

Women and Islam: A History, Study, and Analysis of Women's Rights in Indonesia and Egypt

Rachel Boyett

Law and Public Policy

Senior

Sean Nicholson-Crotty

Professor

O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs

Faculty Mentor

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Abstract

History has shown that the patriarchy dominates many of the ways in which the world operates, from politics and economics to health and social norms. As reforms have taken place, there has been a dramatic increase in the advancement of women's rights in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia. The purpose of this research project is to compare women's rights in Indonesia to those in Egypt. Both countries allowed women to vote in the 1950's and later, participate in politics. However, since then, their paths have diverged and women in Indonesia face different problems than women in Egypt. This paper will address the reasons by first understanding the origins, defining the points of change, and finally, analyzing the patterns of current women's rights. By doing so, trends can be traced and analyzed for both countries as well as other countries in similar regions of the world, to predict the future advancements of women on a global level.

Introduction

Women have consistently been viewed as men's less equal counterparts throughout history. The patriarchal system once defined a woman's role as one who supported her husband, cleaned house, cooked meals, and cared for children. Women felt compelled to submit themselves to men's laws and silence their voices. These norms were only reinforced by the laws of governments worldwide. In many countries, women were not allowed to exercise basic rights to vote in elections, divorce their husbands, and inherit property. Additionally, they were subjected to honor killings, domestic abuse, and female genitalia mutilation for varying reasons.

Although times have changed, reforms have taken place, and women have gained recognition in society, women around the world still face these and other struggles due to a lack of rights and an enforcement of those rights. While the United States of America and its western world alliances receive the most publicity for changing the world's view on women and coining new phrases such as "feminism", other countries have and continue to fight similar battles for women, namely countries within the Middle Eastern, Southeast Asian, and North African regions.

As governments of these regions have undergone social and political changes, a problematic area that remains difficult to change is the inequalities that women face. For example, Iraq (located in Central Asia), currently faces heated debates on a woman's legal status, a topic that is as controversial as the methods to restructure the government system. Jordan (located in the Middle East) entertains legislation to increase the penalties for honor crimes (the right to punish or murder a female family member for improper and immoral behavior) which is resisted by its traditional and conservative citizens. These countries specifically, as well as others, face many similar and different debates pertaining to women.

Problems and debates such as these are extremely difficult to change due to the fact that they do not only have legal and philosophical bases, but are also emotionally charged personal struggles that are

embedded in their religion, culture, and politics, and rooted in morality and social order (Kelly, 2010). Many analyses have researched the similarities and differences of women's rights in countries located within the same region. However, this paper will compare countries with similar backgrounds rooted in the same religion, Islam, but located in different regions of the world. Egypt and Indonesia have been specifically chosen for this analysis for several reasons:

1. Both of these countries are Islamic
2. Both of these countries have large middle classes
3. Both of these countries attained women's suffrage in the 1950's

While governments of these two countries have allowed their female citizens to vote, the paths these two countries have taken since diverge. This paper will provide background on the role of Islam, histories of Egypt and Indonesia, as well as a history of women's rights and their current struggles. Additionally, this paper will highlight some of the similarities and differences between the movements. In so doing, one will find that although both countries have Islamic roots, Islam has manifested itself differently in their societal norms, resulting in different laws and norms regarding women. Finally, the importance of the ruler will be highlighted as he/she can completely alter the hopes and dreams regardless of his/her regime type.

Islam & Women's Rights

Islam has over one billion followers, making it the second largest religion worldwide. In sum, Muslims believe that there is only one god - Allah, who has sent prophets to teach the people how to live His law (Badawi, 2017). These and other beliefs are based on their holy book, the Qur'an, as well as the Sunnah. Both of these religious books express mixed views with regards to women. On the one hand, Islam teaches that men and women should be viewed as moral equals in the sight of Allah and as such, are

expected to fulfill the same duties (Badawi, 2017). For example, both men and women should pray, worship, fast, and take pilgrimages to Mecca. Furthermore, Islamic law explicitly emphasizes the nature of marriage being a contract between the husband, wife, and Allah (Badawi, 2017). As such, dowry's are required to be paid to the women, which guarantees their rights of inheritance.

On the other hand, the translation of these and other guidelines into society has resulted in a very conservative culture which is not explicitly expressed in the Qur'an, Sunnah, or by its religious leaders, but rather, has been adopted from patriarchal cultural norms (Badawi, 2017). As a result, there has been a significant problem in addressing and improving the status of women in both Islamic ruled countries as well as countries with large majorities of muslims. Since the mid-nineteenth century, both genders have questioned the restrictions placed on women, specifically with regards to women's education, seclusion, and strict veiling, as well as other problems such as polygamy, slavery, and concubinage (Badawi, 2017).

Egypt

The Arab Republic of Egypt is a Mediterranean country located in the northeastern part of Africa (Smith, 2020). It has one of the longest and richest histories of any country in the world, with its heritage dating back to the Ancient Egyptians. Over time, it has been influenced by foreign empires and regimes, including but not limited to Greek, Persian, Turkish, and Roman influences (Smith, 2020). While it was an important hub for Christianity, it was islamized in the seventh century and today, contains a Muslim majority with a relatively large Christian minority. For the longest while, Egypt was considered a secular country without any official religion (Smith, 2020). However, this changed in 1980 when Islam became the official state religion due to an amendment to the second article of its constitution. The majority of its islamic citizens are Sunni, with minorities of Shia, Mu'tazila, and Ismaili muslims (Smith, 2020).

