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Authenticating Representation: Women's Quotas and Islamist Parties

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The spread of women's quotas[1] in legislative bodies across the world since the mid-1990s has become one of the most significant factors impacting levels of women's political representation (Dahlerup 2013; Krook 2009; Tripp and Kang 2008). In the Middle East, a region that has long held a place at the very bottom of global rankings of women's representation, the adoption of such quotas is transforming levels of representation (Kang 2009). But there is still much debate over the utility of quotas for women's meaningful participation in political life. There is now a well-established literature that examines the effects of quotas on women's descriptive or numerical representation. We have a fairly robust idea about the types of quotas that are appropriate for particular sets of electoral system contexts when the goal is to generate a target percentage of women elected to legislative bodies (Jones 2005; Larserud and Taphorn 2007). However, questions about whether and how quotas benefit women beyond the simple addition of several women parliamentarians to the political game remain contested. The various arguments for the utility of quotas rest mainly on two underlying

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1. The literature often refers to such quotas as "gender quotas." However, "[e]ven when quotas are framed in gender-neutral language . . . the discourse surrounding gender quotas has focused on the underrepresentation of women" (Murray 2014, 500). For this reason, I find the terms "women's quotas" or "sex quotas" more appropriate for this paper.

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propositions. The first is that quotas, by bringing more women to the political sphere, promote the substantive representation of women's interests. The second is that quotas have a symbolic effect. They help demonstrate that women are fit and able to govern and so contribute to countering women's historical exclusion from politics.

This article argues that in the Middle East context quotas have a tremendous symbolic effect. It shows that while substantive effects are hard to assess, quotas, even in their most flawed form, in fact contribute to a transformation in attitudes toward women's role in the political sphere. By examining the impact that women's quotas have on ultraconservative religious parties — affiliated with Islamist movements that advocate a strict sex-based division of labor — this article identifies the significant symbolic utility of quotas in the Middle East. The study traces variation in the electoral campaign rhetoric and policies pertaining to women's representation pursued by Islamist parties across three quota contexts: (a) the Palestinian Hamas in the 2006 Palestinian national election, in which a 20% women candidate quota for national party lists was legislated; (b) the Egyptian Muslim Brothers in the 2010 parliamentary election, in which 64 reserved seats for women were added to the Egyptian parliament and; (c) the Islamic Movement in Israel, where quotas are not legislated but where some parties adopt voluntary quotas. The article demonstrates that even though Islamist parties remain among the most vocal opponents of quota policies, when they compete in electoral frameworks that stipulate a women's quota, they not only nominate women as candidates, but also extensively labor to convince their supporters and potential voters that women are fit and able political leaders. Paradoxically, while often denouncing the quota system, Islamists contribute to positively changing the discourse on women's representation. They do so by arguing that their own decision to appoint women should not be attributed to the quota requirement, which they see as a foreign imposition, but rather to authentic, indigenous Islamic principles that support women's political participation.

The article first shows that legislated candidate quotas (Palestine), which guarantee a significant percentage of women on candidate lists, lead to a noticeable transformation in the discourse and practices of ultraconservative religious parties. Second, reserved seats in an authoritarian context and with a highly biased design (Egypt), although significantly contributing to the tainting of the quota system by its association with authoritarian practices, still lead Islamist parties to pay greater attention to and discursively legitimate the role of women as

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political leaders. In both the Palestinian and Egyptian cases, Hamas and the Muslim Brothers respectively had to not only justify, argue for, and defend their inclusion of women candidates in response to quotas, they also had to convince supporters and potential voters that this inclusion was grounded in authentic Islamic doctrine and was not simply a concession to secular and liberal women's advocacy efforts or to Western influences. The large number of women candidates in both cases also contributed to a critical mass in terms of the public attention these parties had to devote to the issue of women's representation. Finally, in the absence of legislated quotas (Israel) Islamist parties can continue to ignore the question of women's representation all together, devalue it, or, when pressed, rationalize noninclusion.

THE BENEFITS OF QUOTAS: SUBSTANTIVE VS. SYMBOLIC EFFECTS

There is a growing body of literature that aims to empirically test utilitarian arguments in support of women's descriptive representation and of women's quotas by investigating the substantive and symbolic effects of increased representation. To gauge substantive effects, scholars have examined elected women's attitudes, policy focus, political style, or their ability to pass legislation that is considered advantageous to women (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004; Swers 2002; Taylor-Robinson and Heath 2003). Some studies examine the attitudes of women representatives toward women's issues and toward gender equality, or their stated interest in such matters. Others look at their legislative style and policy priorities for the extent that these are or are not different from those of male legislators and represent a women's agenda (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Reingold 2000; Schwindt-Bayer 2006). Others look at the policy outcomes that women in legislative bodies are able or unable to produce. (See discussion in Htun, Lacalle, and Micozzi 2013).

But several critics have pointed out the significant problems with a focus on substantive representation, which stem from the difficulty of identifying "women's interests" — or the *substance* of substantive representation. Much of the focus of studies on substantive representation has been on feminist legislation and efforts to promote gender equality. There are two significant risks with this approach. First, by focusing on women's substantive involvement in "women's issues" we run the risk of essentialism (Mansbridge 2005). The expectation that women politicians

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should represent women could imply that women somehow share essential traits with women constituents that should lead them to better represent women as a group. This may also, inadvertently, imply that women are less able to or should not strive to represent men as well. If we judge the effectiveness of quotas by the extent to which elected women work to promote a women's agenda, we risk ignoring the contribution of women representatives on a variety of other issues that are unrelated to women. The second risk could be termed "feminist bias." The expectation that women elected through quotas would enact women-friendly policy change "overlooks the fact that these measures are not feminist quotas but gender quotas . . . that seek merely to increase the number of women in political decision making, separate from any obligations to change policy outcomes" (Krook 2006, 111).

