

Gender Regimes in the Middle East and North Africa: The Power of Feminist Movements

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Applying Walby's model of gender regime, with some modifications, to the Middle East and North Africa, I highlight the importance of the family as an institutional domain, replace the ideal types of *social-democratic* and *neoliberal* public gender regimes with *neopatriarchal* and *conservative-corporatist*, and elucidate feminist organizing and mobilizing as a key driver in the transition from one public gender regime to another in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. The article contributes to theory-building on (varieties of) gender regimes by underscoring (sub)regional specificities across the capitalist world-system's economic zones and emphasizing the role of feminist activism.

Introduction

Much of the research on gender regimes has pertained to the democratic welfare states of Europe, with attention to European Union (EU) legislation as a driver of gender-equality policies such as work-and-family reconciliation measures (Pascall and Lewis 2004; Walby 2009). In her work on gender regimes, Walby (2004, 2009) theorizes and historicizes the relationship between modernization and gender regimes, examining their evolution over time and distinguishing between the private patriarchy of the family (the domestic gender regime) and the public patriarchy of the state (the public gender regime). In Walby's model, a gender regime is a set of interrelated gendered social relations and institutions that constitute a system, operating across four institutional domains: polity, economy, civil society, and violence. The more contemporary "public gender regime" has come about through markets, political provisioning, or regulations. Drawing on the experience in Europe and North America, Walby distinguishes two ideal types of public gender regimes: neoliberal, exemplified by the United States with its weak

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welfare provisioning, and social democratic, which is exemplified by many states in the EU. She adds the possibility of “hybrid” gender regimes, resulting from incomplete transition to modern gender relations or a legacy of a previous, changing gender regime.

Walby’s theory displays elegant classification, macro-sociological conceptualization, and historical-comparative methodology. However, it raises some questions. Can a given national context be characterized by more than one gender regime type? What is the place of *family* in institutional domains? Beyond the Western democratic welfare states, are there features within the capitalist world-system’s periphery and semi-periphery that call for categories other than *social democratic* and *neoliberal*? Besides the structural drivers that Walby identifies—markets, political provisioning, regulations—what are the sociopolitical forces and agents driving change from one public gender regime to another?

Kocabicak (2018) applies Walby’s concept of domestic gender regime to Turkey, drawing attention to the significance of women’s lack of agrarian property ownership and of male control over female labor in a context of combined and uneven development, with implications for the quality of Turkish capitalism as well as for gender equality. In a study animated by measurement issues and using an expanded definition of gender regime, Bose (2015) shows that gender regimes cluster by world region and are varied in the Global South. An intriguing finding is that the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region falls between the lowest and highest regions in terms of gender (in)equality measures. This is because women’s educational attainment and especially tertiary enrollments are high, but on measures such as labor force participation and political representation, the region ranks low. In fact, the MENA region itself is varied, with a key difference lying not so much in forms of capitalism or social policy regimes but rather in the strength and influence of women’s rights movements. Here I make the following arguments:

- (1) The transition from “domestic patriarchy” to “public patriarchy” in MENA has largely taken place, the result of broad modernization processes since the 1950s, including the region’s participation in the world polity and the influence of the United Nations (UN) global women’s rights agenda, along with women’s rising educational attainment, access to the professions, involvement in civil society, and changing societal attitudes, values, and behavior. Domestic gender regimes may, however, be found in less-developed parts of MENA countries.
- (2) Given the distinctive political-economy features of MENA (e.g., authoritarian states, oil economies, limited neoliberalization, and corporatism in both polity and economy), public gender regimes should be classified as *neopatriarchal* versus *conservative-corporatist*. In the neopatriarchal form, aspects of private/domestic patriarchy prevail, in terms of the retention of conservative family law, a rentier or dependent form of

capitalism that limits female economic participation, restraints on civil society that impede sustained feminist organizing, and inadequate or non-existent legislation on violence against women. The emerging *conservative-corporatist* form is most evident in Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria, countries characterized by strong feminist movements, the visibility of women in the professions (especially the judiciary), and reformed family law.¹

- (3) The importance of *the family* in the MENA context—in societal and legal debates, constitutions and policies, personal status codes (or family laws), childcare and elder care, kinship-based welfare outside formal employment arrangements, and contestations between feminists and Islamists—confirms that it remains the locus of female control (including the control of women’s sexuality) and of social reproduction in both types of contemporary MENA public gender regimes: *neopatriarchal* (characteristic of most MENA countries) and the more modern *conservative-corporatist* gender regime (becoming institutionalized in the Maghreb).

