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A Thesis submitted to
the Middle East Studies Center

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (M.A.) in Middle East Studies

by Kristen Anne Belle-Isle
under the supervision of Dr. Hania Sholkamy

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The American University in Cairo
School of Global Affairs and Public Policy


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to the Middle East Studies Center
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Abstract

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Quotas for women in Egypt are controversial. The debate about quotas began in the 1970s and has exploded into current debates since January 25th, 2011. Quotas are one vehicle of increasing women’s political representation that became popular after the Beijing Platform for Action was announced in 1995. This research examines why certain actors in Egypt called for the use of a quota for women at the national level in Egypt. I consider this question in the last few years of Hosni Mubarak’s rule and in the post-Mubarak transitional phase that began in February 2011. I examine the time frame in which Egypt considers using quotas for women and the impact international legislation has on Egyptian lawmakers. This research looks beyond using quotas to quantitatively add women to Egyptian national Parliament to address their experiences and goals as a Member of Parliament. This project engages with women who ran for Parliament and both won and lost. The obstacles they faced and their main goals for office are considered against the type of candidate women wished to be.

Engaging with women’s groups adds another dimension of consideration. Women’s groups began to form and become active in politics around 2000 and continue to organize and call for quotas. This research considers the relationships women’s groups have with the state as well as female candidates in Egypt. I question why women’s groups consistently call for quotas for women in politics by asking about various initiatives and programs undertaken on behalf of female politicians. Reasoning as to why women’s groups call for quotas is considered against the global framework of women’s human rights and domestic Egyptian policy.

This research focuses the main actors who engage with women’s rights through calling for a quota for women in national decision making bodies. These questions are asked and considered in two politically and ideologically different regimes. The changing nature of the regime allows for a broader discussion of ideological difference in order to understand why women continuously lobby the government for the use of a quota in politics.
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## TABLE 1

Table 1. Percentage of Women in Arab Parliament

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Source: The World Bank "Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments (%)"

## Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</th>
<th>CEDAW</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian Center for Women’s Rights</td>
<td>ECWR</td>
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<td>Egyptian Feminist Union</td>
<td>EFU</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freedom and Justice Party</td>
<td>FJP</td>
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<td>Muslim Brotherhood</td>
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<td>National Council for Women</td>
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<td>National Democratic Party</td>
<td>NDP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supreme Council of the Armed Forces</td>
<td>SCAF</td>
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<td>Supreme Constitutional Committee</td>
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CHAPTER 1 - Why Quotas?

Introduction

In the days leading up to Egypt’s most recent constitutional referendum, held on January 14th and 15th, 2014, discussions about using a quota for women abounded. Women’s groups and activists hoped that after the January 2011 uprising, quotas would be upheld, despite the suspension of the constitution after the uprising. This hope stemmed from a 2009 constitutional amendment which stipulated the use of a quota for women for the next two parliamentary election cycles. However, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces first decided that quotas for women would not be used for the 2012 Parliamentary elections. Then, the writers of the 2012 Constitution chose to not include quotas for women at the national level in the Constitution. These decisions were not favorably met by women’s groups and activist, who had long lobbied for quotas for women for many years. Many saw the post-uprising time as an ideal arena to enhance women’s formal political participation and quotas in national Parliament was one such vehicle of change.

Therefore, the writing of the 2014 Constitution, made possible after the ouster of Mohammed Morsi in July 2013 and the suspension of the 2012 Constitution provided a renewed hope for the inclusion of quotas for women. As the constitutional writing process proceeded, women’s groups and activists held rallies and demonstrations demanding quotas for women in national parliament. On November 13, 2013, a large protest took place in Downtown Cairo. Women from different socio-economic and political backgrounds participated; members of the more liberal al Dustor and Social Democratic Parties rallied alongside women wearing niqab and sheiks from al Azhar. Their message was the same. It was time to recognize the right of women to be included in politics. Protester Iman Abdel Baset, from Zigzag, a large town in the Sharqia governorate in the Delta, summarized the wishes of her fellow protesters.

“Women are abused here in Egypt. This happens all the time. We are here to ask for the right of women to participate in politics. The women is a human being, she has a right to
decide for her country. In the current constitution, women will not have a right to participate in politics. They say that women are weak, so men always take their places.”\(^1\)

One of the protesters demands was that a quota for women in Parliament be included in the new constitution. A constitutional amendment passed in 2009 by the last Parliament under Honsi Mubarak’s regime declared that a quota would be used for women in parliament for two election cycles; why would it not be included now? The January 25\(^{th}\). 2011 uprisings as well as the June 30\(^{th}\), 2013 uprisings proved that women were just as active on the streets as men. The transitional period should be an opportunity to introduce better gender equality in the constitution. The following week, it appeared as if the wishes of the female protesters were heard when an anonymous source close to the proceedings of the constitutional writing process stated that a quota for women would be included in the new constitution. However, a week later, committee member Mohamed Abla announced that a quota for women in national Parliament (as well as Coptic Christians and youth) would not be included.\(^2\) By the time the draft constitution went to referendum in January, there was no mention of a quota for women in politics at the national level. Article 11 of the 2014 Constitution references women’s formal political participation. It states,

“The State shall ensure the achievement of equality between women and men in all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution. The State shall take the necessary measures to ensure the appropriate representation of women in the Houses of Representatives, as specified by Law. The State shall also guarantee women’s right of holding public and senior management offices in the State and their appointment in judicial bodies and authorities without discrimination…”\(^3\)

Nowhere does it state what “appropriate representation” means or who will decide what an appropriate number of women are to be included in the House of Representatives. The

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discussion about quotas for women in Egyptian Parliament after the uprising had found its answer.

Unexpected events change the course of action in Egypt but this appears to be the latest framework that women in Egypt will be working in. This research seeks to understand what quotas mean to various women’s groups and candidates and political parties for Parliament between the years 2005 and 2012. The 2005 session of Parliament was the last under Mubarak’s regime. The ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) controlled Egypt for almost thirty years and had a record of widespread corruption, nepotism, and election fraud. The first multi-person presidential election took place earlier in 2005, and even though Mubarak unquestionably won the election, there was a growing belief that there would be more political liberalization in the coming months. Indeed, the 2005 Parliamentary elections saw the banned, but tolerated, Muslim Brotherhood, win 88 seats by running as independents. Additionally, four women won election to Parliament with Mubarak appointing another five. Members of the 2005 Parliament discussed many issues that addressed social, political and economic matters. One of the issues discussed was the use of a quota for women as a way to increase women’s political participation in the following national Parliaments. The nature of these discussions and their implications will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 4.

A quota amendment passed in 2009 stipulated that a quota for women would be utilized for the next two parliamentary election cycles. Sixty four new constituencies were created specifically for female candidates in the 2010 elections. This ensured that women would have a chance to run against other women in the same constituencies instead of having women run against men. New constituencies were created so there was no precedent of a man carrying the district in the past. The creation of 64 constituencies however changed the total number of elected members from 454 to 508. As a result, the

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percentage of women was reflected against 508, which lowered the total percentage of women despite 64 women winning seats in Parliament. Nonetheless, in 2010, a new Parliament was elected in November 2010 with the 64 new female parliamentarians. They, along with their colleagues, entered into the one of the shortest sessions of Egyptian Parliament. These lawmakers lasted for about three weeks, as the uprisings in January 2011 against Mubarak’s regime began shortly after their election and he dissolved the parliament in a desperate bid to end the protests.