In the Middle East, as elsewhere, elected women might not pursue a feminist agenda not only because they themselves are not feminist, but also because the women and men who had voted for them are not feminist (Celis and Childs 2012). The example of Islamist parties is a case in point. Many women vote for these parties — at times in greater numbers than they vote for parties with a more progressive gender agenda — and do not expect these parties or their women representatives to promote a feminist agenda. In fact, the political and social discourse of these parties and the religious movements they are affiliated with often encompasses a great deal of explicitly antifeminist language. For these reasons, while the link between descriptive and substantive representation is important to the discussion of quotas, the several pitfalls associated with this approach make it conceptually challenging — even more so in the Middle East.

The arguments for quotas that rest on their symbolic utility provide more robust grounds for evaluating the desirability of quotas and their effect in the Middle East. The symbolic benefit of quotas is that by bringing a greater number of women into the political game, they can reshape engrained conceptions about the relationship between women and politics, or women and political leadership. Quotas work symbolically by "creating a social meaning of 'ability to rule' for members of a group in historical contexts where that ability has been seriously questioned" (Mansbridge 1999, 628).

The evidence for positive symbolic effects of women's descriptive representation is largely drawn from the United States, but research elsewhere has also shown some positive links. Studies that have attempted to measure this aspect have generally operationalized symbolic

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effect in two ways. One measure is the extent to which having a woman in office influences other women to be more interested and engaged in politics (i.e., whether seeing women in politics contributes to closing the political knowledge and participation gender gaps (Atkenson 2003; Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006; Reinglod and Harrell 2009). Most of these studies identify a positive effect (but see Dolan 2006 for no effect). Another measure, less often employed, is voters' attitudes toward women representatives. Such studies find that having a woman in office often increases voters' belief in women's ability to govern (Alexander 2012; Burnet 2011).

The symbolic effects that quotas could generate are even more important in countries where the majority of the population does not see a significant role for women in political leadership. The Middle East has scored consistently high on survey questions measuring agreement with the statement that "men in general make better leaders than women." Often levels of agreement with this statement are between 70% and high 80% of respondents in some Arab countries.[2] In such a context where the majority of the population views women as less qualified for political leadership, and where many women themselves may not be supportive of a feminist agenda, the main utility of quotas is their symbolic consequences.

In these countries, religious movements and parties often historically represent the most conservative and usually highly popular positions on gender roles and the appropriate, distinctive avenues for men and women to operate in public. The Association of the Muslim Brothers, which was established in Egypt in 1928 and has spawned offshoots throughout the Middle East, provides a useful case study for the effect of quotas on such ultraconservative political actors. Women have always had an important activist role in the doctrine of the Muslim Brothers (MB), but their role in political leadership has been intentionally circumscribed. Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the MB, stressed in his writings the importance of sex-segregation, arguing that women and men should operate in distinct spheres and decrying the moral dangers of public mixing of the sexes. Emphasizing women's primary roles as mothers and wives first, and as *da'iyat* (the promoters of piety inside the family and among other women), al-Banna did not see a role for women in the state's representative bodies (al-Banna 1950).

2. Arab Barometer Surveys: Palestine: http://www.arabbarometer.org/sites/default/files/county reportpalestine2.pdf; Egypt: http://www.arabbarometer.org/sites/default/files/countyreporty egyptII.pdf (last accessed November 24, 2015).

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However, participation in electoral politics, whether in democratic or electoral authoritarian settings, has had a significant impact on the MB and their Islamist movement offshoots elsewhere, leading to ideological and practical transformation (El-Ghobashy 2005; Langhor 2001; Schwedler 2011). One important aspect of Islamist participation in the electoral game, which has not been studied sufficiently, is the way institutional design interacts with such movements' gender ideologies to produce transformation in their practices and discourse. A clear change in the way Islamist movements that share the founding ideological tenets of the Muslim Brothers speak to their constituencies and potential voters on questions of gender and women's roles in politics as a consequence of their interaction with electoral quotas constitutes a noteworthy symbolic benefit of quotas. Moreover, that this change can occur not only in places where the quota is descriptively effective, but also in contexts where it is incredibly impeded by flawed or biased design, as in the case of Egypt, further lends support to quotas' symbolic effect. Even in the absence of a descriptive and sustentative representation effect, quotas' symbolic effect may still hold and merit emphasis (Burnet 2011; David and Nanes 2011).

The reason for the selection of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers, the Palestinian Hamas, and the Israeli Islamic Movement for this paper is that these three movements are the closest to each other historically, ideologically, and operationally. Both the Palestinian and Israeli movements have been originally established as local branches of the Muslim Brothers, and they share its founding ultraconservative gender ideology. There are, of course, many other Islamist movements that have based themselves on the Egyptian Muslim Brothers model, including, for example, those in Tunisia, Syria, Jordan, Yemen, and Libya. However, the three movements in this study maintain close ideological and operational ties to each other, and the leadership in Palestine and Israel looks to Egyptian Muslim Brothers spiritual guides for authoritative instruction on doctrinal matters. Due to these intimate ties, the underlying gender ideology of the three movements is almost identical, and variation in their policies and practices with regard to women's representation, as we shall see, is determined by the quota context in which they operate rather than by any significant doctrinal difference. This selection, therefore, is close to a "natural experiment" in that we can, in a sense, follow one Islamist movement across three quota contexts in order to identify the effects of quotas on its political behavior.