Institutional changes in the Maghreb include the presence of competitive elections with multi-party politics, left-wing parties sympathetic to women’s rights, and increases in women’s political participation and representation; educational attainment and a concomitant growing female presence in the professions; women’s extensive involvement in civil society and influential feminist organizations; and changes to the structure of the family (declining fertility, rising age at first marriage, nuclearization), along with family law reforms, laws on violence against women, and attitudinal and normative changes. Such a “gendered modernization” signals a shift in the gender regime.

Patriarchy, Economic Development, and Women’s Movements in MENA

The concept of patriarchy has long been in use in feminist theorizing (Hartmann 1979; Joseph 2000; Kabeer 1988; Lie 1996; Pateman 1988; Walby 1989). Caldwell (1982) identified the “patriarchal belt” and Kandiyoti (1988) “the belt of classic patriarchy”. Borrowing from Sharabi (1988), Moghadam (1993, 99) defined *neopatriarchy* as “the result of the collision of tradition and modernity in the context of oil-based dependent capitalism . . . and limited industrialization.” Asserting that classic patriarchy was on the wane, she used neopatriarchy as an umbrella term for the different types of twentieth-century states and gender relations. Conceptually, neopatriarchy spans macro, meso, and micro levels: state and economy; institutions and organizations; households, families, attitudes, and interpersonal relations. The modernizing

neopatriarchal state introduces policies for women's social and spatial presence—public education, employment in the government sector, the vote—but retains patriarchal family laws that bind women and girls to the family and to protection (or control) by male kin. For decades, the regional oil economy has precluded women's labor market incorporation via several mechanisms, including high wages for men in the oil sector and other capital-intensive industrial sectors, and remittances from men's migrant labor. This has strengthened the “patriarchal gender contract” (Moghadam 1998, 10), whereby men are responsible for maintaining families, and women are wives, mothers, and dependents. Neopatriarchy entails “two parallel, apparently contradictory developments . . . (i) the expansion of industrialization, urbanization, proletarianization, and state-sponsored education, which undermines patriarchal family authority; and (ii) the retention of Muslim family law, which legitimates the prerogatives of male family members over female family members” (Moghadam 1993, 111). In such contexts, the domestic gender regime prevails.²

Changes in the institutional domains that constituted the prevailing gender regime became evident at the century's end. Morocco's 1998 socialist government promoted a program to integrate women in development and reform the patriarchal family law, the *Moudawana*. Algeria's feminist organizations emerged in the 1980s to challenge the single-party regime and its attempt to placate the growing Islamist movement by introducing a patriarchal family law, and they expanded in the 1990s to oppose Islamist militancy. Tunisia's feminist organizations worked with those in Algeria and Morocco to form the *Collectif 95 Maghreb-Egalité* to press for an end to discriminatory laws and policies.

In the new century, Middle East feminist scholars analyzed social and discursive changes, including citizenship claims, family law (Charrad 2001; Welchman 2004), economic participation (Cinar 2001), and family forms (Yount and Rashad 2008). Examining such claims, trends, and changes, Moghadam (2004) suggested that the institution of the MENA patriarchal family (extended, patrilocal) was in crisis. Skalli (2007), Sadiqi (2010), and Salime (2011) showed how the long but eventually successful Moroccan campaign for family law reform was grounded in feminist advocacy, alliance-building, and strategic use of the new communication technologies. Gilman (2007) analyzed the activities of an independent feminist group in Tunisia and its association with the *Collectif* (see also Grami 2010). Bouatta (1997), Messaoudi and Schemla (1995), and Salhi (2010) drew attention to a “new feminist movement” in Algeria and its resistance to fundamentalism and Islamist terror. A series of studies suggested that a “new feminist generation” was developing in Iran, along with changes in attitudes and behavior (Kian-Thiébault 2002, 2005; Kurzman 2008; Mahdavi 2007; Milani 1992; Shaditalab 2005). Women-friendly changes to Turkey's Civil Code resulted from years of feminist advocacy that began during the 1990s democratization (Arat 1995) as

well as in preparations for EU accession (Ayata and Tütüncü 2008). Moghadam (2013: ch. 8) provided details of the legal and policy reforms for women's participation and rights in some MENA countries. State policy was in part responsible for those changes, from the history of "state feminism" in Tunisia (Charrad 2001) to the Iranian state's highly effective family planning policy in the 1990s (Hoodfar and Assadpour 2000).