The next parliamentary election, the first after the uprisings, took place from late 2011 to early 2012. This was the first free and fair elections in Egypt. Islamist groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood’s newly formed political wing, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), did very well in parliamentary and later presidential elections. Of the 498 members of this Parliament, around seventy percent was dominated by a coalition formed either by the Muslim Brotherhood or the ultra-conservative Salafi al Nour party. Nine women, four of whom were members of the FJP, won seats in Parliament, while two additional women were appointed by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). This, too, was a short lived Parliament. The Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) ruled on June 14, 2012 that the Electoral Law issued by SCAF was not used properly thus the Parliament was constitutionally void. SCAF based their decision on the parliamentary electoral law that was approved by referendum on March 19, 2011. It stated that one third of the seats would be elected from the individual system while the remaining two thirds would be elected by the closed list system, where parties would be allowed to nominate individual members for seats. The SCC objected to how the Election Law was followed as the law allowed those running on the closed lists to run as independents but candidates running in the individual elections were not allowed to run independents. The manner in which these two systems were used in elections failed to provide equal rights of representation to all candidates and the SCC decision stated that if

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part of the Parliament was elected unconstitutionally, then the whole Parliament was unconstitutional.

Presidential elections were held the following week in which FJP candidate Mohammed Morsi won. Though he declared he would reinstate Parliament, this proved to be an empty promise and no other Parliament was elected during his year in office. The referendum held in March also dictated the constitutional writing process. A committee was formed made up of one hundred people who were tasked with amending the constitution. The fruits of this committee produced the 2012 Constitution which many decried as undermining human and women’s rights and limiting freedom of expression and religion. After a controversial power grab in December 2012 and months of growing unrest Morsi, like Mubarak, was toppled after just one year in power by a popular uprising in June 2013.

The ever changing political arena in Egypt is a difficult place to work in. It is evident that in both 2005 and 2011, women had poor levels of representation in Parliament. Against this backdrop, I look at female parliamentarians from two ideologically different regimes in order to address broader questions concerning the use of a quota in national politics and examine the debates and ramifications in using a quota in Egypt. These two sessions of parliament are important as the nature of the political regimes changed drastically. I highlight the different political regimes’ rhetoric on the use of quotas in politics by studying the discussions and arguments that took place both in Parliament and by women’s groups and political parties who work and lobby the State for laws that extend equal rights to both men and women.

**Research Question**

The focus of my research is to examine the introduction of a quota for women in the People’s Assembly, the national Parliament in Egypt. I use three important actors in this process, various state sponsored and independent women’s groups, candidates and

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Members of Parliament and political parties in Egypt between 2005 and 2012 in order to highlight relationships between these actors as well as their relationship to the State. I try to understand quotas as more than just a quantitative method of increasing women’s political participation in Egypt. I investigate different services various women’s groups provide to female candidates for Parliament as well as their viewpoints on which type of quota works best for Egypt. Additionally, I talk with Members of Parliament about their interactions with women’s groups and their experiences in running for Parliament. I discuss their campaign platforms and goals they set for office and how these issues are addressed. These questions are considered in a time of political change and transition in Egypt. Political ideology of different groups change and I look to highlight how these changes in ideology affect the conversation about quotas in Egypt. I consider these questions against the backdrop of international conventions and treaties and domestic Egyptian policy.

**Chapter Outline**

My thesis will consist of five chapters with an introductory first chapter and concluding fifth chapter. This first chapter introduces the topic and my research question. The next section presents a brief history of Egypt’s modern Parliamentary history. It is important contextualize Egypt’s past experiences with a quota in order to understand the decisions that were made in the time period I will be examining. The remainder of the chapter will include a literature review which presents a theoretical and conceptual framework for my research.

The second chapter will be a critical look at the use of quota systems. I will begin by introducing quotas as an international global vehicle for better representation that gained growing recognition after the signing of the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, which Egypt is a signatory of. I highlight other international conventions that encourage countries to find ways of increasing women’s political participation, such the First International Conference for Women in 1975, the Beijing Platform of Women in 1995 and the Millennium Developing Goals (MDG) by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2000. I then
explain different types of quotas and highlight those who argue both for and against a quota in national politics. I contextualize this argument by examining countries in Africa and the Middle East that have used a quota in national parliament. The five country analysis introduces many of the issues Egypt faced and is facing as they struggle to find a path that promotes greater gender equality.

Chapter three will focus on different women’s groups in Egypt. This chapter seeks to differentiate between groups active in working with women and explore the various kinds of work that Egyptian women’s they are doing today. I am specifically interested in the work they do for and with Members of Parliament. I will discuss the different types of services women’s groups such as the state sponsored National Council for Women provide. I additionally consider more independent groups such as the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU), the Egyptian Center for Women’s Rights (ECWR) and Nazra for Feminist Studies and the services they provide for candidates in elections beginning in 2005. I will assess their viewpoints on quotas and what, if any, action should be done regarding quotas now. I will also discuss the work these groups do with political parties in Egypt and how they see quotas being applied to parties. Finally, I will introduce a post-January 25th discourse in order to highlight the trajectory women’s groups took in the new Egyptian political landscape.

Chapter four focuses on women in Egyptian Parliament from the years 2005, 2010 and 2012. I use meeting minutes from Parliament to address the discussions parliamentarians had in 2009 about introducing a quota for women. Who brought up these issues, who participated in the discussion and which party they are from will be helpful in determining the process of implanting quotas in Egyptian Parliament. I use interviews with members of Parliament in 2010 and 2012, as well as other public interviews and media to highlight their experiences in running for Parliament as well as being a member in this decision making body. I discuss their viewpoints on quotas and other issues they believe are important for improving women’s political representation. Finally, I introduce the larger media debate, in which other parliamentarians voices are
heard, as well as Egyptian citizens who express their views on women’s rights and quota usage.

Finally, the concluding fifth chapter will discuss the latest challenges and debates about using a quota in Parliament. I will discuss some of the debates that were had in the Constitutional Committee that drafted the 2014 Constitution as well as the broader public debate that is present in politics to date.

**Egypt’s Modern Parliamentary History**

Since the early 1900s, Egyptians engaged in legislative politics in Parliament.\(^8\) The 1923 Egyptian Constitution, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 42 established a bicameral legislature with a Senate and House of Representatives.\(^9\) Two fifths of the Senate was to be appointed by the King with the remaining three fifths elected by voters.\(^10\) The term was to last ten years while half of the appointed and half of the elected Senators would be renewed after five years.\(^11\) Members of the House of Representatives would enjoy a five year term\(^12\) and each Representative would be elected by qualified voters from Egyptian society.\(^13\) During this period, Members of Parliament struggled against three conflicting actors: the British, the King and the powerful Wafd Party who controlled Parliament for many years.\(^14\) Instability caused by these actors and world wars resulted in many rigged elections, a series of changing cabinets, and the dissolving of Parliament multiple times between 1936 and 1952.\(^15\) The end of the 1940s and into the early 1950s, a group of army officers became active in politics. This group spun a narrative that placed the blame for Egypt’s troubles and instabilities on the most

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\(^8\) Cook, Steven A. “The Struggle for Egypt: From Nasser to Tahrir Square” (Oxford University Press, 2012) Kindle Location 63.4/1061
\(^10\) *Ibid*, Article 74
\(^11\) *Ibid*, Article 79
\(^12\) *Ibid*, Article 86
\(^13\) *Ibid*, Article 82
\(^15\) *Ibid*, 3-4
unpopular groups in Egypt: the King, the British and the Wafd. In 1954, these officers, known as the Free Officers, staged a coup and took over Egypt. One of their first acts was to dissolve Parliament but ensured governing remained in the hands of a civilian prime minister and cabinet. The Free Officers, led by Gamal Abdel Nasser, retracted the 1923 Constitution and abolished all political parties. Egypt entered into a single party state and an authoritarian rule was established. The Constitution of 1956 set out the terms of the legislature. Parliament would be unicameral and in the beginning, it was not specified how many members would be elected. Members of the National Assembly would be elected through a secret general election and would serve a five year term. For the first time, Egyptian women were granted the right to vote and in 1957, the first woman, Rawya Atiya, took her seat in Egyptian national Parliament.

