatt” and “Yazbak” faction conflict<sup>5</sup>. Bashir II, a powerful leader, tried to subdue the power of Jumblatt by using the Maronites against him which therefore encouraged certain tendencies within the two communities: The Druzes became more powerful and the Maronite population was growing in numbers, spreading to the south, and developing in ways which could not be encompassed within the social structure. The Maronites were no longer willing to accept the lordship of the Druze families and the Maronites claimed that they were a nation as well as a Church. During the time that the Maronites were growing stronger, the Druze lords were weakened and challenged by the Maronites and were struggling to hold on to their power.

#### *i. A Legitimized State*

In 1842, the government removed Bashir II's heir and brought the Shibabi family's decree to an end. The government introduced a new system which called for the division of Lebanon into Maronite and Druze districts. Each district would have a governor for whichever religion was dominant however with a council representing the multiple religious groups. This new system is the “first embodiment of the communal principle, which has since then been the basis of the legislature”<sup>6</sup>. The fundamental belief of the new system was that the many communities could live together, but that the Maronites were the dominant community. The changes during the next fifty years vindicated the assumption...as “schools were established, trade was increased, and emigration to the New World began”<sup>6</sup>, the Christian community flourished. During this time, Maronite writers

supported the idea of Lebanon as a Christian country, intended to govern itself under the defense of Christian Europe.

In 1861, a new arrangement was introduced: “political activity directed by parties, cutting across the communal boundaries and expressing itself in the elected legislature”<sup>7</sup>. This arrangement provided a framework of authority within which Lebanon could develop. However, it simultaneously widened the gap between the districts both inside and outside the framework. The tension between the districts was greatest in the Lebanese city of Beirut. It was both a “cultural and commercial capital of Christian Lebanon”<sup>7</sup> as well as “the center of a large Muslim population with a growing educated class”<sup>8</sup>. The tension in Beirut between the Muslim and Christian populations continued all the way through 1918 when it started to affect Lebanon’s life. After the Ottoman’s left Lebanon, the French military came in and the Lebanese lived under the French mandate. In 1919, the Maronite Patriarch Elias Hoyek was sent to the Peace Conference where he showed that Lebanon restored its legitimacy and “existed as a political entity”<sup>8</sup>. It was finally in 1920 that Lebanon was created, “including the coastal towns as well as certain country districts”<sup>9</sup>. At first, it was difficult for the many religious populations to accept a, “greater Lebanon,” and there was much turmoil. However, by 1946, when the French left, the Lebanese state and government was finally accepted as legitimate by the population producing our Lebanon of today.

### [C] Women in Lebanon

As reported by Jens Hanssen, author of *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, Beirut, in the late Ottoman period, shared many of the contemporary characteristics of other Mediterranean harbor-cities including the most prominent characteristic of a male-dominated world<sup>7</sup>. It was not until the 1870s and 1880s that Lebanese women finally gradually entered “respectable” professions through both health and education<sup>8</sup>. Further, Hanssen writes that women began to enter the worlds of politics, journalism, leisure, and entertainment during the mandate period.

#### *i. The Case of Najlā Arslān*

One of the first shaking cases of a woman becoming a “hysteric” in Beirut is that of a Druze princess in the early 1890s who suffered mentally from the turmoil of fighting an arranged marriage. The story of Najlā Arslān of Istanbul who fell in love with her cousin living in Beirut is a tragic and educational story of how family politics and patriarchy can manipulate the women involved<sup>9</sup>.

Najlā had fallen in love with Majīd, a paternal cousin of hers studying in Beirut at a missionary school. When they decided to get married, Najlā and Majīd were faced with instant troubles. Najlā’s father claimed betrayal because, as his only child, he had promised her to the son of her family’s political boss, Muṣṭafa Arslān. Najlā’s father and her uncle, Majīd’s father, decided to take matters into their own hands and place Najlā under house arrest. Najlā managed to escape once, but was quickly recaptured. It was then that she

turned to the sultan in Istanbul, asking for imperial help. She wrote a letter to the sultan that reads as follows:

“I am twenty-five years old and a mature adult. Yet, my family insists that I marry a person whom I do not want to marry. I cannot find any refuge or helper but Your Compassionate Imperial Majesty. Please rescue me from the torment and oppression to which I am subjected and which endangers my life just for having a wish in perfect accord with the sharī’a!”

The case was referred the sultan, Na‘ūm Pasha who initially refused to do anything against Muşţafa Arslān because he was an important part of his administration’s balance of power. Najlā, for a year, was confined in the Shuf Mountains and news spread to Beirut that she had suffered much mental and physical abuse during her confinement. After hearing the news, the sultan Na‘ūm Pasha changed his mind and ordered for her release and forced Najlā’s father to consent to the marriage she wanted. However, by this time, Najlā was showing signs of having psychological issues that were eventually confirmed as an unsound mind. Pasha ordered for her to be sent to Istanbul where she was admitted as a patient of the medical profession of the state. He personally attended to her well-being. She was eventually diagnosed with “mania” and sent to the best mental hospital in Istanbul.