I highlight those studies to argue that the changes they detailed indicate an ongoing transition from private to public patriarchy—or from a domestic to a public gender regime—in most MENA countries. The state remains a major regulator of gender relations, as does the family, which also provides a welfare function for populations outside formal employment arrangements. But what kind of public gender regime is emerging? And what variations can be discerned across the region?

Unlike the EU and North America, MENA is not characterized by the tension between social democratic and neoliberal models. The "authoritarian bargain" entailed state provisioning of social benefits (free schooling and healthcare, subsidized food and utilities, guaranteed public sector employment to graduates) in return for citizens' acquiescence to authoritarianism (Dilek 2015; Richards and Waterbury 2008). This model collapsed in all but the richest Gulf states during the shift to privatization and liberalization in the 1990s, but most MENA countries retain mixed market and state-controlled economies, ranging from the more open economies of Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and Turkey to the more protectionist economies of Algeria and Iran (Cammatt and Diwan 2019; Talani 2014). Full neoliberalization has not occurred; finance is hardly the dominant sector. Social democracy, the dream of Tunisian and Moroccan protesters in 2011, has not been realized. Markets have not been the main driver of change in gender relations; rather, we should look at the polity, the family, and civil society, especially the role of feminist organizations.

Here the Maghreb countries stand out for the sociopolitical and gender transformations that have taken place. Algeria's political liberalization of the late 1980s resumed in the new century after the civil conflict; Morocco's slow democratization began when a socialist government briefly came to power in 1998 and resumed with the 2011 *Mouvement 20 février* (M20F) and subsequent constitutional amendments. Tunisia launched a democratic transition after its 2011 revolution. All three countries have seen increases in women's political and parliamentary representation. At the meso level, educational attainment has increased, with women's tertiary enrollments exceeding those of men and impressive enrollments in STEM disciplines (UN Women 2015). Many professional fields have become dominated by women, who also have become visible and vocal in an array of civil society organizations. Ties between women in civil society and in the political parties have enabled passage of legal and policy reforms for women's rights (Moghadam 2017; Tripp 2019). Survey research shows changes in attitudes and values toward women's

Table 1. Drivers and agents of change and some gendered outcomes

| Institutional Dimension | Drivers of change | Agents of change | Outcomes |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|
| Economy | Global capitalism; economic development strategy | Modernizing elites; bureaucrats; trade unions; foreign investors | Female labor force participation and economic rights expanded or restricted |
| Polity | World polity; political system/power relations | Modernizing elites; political parties; international organizations | Electoral reforms; quotas and other pro-women legislation |
| Civil society | Global capitalism; world polity; state–society relations | Modernizing women/feminist organizations; NGOs; Civil society organizations (CSOs); social movements; international organizations; transnational advocacy networks; transnational feminist networks | Expanded rights for women; legal reforms; policy changes |
| Family | Capitalism; state policies; demographic transition | Capitalists; bureaucrats; feminist activists; social movement organizations | Nuclearization; new social policies; family law reform |

equality (Arab [Barometer 2019](#); [El-Feki, Barker, and Heilman 2017](#)). Even so, most women are economically dependent on husbands or fathers; female economic activity is low, especially among those without tertiary education, the dual-earner family is limited, and family inheritance remains unequal between the sexes. Constitutions cite the family as the foundation of society. Conservative-corporatist, therefore, is the appropriate term for the public gender regime in the Maghreb.