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LEGISLATED CANDIDATE QUOTAS AND THE PALESTINIAN ISLAMIC RESISTANCE MOVEMENT (HAMAS)

Since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994, a lobby of women's NGOs, united under the National Campaign to Advance Women's Participation in Elections, has constantly pressured legislators for the introduction of a women's quota in local and national elections. Although all Palestinian factions persistently resisted the quota, it was the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, that published an official position against the quota, claiming that it contradicted the Palestinian Basic Law, that it discriminated on the basis of gender, and that it would lead to unqualified representatives (Haas 2005). The movement also expressed a view, which it continues to hold, that women should be barred from serving in the position of head of state. Representatives of the movement argue that "Hamas' refusal to allow woman to take the position of president is a matter of Islamic Law, which is derived from the saying of the Prophet, 'a people that places their affairs at the hand of a woman will never prosper'" (Lahlouh 2010, 33). But in 2005, the Palestinian women's movement through lobbying efforts at the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) succeeded in adding a women's quota to the new Palestinian election law (Allabadi 2008). For parliamentary election, the quota mandated that parties include one woman among the first three candidates on their proportional representation (PR) closed list, at least one woman among the next four candidates, and one woman among every five candidates throughout the rest of the list (Law no. 9, 2005). Because half of the PLC members are elected though the PR system and another half from multimember districts, and because the quota only applied to the PR component, the quota guaranteed the inclusion of about 20% women among all candidates. The quota increased the ratio of women elected to the PLC from 5.6% in the 1996 election, to 13% in the 2006 election.

Hamas formed the Change and Reform Party for the 2006 election. This was the first time the movement participated in parliamentary election, having boycotted the first election of 1996. Like other parties, Hamas abided by the quota requirement and included 13 women candidates on its national PR list. Also, like its main rival, the Fatah movement, Hamas did not run women candidates in any of the multimember districts.

But Hamas did not simply add women to its list. It carefully chose high-profile civil society figures with vast experience and outreach gained through work in Hamas' social service and charitable organizations

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where women have historically played a central role (Roy 2011). It also exerted tremendous efforts during the election campaign to correct what it called a false image of Islamists as restrictive of women's public roles, particularly women's roles in formal politics. A significant portion of Hamas' focus on this issue aimed at convincing the public that Hamas' inclusion of women did not stem from capitulation to the agenda of the feminist women's movement. Rather, Hamas' decision to include women, the movement argued, stemmed from an authentic commitment to Islamic principles. Thus the movement worked to legitimate and make indigenous, authentic, and Islamic the practice of women's participation as parliamentary candidates and elected representatives. It worked to convince its supporters and potential voters that women were indeed capable of serving as elected representatives and that this was in fact a part of their Islamic tradition rather than a break from it.

It is not surprising that Hamas would worry about appearing as capitulating to the quota requirement that was imposed through the work of the women's movement. While women are prominently active in Hamas' ranks, most significantly in its social service and proselytizing sectors, the movement's political and military leadership is exclusively dominated by men. In addition, the founding documents of the movement and much of its literature and discourse since its establishment in the late 1980s advocate a strict adherence to a religiously sanctioned sex-based division of labor. While Hamas has empowered women through educational and professional opportunities and various forms of assistance, it has always stressed that women's primary roles are to be wives and mothers and that their most important commitment is to the home. (For a review of Hamas' gender politics, see Ben Shitrit 2015, Sh'hada 1999.). Some of this familiar discourse was still present during the 2006 election campaign. For example, in a campaign rally Ismail Haniya, number one on Hamas' party list, explained that the Palestinian woman "is the mother and sister and the wife and the daughter, who raises the heroes and martyrs and the next generation."[3]

Given Hamas' well-known stance on "traditional" gender roles, its decision to include so many women candidates on its list could appear as an acceptance of a feminist agenda that Hamas has consistently denounced. Hamas' candidates therefore insistently stressed in interviews

3. *Al-Risala*, January 5, 2006 p.2.

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and articles in the movements' paper, *Al-Risala*, that they still abided by their rejection of this agenda. As Shaykh Al-Astal, a high profile candidate from Khan Younes explained, the Palestinian society is

> . . . plagued by organizations that target women in the name of countering injustice and activating their roles, and other empty words and weak excuses. But they in fact implement the foreign agenda of their donors, who provide money to make the Palestinian women rebel against her religion and her morals and our traditions.[4]

Many of Hamas female and male candidates denied in interviews that the movement included women due to the quota requirement in the new election law, insisting that Hamas from its establishment has been conscious of the role and status of women.[5] Um Nidal Farhat, one of the highest-placed women candidates on the list, for example, explained that Hamas' decision stems purely from adherence to Islamic principles, arguing,

> Those who say that Islamic movements undermine women's roles are wrong. The Islamic movements are the ones who give women their rights, more than any other movement, because they derive their thought from Islam, which does not deny women their political rights and has made their role complementary to men's in all areas of life.[6]

Fathiya Qawasme, another candidate, drew on the Quran, Islamic history, and the *sharia* (Islamic Law) as sources of legitimization for her participation in politics. Quoting verse 9:71 of the Quran, she explained that there is a clear textual evidence that the work of "enjoining the good and forbidding the evil" as stipulated in the verse is the duty of both men and women and that the improvement (or reform) of society is entrusted in the hands of every believing man and woman. The Muslim woman, she said, has already proven herself capable of this important work through her significant endeavors in and contribution to Hamas' social, educational, and religious organizations. Qawasme used women's undisputable accomplishments in social work, a realm that is considered to a certain extent to be a "women's sphere," in order to support women's participation in politics.[7]

4. *Al-Risala*, January 12, 2006, p.7.
5. *Al-Risala*, December 15, 2005, p.5.
6. Ibid.
7. Palestine Information Center, "An Interview with Fathiya Qawasme: The Palestinian Women is a Partner in Resistance, Decision Making and in Development," August 2005.