Anwar Sadat became President of Egypt in 1970 after the death of Nasser. The 1970s was a time of political, economic and social liberalization as President Sadat’s Infitah or open door economic policies began to take effect. In 1971, a new constitution was issued which reestablished a multiparty political system. Article 62 of the Constitution addressed Egyptian Parliament. It says,

“Citizens shall have the right to vote and express their opinions in referendums according to the provisions of the law. Their participation in public life is a national duty. The law shall regulate the right of candidacy to the People’s Assembly and the Shura Council according to the electoral system it specifies. The law may adopt a system that combines between the individual and the party-list systems at such ratio as may be specified by the law. Such system may also include a minimum limit for the women’s participation in both councils.”

16 Cook, Steven A. “The Struggle for Egypt: From Nasser to Tahrir Square” (Oxford University Press, 2012) Kindle Location 101.6/1061
17 Ibid, Kindle Location 106.9/1061
18 Dunne, 4
19 Cook, Kindle Location 106.8/1061
20 “The New Egyptian Constitution” Middle East Journal Vol. 10, No. 3, Summer, 1956 (Middle East Institute, 1956) p. 300-306 ; 301
21 Ibid, 301
22 “History of Women in Egyptian Life” State Information Service (undated) http://www.sis.gov.eg/En/Templates/Articles/tmpArticles.aspx?CatID=827#Uzqz0fmSzYt
24 Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Article 5 http://www.sis.gov.eg/En/Templates/Articles/tmpArticles.aspx?CatID=208#UzqzSfmSzYs
25 Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt 1971
Under this Article, Sadat recreated a bicameral legislature in Egypt. The National Assembly was rechristened as the People’s Assembly, and the upper house, the Shura Council was created. The Shura Council is comprised of 264 members; two thirds are elected while the remaining one third is appointed by the president. Though a quota for women was not applied to this Council, women’s representation was traditionally high. The president is able to appoint one third of the members of the Shura Council and the president typically chose women for these seats. The Constitution addressed the political participation of women in the People’s Assembly. Egypt was the first Arab country and one of the first African countries to address this. The last sentence of Article 63 introduces a minimum percentage for women in the People’s Assembly. However, this is the only sentence that references greater gender parity and no provisions were included on how it would be implemented or how many seats would be reserved for women. Additionally, Egypt, a Muslim majority country, practices more traditional gender roles where males are the breadwinners and providers and undertake political duties while women take more responsibility for childrearing and domestic activities. Politicians and lawmakers were not committed to enforcing a quota for women at this time. Newly organized political parties did not consider including women on their party lists as representatives and there was little public pressure or support to include them. Therefore, the number of women in Parliament remained low and quotas for women were not addressed until the end of the 1970s.

27 Ibid, 47
29 Many laws are based on a particular conception of gender that views men and women as having different responsibilities based on what is described as their natural advantage:

    The Quran says that God has made men and woman to excel each other in certain respects. The man excels the woman in constitution and physique, which is capable of bearing greater hardships and facing greater dangers than the physique of woman. On the other hand, the woman excels the man in the qualities of love and affection. Hence there is a natural division as between man and woman of the main work which is to be carried on for the progress of humanity” – Rahman, 349
30 Abou-Zeid, 46
Including more women in Parliament was reconsidered in 1979 and Constitutional Amendment 21 of 1979 was passed that clarified women’s political participation. The Amendment stated that thirty out of the total 360 seats would be for women in Parliament. This year also saw the foundation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW was supported by the political elites in Egypt, including the First Lady, Gihan Sadat. She called for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to form in Egypt and urged them as well as other political elite to support CEDAW, especially in enforcing Article 4 which discussed women’s participation in parliament. Egypt was looking to improve its image and eliminate areas that diminish human rights as it began looking to enhance its relationship with the West. Greater gender equality through the use of quotas for women in Parliament was one of the ways Egypt could show it was moving towards a more democratic and equal society. Therefore, in 1979, a quota was used for the first time in parliamentary elections and thirty five women were elected to parliament (representing nine percent of women). The following election in 1984 only saw one additional woman, but the two election cycles that used a quota provided a veritable first step for women in Egyptian politics. Along with quotas at the national level, local council quotas were also introduced. Quotas in local councils were quite successful and the number of women who participated in their constituencies rose between ten to twenty percent. However, the quota amendment was not strictly enforcement and the numbers of women represented dropped to one percent by 1997.

The quota was short lived. Due to a change in the 1983 electoral law, some Egyptian lawmakers argued against quotas, stating that they were a way to favor women

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31 Ibid, 47
32 Ibid, 45
33 Ibid, 46
34 Ibid, 47
35 Ibid, 47
36 The 1983 Electoral Law changed the electoral system from constituency elections to list nominations, in theory making it easier for women to be elected. However, this same law introduced severe restrictions on independent candidates and non-partisan candidates, which some women perceived as a way of forcing them out of parliament. Such candidates claimed that the law was unconstitutional on the grounds that it prohibits the nomination of those who are not running on a party ticket, thus violating public rights- Abou Zeid, 47
over men, which is a violation of equality. Therefore, in 1986, the Supreme Constitutional Court ruled that the quota amendment was unconstitutional and it was cancelled.\(^{37}\) The number of female parliamentarians dropped from ten percent to around two percent.\(^{38}\) The late 1980s and the time following well into Mubarak’s presidency signaled the state’s declining commitment to women’s equality. The quota system would not be discussed again until 2009. During this time, women in Parliament continued to be underrepresented and no serious attempts for the reintroduction of a quota was discussed. Few women were elected during these years and women’s political participation remained low, despite the president consistently appointment some women to the legislative bodies.

**Literature Review**

*(Transitional) Democracy and Feminism*

Early conceptualizations of democracy sought to provide equal rights for men while denying similar opportunities to women. “With the odd exception, the entire debate on democracy has proceeded for centuries as if women were not there, or it has, as with Rousseau, only acknowledged us to show us our place.”\(^{39}\) The rise of feminism aims to address this oversight. Women have collectively organized to address structural and ingrained inequality and injustice. Feminists worked to afford women the same rights that are taken for granted by men. The liberal conceptualization of democracy enables men to partake equally in the public sphere and engage in politics as representatives and lawmakers. Lawmaking and political governance are masculinized, which accentuates the differences of sex.\(^{40}\) Feminists and other women activists aim to address structural and ingrained practices of discrimination against women by working to bring awareness to the problem and influence government policy. In response to the masculinization of politics, Anne Phillips introduces two important implications. She argues that in order to address discriminatory practices, nations should develop representative mechanisms that

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\(^{37}\) Global Database of Quotas for Women, Egypt

\(^{38}\) Abou-Zeid, 47


\(^{40}\) *Ibid*, 6-7
address gender difference and inequality present between men and women in politics.\textsuperscript{41} This enables a fairer distribution of representation between men and women in important political decision making areas, where decisions affect women as much as they affect men. The second is to focus on women’s movements as a way to reorder and restructure relationships between the public and private sphere.\textsuperscript{42} Phillips acknowledges that an important aspect of extending democratic principles to all citizens is to include women in the decision making process of her country. Part of this will be achieved by changes to law that encourage and protect women’s political participation. Additionally, women’s movements work with their country’s lawmakers to influence them to enact positive changes in the law that promote greater representation for women in politics.

An important intervention is made for those countries who are in the process of trying to transition to democratic governments. Georgina Waylen questions the impact of democratization on gender relations.\textsuperscript{43} She discusses countries which transition from authoritarian forms of governance to a more democratic one as a top down approach because political elites play the primary role in decision making.\textsuperscript{44} Politics was largely elided with political elites, most of whom were men.\textsuperscript{45} Waylen, like Philips, recognizes that this understanding leaves out the important contributions women make including contributions in formal and informal civil society and through movements and organizations that advance specific rights. These actions and interventions by women are especially important in transitional politics. Waylen cites Latin America as a transitional model that highlights the important contributions of women. Chilean and Argentinean women in the 1980s were influential in organizing in order to press the government to recognize instances of human rights abuses against women and to vocalize their demands to rectify past wrongs.\textsuperscript{46} Women’s groups and movements played important roles in changing and influencing the authoritarian and military dictatorships in Latin American.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, 7
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, 7
\textsuperscript{43} Waylen, Georgina. “Women and Democratization: Conceptualizing Gender Relations in Transition Politics” World Politics Vol. 46, No. 3 (April 1994) 327-354; 329
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, 331
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, 333
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, 336-337
A further study of Chile and Argentina, also by Waylen, purports the necessity of studying both the strategies and goals of the actors of formal and informal women’s groups, activists, and political parties but also highlighting the institutions and structures of the state these actors are working within. The type of electoral system chosen for parliamentary elections, the strength (or weakness) of political parties participating in elections and the goals of active women’s groups all play important and influential roles during times of political transitions.