Research has identified structural and institutional drivers of change: resource endowments and the nature of the social structure; the development strategy pursued, state policies and legal frameworks; values and attitudes (these also may be indicators and outcomes of change); and the global normative environment, including international standards and norms to which a

Table 2. Varieties and features of gender regimes in the Middle East and North Africa

| Institutional dimension | Neopatriarchal | Conservative-corporatist | Hybrid |
|-------------------------|--|--|---|
| Economy | Rentier; resource-based; corporatist | Diversified or diversifying | Rentier or diversifying |
| Polity | Authoritarian (republic or monarchy); high military spending | Multi-party | Multi-party but with dominant party and authoritarian features |
| Civil society | Restricted and repressed | Open; presence of social movement organizations (trade unions, feminist, human rights) | Restricted but room for maneuver for NGOs and CSOs (feminist, trade unions, human rights) |
| Family | Patriarchal family laws intact; limited female autonomy, mobility, labor-force participation | Adoption of gender-egalitarian legislation (e.g., nationality laws, violence against women laws, family law reform); family: constitutional “basis of society;” dual-earner family emerging slowly | Conservative family laws; continued discriminatory legislation; limited female employment |
| Country examples | Gulf monarchies; Jordan; Egypt; Iran; Iraq; Libya; Syria; Yemen | Morocco; Tunisia; Turkey | Algeria; Lebanon |

state is signatory (Paxton and Hughes 2014; Walby 2009). Agents of change identified across various bodies of literature include state officials and managers, the modernizing bourgeoisie/elites, the working class and trade unions, and women’s organizations.³ Htun and Weldon (2018) identify autonomous

women's movements, which promote women's rights, as sources of policy change. Table 1 identifies the drivers and agents of change across Walby's institutional domains of economy, polity, and civil society, and my addition of family, with examples of gendered outcomes for each. Feminist mobilization, I argue, has been a principal driver and main agent of the shift from the neo-patriarchal to the conservative-corporatist public gender regime in the Maghreb.

As noted, Walby's hybrid type of public gender regime may reflect an incomplete transition from the domestic gender regime or a variant of one of her two ideal types. I adopt her concept of a hybrid and try to conceptualize its "in-between" features in MENA (Table 2). What follows is a summary of institutional changes that signal the emerging conservative-corporatist gender regime in the Maghreb.

Polity: From Authoritarianism to Proportional Representation Electoral Systems and Gender Quotas

Maghreb intellectuals and activists have retained close ties with colleagues on the other side of the Mediterranean, embracing the diffusion of values, norms, and policies around democracy, human rights, and citizenship. In turn, political leaders have been compelled to respond to external and internal pressure by easing restrictions on marginalized or banned political parties, permitting them to compete with the official or state-affiliated parties, and allowing new ones to form. The adoption of proportional representation electoral systems in the Maghreb, along with gender quotas, has helped women gain access to the political process.

In *Algeria's* 2012 parliamentary elections, Islamist groups formed a coalition, the Green Alliance, although they did not win the majority seats they expected. A large proportion of women, 32 percent, won seats.⁴ The new quota had mandated a 20–40 percent female presence on party lists for parliamentary elections and 30 percent for municipality councils. The Workers' Party continued to be run by Louiza Hanoune. Algeria's military now includes five women generals.

Prior to the Arab Spring, *Tunisia* had one major party—the Rassemblement pour la Constitution et la Démocratie (RCD), but it was dissolved after the Tunisian revolution and not permitted to run candidates for the National Constituent Assembly election in October 2011. Other parties included Tadjdid (the former communist party which was renamed after the ban was lifted in 1993), and Parti Démocratique Progressiste (later the Parti Républicain), co-founded and co-led by Maya Jribi (d. 2018). The fast pace of change following Tunisia's political revolution saw the formation of new political parties and coalitions running for seats in the constituent assembly. The 2014 constitution establishes a multi-party system of proportional representation; enshrines the civil, political, and social rights of citizens; stipulates the

principle of gender parity in elections; and charges the state with ending violence against women.