Modern Egypt was established in 1922, once it gained independence from the British Empire . From 1882-1922, British forces occupied and controlled Egypt (Smith, 2020). During this time, the British forces oversaw the Egyptian budget, trained the Egyptian military, and ran Egypt in order to protect British investments in what is considered to be a veiled protectorate (Smith, 2020). This lasted until approximately 1914, in which Britain declared war on the Ottoman Empire and named Egypt as its formal protectorate (Smith, 2020). In 1922, as British troops departed from Cairo during the First World War, revolutionists and anti-British rebels united, causing Britain to declare Egypt as independent.

Modern Egypt really started in 1922, once it gained independence from the British Empire. Since its time of colonialism, Egypt has grown its economy in as much to be considered one of the largest and diverse economies in the Middle East and a global middle power (Smith, 2020). During its modern age and in the second half of the twentieth century, Egypt has undergone several conflicts and struggles with regards to political instability and has suffered much social and religious strife. Today, Egypt continues to face political unrest, underdevelopment, and terrorism (Smith, 2020).

Feminist Movement in Egypt

Many cite Qasim Amin as the first Arab feminist. He was an Egyptian jurist, member of Egypt's aristocracy, and a supporter of modern Islam (Egypt). During the nineteenth and very early twentieth centuries, he was one of the most prominent advocates of women's rights, who criticized both the veiling and seclusion of women (Freedom, 2005). Additionally, he found the lack of education that most women had and the promotion of marriage at an early age to be troubling and alarming (Freedom, 2005). In 1900, he published the book "Modern Woman", in which he called for a wider role by women in politics (Egypt).

After the vocalization of advocacy on behalf of women, a women's rights movement was soon underway (Gender, 2019). The beginning of this movement began in the 1919 Revolution in which they

played two major roles (Ramdani, 2013). First, Egyptian women raised awareness for women's inclusion in politics, specifically with regards to leadership roles (Freedom, 2005). Secondly, Egyptian women advocated stronger relationships between men and women both in politics as well as in general areas of life (Ramdani, 2013). As a result of this advocacy as well as other influences, a pluralist political system was adopted by Egypt and was later declared in its 1923 Constitution (Egypt). The constitution explicitly expressed:

1. Equality and freedom for both genders;
2. Civil, democratic, and political rights for all;
3. Compartments for women in the 1925 Parliament (Ramdani, 2013).

The women's movement was further aided during the Second World War, in which several women's associations were established (Egypt). These associations, such as the Egyptian Women Union, called for the Egyptian people to be allowed to exercise their full political freedoms, including suffrage and running for election (Freedom, 2005). The campaigns led by this organization, specifically a campaign in 1949, were deemed as legitimate causes as they were supported by famous intellectuals of the time - Taha Hussein and Salama Moussa (Egypt). This specific campaign encouraged women's participation in political life, a topic which both intellectuals supported (Gender, 2019).

By 1956, women were able to vote and stand for elections under the rule of Gamal Abdel Nasser (Egypt). In Article 61 of the 1956 Egyptian Constitution and Article 1 of Law no. 73 of 1956 (Exercise of Political Rights), women were granted the right to vote in Egypt, resulting in women's political participation in the national elections for the first time in 1957 (Egypt). The results included eight women running for 1957 elections (with some actually being elected in July of the same year) (Freedom, 2005). In 1957, one year after women were allowed to vote, women were elected in parliament, namely Rawya Ateya and Amina Shokry, who brought about many monumental 'firsts' for women in Egypt, including the:

- First female minister of Social Affairs
- First Women in Labour Union
- First woman on the Higher Consultative Council for Work and Workers
- First woman on the Board of Directors (Smith, 2020).

By 1971, Egypt's permanent Constitution guaranteed proper coordination between the duties of women towards the family and their work in society, considering both men and women to be equal in political, social, cultural, and economic fields (Egypt). Additionally, it specified that if women were to take advantage of these laws, it would not infringe upon any rules listed in the Islamic Rule (Freedom, 2005). The Constitution also guaranteed that all citizens are and should hold public office on equal footing, as listed in Article 14 (Egypt).

Each of these changes contributed to major shifts in how Egypt was run. A few years later, in 1979, with President Anwar Al Sadat being in power, thirty seats were allocated in parliament to women which was a big shift from the first eight in 1957 (Egypt). There was a shift from a one party to a multi-party system, allowing for some of the parties to mainly focus on women's rights issues (Egypt). The central economy shifted into a market economy, allowing for more women to participate in the workforce (Egypt). And finally, and perhaps most importantly, it established more family rights which shifted responsibility and agency of women from their parents or husbands to themselves (Egypt).

Aid to Women's Rights

The progress seen in the women's rights movement in Egypt could not have happened without aid from multiple sources of support (Egypt). For example, trade unions assisted in advocating and supporting women's working rights while legal quotes ensured a woman's presence in the government system (Freedom, 2005). Furthermore, laws granting equal rights in family matters such as marriage, divorce, and child custody, allowed women to express their voices and subsequently, their opinions more

freely (Gender, 2019). Now, women were allowed to file for divorces respectfully, maintain child custody, and have a say in who and when they married. Successes such as these in Egypt were largely due to the support women had in political parties and councils (Egypt).

The most famous political party to assist with women's rights is the Al Wafd Party while the most famous council to exist on behalf of women is the National Council for Women (Freedom, 2005). The Al Wafd Party, a nationalist party, came about in 1918 in order to voice civil rights concerns and to change the circumstances of its people (Gender, 2019). At the time, Egypt was ruled by the British monarchy which oftentimes resulted in few Egyptian nationals, regardless of gender, to be heard (Freedom, 2005). However, the Al Wafd Party had had enough and demanded to be heard in conferences both abroad in London and at home in Egypt (Egypt). The party largely focused on enhancing and defining civil rights and establishing a constitutional government (Freedom, 2005). For women, it advocated stronger relationships between men and women which was oftentimes voiced through campaigns.