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Even though in entering the political sphere women seemed to be entering a "male domain" and undertaking work that is perceived to be the work of men, Qawasme draws parallels between social work and political work in explaining that both are aimed at helping, developing, and serving society.[8] Samira Halaiqa, another candidate on the Hamas list, stressed women's endurance of the Israeli military occupation as the distinguishing factor in their activism and the greatest challenge they have had to face.[9] Women's proven political activism and contribution to the religious-nationalist struggle made them, according to the candidates and Hamas' publications, suitable leaders and politicians.

Echoing this approach, prior to the election Hamas published on its web site a fatwa by its affiliate, the Palestinian Ulama Association, on women's participation in the election.[10] The text announced that women's participation in the election is permitted according to Islam. This position, the text explained, rests on "numerous Quranic verses and *ahadith* (accounts of prophet Muhammad's sayings and deeds) as well as historical accounts of the lives of the prophet's companions." The fatwa further declares, "Islam gave women the right to share with men in voting, being nominated as parliamentary candidates, holding positions in representative bodies and other general governmental and administrative posts." The symbolic effect of the quota here is paradoxical. While Hamas candidates, and the movements' publications and social media platform expressed a reluctance toward and at times outright opposition to the women's quota and the political agents that have advocated for it, they generated an unprecedented amount of discursive support for women's political representation. Moreover, they couched this support in Islamic principles, making women's inclusion a central tenet of the movement's religious-political outlook.

Alongside authenticating women's political representation as an Islamic principle, during the election campaign the movement also worked to convince its voters and the general public that women made capable leaders. Campaign activities for women and women's electoral efforts, for instance, received unprecedented attention. Women candidates featured prominently in Hamas' publications and social media and were

8. Hamas Women's Branch in Gaza distributes a weekly newsletter in which the activities of the branch are described. These include not just *da'wa*, social, educational, and charity work, but also participation in demonstrations and public protest.

9. Personal correspondence with Samira Halaiqa, 2011.

10. Palestine Information Center, "The Palestinian Ulama Association Approves of Women's Participation in the Election," October 13, 2005.

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described as apt leaders with extensive experience. In these profiles, the candidates were described as being untiring public figures while maintaining their commitment to their homes. Some candidates explained that their first duty is as housewives and that they strive not to let their public work interfere with their housework for the sake of their families.[11] Others, like the candidate Samira Halaiqa, argued that "when women only devote themselves to housework and nothing else, many of them just waste most of their free time on unimportant or useless things."[12] Many candidates explained that women's entry into the political realm will allow them to focus on the issues and concerns of women, while others argued that Hamas women will be involved in all policy areas and will represent the entire population.[13]

In some profiles, the candidates' husbands also offered their perspectives, emphasizing their support for their wives and for women's political leadership. Some explained how they have started to help with housework while others stressed that men should accept the personal sacrifices entailed in a wife's public work for the greater good of society and the nation. The following quote from a Hamas' piece on the husbands of candidates reflects how the movement strove to alleviate the concerns of a traditional audience over women's leadership, and to highlight the compatibility between women's representation, Islamic activism, and the realities of a traditional society:

> Women's decision to enter the public realm in a society that still possesses many traditional ideas about women's roles doubtlessly raises questions about the position of their husbands and their feelings, and even more so when the issue involves the wife's entry into parliament. Will the husband accept his wife's rising to such a prominent position and social status as a member of parliament? Especially as her new responsibility, which is not confined to regular hours, might come at his expense or at the expense of his home . . . When Hamas decided to nominate women it proved wrong the conviction of many who did not think that Islamist women[14] would be allowed to take certain positions and duties, and that Hamas will not allow them to do so. Moreover, many in our society thought that their [Hamas women's] husbands would not be able to be so understanding and encouraging of their leading wives, [to such an extent] that they

11. *Al-Risala*, January 12, 2006, p. 3.
12. *Al-Risala*, January 23, 2006.
13. *Al-Risala*, January 12, 2005, p. 3; January 5, 2006, p. 14, December 8, 2005, p.12
14. Actually "Muslim women," but here means women affiliated with Hamas, so I translated as "Islamist women."

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> would be able to say: "the day has come when it is possible to say that behind every great woman there's a great man."[15]

In a different vein, Jamila Shanti, the highest-placed woman on the Hamas list (third) and head of Hamas women's branch in Gaza admitted in an interview that her elevated placement on the list was in fact due to the quota requirement. She also expressed a hope that through her entry into parliament she will facilitate an increase in women's representation even further in the future.[16] In addition, new voices appeared even on the issue around which there seemed to be a consensus in Hamas — the religious objection to placing a woman at the head of the affairs of the community. Huda Naim, for example, who was seventh on the Hamas parliamentary list, stated that there is a disagreement on the issue among religious scholars, with some accepting and some rejecting this stipulation. In an interview she advised women to

> excel and strive and compete strongly and succeed in the arenas in which women are present. If women succeeded as ministers and as parliamentarians and in other positions, then the discussion about the possibility of [a woman] assuming the presidency would make sense. A woman's performance is what would do her justice, if she excelled the doors will open before her" (Lahlouh 2010, 34).

Samira Halaiqa later expressed a similar position, claiming that there is no agreement among the *ulama* and pointing that there is significant evidence in the Quran and the Sunna to suggest that women do have a right to participate in such work in accordance with necessity and the general interest of the Muslim community.[17]

In the 2006 election, Hamas' national list won 29 seats, out of which women held six seats. Hamas' rival, the Fatah movement, won 28 seats, out of which eight were occupied by women. Sixty-six of the PLC seats were won through national party lists. (The PLC has 132 seats.) The rest of the parliament members were elected by districts where no women's quota was required. In the short-lived unity government that Hamas and Fatah formed after the election, the appointed minister for women's affairs was a Hamas MP, Amal Siam. However, tension between the two movements and external pressure from Israel and the United States, which considered Hamas a terrorist organization and sanctioned the unity government, led to the outbreak of a violent clash between Hamas

15. *Al-Risala*, January 23, 2006.
16. *Al Risala*, January 5, 2006, p. 14.
17. *Women for Palestine*, November 28, 2010.