Morocco's left parties were largely repressed in the 1970s and 1980s (Dwyer 1991). The "Years of Lead" ended with the onset of the post-Cold War world order and pressure from European partners. In 1998, Abdelrahman Youssefi, a socialist and former political prisoner, formed a government with other progressives. Mohamed Said Saadi, a former communist, led the newly formed ministry of women and family affairs and helped draft the National Action Plan for Integration of Women in Development (French acronym PANDIF), which included a proposal for the reform of Morocco's patriarchal family law. Despite the large-scale Islamist opposition, progressive political parties and their civil society partners continued to support the family law reform, which eventually came to fruition in 2004. Morocco's Arab Spring took the form not of regime change but of constitutional amendments following protests and advocacy by the M20F. The amendments limit the king's vast powers (to some extent), strengthen parliamentarism, enshrine the cultural and linguistic rights of the Amazigh (Berber) ethnic community, and charge the state with establishing parity in elections.

Civil Society: Women's Presence and Mobilizations

The Maghreb arguably has the most vibrant civil societies in MENA. The waning of the Cold War and start of democracy promotion by the United States and international NGOs prompted political liberalization, enabling civil society to emerge and grow. Trade unions, human rights organizations, student groups, and feminist organizations became the most active, along with an array of professional associations in which women members are active. Women's entry into professional fields has been a key marker of the gender regime transition.

Starting from a very low base, women's educational attainment increased after the 1980s, with gender gaps closing. In the new century, women's tertiary enrollments began to exceed those of men. In 2010, 34 percent of Algerian women of university age were enrolled, and in Tunisia the figure was 40 percent; women were studying law, medicine, and the sciences, as well as the liberal arts. According to UN data, women's average tertiary enrollment in the sciences in 2006–2013 was 20 percent in Morocco (compared with 24 percent for men), and 22 percent in Tunisia (compared with 27 percent for men). Those figures for women enrolled in sciences were higher than all the Latin American countries listed. Women's enrollments in engineering were about the same as in Latin America—and about half the proportion of male students (see UN Women 2015, 263). The mean age at first marriage has risen for women, and fertility rates have fallen from a high base. By 2010, Algeria and Morocco each had a fertility rate of 2.4 while Tunisia's was 2.0. Smaller family size reflects women's educational attainment, employment, and access to

contraception while also enabling women to remain in the workforce, seek career advancement, and engage in civic activities.

Certain professional fields have seen a large-scale entry of women. By 2010, Algerian women constituted 38 percent, and Tunisian women 42 percent, of university teaching staff. The field of law saw a large presence of women, with women lawyers as key figures in legal reform. They were involved in Morocco's 2004 family law reform bill and continue to monitor the law's implementation across the country; Algerian women lawyers drafted legislation to improve the rights of women and young girls; Tunisian women lawyers drafted bills on mixed marriages, sexual harassment and domestic violence, and equal inheritance. Women's inclusion in the judiciary, and especially as judges, is a key indicator of changes in gender relations, given that orthodox interpretations of Sharia law prevent women from serving as judges, and declare that the testimony of two women is equal to that of one man. In Algeria in 2010, 37 percent of all judges were women; in Morocco the figure was 24 percent and in Tunisia 28 percent.⁵ About half of Tunisia's constitutional court was female in 2010 (OECD and CAWTAR 2012, 16, figure 14), and in 2012 a woman served as president of an Administrative Court. In Morocco, female representation on the high court increased from 23 percent in 2004 to 26 percent in 2010. As a result of Morocco's 2011 constitutional amendments and Article 111 permitting judges to form independent associations, women jurists formed l'Association marocaine des femmes juges; one priority is to "promote a culture of gender equality and equal opportunities."⁶ By 2018, 42 percent of judges in Algeria, 23.5 percent in Morocco, and 43 percent in Tunisia were women (UN ESCWA 2018, 7).

Feminist Organizing

In the 1960s and 1970s, women from left-wing organizations and pro-Palestine solidarity groups formed study groups, precursors to the women's rights organizations that appeared first in Algeria in the early 1980s and soon afterward in Tunisia and Morocco, largely in reaction to fundamentalist movements and the implementation of structural adjustment policies.⁷ Feminism in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, therefore, arose in a regional and global context of political liberalization, Islamist expansion, economic globalization, and the UN global women's rights agenda. An important initiative was the formation of the Collectif to advocate for family law reform, equal nationality rights, enhanced political representation, and ending violence against women.