In the time frame I am studying, Egypt cannot be considered a democratic country. However, women’s political participation was and is an important discussion that gained prominence in 2009 and continues to be discussed at the time of writing. This research seeks to understand influence of women’s groups in their quest to advance women’s political participation in Egypt between 2005 and 2012. I take direction from Waylen and Phillips in order to address activists, different groups, parliamentarians and political party actors who participate in the discussion about women’s political representation as a form of encouraging and enhancing democracy in Egypt. I will also critique the political structure that these actors are operating in. What does increased women’s participation through the use of a quota mean to these actors? How does it affect their agenda and party platforms? This was a time of transition and change in Egypt: between January 2011 and today, the past authoritarian regime of Hosni Mubarak, the interim period governed by SCAF, and finally the Islamist regime of Mohammed Morsi presented differing viewpoints on women’s political participation. Each regime had a different relationship to women’s groups and I attempt to look at those changing relationships and highlight the contributions each group made in reference to women’s political participation in the time frame I have chosen. I take direction from the studies done by Waylen in Latin American to further understand the nature of democratic transition and the influences of various actors along the transitional path Egypt has taken since January 25th, 2011.

The terms ‘feminist’ or ‘feminist movement’ and ‘women’s movements’ are oftentimes used interchangeably. Many women in Egypt shy away from using the term ‘feminist’ as they feel it is too closely associated with Western meaning and ideals. Furthermore, ‘feminism’ or ‘feminist’ does not have an Arabic equivalent, rather, the terms taken to mean ‘feminist/feminism’ nisa’i,/ al-nisa’iyya simply mean ‘women’. ‘Feminist’ or ‘feminist movement’ will be used to understand any group of women that come together to work on women’s issues and act as a voice for greater rights for women while women’s movements or groups are understood as those considered with gender interests that challenge the ingrained patriarchal system and subordination and have strategic goals that promote gender equality.\textsuperscript{48} Some feminists in Egypt proudly embrace the term ‘feminist’, while others work on women’s issues and act as feminists but chose not to identify themselves in that manner. Margot Badran engages specifically with Egyptian feminism and its different strands that are prevalent throughout modern Egyptian history. In her work, she found that using the term gender activism alleviates the negative connotations some Egyptian woman feel when they are described as feminists, but still encompasses the important work they do on behalf of women. “Gender activism intends to capture women’s common “feminist” modes of thinking and behavior in the public sphere without denying the reality of distinct feminist and Islamist “movements” and separates the experience of uncommitted (pro-feminist) women”.\textsuperscript{49} Badran also differentiates between those women who publicly or privately declare themselves to be feminists as feminists; those who engage in feminist-centered work, either professionally or personally but refrain from identifying themselves as feminist to be ‘pro-feminist’.\textsuperscript{50} Finally, Bedran found that more conservative Islamist women chose not to identify as a feminist; these women were also more likely to don a hijab or niqab.\textsuperscript{51} While in the past, Islamism was associated with militancy and violence, these stereotypes

\textsuperscript{48} Stevens, 144  
\textsuperscript{49} Bedran, Margot. Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences (Oneworld Publications, 2009) 142  
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, 142  
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid, 142
are gradually dying away.\textsuperscript{52} In the polarized political climate that is present in Egypt now, these distinctions are especially important. The Islamist movement is traditionally unsupportive of increasing greater women’s rights and representation. In her research, Badran found that some of the younger Islamist women are beginning to question the patriarchal nature of the organizations they are a part of. These women argue that their subordination is not inherently a part of Islam and this conclusion provides an opening for gender reconfiguration that Islamist women support. I argue that while the Islamist parliamentarians I studied made continuous public statements that voiced their support for women’s political participation and the advancement of women’s human rights in Egypt, their actions while in power contradicted their statements.

\textit{State Feminism and Women's Groups}

Many countries have formal and informal groups that promote agendas and attempt to influence legislation and policymakers. Some groups are state sponsored and state mandated and is tasked with promoting state ideas about a certain issue. State feminism refers to those groups that are sponsored by the state to represent and lobby for changes that promote women’s rights. A central issue of state feminist groups is women’s representation in various government institutions.\textsuperscript{53} State women’s groups are first tasked with understanding how to best achieve policy that advances women’s rights in their country and second, to analyze whether or not their intervention and recommendations are actually effective in making the state more inclusive towards women.\textsuperscript{54} A central concept of this work is to understand how, if at all, state sponsored women’s groups in Egypt promote women’s rights and gender equality. Distinctions will be made between

\textsuperscript{52} After the events of June 30, 2013 which ousted the Islamist backed government of Mohammed Morsi and the August 14-15, 2013 forcible clearing of the Islamist sit-in in Rabaa al-Adawiyya and Nahda Squares, the Egyptian government reintroduced these stereotypes, which portray the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization who are responsible for killings, torture, bombings and other violence that has been prevalent in Egypt since the summer. At the time of submission, many Brotherhood members and sympathizers are currently jailed and the political and charitable faction of the Brotherhood was officially labeled a terrorist organization on December 25, 2013. While the focus of this thesis is not on the Muslim Brotherhood or the political events that are still unfolding, these distinctions are relevant and connected to women’s roles in politics.

\textsuperscript{53} McBride, Dorothy E. and Amy G. Mazur. \textit{The Politics of State Feminism: Innovation in Comparative Research}\textsuperscript{\textcopyright}(Temple University Press, Philadelphia 2010) 3-4

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Ibid}, 4
state sponsored groups and independent groups working in Egypt. Goals and actions of each group will be analyzed using this framework in order to discern changes in relationships and outcomes between 2005 and 2012.

McBride and Mazur write that state sponsored women’s groups are oftentimes more successful when they join with other formal and informal groups within their countries.\textsuperscript{55} They present two types of state feminism. The first is Movement State Feminism, in which the group promotes ideas and activists associated with the group promote their demands based on consciousness, women’s solidarity and the cause of women.\textsuperscript{56} The second type is Transformative State Feminism. These groups are explicitly feminist in nature and their demands and actions correspond to feminist ideals in that they recognize patriarchy and gender based hierarchy and seek to promote gender equality with the ultimate goal of transforming gender relations within the state.\textsuperscript{57} I take direction from McBride and Mazur in order to better understand the goals and influence on Egypt’s state sponsored women’s group, the National Council for Women. I try to determine whether the mass uprisings in January 2011 changed the nature of the NCW. I look to see if the NCW is influential in framing the issue of women’s political participation in society in a way that enables them to advance their agenda. Additionally, once an issue, such as gender equality and women’s political representation, is introduced and framed in society, who has the power to introduce initiatives that rectify the issue? In Egypt, the main state sponsored women’s group advanced legalization that was approved by the State prior to January 25\textsuperscript{th}. The paradigm shift after 2011 was significant. After the mass uprisings in January 2011, how effective and influential was Egypt’s National Council for Women?

I argue that prior to January 25\textsuperscript{th}, other women’s groups entered into a relationship with the NCW as one of their only options for advancing their agenda in authoritarian Egypt. After the uprising, the NCW was vilified for its association and connection to the past regime and thus is not influential in its initiatives in 2014 at the

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid, 4-5
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid, 5
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid, 5
time of writing. However, post January 25th saw other independent women’s groups gain prominence and I argue that the changing political arena gave them mobility. This is not to say that the political arena in Egypt has led to independent women’s groups achieving their agenda. The looming presence and past power of the NCW no longer plays such a significant role in framing issues in Egypt today, thus providing a space for other groups to form and promote their agendas.