The National Council for Women, an independent institution, was established in the year 2000 by President Hosny Mubarak (Egypt). This government organization was established solely for the purpose of improving women's rights and today, exists for the same reason (Freedom, 2005). Generally speaking, it has been concerned with increasing the development and empowerment of women through advocacy (Freedom, 2005). Specifically, it has focused its efforts on advocating the need to halt violence against women, ban and criminalize female genitalia mutation, and promote female political activity (Gender, 2019).

Current Events with Women's Rights

Effects seen from the twentieth century are present in Egyptian's government system. The 2010 parliament has a new quota of sixty-four parliamentary seats to be given to women, substantially larger than the thirty allotted by President Anwar Al Sadat (Chang, 2018). In the 2011 revolution, both men and

women called for an increase in freedom, equality, justice, and democracy (Gender, 2019). It established that women are important political actors and that they should participate in elections as both voters and candidates (Freedom, 2005). Furthermore, the revolution increased female membership in non government organizations and charity associations as well as in voluntary work (Gender, 2019).

Besides the positive changes seen in Egypt's modern government, positive effects have taken place in Egyptian society (Chang, 2018). Current political parties of women now deliver artistic and cultural presentations in streets, to connect with their fellow citizens, in which they continue the advocacy of women's rights and encourage others to support them (Chang, 2018). The receptive response of these presentations by the public has encouraged women to turn to other venues for support (Chang, 2018). Political parties have also taken to the internet and attracted large audiences in the form of followers, in order to address and educate the public on violence against women and to form initiatives that addresses it (Chang, 2018). While these and other positive effects can be seen throughout Egyptian government and society, Egyptian women still face significant inequality.

Issues Seen Today

Although the women's right movement has come a long way in Egypt, Egyptian women still face many difficulties, including several types of violence against women- harassment, honor killings, and female genitalia mutilation (Freedom, 2005). The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights conducted a survey of approximately one thousand women in Egypt in 2010. Of these women, more than 83% of them, related that they had been sexually harassed at some point in Egypt (Gender, 2019). In another survey by the United Nations, 99.3% of Egyptian women had experienced harassment of some kind (Gender, 2019). Harassments of this nature tend to increase during political activities, such as in the Tahrir Square protests in 2013 (Freedom, 2005). During these protests, Human Rights Watch reported that from the last day of June to the fourth day of May, over ninety-one sexual assaults took place

(Gender, 2019). As a result, a law was established to criminalize sexual harassment (the first of its kind) which has not received a significant amount of enforcement by the government, like many other laws such as those banning honor killings (Gender, 2019).

Honor killings, also known as shame killings, is the action of taking the life of a family member, most oftentimes a female, for bringing shame or dishonor to the family by participating in ill-advised relationships, divorcing of one's husband, or engaging in premarital sex (Freedom, 2005). While it has been mostly eliminated in many western cultures, it has only been recently condemned in other regions of the world. For instance, Egypt's first laws against honor killings were passed in 2011 (Gender, 2019). Despite the fact that these laws have been established in order to attempt ending the occurrence of honor killings, reports have shown that they still take place (Gender, 2019). In 2013, it was reported that a mother and her two daughters were first beaten and strangled before being thrown into the Nile by ten male family members, of which, only half were arrested (Gender, 2019). Although banning actions such as these has shown an increase in awareness by the government, the lack of enforcement of these and other laws protecting women raises many concerns and worries for the wellbeing of women in Egypt (Freedom, 2005).

Laws banning and criminalizing female genital mutilation (FGM), the process of cutting or sewing a female's exterior reproductive organs, also receives little enforcement by the government and society (Gender, 2019). The majority of Egyptian women above the age of sixty (some reports saying up to 95%) have undergone some version of the procedure due to late and lax laws (Gender, 2019). Additionally, many women below the age of sixty have had some form of procedure performed on them. It has been believed and impressed upon females by males that these procedures ensure chastity and honor upon the family (Freedom, 2005). It was not until 2008 that Egypt first banned FGM and weakly enforced the ban. In 2016, when high numbers of FGM were still being reported in Egypt, another law was established, deeming it as a felony (Gender, 2019). While this law has succeeded in reducing FGM

numbers, especially in higher class families, FGM is still a common and well-known phenomenon that still takes place in Egypt today, specifically in middle and lower class families, permanently affecting their physical and mental health. Besides this and other physical inequalities against women, Egypt is prevalent with inequality (Freedom, 2005).

Other significant challenges and setbacks that women have faced in recent years are low marriageable ages and the inability to file for divorce against their husbands (Gender, 2019). A decrease in the promotion of women's education and an increase in the lack of women's education has also been seen (Freedom, 2005). Finally, women still have little representation in their marriages with dominating husbands and in the workforce with belittling male superiors (Gender, 2019). While women and women's organizations continue the fight for equality in Egypt, the increased crackdown and harassment by the government has made it extremely difficult for any progress to be made (Gender, 2019).

Indonesia

Indonesia is located in the southeastern part of Asia and is composed of seventeen thousand islands (History). While being surrounded completely by sea, its neighbors include Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, East Timor, and even Australia. Due to being a strong center for both trade and agriculture, the culture, religion, and the history of Indonesia is very complex, with little history being actually documented (History). In the first millennium, it remained a commercial and agricultural hub with influences from its neighboring countries: China, Japan, and India and their religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam (History). However, Islam did not become the dominating religion of Indonesia until the sixteenth century, in which Java (an island) became a Muslim sultanate (History). While Indonesia received attention from its neighboring states, it did not receive western attention until the Dutch colonized Indonesia in the early 17th century.