Algeria's new feminist movement comprised many associations opposed to both the conservative family law and the growing Islamist movement now engaged in a civil conflict with the state. Their firm stance earned them cabinet posts in the new century, some amendments to the family law in 2005, and the 2009 appointment of the first female general. Amid protests in February

2019 against a fifth term for the ailing president, a group of feminist intellectuals penned a solidarity statement and called for social and gender equality (El Watan 2019).

Moroccan feminist groups allied with progressive political parties, notably the Union Socialiste des Forces Populaires (USFP), to win rights. In 2002, the Electoral Code introduced a “national list” with thirty reserved seats, or a 10 percent parliamentary quota, for women (subsequently raised); the family law was replaced in 2004 with a more egalitarian set of laws and norms for marital life and family affairs; the 2004 Labor Code established the equality and rights of working women; feminists began agitating government agencies for the criminalization of domestic violence; and in 2007 the Nationality Code gave women and men equal rights to transmit nationality to their children. Morocco’s feminist groups formed a coalition with physicians and human rights groups for the decriminalization of abortion, which they note unfairly affects vulnerable young women and low-income and poor women.⁸ They also won repeal of the penal code provision allowing a rapist to marry his victim and thus escape prosecution. In 1993, Tunisia’s two main feminist groups pioneered a *centre d’écoute*, or hotline and counseling center for women victims of domestic violence and sexual harassment; the official women’s organization founded a physical center in 2004. At the start of the Arab Spring, thousands of Tunisian women mobilized to warn the newly empowered Islamist Ennahda party against any backsliding on women’s rights: “*Ne touche pas à mes acquis*” was a widespread slogan. When Islamists in the Constituent Assembly tried to change constitutional language on gender equality and introduce “complementarity of the sexes” in Article 28, feminist activists and secular allies within the Assembly prevented that. The 2014 Tunisian constitution enshrines women’s equality and stipulates that the state is responsible for ending violence against women. Tunisian feminist organizations continue to work with Algerian and Moroccan feminists within the Collectif.

The Family: Nuclearization, Family Law Reform, and Social Policy

The world’s biggest proportion of nuclear families (59 percent) is found in MENA (UN Women 2019, 48–9). Changes in the structure of the family and the characteristics of the female population, as well as the feminist advocacy discussed above, have instigated legal and policy reforms.

Algerian feminists’ anti-Islamist stance during the 1990s civil conflict earned them rewards: the 2004 amendment to Article 341 of penal code, making sexual harassment an offense; and in 2005, an amendment to the nationality code, enabling an Algerian woman married to a non-Algerian to confer citizenship on her children. At this writing, Algerian women’s rights advocates await more changes to the family law. In Morocco, a reformed family law was

introduced in 2004 after twelve years of feminist advocacy; equal nationality rights for women were adopted in 2007. Two years later, a three-year campaign spearheaded by the Association démocratique des femmes du Maroc (ADFM) overturned century-old norms denying *Soulaliyate* women (residing in rural, tribal areas) equal land rights or to share, transfer, and benefit from the rent or sale of 30 million acres of communally owned land.⁹

In Tunisia, the 1993 enhancements to the family law were followed by the 1998 Nationality Code, whereby Tunisian mothers married to foreign men could pass on their nationality to their children. A law criminalizing “honor crimes” was adopted; the punishment for domestic violence was made double that of an ordinary offense. A child born out of wedlock could now carry the father’s name, expect paternal support until adulthood, and inherit the same portion as a daughter (Labidi 2007, 25–6). In 2018, a presidential commission (known by the French acronym COLIBE) considered the possible adoption of an equal inheritance law and was headed by a well-known feminist lawyer.

In all three countries, ending violence against women—in the home, workplace, and the streets—is a priority for research, advocacy, and coalitions. In 2013, members of Morocco’s Democratic Progress party and Authenticity and Modernity party introduced bills to end gender-based violence, and in 2014, members of the *Istiqlal* political party proposed a law to establish mechanisms for equality and non-discrimination. The law on combating violence against women (Law 103.13) was approved by a majority in the parliament and ratified in July 2016. In February 2016, a new Algerian law came into effect to hand down heavy penalties for acts of domestic violence as well as harassment of women in the street.¹⁰ In Tunisia, the most stringent law on violence against women was passed in July 2017,¹¹ and a 1973 decree banning a Muslim Tunisian woman from marrying a non-Muslim man was abrogated. In all three countries, violence against women continues, but so do public protests against it. Abortion remains a taboo subject, and only Tunisia legalized it, but Moroccan feminists are seeking decriminalization and Algerian feminists are monitoring those efforts.¹² The so-called “marry your rapist” laws were abolished in Morocco (2014) and Tunisia (2017).