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and Fatah. This led in 2007 to the takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas and the West Bank by Fatah. No parliamentary elections have taken place to date, due to this continued dispute. From the 2006 experience, it is evident that the quota had played an important part in advancing women's political representation among all Palestinian political factions, including Hamas. Symbolically, the quota also forced Hamas to articulate a clearer position on women's political role than it has ever done before. It also compelled the movement to authenticate its decision to place women candidates high on its list as a move stemming from Islamic principles and commitments rather than a capitulation to feminist pressures.

RESERVED SEATS AND THE EGYPTIAN MUSLIM BROTHERS

As Aili Tripp (2015) has shown, authoritarian and semiauthoritarian regimes adopt quotas in similar rates as democratic regimes do. The reasons for quota adoption under different regimes are also often similar, spanning the impact of international norms, pressures from donors, internal mobilization by women's movements, the desire to appear modern and enhance democratic credentials, and often in the case of the Middle East and Africa, conflict with an Islamist opposition. However, authoritarian countries tend to prefer the form of reserved seats for women over candidate quotas for parties. In countries where the space for activity by opposition parties is highly limited or nonexistent, and where the regime strives to maintain a tight grip over electoral outcomes, reserved seats for women are preferred as they can yield more predictable results (Tripp 2015).

In June 2009, Egypt adopted a women's quota, stipulating an additional 64 reserved seats for women in the parliament to be elected in specified electoral districts. The move was an initiative of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) and was highly contested by all opposition parties. Egypt, which has maintained very low rates of women's representation since women gained suffrage in 1956, had a fraught history with women's quotas. The country had experimented with reserved seats for women, imposed in 1979 by then President Anwar Saadat, that increased the number of women in parliament, almost all of them from Saadat's ruling party, from 1.6% to close to 10%. However, reserved seats were ruled unconstitutional by the Egyptian Supreme

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Court in 1986, and subsequent women's representation rates fell to an average of 2.5% in elections from 1987 to 2005 (Tadroz 2010).

The reserved seats system of 2009 was criticized by foreign observers, some local feminist activists, and opposition parties, all arguing that they were designed to benefit only women associated with the ruling NDP (Bradley 2010; Hill 2010; Topol 2010). The main problem was that the electoral districts designated for the women's seats were several times larger than the regular electoral districts. The seats were associated with Egypt's 29 governorates, which encompass 222 districts (Topol 2010). This meant that in order to reach the vast constituency in her district, a candidate running for such a seat would have to expend tremendous effort and financial resources to a far larger extent than candidates in the regular districts. This created a clear advantage for women associated with the ruling NDP, who had the backing of a well-funded and hegemonic political machine. Coupled with intimidation and fraud by the regime in the first round of the 2010 election, the Muslim Brothers boycotted the second round of the election, and only NDP women won the 64 reserved seats.

Nevertheless, even under such a flawed design, the 2009 quota had a strong symbolic effect on the discourse and electoral campaign decisions of the Muslim Brothers (MB) with regard to women's representation before the first round of the election. While the MB had evolved in its thinking on women's political participation from the very limiting perspective of its founder, Hasan al-Banna, women's candidacy among the MB members vying for a parliamentary seat had been highly circumscribed since the 1980s, when the MB began its electoral efforts in earnest, until the 2010 election. The first women's branch of the MB was established in 1933 in Ismailiya and was revitalized with the explicit encouragement of Hasan al-Banna in 1944. The women's branch, which later came to have a presence throughout the country, worked in the fields of proselytizing among women, in education, and in social and cultural services (Dastuqi 2011). Women were not represented in the political bodies of the MB.[18]

The MB renewed participation in the electoral game since the 1980s had begun to transform the organization. According to Mona al-Ghobasy, "The institutional rules of authoritarian electoral politics have led to both organizational and ideological change within the group"

18. With the exception of Zainab al-Ghazali, who was a member of the organization's Guidance Bureau (*maktab al-irshad*) in the 1960s (Bajes 2013, 35).

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(Al-Ghobashi 2005, 374). One of the examples of this change came in March 1994, when the MB issued a statement on women's rights and party pluralism, asserting women's right to vote and to run for public office, except for the highest executive office — that of head of state. This was followed by the candidacy of Jihan al-Halafawi in the 2000 election, the first woman from the MB to run in parliamentary election. Her participation was not solicited by the MB. It was her own initiative, but she mangaged to convince the leadership to support her move (Dalal 2013, 38). In 2005 the MB again had one woman candidate, Dr. Makarem al-Diri, but like al-Halafawi before her, she was not elected to parliament. The candidacy of al-Halafawi and al-Diri did not have much of an impact on the election campaign of the MB. A review of MB publications and social media platforms from 2005, for instance, reveals very little coverage of al-Diri's campaign or attention to the issue of women's political representation. And although women voters and activists were essential in bringing about the unprecedented success of the MB in the 2005 polls, in which they won 88 seats in parliament, much of the MB discourse on women's political participation remained highly limiting. For example, articles warning against the dangers of "mixing" of the sexes in MB women activists' work during the election, or criticizing women's prioritization of work outside the home over their primary duties as wives and mothers, continued to dominate the MB's discourse.[19]

A remarkable transformation occurred in 2009 and 2010 with the addition of 64 reserved seats for women to the electoral law. Although the MB leadership and parliamentary candidates vehemently decried the quota, the MB decided that among its 130 candidates, who were to compete for 30% of the seats in parliament, 13 would be women who would run for the reserved seats. Accompanying this decision, and similar to the Hamas case, MB publications began to devote significant attention to religious justifications of women's representation. Articles arguing that women's political rights rest squarely on Islamic principles and dispelling accusations by "rivals" who claim that the MB discriminates against women or limits their activities, began to appear frequently.[20]

For example, in an MB document on Islamic Law's view on the election, Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Bir, a deputy in the society's Guidance Bureau,

19. Examples: *Ikhwan Online* (henceforth *IO*), November 7, 2006; March 8, 2007.
20. *IO*, "Amr Shamakh yunaqish mawqif al-ikhwan min al-mara'a," July, 2010.