“Najlā’s case disappeared in the anonymity of the Ottoman archives and with it the voicelessness of Najlā Arslān.”<sup>11</sup> Najlā’s story became a medical case and an example of the effects manipulation and oppression has on women.

Cases like that of Najlā Arslān have sparked much interest by the female population of the Middle East. Aiming to eliminate gender discrimination, abuse, and gain equality, groups of women would get together and form alliances to protect themselves.

*ii. Women's Movements and Social Structure in Lebanon*

In 1952, in Lebanon, emerged a group of women who called themselves *Assembly of Lebanese Women's Associates* which later became known as the *Lebanese Council for Women*. This group of women wanted to merge their ideas and efforts into an association. The goal was "to lead and give direction to the Lebanese feminist movement"<sup>9</sup>. The Council was formed by a merger of two other women's rights groups: the Lebanese Arab Women's Union (1929) and the Lebanese Women's Association (1947). The Lebanese Council for Women is known to be responsible for, but certainly not limited to, the following achievements in gender equality in Lebanon: women's right to vote and stand for parliamentary elections (1953), women's right to freedom of movement without needing permission from her spouse (1974), married women's right to trade without needing the permission of her husband (1994).<sup>14</sup> These groups have addressed issues about a woman's rights in the event of a divorce, education, dress code, and issues of the like.

One area of Islamic life that has been greatly criticized is the restrictions on education. The extremist traditional Islamic lifestyle has always placed certain restrictions on and provided obstacles for women receiving education. Although Islam advocates for right and importance of education for both genders, access to education by most Muslim

women is not easy. Muslim women have played a major and important role as leaders in education. For example, “the princess Fatima Al-Fihri established the first degree-granting university in the world, University of Al Karaouine, in Morocco in 859 CE. And during the Ayyubid dynasty, the regent queen Dafiya Khatun built numerous *khangas* (Sufi convents) and *madradas* (theological colleges) in Damascus and Aleppo”<sup>10</sup> There are many challenges that Islamic women face when trying to receive an education. For example, there is the interpretation of *qiwamah*, or the idea that men are the guardians of Islamic women. Even though the Quran states that men and women alike are defenders of one another, *qiwamah* has been used as an excuse for restrictions on women that have denied Muslim women their education. For instance, the limitation of women’s right to free movement is a major setback in equal access to education. In some areas, Muslim girls are obligated to marry at a young age and therefore kept at home to be housewives instead of going to school. “The Middle East has encountered numerous wars and political conflicts since the 1950s, with varying implications for societies and for women”<sup>11</sup>

Furthering the idea of marriage, a study at the Lebanese University found that Lebanese parents feel that educating their daughters is a good investment. They further believe that in addition to providing better working opportunities and standards for finding the best husband, a higher education degree doubles as a backup plan in the event that the woman does not ever marry or if her marriage ends in divorce.

Consequently, an area where gender discrimination is apparent is in the area of divorce. Historically, women have not had any right to initiate a divorce while a man would

not even have to provide a reason for asking for divorce. In Lebanon, feminist groups have created the Permanent Arab Court to Resist Violence Against Women, and a Feminine Rights Campaign which aim for gender equality in the event of a divorce. As seen in Table 2, there are strong differences between the initiation of divorce between men and women. The right to initiating a divorce lies with the man; if a woman wishes to initiate the divorce, she must first relinquish her legal rights. Further, the man has the option between two different types of divorce that are explained within Table 2.

To reiterate, Lebanon, in regards to women's rights, is considered a more moderate country of the Middle East. The Lebanese Constitution, however, does not specifically lay out that men and women are equal and the rights of working men and women are regulated by an obsolete 1946 labor law<sup>12</sup>. Further, there are sections of Lebanese law that explicitly discriminate against working women; a working male employee is enabled to receive a family allowance with no limitations, while a working female employee is allowed to receive the same allowance *only* if she meets the following three requirements: (1) her husband is debilitated, (2) the woman is financially responsible for her children, or (3) the woman is a divorcee and there is proof that the ex-husband cannot pay alimony<sup>13</sup>. In addition, as reported by *Kail C. Ellis*, author of *Lebanon's Second Republic*, although all paid employees are entitled to medical coverage for their families, women receive only a small portion of the full amount of coverage unless they are also approved to receive a family allowance.

Accordingly, the Republic has actually had women in parliament since 1992; three women, one from the south, one from the north, and one from Mount Lebanon, were elected to three seats in the 1992 elections. These women entered the elections with the goal of challenging and changing political gender discrimination. Although women still continue to defeat the odds and be elected to parliament, feminist groups are still fighting the restrictions and obstacles before them. The chart on the following pages exhibit a comparison between some men and women's rights in the Lebanese legal system<sup>14</sup>:

**Table 2. Differences between legal rights of the sexes in Lebanon**

Law	Men	Women
Violence	The same domestic violence laws pertain to men and women alike; there are no special provisions.	The same domestic violence laws pertain to men and women alike; there are no special provisions. However, feminist NGOs are working to get laws passed to protect women.
Rape	Marital Rape is not punishable by law  Men are recognized as the offenders	Wives are omitted from any kind of legal protection if she is raped by her husband  Women are recognized as the victims of rape If a man marries his rape victim, he escapes criminal charges
“Honor” Crimes	If a man catches his wife in an act of adultery, he will be given a lesser punishment for the murder or injury of those involved in the act	If a woman catches her husband in an act of adultery and kills him, she will be charged with murder, and will not be given a lesser charge
Marriage	There are two types of marriages: Temporary marriages, which are set up for a specified amount of time, and regular marriages.  A man may marry up to four women at a time.	A woman needs the consent of her father or grandfathers in order to marry.  Women are not allowed to leave their home without their husband’s permission, unless the purpose to leave is in order to fulfill the necessary responsibilities of being a wife. If she leaves without his permission, it is grounds for divorce and she

		<p>will be held liable and will not receive alimony.</p> <p>The woman must always be available for her husband's pleasure and can only recuse herself for religious reasons.</p>
Adultery	If a married man has sexual intercourse with someone other than his wife, he can be punished with imprisonment of one month to up to one year	If a married woman has sexual intercourse with someone other than her husband, she can be punished with imprisonment of three months to up to two years
Divorce	<p>The right to initiate divorce lies with the man.</p> <p>Men can divorce their wives through verbal rejection which is in turn put into action. A man can choose between two types of divorce: <i>talaq raj'i</i> which allows the man to change his mind within a three month time period with or without the consent of the wife and allows the couple to remarry later, and <i>talaq niha'i</i> which requires the man to reject and divorce his wife three times</p>	<p>Women can initiate a divorce by relinquishing all her legal rights.</p> <p>Women have been recently allowed to ask for guardianship over the marriage contract and/or delegate the guardianship of the marriage contract to a third party who can file for divorce.</p> <p>Women who are younger than nine years old or are post-menstrual do not have to endure the <i>'iddat</i> (three month confinement during which the ex-husband can change his mind)</p>
Custody	The father is the legal guardian of his male children after the age of two and of his female children after the age of 7.	<p>The mother is the legal guardian of her male children until they are age two and of their female children until they are age seven.</p> <p>The wife may lose custody if she is not Muslim or if she remarries another man.</p>

Despite the differences between how women and men are treated, Lebanon is working towards providing more protection for women; the country has sanctioned international conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>15</sup>, which aim to protect women's rights. Lebanon has even amended its 1990 Constitution to state that the Republic will apply the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in all areas without exclusions<sup>16</sup>. Other important international national conventions that Lebanon has subscribed to are the 1955 Convention concerning Women's Political Rights, the 1964 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, the 1976 International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the 1977 International Labor Organization Conventions concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers of Equal Value and Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation, and the 1996 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>17</sup>.

#### [D] Application as to Discussion

Although the Lebanese Republic has made much progress in the modern world and has worked to provide Lebanese women with many rights equal to that of Lebanese men, there is still room for much improvement. In Lebanon, for example, there are no special laws or provisions protecting women from domestic violence. Some take Quranic verses like Qur'an (4:34) literally which states, "Good women are obedient, guarding in secret that which God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them,

then banish them to beds apart and strike them. But if they obey you, do not seek a way against them.” Quran 4:34 also provides three methods to be used in resolving marital disagreements. First comes, “admonition or discussion between the husband and wife alone or with the assistance of arbiters.” This method, also suggested by 4:35 and 4:128, is also to be used for couples thinking about getting a divorce. If this method fails, the second choice is physical separation, like sleeping in separate beds. The third and final technique is striking. This striking takes the singular form grammatically, so that only a single strike is allowed. Quran 4:34 was exposed early in the Medinan period of Muhammad’s ministry... a time and when cruelty and violence against women was lush. Consequently many extreme traditional Islamists take the above verses literally and argue that the single strike acceptable in 4:34 can be used as a suggested way of dealing with one’s wife in a marital dispute which results in the largely negative perspective outsiders have on the Islamic religion. Further, as demonstrated by Table 2, the legal and social inequalities and recent equalities between the genders in Lebanon provide the needed evidence to prove that the amount of influence that Islam has on the politics and social structures affects the ways in which women are treated.

### [E] Chapter III. Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Leonard Binder, *Politics in Lebanon*, (New York, London, Sydney: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Jens Hanssen, *Fin De Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005): 133.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid at 133-34

<sup>10</sup> "Access to Education." *Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality*, 2011,  
<http://www.wisemuslimwomen.org/currentissues/accesstoeducation/>.

<sup>11</sup> Valentine M. Moghadam, *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East* (Boulder, CO: L. Rienner, 1993).

<sup>12</sup> Kail C. Ellis, *Lebanon's Second Republic: Prospects for the Twenty-First Century*, (Gainesville: University of Florida, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Mikdashi, Maya. Jadaliyya, "A Legal Guide to Being a Lebanese Woman (Part 1)," 2010,  
[http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/376/a-legal-guide-to-being-a-lebanese-woman-\(part-1\)](http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/376/a-legal-guide-to-being-a-lebanese-woman-(part-1)).

<sup>15</sup> Arab NGO Network for Development. *Human Rights Conditions in Lebanon: Civil City Considerations in Light of Universal Periodic Review*, 2010,  
<<http://www.annd.org/administrator/pubfile/UPR%20Lebanon%20Pub%20en.pdf>>.