The Dutch East India Company was established in 1602 and was viewed as a dominating European power. During this time, very little is documented on Indonesian society, especially with regards to women, which will be explored later in this paper (History). The Dutch colonization period was finally put to an end, when the Dutch lost Indonesia to Japan during the Second World War (History). Indonesia finally gained its long deserved independence from all foreign powers in 1945; however, the Netherlands still recognized it as its colony until 1949. The leader of Indonesia around this time, Sukarno, adopted a dictatorship rule of government until being replaced by General Suharto, a leader supported by the United States of America, in March 1968 (History). General Suharto encouraged foreign investment by other countries, which resulted in a growth in its weak economy. However, his rule is overshadowed by his corrupt and suppressing regime in which the effects, especially with regards to women, can be seen today and will be explored later in this paper.

Feminist Movement in Indonesia

The history of women's rights in Indonesia as previously mentioned, is much more complicated and complex because of the lack of records and evidence specifically relating to women, pre and post the colonial period that lasted until 1949 (Arivia, 2017). This means that Indonesia only has information relating to women for the past seventy years, unlike the thousands of years of documentation from Ancient Egypt (Arivia, 2017). The absence of records pertaining to women is mainly due to the fact that women were considered to be the lesser sex, resulting in women not being given any political authority and leadership positions (Arivia, 2017). It was very difficult for women to socialize with other women and form organizations to unite and advocate their causes due to the highly supported idea that women needed to remain within the walls of their own homes (Arivia, 2017).

For the purpose of this paper, the women's movement in Indonesia is broken into three main segments: the movement pre and post the colonial period, the movement during Japanese rule, and the movement during Suharto's New Order regime.

Pre and During the Colonial Period

Before and during the end of the colonial period of Indonesia, an increase in respect for women was seen in several different areas. First, there was an increase in mixed gender associations (Arivia, 2017). Before this time, men and women were kept separate and were not allowed to associate with each other, especially with non-family members, due to Islamic social norms. Therefore, the allowance of men and women to mix showed a transition from very traditional and conservative social norms to new and modern norms. Second, these interactions enabled joined groups to meet because women were now respected enough to be associated with men (Arivia, 2017). This allowed for both genders to meet together for reasons besides the occasional social call. Third, it gave women recognition (mainly negative) by the government and eventually led them to be viewed as political actors (Arivia, 2017). Finally, it allowed women to form one single organization, Putri Mardiki, in hopes of improving their social status. This organization allowed for women to exchange ideas and opinions which were later synthesized and advocated to the government (Arivia, 2017).

The allowance of these mixed associations, joined groups, and female organizations contributed to establishing a women- only congress. This was able to take place by involving over one thousand members from over thirty women's organizations across the country (Arivia, 2017). Then, these members acted as delegates and were able to isolate several problems regarding women's rights in Indonesia. Specifically, they were able to highlight marriage relations and polygamy, as well as women's access to education. Besides discussing these problems, it allowed for the formation of a national women's federation, enabling more recognition of women by the government.

By 1945, the recognition of women by the government translated into changes in its Constitution (Arivia, 2017). The Indonesian Constitution had changed mostly due to its newly gained independence from the Dutch which allowed for rules to be revisited and revised. One of the revisions of the constitution pertaining to women was the allowance of women to vote in national elections, which would not happen for the very first time until 1955, since a democracy had yet to be established (Arivia, 2017). As women participated in politics, wounds from the past began to heal. Women were not only respected by society but also celebrated (Arivia, 2017). This was portrayed in the establishment of Mother's Day in Indonesia, in which women were appreciated and celebrated for their work, love, and support that they gave their families, societies, and nation. However, the importance of women was soon degraded as men both in society and the government moved towards lessening the significance of the day, leading to women's past wounds being reopened (Arivia, 2017). By the time this had taken place in the early 1940's, a foundation was set for the Japanese to constrict Indonesian women's rights as they began their rule over Indonesia.

Women's Rights During Japanese Rule

Although the Japanese only ruled Indonesia from 1942 to the end of World War Two in 1945, its short rule elicited perhaps one of the most detrimental effects on women's rights in Indonesia (Rhoads, 2012). As a part of its colonization and rule, all but one female organization was terminated (Arivia, 2017). The remaining organization, Fujinkai (Women's Group), was allowed to exist as long as it was strictly regulated and practically dictated by the government. It had two main purposes- one was to fight for the education of women and increase women's literacy rates, and the other was to provide soup kitchens and care for those less fortunate (Arivia, 2017). Although this organization was allowed to exist, it only lasted until Japan lost in the Second World War and retreated from Indonesia (Rhoads, 2012).

Without the presence of the Japanese government, women felt that it was safe for them to be politically active once again (Arivia, 2017). While women felt that their lack of equality demanded to be addressed, women decided that they needed to focus on fighting for nationalism and independence from the Netherlands instead. This acted as a double-edged sword because women needed to be careful to not appear as strong and secular as the western feminist movement, a movement that received contempt from many of Asia's conservative cultures. If they acted similarly to the western women, there was a high possibility of losing support from their conservative counterparts, hindering their own women's right movement (Rhoads, 2012). However, women also believed that if they could raise their just barely-strong voices and contribute to their nation's freedom, then they could be viewed as helpful, legitimate, and worth fighting for (Rhoads, 2012).