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publicly rejected opinions held by some in Egypt "that women should not be allowed to go out to vote or to be nominated as a candidate . . ." because of the belief that the prophet forbade it or that political activism would lead to improper "mixing" between men and women. He argued that since being a parliamentarian is not the same as holding the highest executive position (from which he agrees women should be barred), and since women already work in a variety of fields and there is no more risk of mixing in political activity than in any other professional activity, such restrictive positions are incorrect interpretations of Islam. Finally, he wrote, since MB women candidates compete against secular women who are "in consort with foreign currents that want to corrupt Muslim societies by corrupting women," pious voters must lend their support to MB women in this battle.[21]

In an interview, Maisa al-Jawhari, one of the MB women candidates, explained, "Those who think that the woman must sit at home and not come out, should be reminded of the role women played in calling people to Islam [in early Islamic history], and that Islam does not distinguish between men and women in any respect, in reward and punishment, in rights and religious duties, and in political work." She described the prophet Muhammad as the best role model for the inclusion of women in all aspects of public life.[22]

Strikingly, the 13 women candidates received an enormous amount of attention in the MB's electoral coverage. The very short election campaign period saw hundreds of articles including interviews with the candidates, profiles, and reportage on their campaign events and statements. In particular, the MB social media platform *Ikhwan Online* followed women candidates as they spoke before crowds of supporters; led campaign rallies, conferences, and gatherings;[23] or visited hospitals, factories, villages, and educational institutions.[24] The coverage stressed the extent to which MB women candidates were overwhelmingly supported by massive crowds of voters.[25] Similar to the coverage of Hamas candidates, MB publications also inquired into the women's ability to balance political work and family life, dispelling worries that a traditional constituency might have. In an interview, Wafaa Mashhour,

21. *IO*, November 27, 2010.
22. *IO*, November 25, 2010.
23. For example, *IO*, November 19, 2010; November 26, 2010.
24. For example, *IO*, November 12, 2010; November 15, 2010; November 23, 2010.
25. For example, *IO*, November 27, 2010; November 23, 2010; November 18, 2010; November 15, 2010.

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daughter of a former General Guide (*al-murshid al-'amm*) of the MB and a 2010 candidate, explained, "There is no doubt that my responsibilities at the home are now less than before, after my children married and settled in their new life. Through arranging priorities and balancing different tasks, I think that the issue will be simple, God willing, especially thanks to my husband's support and the big part he played in motivating and encouraging me to enter the race, as well as his help and assistance."[26]

Given the highly problematic design of the quota law, an almost equal amount of attention was given to renunciations of the quota by both men and women MB candidates. Like in the Palestinian case, the quota was deemed a part of a foreign agenda. As Dr. Manal Abu al-Hassan, an MB candidate explained, "The Arab woman has not asked for this system — with the exception of those women who work for a foreign agenda . . ."[27] However, most of the critique was made on issues of constitutionality, fairness, and effectiveness. At the constitutional level, MB parliamentarians as well as MB women candidates argued that the quota violated several articles of the Egyptian constitution, including Article 8, guaranteeing equal opportunities; Article 11, requiring agreement between women's duties toward their families and their public work and their equality with men in the political, social, cultural, and economic realm; and Article 40 guaranteeing equality before the law. MB parliamentarians and other opposition members challenged the quota law and requested that it be reviewed by the Egyptian Supreme Court.[28]

On the question of fairness, MB representatives argued that the large district designated for the women's seats guaranteed a sure victory for candidates from the ruling NDP who have the support of the state's political apparatus, funding, and outreach. As Dr. al-Hassan put it, there was a clear bias in favor of women supported by the NDP, or "those who have connection to the authorities directly or indirectly, or the wives of the state's wealthy elite, and others of this sort . . ."[29] The training offered to women running in these districts, according to another MB candidate, was selectively provided only to women affiliated with the ruling party.[30] Reports during the election of fraud, intimidation, and violence by the state security services and NDP affiliates, especially in

26. *IO*, November 4, 2010.
27. *IO*, November 14, 2009.
28. *IO*, June 14, 2009.
29. *IO*, November 14, 2009.
30. *IO*, November 25, 2010.

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the districts allocated for the women's seats, further undermined the legitimacy of the quota in the eyes of MB commentators as well as external observers.

MB candidates also critiqued the quota as an ineffective means for achieving political progress. The real reason for the low political representation of women was not discrimination against them in politics, they argued, but rather the authoritarian political system that repressed the political activities of all citizens — both men and women — and weakened parties and opposition forces. The absence of women from politics, they said, stemmed from the repressive political environment that violated all citizens' political rights and made meaningful participation difficult and risky. In this respect, MB parliamentarian Osama Gadu asked, "Who has oppressed women? Is it the people and the voter, or the regime?"[31] Nevertheless, even with their strong rejection of the quota system, the MB still ran women candidates for the quota seats and extended tremendous efforts in making voters take the contest seriously. As the MB woman candidate for the Sharqiya district explained, the participation of the MB in the contest over quota seats was "not a contradiction," because, she said, "the MB has decided to enter any arena by which the interests of the people and the nation could be realized."[32]

Even though MB women did not win any of the reserved seats in the 2010 election and the MB largely withdrew from the election, the symbolic effect of the introduction of even a highly flawed quota on the discourse and campaign strategies of the MB as they pertained to women was clear. Moreover, while in the post-Arab Spring parliamentary election in 2011–2012 the reserved seats quota was scrapped, its effect seems to have persisted. The MB's new political party, the Freedom and Justice Party, nominated 76 women candidates (about 13% of its total candidates), seven of whom were at the top of its lists.[33] Only seven women were elected to parliament in the absence of quota, but four of them were from the MB.