<sup>16</sup> Ellis, *Lebanon's Second Republic*.

<sup>17</sup> Ellis, *Lebanon's Second Republic*..

## IV. TURKEY

### [A] Introduction

#### *i. Summary*

The Republic of Turkey is one of the more socially liberal Islamic countries of the Middle East. Such liberal classification of the Republic is due to the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent founders who aimed to found a politically secular state. “The decline of the Ottoman Empire had coincided with the birth of women’s hopes to play a larger share in society, and the war of Turkish survival finally gave women their chance.”<sup>1</sup> The founders of the Republic of Turkey accepted the responsibility of altering society for the better, this included how Islam affected the way society is governed. These founders redefined Islam’s place in the public sector and restricted the areas where Islam could govern.<sup>2</sup> This pivotal decision by the founders has provided women in Turkish society with many positive opportunities and changes, such as the Swiss Civil Code. The Swiss Civil Code was implemented in 1926 and it provided women legal protection as well as new legal and social rights. Further addressed in this chapter, the reader will find that the founders of the new Republic made it a goal to remove Islamic influence from its politics and social structure in hopes of ensuring a secular state so as to try to eliminate social issues like gender inequalities. Therefore, like their Islamic sisters in other countries, Turkish women are not as well educated as men, make decisions of less importance and frequency than their male counterparts, and are more limited than men. However, unlike

their Islamic sisters in other countries, Turkish women are not restricted to their home and are even permitted to travel. This chapter will examine the history of The Republic of Turkey as well as the impact of Islam on Turkish women and will further delve into the Republic's steps towards achieving modernization; "modernization," in this context, denotes the progressions of restructuring political and social traditions of a society to model those of Western societies<sup>3</sup>.

### [B] Country Origins

#### *i. Ottoman Turkey*

Since the beginning of time, even when it was known as Asia Minor, Turkey, or Anatolia, the region has been known as the dividing line between the Orient and the Occident; the bridge connecting Europe and Asia. What has to be the most historically pivotal, and largest, city in Turkey has a history that dates back to when it was the former capital of the empires of the Byzantine and then the Ottoman, until it was renamed Constantinople, after the Christian Emperor Constantine, up until recently when it was established as Istanbul in 1930.

The Turks are attributed as being the first people to invade Anatolia as a whole. Modern Turkey is a comprised of a blend of two groups of peoples that came in migrations: those that trace back to the Arabian dessert and those that trace their origins back to Central Asia.<sup>4</sup> Such influences could be seen under the Seljuk dynasty through the use of the Arabic language and the mummification customs of the Central Asians.<sup>5</sup> The first group

gave Turkey its faith and the second gave her rulers. Seljuk, the first leader of Turkey to have had the most impact on the history of Turkey, played a major role in the Turkish shift to Islam. Not long after Seljuk, came the infamous Ottomans. The Ottoman Empire lasted 600 years until 1923 when the Republic of Turkey was founded.<sup>6</sup> At its peak, the Ottomans controlled parts of northern Africa, southeastern Europe, and western Asia.<sup>7</sup> However, the empire ran itself into the ground by failing to keep-to-date with social and technological changes in Europe. This failure pushed the Turks' national consciousness to an all-time high and encouraged several groups to pursue independence which eventually lead to the empire's own demise. Additionally, the Ottoman Empire's participation in World War I as an ally of the Germans contributed the empire's demise.

#### *ii. The Republic of Turkey*

Once weak, the empire was replaced by the leader Mustafa Kemal, the invading Russians, French, Italians, and Greeks were expelled from Anatolia, and finally after the official declaration of the Republic of Turkey, both the sultanate and caliphate were eliminated in 1924.<sup>8</sup> In 1926, the founders changed the calendar from the Islamic lunar to the Western solar Gregorian calendar and Islamic law was abolished and replaced by the Swiss Civil Code, the Italian Penal Code, and German and Italian Commercial codes; additionally, the Arabic script was replaced with Latin in 1928.<sup>9</sup>

“It is within this context that the idea of ‘gender equality’ effectively became part of what defined the Turkish Republic as a ‘modern’ country. A

women's empowerment discourse was often used by the Kemalist elites as a means of dismantling the old order. Women were defined as the group most oppressed through Islamic practices such as veiling, seclusion and polygamy. The idea of the Turkish woman was also invoked for the creation of the national consciousness women were depicted as courageous, altruistic heroes of the Turkish War of Independence and hailed for their active support of the national liberation movement. Most importantly, women's emancipation from traditional role expectations, their increased education and active participation in public life became symbols of the place the Republic was aiming to take among Western nations."

The new leaders of the Republic focused on uniting their power and Westernizing the new Republic of Turkey. "Social, political, linguistic, and economic reforms and attitudes decreed by Ataturk from 1924-1934 continue to be referred to as the ideological base of modern Turkey."<sup>10</sup> In the post-Ataturk era, the ideology became known as "Kemalism" and Ataturk's reforms were referred to as "revolutions;" the elements of Kemalism are as follows: secularism, nationalism, statism, and identification with Europe.<sup>11</sup>

Realizing that this would help with the westernization of the nation, the leaders of the new Turkey entered World War II. This time, they joined forces with the allies, and became a charter member of the United Nations. In 1947, the United States enacted the Truman Doctrine, guaranteeing the security of Turkey and Greece. In 1952, after assisting

UN troops with the Korean conflict, Turkey joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and became a candidate for membership to the European Union.