**Women’s Political Representation and Effectiveness**

How representatives behave is an important facet of understanding the depth of the meaning of ‘representation’. Feminist theorist Anne Stevens explains how to understand representation. She introduces the concepts of substantive representation and descriptive (or numerical) representation. Substantive representatives are those who are elected or appointed who ensure that the basic fundamental interests of individuals or the group find a voice. Substantive representation is aimed at groups and collective interests, rather than individual wishes and interests. The actions of these representatives in national parliament and the choices they make on behalf of the group take precedence over who they are. Substantive representatives uphold party ideology and endorse and promote legislation that benefits the collective interests they represent. Personal ideology and platforms are not as important to substantive representatives. Conversely, for descriptive or numerical representatives, who they are is important, because while they may represent the interests of the group, the sex of the representative is more important. Descriptive representatives are more reflexive of the makeup of the group and society at large. Women representatives serve as visual reminders that they are present in political group as well as having an important voice on the national stage. Through interviews and media discussions, I attempt to discern a greater understanding of which women are more beholden to party ideology by asking about their goals and objectives of being an Egyptian Parliamentarian. This will allow me to go beyond looking at quotas simply as a quantitative tool to increase female representation in Parliament.

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“Should the mechanisms of representative democracy aim to represent women as women, and if so, what would the representatives be representing- women’s ideas, interests or identities?”60 This question, posed by Judith Squires challenges the idea of ‘representative’. Anne Stevens responds to Squires by presenting two different viewpoints in response to this question; variations of these arguments and logic can be found when lawmakers discuss quotas for women, which I will address in Chapter 2. One such argument is drawn from the republican approach to democratic representation, which argues that as citizens are equal, political systems should not recognize any social, religious, cultural or sexual distinctions between citizens.61 Numerous representatives are chosen from a population who come from varied backgrounds and all have varied interests. It follows that citizens will find their sex, religion and culture represented in at least one of the members of parliament. If the members of parliament use logic and rationale to solve issues presented and translate the issues into law, it is unnecessary, even undemocratic, to use quotas or other affirmative action policies to increase the number of women in parliament or politics.

“While low proportions of women may be deplorable, representation is still held in principle to function as satisfactorily for women as for men, and women should have no cause to complain that their voices are not heard. Any individual woman has as much ability as any individual man to vote against a representative whom she feels is not working in the interests of all society.”62

The counterargument is that women have distinct interests that cannot and should not be represented by men.63 Furthermore, stating that all citizens are equal and interests and ideas are represented by someone in parliament intrinsically ends up assimilating women to the masculine narrative. “Ideas and interests cannot be represented if the gender identities that are embodied in sexual difference do not also come into the picture,”64 Women constitute half of the global population and have the right to participate and be heard in national politics; their absence in politics, both nationally and locally, damages

61 Ibid, 69-74
62 Ibid, 69-74
63 Ibid, 69-74
64 Ibid, 69-74
the legitimacy of the political process and depresses the status and aspirations of women as a whole.\(^{65}\) Women’s political representation is one aspect of democracy. As I will discuss further in Chapter 2, quotas are one mechanism that aims to secure and increase representation for a certain group. Quotas for women became a popular choice after the Beijing Platform for Action was introduced in 1995. As way of increasing female political participation, quotas seek to give women a voice in politics and agency to introduce and implement their policy ideas.

Anne Marie Gotez discusses women’s political effectiveness, which questions the ways in which women obtain a voice in politics. She understands political effectiveness as “the ability to use ‘voice’ to politicize issues of concern to women, to use electoral leverage to press demands on decision makers, to trigger better responsiveness from the public sector to their needs, and better enforcement of constitutional commitments to women’s equal rights.”\(^{66}\) The use of quotas for women in politics is one possible way to grant women a voice in politics. However, once in power, quotas do not assess the quality of service. Quotas do not mean that society automatically becomes more democratic or equitable. Nor do quotas necessarily mean that women will be advocates of a gender agenda. “Indeed, for some women, winning and keeping office can be contingent upon downplaying feminist sympathies.”\(^{67}\) I use Goetz in order to understand if newly elected female parliamentarians in Egypt have the agency and ability to address the issues she campaigned on. Is she able to address all issues in the People’s Assembly of Egypt, including discussing women’s rights and the use of a quota?

**Liberal versus Liberating Empowerment**

In recent years, there is a growing body of literature on the empowerment of women, especially in the global South. Like scholarship on democracy, scholarship on neoliberal policies in the 1990s highlighted marked gender blindness and the negative

\(^{65}\) *Ibid*, 69-74


\(^{67}\) Cornwall, Andrea and Anne Marie Goetz. “Democratizing Democracy: Feminist Perspectives” *Democratization* Vol. 12, No. 5 (December 2005) 783-800 ; 784
effects this had on the advancement of women’s rights. Terms such as “empowerment” became a key phrase in the development paradigm. It is defined by the World Bank as “the process of enhancing an individual’s or group’s capacity to make purposive choices and to transform these choices into desired actions and outcomes.” Indian feminist Nirantar defined empowerment as “the ability to define these changes for themselves, negotiate change, understand and challenge injustice and inequality and act towards the achievement of strategic goals that address issues of women’s status/position.” Cornwall et al. contend that empowerment has become eviscerated of its original political content and that there is little or no talk of the location of power, inequalities or structural constraints. Cecilia M.B. Sardenberg, in agreement with Cornwall et al., writes that that power is central to any conceptualization of empowerment… “Women’s empowerment involves challenged patriarchal relations which in turn requires that women first recognize the ideology that legitimizes male domination and understands how it perpetuates their oppression.” However, the approach supported by the World Bank and other institutions does not take into account patriarchal structures of dominance, nor does it address class, race, or ethnic differences that are also responsible for inequities among women. Sardenberg terms this approach liberal empowerment, which fits into the neoliberal economic paradigm. It aims to empower individual women without critically understanding or examining the meaning of empowerment as promoted by Nirantar.

Liberating empowerment, in contrast, emphasizes power relations and structural inequalities and conceptualizes gender relations as socially constituted relations between men and women. It focuses on the work women do as well as the important

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69 Ibid, 3
70 Ibid, 3-4
71 Ibid, 3
73 Ibid, 19
74 Ibid, 19
75 Ibid, 21
contributions of women’s groups active in their country. Liberating empowerment fits into the gender and development (GAD) framework. The GAD approach to empowerment, which grew out of the work women did primarily in the global South, rejects the Women in Development (WID) framework as it ignored patriarchal structures of dominance.\(^{76}\) The roots of GAD can be traced to the First International Conference on Women in Mexico (1975) as well as in the Fourth International Conference on Women and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995). These two important conferences will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 2.

Sardenberg stresses the need of women’s organizations which play a fundamental role in creating organizations that promote women’s activism.\(^{77}\) The role of women’s groups is an essential part of the liberating conception of empowerment, which recognizes that the influences of these groups result in structural transformation of the institutions of patriarchal domination.\(^{78}\) Collective action is more powerful and effective than providing resources for individuals and the process of empowerment can be viewed through a three part process, beginning with providing groups with resources to help women, allowing groups agency to enact their agenda, and finally their achievements.\(^{79}\) However, Sardenberg concludes that a critical missing dimension is that in this conceptualization of liberating empowerment, there needs to be a distinction between interventions aimed at enhancing women’s resource and those that genuinely reduce inequality.\(^{80}\) This argument aids in addressing quotas a more than just a quantitative policy. Sardenberg’s intervention on liberal and liberating empowerment will provide an important framework as I address the introduction and implementation of quotas for women in Egypt.