31. *IO*, June 14, 2009.
32. *IO*, October 28, 2010.
33. Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, "What Women Lost . . . And What Egypt Lost," January 31, 2012 http://ecwronline.org/blog/2012/01/31/what-women-lost-and-what-egypt-lost/ (accessed August 15, 2013).

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THE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT IN ISRAEL IN THE ABSENCE OF LEGISLATED QUOTAS

In the Israeli parliament there has not been a mandatory women's quota of any kind, but several parties have independently adopted voluntary candidate quotas. From the country's establishment in 1948 until the fifteenth election in 1999, women's representation in the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, was between 6% and 9%. From 1999 onward, their ratio slowly climbed, reaching 24% in the latest election of 2015. Although women are underrepresented, they have served as ministers and once as the head of the state and have been heads of major parties.

Several distinctly Arab Palestinian parties vie for the votes of the Palestinian citizens of the country, who make up about 20% of the population. Among these is a coalition party that is the national political representative of the Islamic Movement in Israel. The Islamic Movement was established in the 1970s as a local branch of the Muslim Brothers. From the early 1980s onward, the Movement focused its activities on three areas: social service, religious proselytizing among Muslims, and political participation. The Movement participated in local council elections since 1983 and in 1996 first entered the parliamentary election for the Knesset. The Movement's gender ideology rests on the teachings of the Muslim Brothers, with its heavy stress on women's essential and primary roles within the home and the family and the dangers of "Westernization" and the public "mixing" of the sexes (Ben Shitrit 2015).

No woman holds a leadership position in the highest ranks of the Movement's administrative bodies (except for representatives charged specifically with managing local women's branches). In addition, no woman has ever served as a Knesset member on behalf of the Movement's party. Like the two other movements in this study, the Islamic Movement does not object in principle to women's political representation. Both women and men can, in theory, compete to become party candidates for the Knessest. The only requirement to running is at least five years of membership in the Movement.[34] Nevertheless, the Islamic Movement's Knesset party has never had a woman representative.

Both men and women leaders and activists in the Movement point to three central barriers to women's political representation in the Movement's party. The first obstacle is women activists' purported own

34. *Al-Mithaq*, November 7, 2008, p.4.

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lack of interest in politics and their preference for working in other realms. This rationale fits with the Movement's role-complementarity model in which political leadership is seen as a masculine domain and the reserve of men. The second obstacle, some women activists say, is that the Movement has not prioritized women's representation and has therefore not provided activists with the required training to pursue such work. Even though some women may be motivated to join politics, they do not receive the necessary tools and the sufficient support from the Movement. Finally, many leaders also point to conservative cultural norms, that are not derived from Islam but rather from local customs and traditions, which inhibit women's entry into formal politics.

While women's representation is highly stunted, there is a broad agreement that women's grassroots political work is essential for the Movement. In many conversations and interviews I was told that women's work probably accounts for 60–70% of the campaigning work during the election. The women build on their strong networks established through their social and religious activism to reach out to other women, their families, and friends. They organize election conferences and gatherings, distribute literature and social media content specific to women, and even at times organize segregated buses or rides to shuttle women to the polls.

The male leadership of the Movement acknowledges that despite women's political instrumentality, they have not acquired commensurate formal representation. Shaykh Hamad Abu Daabes, the current head of the Movement said,

> Until now, women's political role in the Islamic Movement is in its very early stage, in its beginning, it is not strong. But we share with women our positions, they assist us in distributing and promoting our political perspective. We recognize that their political role until now has lagged behind men's political role.[35]

As for the reasons for this lag, high-ranking leaders argue that while they are invested in promoting women to leadership positions, the women themselves reject this offer, stating that politics is not where they want to exert their efforts. Shaykh Sarsour, the former head of the Islamic Movement, explains: "The priority for women at this time is not political activity ... Their priorities include all fields of life, but not the political one. Maybe in the future they might change their mind."[36]

35. Interview with Shaykh Hamas Abu Daabes, Rahat, January 2010.
36. Interview with Shaykh Ibrahim Sarsour, Jerusalem, July 2013.

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Male leaders stress that if women were to be included on the local and national party lists, they are likely to bring in many votes, due to their high profile of activism and contribution to society. Yet this stated enthusiasm is belied by the structural organization of the Movement, as well as by some of its action. In many villages, towns, or localities in which the Islamic Movement participates in local election, a local shura council often chooses the Movement's candidates for the local list. There are no women on these shura councils normally, as women have their own branches and focus on these branches' social and religious work.

The Islamic Movement's approach to the matter of women's formal representation is in fact a mixed one. While there is no principle religious objection and leaders of the Movement told me in interviews that they are supportive of women's inclusion, some of the actions of the leadership also reflect a more complicated stance. For instance, the Islamic Movement was the only Palestinian group to object to the imposition of a women's quota in the most important representative body of the Palestinian community in Israel — the Israeli Arab Higher Monitoring Committee. The committee is a nonpartisan forum for heads and mayors of Arab local councils, Arab MKs, and representatives of Arab civil society organizations.