### [C] Women in Turkey

Since its founding, the Republic of Turkey has provided women with rights that have not been given to women in other Middle Eastern countries until recent years and after much social turmoil. This more respectable status of women can be traced by to the end of the Ottoman Empire and includes access to the labor market with roles such as teachers, clerical workers, and industrial workers both before and after World War I.<sup>12</sup> “Today, Turkish women are bank directors, doctors, lawyers, judges, journalists, pilots, diplomats, members of parliament and police officers.”<sup>13</sup> Recognizing that the enhancement of women’s status in society was necessary to true modernity and westernization, the new leaders of the new Republic of Turkey made sure to expand women’s opportunities. Further, in 1926, the adopted Swiss Civil Code outlawed polygamy, women were granted the right to initiate a divorce, and inheritance laws were altered to give both women and men equal rights. Although strongly opposed by traditional Islamists, the civil code was upheld. However, there are still instances of female submission to male authority in Turkish society. In the public view, women are considered to be equal to men, but in the private view, women are still expected to practice patriarchal norms. The new modern views of the rights of women in society were mostly influenced by members of the Ladies’ Commissions. These women felt that the Turkish state granted women with independence

and the chance to pursue their rights...something possibly impossible for women in other Islamic societies like that of Iran.<sup>14</sup>

In an effort to further push Turkish society into modernization, in 1982, the Council of Ministers approved a statute that required female students and employees to remove their headscarves, thus banning the use of headscarves in universities and the workplace.<sup>15</sup> In 1984, however, due to pressure from the Islamists, and women themselves, the party allowed for women to wear turbans (a scarf tied at the back at the head that only covers the hair).<sup>16</sup> However, this did not appease the secularist government, who still pushed to have even turbans removed to further enforce a westernized dress code; this effort was also opposed by Islamist women who claimed that wearing a headscarf was a civil liberty and claimed discrimination.<sup>17</sup> It was not until the Refah Party of Turkey<sup>18</sup> was closed that the government gave in to the headscarves. The fight between Islamists and the government over headscarves still continues as Islamists see the headscarf as a religious right and the government sees it as a symbol of unequal rights. In support thereof, dress has become a “marker of the front line” in the long-standing battle between the Islamists and the secularists in Turkish politics and society.<sup>19</sup> The fact that these women’s protests were successful in producing the results they wanted in regard to the headscarf issue, has exemplified the influence that women, both Islamist and secularist, can have on political decisions.

In regard to Turkish politics, women of the new republic were amongst the first to receive rights to vote and be elected. For example. “In 1926 women were given

unprecedented legal rights and in 1934 received the franchise as well as the right to stand for election.”<sup>20</sup> In comparison, Lebanon did not grant even women’s suffrage until 1952. In 1989, the Islamist Refah (Welfare) Party in Turkey established its women’s organizations.<sup>21</sup> Hundreds of women worked for the party and the party received the most votes in 1995 and was elected into government starting in June 1996 until July of 1997. Women’s role in government such as the Refah Party has led to widespread support for equality amongst the genders in society and as well as the legal system.

### *ii. Social Reform*

Concerning society, there has been great progress in positive equality of the genders in addition to new, more accepting views of a woman’s behavior and participation in society. In Turkey, there are different dimensions of Islam. There is a Village Islam and the Cosmopolitan Islam; Village Islam is the Islam of the tribes and Cosmopolitan Islam is the Islam of the caravans and maritime traders.<sup>22</sup> With time, the two types have both coincided and conflicted and has resulted in conflicting views as to how the people should be governed; the Village Islam prefers culture and societal structure remain traditional, while Cosmopolitan Islam pushes for a modernized progression of culture and societal structure. Some hold that Islam should be viewed as an alternative to modernity.<sup>23</sup> However, others believe that it is a form of anti-modernity<sup>24</sup> and have thus therefore pushed for a more secular view of how society should function. An outcome of the push towards westernization has been that as their level of education increases, the proportion of women who feel that they need the approval of their husbands has decreased.<sup>25</sup> One of these new

views is the view on friendships between men and women. Friendships between men and women, especially among the youth, are no longer condemned. Although, a young girl must still keep in mind that her virginity and good reputation do continue to be conditions necessary if she wishes to marry a respectable man. Another positive change in society for the sake of women is that they can now study and work alongside men. There have even been regulations enacted to control women's working time so they have time to take care of children and the elderly.