The women succeeded in dealing with the blow from the double-edged sword. New organizations for women's rights were established in Indonesia as it finally gained independence from both the Netherlands and Japan (Rhoads, 2012). These organizations were able to assist in pushing for the presence of women in the 1955 national election (Rhoads, 2012). Because of their intense advocacy, they were able to secure four seats in its government system. However, this victory and other victories only lasted for a short period of time as the New Order Regime began its powerful and dictatorial rule over Indonesia (Rhoads, 2012).

Independence and the New Order Regime

Suharto's rule began in 1966 and lasted until 1998, during which, it wreaked havoc on most basic civil rights, but especially, upon rights that women had so strongly fought for. The regime returned the society to what it had once been. Politically active women were replaced with overly domesticated women by changing women's organizations that fought for equality with women's organizations that taught domestication and femininity (Arivia, 2017). No longer were women allowed to act in the political

stage. Instead, they were forced to retreat into their own homes, bow their heads in deference, and perform household duties most perfectly without so much as a complaint (Rhoads, 2012). This new way of society lasted throughout the remainder of General Suharto's New Order Regime.

Although the actions committed against them by the New Order gave little hope for women of Indonesia, a tiny glimmer of hope was soon offered when women found that they were able to secretly meet with each other in their local villages (Arivia, 2017). Under Suharto's repression, Indonesian women were able to gather in small numbers and communicate with other local women in their villages, allowing for small organizations to form. Such organizations, including the Kalyanamitra Foundation and Rifka Annisa, were not just formed but also officially recognized (Arivia, 2017). These organizations and their leaders encouraged women around the nation to change the current conservative culture and to seek education in whichever form they could find (Rhoads, 2012). The movement began with small efforts such as attempting to end cat-calling in the streets and eventually led to larger movements such as fighting against one of the largest global gold mining companies for their harmful effects on the environment (Rhoads, 2012).

Current Events with Women's Rights

Towards the end of the New Order Regime, several feminist organizations implemented strategies to end its rule. In 1996, the first feminist journal was published, the "Women's Journal Foundation", which empowered women through giving them more current updates about the society, government, and world (Rhoads, 2012). Upon its success, this foundation began holding meetings in which women met to discuss how women could assist in overthrowing the authoritarian regime (Rhoads, 2012). Additionally, the women of this journal campaigned against the violence that was still taking place against women (Arivia, 2017). They worked closely with the United Nation Development for Women in order to educate

people on the effects that violence has on democracy. Although this did not end of violence against women, it succeeded in highlighting the importance of ending violence against women and encouraging women to speak up.

By the end of Suharto's rule, women had established a voice for themselves. One of the ways this was accomplished was through published works such as books. During this time, many novels were published by female authors wishing to deconstruct the patriarchal culture of Indonesia by discussing taboo topics (Arivia, 2017). One of these books, *Saman*, was written by Ayu Utami and raised conversation regarding sex, which allowed for it to be regularly discussed by the people as both a form of education as well as an aspect of conversation in social situations (Arivia, 2017). By allowing such discourse, women felt more comfortable with themselves and their sexuality, which ultimately gave them the confidence to seek a voice in society.

As the country became democratized, power was slowly decentralized, positively impacting women. Authority was given to the governments of Indonesia's thirty four provinces, extending to many of its thousands of islands, if not all (Arivia, 2017). By doing so, it allowed women's voices to be heard, especially with regards to their concerns about their current status (Rhoads, 2012). Additionally, a quota system was developed for political parties in order to aid gender equality, which has forced political parties to be 30% composed of women (Arivia, 2017). Although the system allows for women who wish to participate in politics to do so, many women feel hesitant to do so as a result of Suharto's authoritarian regime.

While these changes have made significant improvements for women's rights, one of the best approaches that Indonesia has taken is allocating budgets for gender related issues (Bhardwaj, 2020). This concept can be seen throughout many provincial administrations across the nation, as they ensure that women have enough resources to continue closing the gap between them and men (Rhoads, 2012). These budgets are often used for building more and safer infrastructures, establishing more and better education,

and providing more and accessible healthcare for women (Rhoads, 2012). Each of these approaches hope to address gender equality gaps despite the ever constant challenge of men mainstreaming genders (Bhardwaj, 2020). One hopes that the increase of these budgetary programs will target the specific and separate needs of women, enabling them to feel safe, healthy, and confident (Rhoads, 2012).

Some effects have already been seen as women have made several progressions in Indonesia's society (Bhardwaj, 2020). The Mother Earth Foundation was established in 2003 which has provided twenty-four hour safe havens for women to safely give birth to their children (Rhoads, 2012). Indonesia experienced its first female president, Megawati Sukarnoputri, from 2001 - 2004 being one of the first countries to do so (Bhardwaj, 2020). Given that the women and people of Indonesia have been able to make so many strides within twenty years of a repressive regime, it offers the idea of hope for women in Indonesia to change their social norms (Bhardwaj, 2020).

Issues We see Today

Although the compressing regimes of the Japanese and Suharto have fallen, gender equality is still very much explicit in Indonesia's constitution and apparent in the country in general. While strides have been made in ratifying bills and laws like the "Convention on the Elimination of Violence Against Women", society has been difficult to change, especially with regards to violence (Robinson, 2008). Because the country includes millions of people living across thousands of islands and the lack of past data, it is difficult to note exactly the prevalence of these issues. With that being said, it has been established that violence against women tends to take place across the country, regardless of one's social status (Robinson, 2008). A nationwide survey in 2012 conducted by the Ministry of Women and Child Protection and the United Nations Population Fund, it was concluded that one in three women are affected by violence in their lifetime (Rhoads, 2012). In 2017, the government recorded over 348,446 cases of gender-based violence. The manifestations of gender based violence can take place in a variety of

locations: in the sight of the public and in the privacy of one's own home (Rhoads, 2012). Women are harassed on the streets, trafficked for sexual and domestic needs, battered by husbands, and belittled by men in the workplace (Rhoads, 2012). The common occurrence of violence regardless of location portrays the acceptance of violence against and the inequality of women across the country by both genders and all social classes (Rhoads, 2012).