\(^{76}\) Sardenberg, 20  
\(^{77}\) Sardenberg, 19  
\(^{78}\) Sardenberg, 19-20  
\(^{79}\) Sardenberg, 23  
\(^{80}\) Sardenberg, 22-23
**Subjectivity**

Sex and gender are not mutually exclusive. This is the core argument of Butler’s work, *Gender Trouble*. Though we are all born with a biological sex, our gender does not necessarily have to correlate with our sex. Society, however, has certain expectations of individuals which construct or determine sexual identity. Therefore, men are supposed to act according to a masculine narrative, which include traits such as strength and power, while women are expected to be gentle and quiet. This narrative becomes internalized, and Butler sums up the product of this narrative with gender defined as “the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being”\(^81\)

The repetition of gender stereotypes results in expected behaviors and deviating from these gender norms is perceived as weird and unnatural. In public and in private, “the body becomes a site of social control….and thus subject to social norms, gazes, policing and punishment”\(^82\).

Gender subjectivity is further complicated as those within the same sex expect other members to preform according to the gender stereotypes they conform to. It is apparent in varying degrees: some women believe that women should not be concerned with working in politics or other perceived masculine duties while others feel that all women should be concerned with women’s rights and the struggle for equality because all women share in the same experience of fighting for those rights. In speaking with both women’s groups, candidates and Members of Parliament, I determine what struggles women face in engaging with politics in Egypt. How do women’s groups and candidates conceive of her time in Parliament? Is she required to advocate for women’s rights or does she have different concerns?

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\(^{81}\) Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. (Routledge, 2006) ; 33

\(^{82}\) Sultana, Farhana. “Fluid Lives: Subjectivities, Gender and Water in Rural Bangladesh.” *Gender, Place and Culture* 16, No. 4 (August 2009 ; 427–444) 433
Electoral Systems

The focus of this research is how quotas are used and the beliefs and viewpoints of women. While I do not provide a critique of the Egyptian electoral system, it is necessary to discuss different electoral systems in order to understand why some electoral systems support quotas more effectively than others. There are three predominate election systems that countries use. One is the plurality or majoritarian system, where candidates compete for votes and the winner obtains the most votes. In the majoritarian system, areas are divided into districts in which candidates compete in. Some districts are single member districts, where whoever wins the most votes gains the seat in parliament. Other areas are multiple member districts, where more than one candidate is elected. Alternatively, in the proportional representation (PR) system, the percentage of votes that a party receives in each district is translated into the percentage of seats that the party gets in parliament. Proportional representation systems are always multi-member districts. For example, if a party wins twenty percent of all votes, they will receive about twenty percent of the seats in parliament. Matland suggests that proportional representation systems tend to support the election of women for many different reasons. In majoritarian single districts, political parties most often chose to run incumbent, powerful men who will almost assuredly win, thus granting the party a seat in parliament. This is especially true if political parties feel that women are weaker and less competent than men to run and win seats. With multi-district proportional representation, and knowing that there will be more than one winner in each district, women have a great chance to being included as candidates. Parties are more conscious of gender balance when they know that a male will also win in a district. Finally, the last electoral system is the mixed system, where some of the candidates run in the majoritarian system while others

84 Ibid, 99
85 Ibid, 99
86 Ibid, 99
87 For a more in depth discussion of why the PR system is more friendly to women’s election, see Paxton, Kunovich, and Hughes 2007; Rule and Zimmerman 1997; Larsenrud and Taphorn 2007)
88 Matland, 100
run in the PR system. Egypt uses the mixed system. According to the January 1972 Electoral Law, as amended July 23, 2011, sixty multi-member districts in Egypt will compete for one hundred twenty seats through the proportional representation system, while 30 two-member districts will compete for sixty seats under the majoritarian system. Therefore, 180 candidates will be elected through the mixed electoral system. Additionally, the president of the republic has the power to elect up to ninety additional members of parliament. Why, then, if Egypt uses a predominantly PR system, with the added benefit of a president who consistently appoints some women to parliament, is women’s representation still low? What are other factors besides the electoral system that contribute to low female representation?

**Methodology**

I will approach this research from a variety of angles. I conducted interviews with as many women in parliament from 2005, 2010 and 2011-12 who were interested and willing to talk with me. Egypt’s political climate is such that it makes it difficult to talk to politicians. I interviewed Mona Makram Ebeid, who ran in the 2010 elections and Sanaa elSaid, a Member of Parliament in 2012 and who had ran in 2005 and 2010. Both women gave me permission to use their names. In order to include voices from other parliamentarians who did not wish to be interviewed, I use interviews and articles Members of Parliament provided in the past about quotas and women’s rights. Here, I will include all names as the interviews and writings are public documents. Egyptian print media such as *Al-Ahram, Al-Masry Al-Youm, Daily New Egypt*, and *Egypt Independent* have many relevant documents that aided in providing voices to many parliamentarians. I chose these papers because they provide a wide range of coverage and various viewpoints about the issues I am researching. By using multiple papers which discuss the same issue, I can obtain a greater picture of the discussions that took place in the time period I am focusing on.

In order to supplement the interviews I conducted and the additional interviews parliamentarians gave to television and print media, I obtained permission to access the

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90 Inter-Parliamentary Union, Egypt. [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org)
meeting minutes from 2005-2012 which are housed in the *Maktab Meglis al-Shab*. The process of getting into the library was long and I was faced with many unnecessary obstacles. Despite their contradictory rules, I was able to obtain many relevant documents relating to women’s rights that were discussed in Parliament, starting in the 1970s and ending with the most recent happenings in 2013. These documents provided insight into the discussions that took place in Parliament about quotas for women at the national level. They also clarify who discussed issues and highlighted different party stances regarding quota use for women. I will look at who speaks out about quotas and those who are both for and against their implantation. The party they are in helps aids in providing further insight into the greater party ideology and beliefs about women’s political participation.

National women’s groups and movements play an important role in lobbying the government for better gender laws, including a quota. Therefore, I conducted interviews with various women’s groups in Egypt. I interviewed Rania and Laila from the National Women’s Council. Both worked on political participation and activism with candidates for Parliament. Additionally, I interviewed an activist with the Egyptian Feminist Union named Sawsan who worked on providing training sessions for female Parliamentary candidates in both 2005 and 2012. Their names have been changed. In order to supplement the interviews, I use publications these NGOs published as well as interviews other members gave to media outlets. This enabled me to include as many voices and opinions from relevant actors regarding the use of quotas for women in Egyptian National Parliament.

**Conclusion**

This research seeks to understand the use of a quota at the national level in Egyptian Parliament. I examine the time in which Egypt introduced a quota and what using a quota meant to Egyptian women who went on to run in elections. The time between 2005 and 2012 resulted in many significant changes to the political system in Egypt and I identify important actors who take part in the discussion about women’s political participation and the introduction of a quota system during this time. Different
groups, including state sponsored groups as well as independent groups, candidates for Parliament, and political parties are critical to this discussion. I highlight the changing political time and those in power, from Mubarak to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces and finally to Morsi in order to assess how the public conversation shifted. I call on Sardenberg’s analysis about liberal and liberating empowerment in order to assess whether quotas are a means of enhancing democracy in Egypt or as a tool for women’s empowerment. Drawing on notions of subjectivity and feminism, I address how female candidates for Parliament navigate the challenges of becoming parliamentarians and the goals they set once for office. These interactions are contrasted to how groups in Egypt view female parliamentarians and how they believe they should act once they obtain power in government. I seek to understand the relationship between the regime, parliamentarians and women’s movements in Egypt, who play a critical role in the promotion of quotas. I also call on Goetz and Stevens to understand the type of parliamentarian and the goals she wishes to enact once in national Parliament. I attempt to evaluate who has the power and agency to promote women’s political participation through the use of quotas in Egypt’s changing political arena. The power of the state was diminished after January 25th, 2011, and actors with different ideologies came to power. These questions are considered in a time of political instability and change in Egypt.
CHAPTER 2- Defining Quotas

Introduction

Quotas for women in national decision making bodies are not a new phenomenon and many countries have introduced quotas in order to increase female representation in politics. Today, one hundred twenty five countries worldwide use some form of a quota for women in politics, with an average level of female representation of almost twenty two percent. Since the introduction of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, women’s representation in national parliaments has increased. In 1995, the global average of women in parliament was 11.3 percent, which jumped to over 17 percent by 2007. While some countries chose to enact policies that reflect greater political participation for women, such as quotas, of their own volition, many were, and still are, greatly influenced by international treaties and documents that call for recognition of the underrepresentation of women. Since the adoption of these international treaties, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of countries who chose to introduce a quota for women in their legislative bodies. International actors and lawmakers in many countries began to debate the pros and cons of using a quota for women. Countries also vary greatly in the way they introduced and enforced quotas. In this chapter, I begin by introducing major conferences, conventions and action plans that continue to affect countries’ decisions on using a quota. I discuss the three different types of quotas that are used, then present the most common arguments opponents and advocates use. Finally, I describe specific countries’ use of a quota with each one highlighting different issues that arose either in implementing or enforcing a quota.