Another social reform aimed at improving the private and public lives of women has been the discussion of reforming health care to better provide for women. Along with achieving gender equality, addressing women's health and medical needs was acknowledged as one of the top concerns of the Turkish governments; the government wishes to expand women's health care to cover all health issues, not just maternal ones pertaining to pregnancy.<sup>26</sup>

In 2003, the Labour Law was introduced which includes the standard of equal pay for equal work of equal value as well as guaranteeing the equal treatment in employment, the protection of breastfeeding or pregnant women, and women who have recently given birth.<sup>27</sup> The Labour Law has also guaranteed that there will not be discrimination against part-time employees and included the reversed burden of proof in sex-based-discrimination cases from the woman to the employer.<sup>28</sup>

There have been recent changes to the 1926 civil code. Besides raising the legal marriage age of girls to 15, the first change to the code provides that where the original law states that divorced women are entitled *only* to properties registered under their names, the new revisions would provide for equal distribution of assets and property.<sup>29</sup>

#### [D] Suggestions as to Future Progress

Despite the current status of Turkey as a stable and mostly westernized nation, there still remains much for the Republic to improve on in regard to achieving full gender equality. However, it is evident that since the founding of the new republic in 1926, the governing bodies have made and continue to make striving efforts to reach full westernization. As previously mentioned, the republic, with special attention paid to the business sector, wishes to become a member of the European Union (EU). In order to become a member, a country is required to meet specific strict circumstances of democracy and human rights, amongst other requirements. Consequently, even as the most secular of the Islamic states, the Republic of Turkey recognizes that it has to do more to safeguard full women's rights as it would be a major step towards admission to the European Union. Further, women in Turkey remain hopeful of admission due to guaranteed equal rights for men and women in both the public and private sectors. With the progress already made as its foundation, it is evident that with continuing efforts, the republic will achieve the vision of full westernization and true gender equality and will therefore continue to be an exceptional model to the most conservative Middle Eastern states.

[E] Chapter IV. Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Desmond Stewart, *Turkey* (New York: Time, 1965).
- <sup>2</sup> Yeşim Arat, *Rethinking Islam and Liberal Democracy: Islamist Women in Turkish Politics* (Albany: State University of New York, 2005).
- <sup>3</sup> "Glossary," *Houghton Mifflin Textbook*, 31 Oct. 2012.  
<[http://college.cengage.com/history/world/bulliet/earth\\_peoples/2e/students/glossary/index.html](http://college.cengage.com/history/world/bulliet/earth_peoples/2e/students/glossary/index.html)>.
- <sup>4</sup> Stewart, *Turkey*.
- <sup>5</sup> Yenen, Serif. "History of Turkey Part 3 Turkish Period." *Turkish Period. Turkish Odyssey*, 1997, <<http://www.turkishodyssey.com/turkey/history/history3.htm>>.
- <sup>6</sup> Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. "Background Note: Turkey." *U.S. Department of State*. U.S. Department of State, 20 Mar. 2012, <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3432.htm>>.
- <sup>7</sup> Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, "Background Note: Turkey."
- <sup>8</sup> Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, "Background Note: Turkey."
- <sup>9</sup> Esra Özyürek, *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 2007).
- <sup>10</sup> Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, "Background Note: Turkey."
- <sup>11</sup> Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, "Background Note: Turkey."
- <sup>12</sup> Paul M. Pitman, Richard F. Nyrop, *Turkey: A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: Division, 1988).
- <sup>13</sup> Brian Bell, Melissa Shales, *Turkey* (Singapore: APA Publications, 2008).
- <sup>14</sup> Janet Afary, "Portraits of Two Islamist Women: Escape from Freedom or from Tradition?," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 10.19 (2001): 47-77.
- <sup>15</sup> Arat, *Rethinking Islam and Liberal Democracy: Islamist Women in Turkish Politics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Alev Çınar, "Subversion and Subjugation in the Public Sphere: Secularism and the Islamic Headscarf," *Signs*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2008): 891-913, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/528850>

<sup>19</sup> Samir Khalaf, Saad Roseanne Khalaf, *Arab Society and Culture: An Essential Reader* (London: Saqi, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Pitman, Nyrod *Turkey: A Country Study*,

<sup>21</sup> Yeşim Arat, *Rethinking Islam and Liberal Democracy: Islamist Women in Turkish Politics*.

<sup>22</sup> Samir Khalaf, Saad Roseanne Khalaf, *Arab Society and Culture: An Essential Reader*

<sup>23</sup> Samir Khalaf, Saad Roseanne Khalaf, *Arab Society and Culture: An Essential Reader*

<sup>24</sup> Samir Khalaf, Saad Roseanne Khalaf, *Arab Society and Culture: An Essential Reader*

<sup>25</sup> Saniye Dedeoğlu, Adem Y. Elveren. *Gender and Society in Turkey: The Impact of Neoliberal Policies, Political Islam and EU Accession* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Mona Eltahawy, "The World," *Turkish Law Recognizes Women, Men as Equals*, 2002, <<http://womensenews.org/story/the-world/020113/turkish-law-recognizes-women-men-equals>>.

## V. CONCLUSION

### [A] Summary of Discussion

#### *i. Reiteration of Discussion and Summary of Findings*

The Middle East, one of the most geopolitically important regions of the world for both political and cultural reasons, has consistently been recognized and critically analyzed for its conflicting culture and religious practices. The bane of the ever present conflict in the Middle East is the prominent presence of Islam, not only as a widely practiced religion, but as the underlying foundation for most, if not all, aspects of Middle Eastern life and politics. The instability between trying to find a balance between a fair separation between religion and government can be closely tied to literal interpretations of the Qur'an.