Arab Palestinian women's organizations in Israel have repeatedly criticized the lack of women's representation in the committee. Their efforts culminated in an unprecedented proposal in 2008 by the head of the committee to double the number of committee members in order to allow each represented body to appoint an additional woman. This proposal elicited fierce resistance from the Islamic Movement, specifically from its northern branch.[37] *Sawt al-Haq wa-l-Huriyya*, the branch's newspaper, published a series of articles protesting the proposal and an official communiqué entitled "The Imposition of Women's Representation is Unacceptable."[38] In the communiqué, the Movement explained that it was not against the representation of women per se, but rather objected to the quota system and the imposition of representation. The newspaper stated:

> We are not against women's representation ... [We] object to the quota system on principle ... We invite the other parties to appoint women to the committee but we do not accept foreign agendas nor ideas, which are

37. About the differences in women's activism between the Northern and Southern branches of the Islamic Movement, see Ben Shitrit (2015).

38. *Sawt al-Haq*, September 19, 2008, p. 8.

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> promoted with foreign money . . . The women's issue is important and needs to be discussed on the level of values and principles. But . . . The quota is an American patent and its imposition is Collin Powell's agenda as part of the New Middle East agenda.[39]

Since the Committee makes decisions based on consensus, the fact that the proposal had the support of all other groups in the committee could not assure its passing. This episode reveals the consequences that the Islamic Movement's gender ideology can have for women's representation. The proposal to introduce a quota in the Monitoring Committee was a groundbreaking one. The Islamic Movement's northern branch succeeded in turning the debate from one around women's representation to one about colonialism and Western influence, in this way discrediting those who have worked to promote women's representation.

While some women activists in the Movement concur with the leadership's claim that women are simply not interested in formal politics, others provide different accounts for the lack of women's representation. Um Abdullah, for example, a teacher who is in her 30s and a well-regarded activist, told me, "If the movement put [women's representation] on the agenda as a priority, and started preparing and training women for politics over the next ten years, then there will be women candidates who would have the skills, knowledge and motivation to run as candidates."

In sum, in the absence of quota pressure at the parliamentary level, the Islamic Movement in Israel has not addressed the issue of women's parliamentary representation in its publications and communications with its supporters and potential voters. The question has not come up in the repeated election campaigns the party has engaged in. Private interviews with the Movement's leaders reveal that while they do not object to women's representation on the party list, they feel that there is little need to promote the matter. Shaykh Daabes explained that when dealing with a conservative electorate, it is hard to create spaces for significant representation for women. Shaykh Sarsour commented that women's activism and the women's branch are integral to the grassroots work of the Movement, including its electoral efforts. However, the women themselves, he argued, do not demand political leadership positions for themselves and often shy away from the political front stage. In interviews with women activists, many said that though some women

39. *Sawt al Haq*, Sep. 19, 2008, p. 20.

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might have the desire and natural talent for politics, the Movement has not offered political training for women that could prepare them for the challenging task of competing in parliamentary election.[40] In a no-quota context, Islamist religious parties are scarcely motivated to concentrate significant efforts toward women's representation and to engage in discursive public labor to religiously legitimize and emphasize such representation.

CONCLUSION

In the examples of the Islamic Movement in Israel, an Islamist party operating in an electoral context that does not entail any legislated women's quotas can continue to ignore the question of women's representation in most of its public discourse and communications with supporters and potential voters. The only attention the subject is given is in the movement's resistance to quotas, a principle that we saw in the Egyptian Muslim Brothers and Hamas cases. In the Palestinian and Egyptian cases, Islamist parties argued extensively that their choice to include women relied on religious justifications and was an authenticated Islamic decision rather than a capitulation to an imposed, "foreign" and "inauthentic" feminist agenda. In this respect, legislated quotas can contribute to the normalization of women's representation in the Middle East through the labor that Islamist actors undertake to authenticate women's inclusion in representative leadership positions. These actors are less likely to undertake such extensive campaigns in the absence of a mandatory quota requirement. They may not bar women from running as candidates in the absence of quotas — and, indeed, Islamists in Egypt, Palestine, and Israel have conceded that women should be allowed to participate fully in politics, even if they themselves scarcely nominate women. But they are less likely to exert significant labor to convince their base and potential voters of the merit of electing women and prominently feature and highlight the qualifications of a large number of female candidates, if not pushed to do so by a realty of legislated quotas.

Islamists' endorsement of women's representation, as a result of their interaction with quota requirements, has the potential to impact the opinions of wider publics in the Middle East about women's roles as political leaders. The fact that many Islamist parties are often seen as

40. Interviews with Islamic Movement activists 2010–2013 (in Ben Shitrit 2015).

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oppositional actors contesting authoritarian incumbents is significant in this regard. In a recent survey experiment in Jordan, Bush and Jamal (2015) found that support by Muslim religious authorities, like imams, for quota policies promulgated by the regime did not have a positive or a negative effect on respondents' support for women's representation. In fact, such support had a negative effect on respondents who opposed the regime. However, in the cases of oppositional Islamist parties, as we have seen in Egypt and Palestine, rather than supporting a quota policy imposed by the incumbent regime in collaboration with feminist movements or organizations, they remained critical of the quota system and publicly associated it with authoritarian practices. At the same time, these parties sought religious support for women's representation and made space in their campaigns to showcase the competence and merit of their female candidates. They worked to convince voters that their decision to include women did not stem from the quota requirement but from religious doctrine and that the women were not selected because of the quota, but rather due to their qualifications. This Islamist response to quotas has the additional benefit of countering a tendency among the general public to view "quota women" as less competent candidates who received a shortcut to representation and who have not earned their seats by their merit (Murray 2014). By insisting that they field female candidates due to these women's impressive track record in public service and leadership capacities, Islamist parties highlight "quota women's" qualifications and merit, further cementing the notion that women can and do make capable political leaders.

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