International Treaties Addressing Global Women’s Issues

In the early nineteenth century, women in many nations around the world fought for the right to vote. Today, ninety six percent of countries worldwide grant women that

91 Global Database of Quotas for Women, Country Overview
important right. International organizations were created after the two World Wars in order to ensure basic human rights to all citizens regardless of creed or country. The United Nations Charter affirms and “encourages respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without discrimination as to race, sex, language, or religion…” Human rights became a global issue and the UN sought to secure basic rights for citizens worldwide through legislation. The United Nations held conferences that addressed equality, discrimination, violence, and health, along with many other critical focus areas. These conferences resulted in various treaties and charters. Participants of the conferences and signatories of the treaties were prevailed upon to uphold the principles of equality and non-discrimination for all citizens. Lawmakers in their home countries were encouraged to draft legislation that took into account the recommendations of the conferences that would result in a more equitable society for all.

Since obtaining the vote, women have increasingly participated in all aspects of governance that were previously denied to them. The Convention on the Political Rights of Women was signed in 1952, which “recognized that everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country…and desiring to equalize the status of men and women in the enjoyment and exercise of political rights in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights…” Articles II and III grant women the right to run in elections in all publically elected bodies and the right to hold public office and to exercise all public functions “on equal terms with men, without any discrimination.” This Convention was one of the earliest that established the political rights of women.

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94 United Nations. Charter of the United Nations 24 October 1945, 1 UNTS XVI ; Chapter 1, Article 1
96 Ibid, Article II and III
However, despite the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the trajectory of women’s rights and participation is varied and unequal. While some nations autonomously passed legislation that aimed to create more equality in their institutions through the use of affirmative action policies, others passed legislation that appeared to be centered around equality but in reality allowed for the continuation of discrimination.  

In the 1970s, the UN began to target women’s human rights as they recognized that discrimination against women was endemic in many nations. In 1975, the first International Conference on Women took place in Mexico. The Conference stressed that it was necessary for nations to address the positive role women play in strengthening their communities and nations and measures needed to be taken to combat institutional discrimination. One section recognized women’s political participation. It “stressed that greater and equal participation of women at all levels of decision making shall decisively contribute to accelerating the pace of development and the maintenance of peace.” The Report determined that combating discrimination and inequality for women would require an international action plan that would be carried out by individual countries through their lawmakers. For the first time, affirmative action policies for women in politics were addressed. A section entitled “Equality in Law and in Practice” discussed the forthcoming Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Conference participations were hoping for its completion and adoption, which would be binding for its signatories. Until CEDAW was completed, Section 199 of the 1975 Conference Report addressed ways to increase women’s political participation at both national and local levels, but the Report was non-binding, simply a recommendation. “Some representatives suggested the establishment of quotas for women in political

99 Ibid, 3
100 Ibid, 155
101 Ibid, 1q 156
bodies for an initial period until society accepted the active participation of women in political life.”

The first International Conference on Women in Mexico provided the basis for addressing the institutional inequality against women present in many aspects of life. Included in this conference was women’s political participation. The conference recognized the important contributions women make when they are present in decision making bodies at both the national and local level of government. Though it did not provide a formal policy recommendation, the Conference was a starting point that addressed ways of approaching gender equality. Participants also recognized that whichever measures were taken to combat this issue, it would need to be widely publicized and explained in order for it to be achieved.

Four years later, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was completed in 1979. CEDAW was the product of over thirty years of work by the UN Commission on Women, which is tasked with promoting women’s rights. CEDAW drew upon the work of the First International Women’s Conference and other conventions and declarations by the UN and it is the most comprehensive of the treaties and declarations regarding rights for women. Attention to equality, legal status, and reproductive rights are major topics discussed in CEDAW. In order to address these areas, signatories are called to address cultural and social stereotypes that result in discrimination and inequality between men and women and find ways that eliminate such practices “which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotypical roles for men and women.” Discrimination is understood in the treaty as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex…in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil

102 Ibid 156
103 Ibid. 156
105 Ibid, Introduction
106 Ibid, Introduction
or any other field” and that signatories of CEDAW are to take “all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men”. Discriminatory practices are found in many locations from the village to institutionalized workplaces. CEDAW recognizes this and provides recommendations to nations to help them address institution discrimination against women.

Using the basis established in the Convention for the Political Rights of Women in 1952 and First International Conference on Women four years prior, Article 7 of CEDAW address women’s political participation. States are encouraged “to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and in particular, shall ensure to women on equal terms” that they have the right to vote and run in all elections, participate in the formulation of government and participate in all associations concerned with public and political life. In order to ensure that women are granted these rights and protections, Article 8 calls on the states to take all appropriate measures to ensure that there is no discrimination found between men and women in these bodies. Quotas for women in politics are not explicitly referenced in the CEDAW Convention; however Article 24 calls on signatories to undertake any and all steps to achieve equality between men and women in order to recognize the full rights of women. Countries are free to achieve equality within their governments in ways of their own choosing. As a result, some countries adopted quotas voluntarily. Some countries, like Sweden and Norway, introduced quotas autonomously in the 1970s and 1980s while other countries, such as Argentina introduced quotas for women in the 1990s after women’s groups and movements pressured the government to introduce quotas for women. Though CEDAW is a binding document for its

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107 Ibid Articles 1 and 3
108 Ibid, Introduction
109 Ibid Article 7
110 Ibid, Article 8
111 Global Database of Quotas for Women, Sweden, Norway, and Argentina
signatories, there is no way to ensure its aims are being implemented by lawmakers in their home countries. It understood that signatories will enact legislation that supports the aims of CEDAW in good faith. Therefore, the methods of enacting gender equality vary from country to country.

Greater representation for women is reinforced at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. The Conference Declaration and the Platform for Action provided a comprehensive action plan which is designed to empower women. Unlike CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action is not a binding document; instead, it is a policy guideline and provides recommendations for governments who are looking to establish greater gender equality. The Platform reaffirms the basic tenants stated in CEDAW, including a desire to reaffirm the international community’s commitment to seeing more women elected to national parliaments. The Platform for Action’s aims do correspond to CEDAW and its recommendations include ways in which states can act to satisfy the terms of CEDAW. Like CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action does not explicitly reference the use of quotas for women as a way to increase political participation in government. However, in the recommendations to governments, Article 190 Section A states that, in order to

“establish the goal of gender balance in governmental bodies and committees, as well as in public administrative entities, and in the judiciary, including, inter alia, setting specific targets and implementing measures to substantially increase the number of women with a view to achieving equal representation of women and men, if necessary through positive action, in all governmental and public administration positions”.