Another significant issue that raises many concerns about women's rights in Indonesia is the rate of child marriage. According to reports from Unicef, approximately 14% of females are married by the time they reach eighteen (Robinson, 2008). Some sources have said that child marriage is still high because of gender norms, education levels, and legislation. Laws state that as long as the parents of the female consent, females can be married as young as thirteen (Rhoads, 2012). These statistics are alarming to say the least, due to the fact that research has shown that child marriage severely affects the amount of access to education a woman has (Robinson, 2008). Additionally, it increases the rate of sexual and domestic violence. With both of these trends being present, child marriage no doubtedly restricts a female's future (Rhoads, 2012). Besides the violence that takes place against women and child marriage, other issues present difficulties for women in Indonesia (Rhoads, 2012). For example, women in the workforce oftentimes work for cheap labor industries and are exploited (Rhoads, 2012). Other forms of exploitation take place such as sex-trafficking, an industry that is nearly impossible for women (and those trafficked) to escape. Just like Egypt, Indonesia's successes for women have been followed by many setbacks, however, given the progress that women have made, there can only be hope.

Comparative Analysis of Egypt and Indonesia

As stated earlier in this paper, Egypt and Indonesia both gave their women the right to vote in the 1950's but have since drastically changed, resulting in two very different environments for women. As

one takes a deeper look into the two countries' movements and histories, one will notice some similarities and differences in regards to the strategies employed by the women to push women's rights and the strategies employed by the government leaders to resist women's advancements. This portion of the paper will highlight these similarities and differences in hopes of better analyzing the current arena for women's rights and predicting future trends in women's rights for these and other countries.

Similarities

Many women's rights movements across the world have experienced many similarities, enabling women from all over to unite both in person and in spirit. When it comes to the women's movement in Egypt and Indonesia, there are several resemblances between the two movements. First regarding the right to vote, second, regarding the types of regimes, and third, regarding the strategies employed by the women. Each of these similarities are important to take note of because:

- a) Giving women the right to vote in both countries acknowledged a woman's role in society and signalled a change in how governments would later deal with women's movement's issues;
- b) Ruling the government with similar regimes would suggest that results in the success of women's rights would be similar, and yet, in this case, it does not;
- c) Strategizing to gain the attention of the government proved to be difficult for women both in Egypt and Indonesia with some proving to be effective while others ineffective (Moghadam, 2007).

By understanding the likeness of aspects of the women's rights movements in Egypt and Indonesia, one will better understand the differences between the two, as well as the importance of the one constant: Islam.

Voting in the 1950's

The right to vote was achieved during the same time frame but in two very different environments. Women in Egypt took to severe and militarized strategies to garner support despite the fact that women's movements were banned and their organizations were replaced with women's organizations, due to political instability. In 1951, over one-thousand women stormed the parliament and demanded full political rights (Egypt). In 1954, women engaged in hunger strikes because women were not allowed in certain areas. And in 1957, a hunger protest was organized by women which took place during a demonstration against the occupation of Egyptian territories by Israeli forces (Egypt). Finally, in 1956, women were granted both the right to vote and stand for elections in Egypt under Gamal Abdel Nasser (Egypt). The Egyptian Constitution and laws were changed to reflect this change, which enabled women's first official political participation in 1957 (Egypt).

While little is documented about the events that led to women voting in Indonesia, some documentation says that it was not one of the significant obstacles that women had to overcome (Robinson, 2008). Historical references suggest that women in Indonesia rallied for the right to vote as well as the right to be voted as early as 1938. This was a courageous act by the Indonesian women as they both demanded and proposed several resolutions to the foreign ruling Dutch government (Robinson, 2008). These demands and proposals constitute what is now referred to as the Resolution for Involvement of Indonesian Parliament (Robinson, 2008). The Dutch East Indies government responded to the women's cries by allowing for native women to vote and then be voted for (Arivia, 2017). However, it was not until 1945 that the Constitution was changed and it was not until 1955 that women were allowed to vote and be voted for across the nation (Moghadam, 2007).

The allowance of women to vote in Egypt and Indonesia is rightly associated with the right to stand for election (Moghadam, 2007). Almost immediately, if not consequently, women were allowed to

stand for election in both Egypt and Indonesia within the same year as being given the right to vote (Peters, 1995). This allowed women in both nations to represent their gender from their local communities in their parliaments, which enabled more voices to be heard and more issues to gain importance such as, violence against women, women in the workforce, polygamy, etc (Moghadam, 2007). This signalled to leaders of Egypt and Indonesia that women had ideas and wanted those ideas to be advocated, supported, and enforced. While some of their leaders responded positively and opened the doors of discussion to women, other leaders responded with anger and sought to prevent future advancements on behalf of women (Moghadam, 2007).

Authoritarian Regimes

Both Egypt's and Indonesia's governments throughout the past century have been categorized as authoritarian regimes. The government of Egypt has been mainly dominated by authoritarian regimes before and after the rule of the British Empire (Smith, 2020). Egypt was ruled by two kings - King Faud I and King Farouk, the son, with King Farouk beginning the tradition of authoritarian rule (Smith, 2020). After the end of Farouk's rule, as the first president of Egypt, Mohammed Naguib supported terrorist organizations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, and sought to employ his dictatorial ambitions (Smith, 2020). His successor, Gamal Abdel Nasser, was the only ruler to change regimes and sought to reform Egypt, both socially and politically (Smith, 2020). His rule lasted for fourteen years when Anwar Sadat took over for a brief year until his assassination (Smith, 2020). The last noteworthy of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, assumed office from 1981 - 2011, during which he abused his power and corrupted his country. While many of these leaders often led repressive regimes, women in Egypt were oftentimes acknowledged and able to be somewhat politically present unlike the women in Indonesia.