The family nonetheless remains an important institution for the regulation of gender relations and sexual behavior, and for receipt of formal and informal welfare provisioning. As the labor force is male-dominated, men receive most formal socioeconomic benefits (e.g., salaries and pensions), and countries lack quality and affordable nurseries and pre-school facilities that could encourage labor force participation and attachment. The traditional gender division of labor prevails, and family wealth remains unequally divided between sons and daughters, wives and male kin. The diversity of family forms described in the 2019 UN Women report is not found in MENA or even the Maghreb, and the dual-earner family is not (yet) the norm.

Attitudinal Changes

Analysis of recent surveys from the fourth, fifth, and sixth waves of the World Values Survey (WVS) and the Arab Barometer show that attitudes and values are changing in the three Maghreb countries. In general, women tend to have more egalitarian views than do men; and more educated citizens have the most liberal attitudes. The change in attitudes is most pronounced in Morocco. On the question, “having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person,” 60 percent of Moroccan and Tunisian women, and 50 percent of Algerian women agree. In Tunisia, over 40 percent of *men* agree with the statement. On the question, “If a woman earns more money than her husband, it’s almost certain to cause problems,” Moroccan women have the highest rate of disagreement, followed by women in Tunisia and Algeria. Women do not agree that men make better business executives than women do. In all countries, men and women disagree that a university education is more important for a boy than for a girl. The WVS fifth wave and sixth waves found that some 60 percent of Moroccan female respondents had “quite a lot” of confidence in the women’s movement; in the sixth wave, fully 46.4 percent of all Moroccans agreed that “women should have the same rights as men” as a central tenet of democracy.¹³ A 2013 survey of Tunisia with a comparative assessment of seven Muslim-majority countries found that Tunisians had among the most enlightened attitudes (Moaddel 2013).

There is high support for equal rights to divorce in the Maghreb, and acceptance of a woman as head of state is high in Morocco (72 percent) and Tunisia (67 percent) but not in Algeria. Similarly, most Moroccans and Tunisians support the women’s quota but Algerians do not (Arab Barometer 2019, 4, 10). Support for equal inheritance is low: 28 percent in Tunisia, 20 percent in Morocco, and 18 percent in Algeria. Tunisia’s equal inheritance bill was put on hold in 2019 because of pressing socioeconomic concerns and upcoming elections. In all three countries, there is organized opposition to women’s equality in the form of Islamist groups in civil society and political society; they oppose changes in laws and norms concerning single mothers, equal inheritance, sexuality rights, and the marriage of a Muslim woman to a non-Muslim man; and they prefer the expansion of veiling. Moroccan women in traditional roles—and their husbands—are less likely to support gender egalitarian values. For men, the primary driver of egalitarian attitudes is having a wife who works (Benstead 2016, 138). This finding supports previous research on the personal, familial, and social benefits of women’s paid employment in the formal sector and could provide regional support for Walby’s (2009) notion that women in the workforce are more likely to support social democratic values.

Conclusions

Patriarchy is enduring, but it takes socially and historically specific forms. Despite the many country studies on patriarchy, theorization of *varieties* of

patriarchy, or more precisely, the gender regime, has been absent. In this article, I applied Walby's framework to show how institutional changes in the Maghreb signal a gradual shift in the gender regime. Given the socioeconomic, political, and cultural features of MENA, I highlighted the importance of the family as an institutional domain, replaced Walby's two contemporary ideal types of gender regimes with *neopatriarchal* and *conservative-corporatist*, and emphasized feminist organizing and mobilizing as a key driver in the transition from one public gender regime to another in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. Walby's theory of gender regimes can be applied beyond the Western democracies, but with modifications that account for regional specificities.