In pursuing an analysis of the lives of Middle Eastern women, there exist three interconnecting elements that are evident as the prevailing factors contributing to the findings of this discussion. Firstly, one must examine historical origins of a given nation to determine exactly how prominent Islam is in the cultures and politics in the nation's environment. Next, one must grasp a firm understanding of how Islam affects the politics of a given nation and how such impact therefore affects the social lives of women. Finally, another firm understanding must be grasped; the effect Islam has on lawmakers in a given nation and consequently, the laws of the land. The interaction of these factors plays a dynamic role in the promotion of inequality between the sexes in Middle Eastern states. Furthermore, it can therefore be assumed that the interaction of these factors may provide

the necessary evidence needed to qualify states as *moderate, conservative, or liberal*, in regard to Islamic influence, specifically within the states of Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Turkey.

*ii. Summary of Chapter II. Saudi Arabia*

The state of Saudi Arabia has an inherently Arab imposition with both the power dynamic and rulers of indigenous origins. After the 18<sup>th</sup> century Wahhabi movement, the Saud family continued the task of ruling over the nation and simultaneously introduced Salafi Islam, ensuring that the religion remained prominent amongst the Saudi people through the rule of the Rashidun dynasty into modern day Saudi Arabia. Each ruling family and dynasty throughout the history of Saudi Arabia has ensured that Islam consistently played a prominent role in their power dynamic and structure. Through the strong consolidation and integration of religious beliefs, the Saudi state successfully became the birthplace of Islam and is home to the two holiest shrines of the Islamic religions: Mecca and Medina. Despite the intensity, the eventual introduction and influence of the western world has proposed a destabilizing effect on the kingdom. Additionally, due to Islamic law acting as the source of the monarchy's authority and simultaneously serves as the basis of the conservative customs and social observations within the country, efforts towards westernization have been met by conflict and extreme disapproval. Activists working towards westernization and equality of the sexes have been effectively limited by said conservative customs and social practices rendering little progress as well as much backtracking in the efforts.

### *iii. Summary of Chapter III. Lebanon*

As the creator of the state's political institution, the significance of the Ma'ni Fakhr al-Din II cannot be overlooked when discussing the progressive evolution of the Republic of Lebanon. The effects of later ruling parties and regimes have directly shaped much of the Republic's inherent social and political instability. The subsequent efforts to resolve such instability have resulted in success as well as negative backlash. The fact that religious leaders preserve the right to write law has been particularly significant in contributing to the instability of Lebanon's political and social structure. On the other hand, activists have been extensively successful in overcoming the stalwart traditional approaches regarding differences between the sexes. As an example, women in Lebanon now share civil rights equivalent to Lebanese men. Furthermore, the number of Lebanese women currently attending college has significantly increased. Though social developmental labors have rendered progressive movement towards westernization and gender equality, the challenge presented by such progress has presented a challenge to traditional Islamic leaders causing much conflict between activists and leaders. Both the progress and traditional Islamic leaders are the reasons why Lebanon is considered a moderate Islamic state. Nevertheless, there still remains much that the Republic could do in order to ensure further efforts towards true and full gender equality.

### *iii. Summary of Chapter IV. Turkey*

The current political and social infrastructure of the Republic of Turkey can be largely attributed to the early founders of the new Republic after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. It was during the fall of the Ottoman Empire that women began to organize themselves as feminists for the purposes of improving conditions for women and for true gender equality. Moreover, the feminists of the Ottoman Empire played a large and very active role during the Kemalist movement towards modernization after the founding of the Republic in 1923. Through actions such as replacing the Islamic lunar calendar with the Gregorian calendar, replacing Islamic law with the Swiss Civil Code, and banning both the caliphate and sultanate, it is evident that the Kemalist movement aspired for a modernized state. The Kemalist movement's successful efforts to separate church from state within the Republic have rendered a largely westernized nation with extensive equality between the sexes. The effort to remove Islam from politics and law has markedly had a positive effect on both the social political lives of Turkish women thus rendering the Republic as one of the more liberal Middle Eastern nations. However, despite the successful efforts of westernization activists, there are still portions of the Turkish population that practice traditional Islamic traditions which render a hindrance on the achievement of the image of a fully modernized nation.

## [B] Summary of Findings

### *i. Integration of Data*

The resulting of data incurred throughout this discussion can be broken down into four principal areas of analysis. In the area of historical background, the current lingering effects of the history of each state on its present-day circumstances. The analysis of the Influence of Islam incorporates the general influence that Islamic culture and values have on each state studied. Next, the prominence of Islam on the social and cultural sector is examined. Finally, the influence of Islam on the politics and laws that govern each state are analyzed.