Most of Indonesia's governing leaders have also carried out repressive rulings over its people, under authoritarian regimes, beginning with the Dutch East Indies. The Dutch East Indies established a

social order with a strict hierarchy based on race, oftentimes repressing the Indonesians. The next regime, the Japanese, liberated the Indonesians from the Dutch only to force many of its Indonesians into hard labor and executions (Peters, 1995). By the end of the Japanese rule, Indonesia was tired of foreign rulers and fostered an environment for Indonesian nationalism, giving rise to Suharto, who executed a corrupt and ruthless regime that suppressed the people of Indonesia for thirty years (Arivia, 2017). Many presidents after General Suharto have tried to liberalize and democratize Indonesia, allowing for women to become more present in Indonesia's modern society (Arivia, 2017). However, many of these same leaders have often struggled with the concept of power, and consequently, repressed women and other members of society.

The presence of this type of regime in both countries explains the current economic, political, and social situations in these countries (Moghadam, 2007). Authoritarian regimes often repress their people as they seek iron-like grasps on the country (Peters, 1995). By doing so, the leaders believe that they can succeed in eliminating any potential threats to their power, explaining why minorities, such as women, were often ignored, why their rights were so limited, and why their country has only recently seen modernization (Moghadam, 2007).

Strategies Employed by Women

In both Egypt and Indonesia, women have used similar strategies to advocate on behalf of women's rights (Moghadam, 2007). It should also be noted that these strategies employed by women have been used in other feminist movements across the world such as in the suffrage movement in the United States as well as in the United Kingdom. In sum, there were two main strategies:

- Subtle strategy: subtle strategies include women forming organizations and meetings to discuss issues and then presenting these issues before government authorities (Moghadam, 2007). It also included garnering support from legitimate sources, such as men, and using them to also be

considered as legitimate (Segran, 2015). In some cases, this type of strategy proved to be successful because it was similar to the personalities of the country's ruler. In other cases, it proved to accomplish little, as it did not garner enough attention from other women, men, and local authorities to successfully change anything.

- **Militant strategy:** militant strategies are oftentimes violent strategies with drastic measures (Moghadam, 2007). This type of strategy includes women going on hunger strikes and hunger protests, protesting in the streets, picketing at government buildings, and engaging in violent behavior with local authorities (Segran, 2015). Like the subtle strategies, it has proved to be successful in some cases - showing that women were a force to be reckoned with and the seriousness of the issue. On the other hand, it often angered local authorities, backfiring on women and causing repression once again (Segran, 2015).

Both strategies can be seen in the women's rights movements in Egypt and Indonesia as Indonesian women secretly met with other women or as Egyptian women led protests and stormed government buildings (Peters, 1995). It is important to note the type of strategy that was used at specific points in the movement and if the strategy proved to be effective (Moghadam, 2007). By conducting such an analysis, one finds that both strategies were needed in attaining civil rights (Segran, 2015). While subtle strategies may not break the laws of the country, they have not always proven to be powerful enough to bring about change (Moghadam, 2007). On the other hand, while militant strategies have been viewed as too extreme, they have shown nation's leaders that women are not capable of holding power. Because of the ranging effectiveness of these strategies, it is important to utilize both types of tactics when it comes to fighting for one's rights, including women's rights (Moghadam, 2007).

Differences

Despite the fact that there are similar milestones for the women's rights movement in any country and that the main goal is equality, no movement follows the same exact path. When it comes to the women's movement in Egypt and Indonesia, there are two key differences that should be highlighted- first regarding role of Islam and second, regarding the leader's personality (Moghadam, 2007). These differences are important because:

- a) It shows that although countries can be governed by the same religion, that religion can manifest itself in various ways, resulting in different societal norms and attitudes;
- b) It signifies the importance of one's personality as a leader of a nation and how it can not only affect those that come in contact, but it can also affect an entire nation.

In analyzing the differences in the setting of the women's rights movements in Egypt and Indonesia, one will understand the uniqueness of each country's struggle and how some stereotypes have proven to be wrong.

Role of Islam

Sometimes it is easy to blame differences from what we are accustomed to for current situations. In regards to the issue at hand, it is easy for the western world to hold Islam responsible for the lack of rights that women have in these countries. However, one must recognize that Islam does not instruct societies to use violence against women, conduct female genitalia mutilation, or to subject women to honor killings (Moghadam, 2007). Rather, Islam only instructs how genders should be treated in the Qur'an, which has then been interpreted by society's leaders (Badawi, 2017). This has oftentimes translated into specific, conservative cultures that implement bible-like laws to govern societies with a large presence of Islam. As such, it is easy to assume that Islam is solely responsible for the setbacks

previously discussed. While it may be partly responsible for the ways in which society has treated and continues to treat women, it should not be solely accountable (Badawi, 2017). Therefore, it is important to note the role of Islam in these two countries and how these countries' have interpreted the teachings of the Qur'an differently (Moghadam, 2007).