The Maghreb transition is ongoing and incomplete. Despite women's growing presence in Algeria, polygamy and male repudiation remain legal; women cannot marry without a *tutelle*, and the identity card is given automatically to the male household head while a woman needs to apply separately for one. Attitudes are more conservative and thus Algeria retains elements of private patriarchy, justifying its classification as a hybrid public gender regime. Morocco's poverty and marginalization render women in some rural areas subject to patriarchal control, where a domestic gender regime may prevail despite national laws and policies on gender equality. In all three countries, women are still largely responsible for childcare and elder care, although this is true even in many core countries, despite marketized options.

Using Walby's terminology, the changes described here have not been market-led but rather polity-led—by governments and political parties influenced by feminist advocacy and mobilizations. Indeed, markets have not been advantageous to Maghreb women; economic liberalization has not created more jobs for women and certainly not good jobs. Moreover, to the extent that the economic challenges—income inequality, poverty, unemployment, and inadequate social and physical infrastructure—prevent the empowerment of *all* women in the region, women's full citizenship cannot be attained. Class remains salient, in that much of the progress described above has been most directly felt by educated and employed women of the middle class. Greater attention to the inclusion of working-class and poor women could help attenuate organized challenges and create more support for the shift away from neopatriarchy toward a more modern and egalitarian gender regime.

Notes

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1. The paper by [Shire and Nemota \(2020\)](#) on conservative modernizations in Germany and Japan, informed by Barrington Moore’s comparative study of routes to dictatorship and democracy, inspired me to consider *conservative* as a type of public gender regime. Also useful is a study on social policy in the Arab context ([Karshenas 2014](#)), which draws on Esping-Andersen’s classification of welfare states (including his concept of the *conservative-corporatist welfare regime* of continental Europe) and examines prospects for the transition from *authoritarian corporatism* to a possible *democratic-developmental* social policy regime in the wake of the Arab Spring.
2. Space limitations preclude a detailed examination of the transition from domestic to public patriarchy—involving revolutions and state-led modernization and development programs—and the different forms.
3. The vast literature encompasses works on welfare states and citizenship regimes (T.H. Marshall, Walter Korpi, Gosta Esping-Andersen, John Stephens, Evelyn Huber); revolutions (Marx and Engels, Barrington Moore, Theda Skocpol, John Foran), and democratic transitions (Samuel Huntington, Larry Diamond, John Markoff, Georgina Waylen).
4. Sixty-eight women were from the ruling FLN; twenty-three from RCD; fifteen from the Islamic Green Alliance; zero from the PT; seven from the FFS; the remaining twelve spread across five other parties. The Green Alliance claimed electoral fraud. See <http://themoornextdoor.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/screen-shot-2012-05-14-at-7-28-14-pm.png>, last accessed February 2017.
5. For details, see papers commissioned by UNESCO from Boutheina Cheriet (Algeria), Fouzia Rhissassi and Khalid Berjaoui (Morocco), and Monia Ammar (Tunisia), in *Femmes, Droit de la Famille et Système Judiciaire en Algérie, au Maroc et en Tunisie*, publié sous la direction de Souria Saad-Zoy, UNESCO-Rabat, 2010. See also [Sonneveld and Lindbekk \(2017\)](#).
6. See <http://www.amfj.ma/en>.
7. Almost all the Algerian feminist groups were formed by women from communist or Trotskyist parties. In Morocco, the ADFM was an outgrowth of the Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS). Founders of ATFD included supporters of the banned CP (personal communication, 1995, 2016).
8. Morocco’s restrictive penal code on abortion is especially hard on poor women, who often are abandoned after *urfi* or customary marriages; others face health hazards (personal communication, Rabéa Naciri of the ADFM, Jakarta, April 10, 2010).
9. *Ibid.*; see also [Salime \(2016\)](#). Salime (personal communication, April 2019) is critical of the ADFM’s approach to the women’s property rights

- campaign, but acknowledges the importance of acquisition of land rights.
10. See <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/new-law-in-algeria-punishes-violence-against-women/>, last accessed February 2017.
 11. See <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/08/tunisia-violence-against-women-law/>
 12. Morocco confronts abortion taboo with proposed reform, *Daily Star* [Beirut], March 31, 2015.
 13. Author analysis of WVS responses.

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