**Table 3. Comparative Analysis of Contributors in Various Areas**

Area of Analysis National Case Study	Historical Background Lingering Effects	Influence of Islam	Social/Cultural	Political/Legal
The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Strong/ Extremely influential	Strong	Women are perceived very lowly on a social level	Women have little to no rights
The Lebanese Republic	Moderately currently influential	Moderate	Women are treated more equally, yet still have many social limitations	Women have many, but still limited rights
The Republic of Turkey	Hardly any current influence	Mild	Women are mostly free to lead social lives as they please	Women have full civil equality and many equal rights

### *ii. Comparative Analysis of Saudi Arabia*

The factors of social and political instability in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia propose a stimulating assessment when observed according to the influence of Islam in the area of analysis. The influence of Islam first began with the state's origins and has continued to remain extremely influential in modern-day Saudi Arabia. The severe influence of Islam on all aspects of Saudi life has resulted in significant consequences on efforts towards generating gender equality. As shown in Table 1, it is expressed that Islamic values and culture have a strong influence on Saudi Arabia. Table 1 expresses that the social and cultural lives of Saudi women have been negatively impacted by the strong influence of Islam and these women therefore are placed very low on the social scale. These women live by strict social rules and in some cases are not permitted to leave their homes without the permission of the male head of household. Lastly, the perceived political and legalities of the lives of Saudi women as influenced by Islam render them little to no rights. It is evident that the stark influence of Islamic value and culture is the prominent factor contributing to gender inequality and violence against Saudi women.

### *iii. Comparative Analysis of Lebanon*

Conversely, an examination of the various areas of analysis in the Lebanese Republic evidently shows a moderately Islamic state. In regard to origin and the influence of Islam, it is evident that there still exists much Islamic influence from previous regimes. It is likewise evident that Islam plays a large role in the social and cultural aspect of Lebanese

women's lives; due to the extensive practice of Islam and literal understandings, Lebanese women live under social restrictions. However, as a modern Middle Eastern state, the Lebanese Republic has achieved a fair amount of secularism by allowing for a significant separation between church and state. Such separation has allowed for a substantially more equal treatment of Lebanese women. Lastly, an analysis of the political and legal aspect of Lebanese life has shown that due to the significant separation of Islam from politics, though many restrictions and inequalities continue to exist, Lebanese women have been granted many newfound rights and laws have been put in place for the purposes of protection and ensuring equality on many levels. To reiterate, although efforts for gender equality and protection have been extensively successful, traditional Islamic activists and influential public figures are contributors to the overall social instability of the Lebanese Republic.

### *iii. Comparative Analysis of Turkey*

A comparative analysis of the Turkish Republic allows support for evidence of the findings of Table 1. In regard to the historical background of Turkey, the Republic has been successful in removing Islamic influence from its government and politics thus rendering a mostly secular state. Further, as a result, since the founding of the Republic, Turkish women share equal civil rights as their male counterparts and are not forced to live under laws that promote gender inequality. Additionally, Turkish women are free to lead their social lives as they please without the many restrictions placed on their sisters in other Islamic Middle Eastern states. Though, much like all its Middle Eastern counterparts, despite the fact that efforts towards modernization in Turkey have been evidently

successful, there still exists a lot of deviance towards modernization thus stunting a fully modernized state. Interestingly, however, the efforts of Turkish leaders to remove Islamic influence from social models and politics have proven to have a stabilizing and positive effect on the ways in which Turkish women live and simultaneously resulted in the creation of one of the most westernized Islamic Middle Eastern nation-state.

### [C] Conclusions

#### *i. Resultant Interpretation*

Each national case study examined in this discussion shows a stark source of social instability of gender inequality between each contributor studied. It seems that not only do these factors independently contribute to the inequality, but they also intertwine and work together resulting in a much larger issue of inequality and instability as a whole. On an independent scale, each contributor proves that there exists significant inequality on the social lives of the women in the countries studied, as well as a significant inequality in the political and legal sectors in the lives of these same women. However, when assimilated into one single effect, it is apparent that the disparity between the sexes is much more distinct than originally thought.

It is arguable that the implications of the findings listed in Table 1 prove that the influences of traditional Islamic value and culture have a direct impact on the social instability and perception of women in Middle Eastern culture. While both the Lebanese Republic and Turkish Republic have experienced a noteworthy amount of successful

progress towards modernization and continue to address the issue, the persistent traditional Islamists residing in each of the discussed nation-states have made full progress a difficult feat. The extremity of the differences between the nation-states implies that the issue of religious influence in each state-structure is highly significant and holds a level of primacy in comparison to other influencing factors. It is the conclusion of this discussion that, in evaluating contributors to social instability and gender inequality, it is evident that the influences of Islam have a direct effect on the existing gender inequalities in Middle Eastern culture.

#### *ii. Unresolved Issues*

In light of the information and subsequent interpretation of this narrative, it is important to hypothesize about the goal of this discussion and its subsequent conclusions by expanding the research to include other Islamic Middle Eastern nation-states and possibly even other Islamic regions.

Bearing in mind the dynamic composition of internal contributors, the necessity of continuous scrutiny, valuation, and alteration takes a prominent role in the continuation of this narrative. This narrative was designed with the intentions of allowing for further future development, and therefore remains only partially complete. Thus, it may be additionally beneficial to discuss other individual factors that may contribute to social instability and gender inequality in order to establish a greater depth of discussion. It is the goal of this narrative to allow for greater analysis into the questions of cause in regard

to social instability studies. It is also particularly important that further research be conducted as to the relationship between external and internal factors; specifically, the influences of outside prominent forces into already existing forces.

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