In Egypt, Islam has influenced its policies with regards to gender since the seventh century. Today, it influences marriage and gender roles as well as the idea of chastity (Robinson, 2008). The Qur'an "gives the man the right of 'guardianship' or 'superiority' in a family", which has been the cornerstone for gender roles and policies regarding a woman's place in society (Badawi, 2017). As such, women were expected to stay at home while men were expected to be the breadwinners, translating into very traditional roles for both women and men. It has made it difficult for women to seek divorces or work and it has also contributed to a general consensus that women should be submissive to men and therefore, should be treated with violence and restrictions (Moghadam, 2007). While there is no specific mention of female genitalia mutilation in the Qur'an, it has been praised as "noble but not required" in other religious texts (Moghadam, 2007). Although government leaders in Egypt have recently established that it has no place in Islamic law, this new attitude will need to be continually enforced if anything is to change.

In Indonesia, the role of Islam has manifested itself differently than in Egypt. In recent years, Indonesia has taken to aspects of Sharia law due to the support by Indonesian nationals for Islamic law as a means of governing society (Badawi, 2017). This type of Islamic law is most commonly used for criminal law and instructs citizens to abide by a strict code of conduct that results in bible-like punishments if disobeyed (Moghadam, 2007). Oftentimes, it proves to be unevenly enforced in Indonesia, especially with regards to women (Badawi, 2017). It requires women's modesty to include wearing the headscarf (hijab) in public places and full length shirts and/or pants to cover up until her ankles and wrists (Robinson, 2008). If this is not obeyed, then a woman can be subjected to caning (Moghadam, 2007). It

also enforces the idea of chastity and honor of the family, which Indonesian society has used as a reason to conduct honor killings, female genitalia mutilation, and child marriage (Badawi, 2017). Other policies have been influenced by Islam, such as marriage, making it extremely difficult for a woman to succeed in divorcing her husband (Robinson, 2008).

While there are many more rules, laws, and norms in both Egypt and Indonesia which have been influenced by Islam for centuries, it is important to note how it has translated differently into both societies (Moghadam, 2007). There are several theories as to why:

- The religiousness of the leaders influences how much religion will be enforced in society;
- The religiousness of citizens influences how much religion will play a role in society,
- The interpretations and recommendations of religion by national scholars and leaders may result in different outcomes of how much religion should be utilized.

1st Level of Analysis: Leaders

Despite the fact that both countries were governed by similar government styles, authoritarian regimes, leaders made a difference in how much a woman's role in society was restricted. This is probably one of the most significant differences between Egypt and Indonesia that has contributed to the very different environments for women today (Moghadam, 2007). As they are well aware, leaders have an overwhelming amount of power to either restrict or assist a movement (Peters, 1995). Their enforcement, or lack thereof, can contribute to how much a movement can succeed and how much a society can change (Moghadam, 2007).

Although Egypt and Indonesia were both ruled by mostly authoritarian regimes during the twentieth century, societies were affected very differently. Egyptian leaders were often controlling and power hungry, leading them to ban any threat to their power (Smith, 2020). This meant that large types of women's movements were eradicated so as to not threaten their rule. Despite this restriction, Egyptian

women were still allowed to gather together and utilize different strategies to garner support for their cause, which led to many of their successes (Smith, 2020). On the other hand, Indonesian leaders were so controlling and power hungry that all types of women's movements, both large and small, were deemed as threats and banned. At the core, women were not allowed to socialize with one another, which translated to not being allowed to form organizations on the larger scale. This made it very difficult for any progress to be made on the front of the women's rights movement and resulted in a very repressed movement.

In Egypt, Egyptian women were occasionally given a break from harsh leaders as the leaders turned a blind eye to their cause or knowingly allowed women to carry on with their movements. This allowed women to make a presence in the workforce and politics. Additionally, it allowed for women to make progress in advocating their cause to women, men, and government officials across the nation (Smith, 2020). By being given this type of freedom, women blossomed and showed society their capabilities of being able to work and advocate, all while taking care of their children and families (Kelly, 2010). On the other hand, women in Indonesia were always under the strict scrutiny of its authoritarian leaders. After the Dutch finally left Indonesia, the Japanese leader kept a keen eye on women and banned all except one organization (Kelly, 2010). When Suharto took over, this organization fell apart and all socialization between women was banned. This prevented women from expressing their ideas and making strides for over seventy-five years, taking a significant toll on the movement.

Concluding Remarks

The women's rights movement has been a struggle in every nation for the past thousands of years. While leaders have attempted to silence women, women have never been prevented from dreaming of a day in which they could be respected and treated as men's equals. These dreams are what motivates

women all over the world to stand up for themselves and fight for their rights. Across time and nations, women have fought tooth and nail for equality, resulting in giant strides being made. Just like western women, women in Indonesia and Egypt have achieved significant progress in advancing women's rights and should thus, be celebrated. These women have achieved such progress during difficult times and under difficult leaders. Successes in these nations have come in the form of attaining the right to vote and the right to be voted for, accessing education, attempting to eliminate violence against women, and even forming secret organizations. These successes were made possible by utilizing both subtle and militant strategies, such as garnering support from legitimate sources (such as men), forming organizations and associations that advocate women, gaining political presence in revolutions, riots, and movements, and breaking the rules of society.

Critics will say that these catalysts have made little to no progress in their struggle compared to other movements around the world. However, Adora Svitak, a Tedx speaker, said that "success on the front of women's rights will look like a world not only with obvious advances, where no girl is denied access to education for instance - but also one with more subtle changes in how we regard gender and gender stereotypes." Women in Egypt and Indonesia have been able to subtly change society's views on women and have advocated their rights. Women in these and other countries need to be continuously celebrated for standing up for themselves and fighting for change. As they continue to stand up for themselves, they stand up for women all over the world, without even realizing it.

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