113 Schopp-Schilling. 3
Moreover, Section B calls on governments to take the necessary steps to encourage political parties to include women in their programs and assist them in achieving a position in national and local decision making bodies.\textsuperscript{115} The Platform reaffirms the central goals of CEDAW and provides many recommendations to governments to eliminate discrimination against women. Quotas became an especially popular method of increasing women’s representation in parliament after the release of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Five years after the Beijing Platform and twenty one years after CEDAW, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) released a document at the start of the new millennium. Like the Beijing Platform, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) is a nonbinding set of goals which are aimed at combatting global issues relating to the equality and representation of women. An important point is their definition of what they considered to be good governance. It states in part that “all men and women should have a voice in decision-making … [and]… all men and women should have equal opportunity to maintain or improve their well-being.”\textsuperscript{116} As such, the third MDG aims to promote gender equality and empower women.\textsuperscript{117} Regional steering committees were established to address the contextual differences present and to find the best ways of achieving better equality for women. The MDG were reassessed last year in order to evaluate worldwide achievement of the goals. Progress is uneven and unequal in most categories; in women’s political participation in parliament, only Sub-Saharan African and Latin America achieved a “moderate representation” while all other regions were assessed at either low or very low representation.\textsuperscript{118} Activists are now asserting that good governance, which includes addressing inefficacy and lack of accountability, is not enough.\textsuperscript{119} Good governance must also include the principles of democratic governance. This includes addressing participation of excluded or underrepresented groups by assisting

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid, Strategic Objective G.1, Article 190, Section B
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid, http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/
\textsuperscript{119} Goetz, 5
marginalized groups recognize justice through services and resources to all. Democratic good governance allows for lawmakers to reassess their political systems and take into account the recommendations of these international declarations in order to provide better services and recognition of all citizens, including women’s political participation.

The elimination of discrimination against women and establishing better political representation has been an objective of international organizations for many years. Numerous conferences have been held that resulted in conventions, treaties and charters. All aim to ensure that women have the same rights as men and establish greater justice and equality. One area of focus is women’s political participation. It is consistently acknowledged that women are not included in equal numbers in national and local decision making bodies. As a result, many countries began to consider different ways of increasing the number of women in politics and parliaments after conventions and declarations were written. One possible way of ensuring more women are represented in politics is through the use of a quota. Countries are encouraged to enact policies that increase women’s political participation. Some countries decided to use quotas autonomously, while other countries were greatly influenced by women’s groups in their countries. Quotas emerged within the gender and development literature, discussed in Chapter 1, as one vehicle of increasing women’s political participation. There are various other methods and ways of achieving this aim, but quotas became one of the more popular methods.

Defining Quotas

The term quota is used to mean a variety of different implementation schemes. Some understandings of quotas reference only party nominations, while excluding reserved seats. I address the three major ways of incorporating quotas in parliament. One way is a political party quota. These quotas encourage political parties to increase the number of women in their ranks. Political parties are encouraged by members from

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120 Ibid, 5
within their party and externally pressured by outside women’s groups and other local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to amend party charters that reflect a desire to see women nominated for electable roles in government.\textsuperscript{121} National conventions and other high profile events provide a way for political parties to publically affirm their support of promoting women from within to high ranking office. Political party quotas were popular prior to the 1990s,\textsuperscript{122} before the writing of the Beijing Platform and the MDGs. Some political parties voluntarily enforced quotas within their ranks. Reasons for adopting a quota for women voluntarily range from a genuine desire to see women become members of parliament and curb the gender gap in politics while other groups felt the need to use quotas only to remain competitive after their more liberal counterparts began using quotas.

Some political parties choose to address quotas for women by implementing a gender quota, as opposed to a quota for women. Gender quotas bypass many of the arguments that are brought up in opposition to using quotas for women. A common gender neutral quota is the zipper/zebra/alternate quota. Where party lists are used, the names are alternated between men and women so as to provide equal opportunity to both sexes to obtain seats in parliament.\textsuperscript{123} As quotas for women in parliament are controversial, some countries try to alleviate opposition to quotas for women. Instead of splitting representation evenly at fifty percent men and women, a variation includes having sixty percent of parliament represented by one sex and forty percent of parliament represented by the other. The voters are able to decide which gender obtains the majority and each election provides the opportunity for the opposition to win the upper hand.

Another type of quota is the legislative quota which is written into either the constitution or electoral law.\textsuperscript{124} Once included in law, political parties are compelled to comply with the regulations it sets forth and ensure that women are included. Legislative

\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Ibid}, 347
\textsuperscript{123} Dahlerup, 19
quotas require political parties to nominate women to their party lists or promote them for general parliamentary elections. The number of women required is chosen by each country and can range from anywhere to five percent of women to fifty percent. Like political party quotas, legislative quotas focus on candidates for parliament. It does not guarantee women are elected to parliament, but provides a better opportunity at the electoral stage for a greater percentage of women to succeed. Legislative quotas are more commonly found in developing countries, including the Middle East and Africa. After times of political instability, some countries in these regions find space to include more gender friendly laws or amend previous laws to reflect changes. Campaigns to introduce legislative quotas originate from women’s movements and local NGOs with significant levels of bipartisan support from women with a wide array of backgrounds and ideologies. Legislative quotas are met with mixed results in their success in bringing women to parliament. They focus on inducing political parties to nominate women for election, but leave implementation up to the party. Therefore, political parties have the ability to include woman on party lists, but place women’s names in undesirable and unelectable positions, usually at the bottom of lists. Therefore, the results and successes of legislative quotas vary greatly from country to country.

The final type of quota is reserved seats. Unlike political party and legislative quotas, reserved seats directly target parliament by allocating a certain number of seats specifically to women. Women can run for any of the reserved seats as well as any other open seat in parliament, regardless if it is a quota seat. Men, however, cannot on any grounds contest a reserved seat. Many countries include a provision that states if not all of the quota seats are filled, the executive has the power to appoint women of his choosing to the remaining available seats. While the use of a quota and which type is used is decided by a country by country basis, it is important to note that the results vary greatly. This is due to the diverse nature of the political systems, as well as social, economic and cultural differences. Additionally, some countries include more specific

125 Krook, 348
126 Ibid, 348
127 Ibid, 347
128 Hoodfar and Tajali, 45
laws and policies regarding how quotas are used and enforced, while other countries have more vague terminology and lax implementation mechanisms. Therefore, while one variation might be successful in one country, it can also fail in another.

**Theoretical Issues and Arguments about Using a Quota for Women in Parliament**

Using a quota to increase the number of women in parliament is controversial. Regardless of region, national governments face variations of similar debates when considering the use of a quota for women. Key concepts like equality, representation, citizenship and rights are present in arguments both against and for quotas. In order to understand the difficulties in introducing a dialogue about quotas for women, I address the most common arguments that are found worldwide.

**Arguments against Quotas for Women**

A popular debate against the use of a quota in national politics is that it is a form of discrimination and it violates the principle of fairness.\(^{129}\) This argument understands discrimination to be favorable treatment of one group over another while critically assuming that all people are already treated equally. Therefore, by this logic, establishing a quota provides an advantage to one group over another. Quotas as a form of discrimination are further critiqued by those who claim that quotas for females also violate the merit principle.\(^{130}\) If society upholds that men and women are equal and elections are held in a free and fair manner, the voters will choose their representatives based on the qualifications and merits of the candidates. It is therefore unnecessary to have a reserved number of places for women as they should be able to easily obtain a seat if they are qualified. Furthermore, by establishing a quota in parliament, especially the reserved seat quota, underqualified women will be appointed to a seat they are not

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\(^{129}\) Dahlerup, 19; The principle of fairness is constructed in a way that states that justice is fairness and that citizens are free and equal and as such society should be fair. Justice as fairness is the most egalitarian, also the most plausible, interpretation of liberalism’s fundamental concepts, according to philosopher John Rawls, who wrote extensively on this issue- [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rawls/#JusFaiJusWitLibSoc](http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rawls/#JusFaiJusWitLibSoc)

experienced enough to fill. Additionally, due to the fact that men cannot contest seats for women, a (more) qualified male will not be elected because of the lack of available seats.

Some arguments against the quota are based around affirmative action policies, which, although a form of positive discrimination, are still discriminatory in nature. Quotas discriminate against men while trying to right the wrongs to past discrimination against women. Those who do not favor quotas argue that it is an affirmative action policy, or a form of preferential treatment for those described as ‘disadvantaged’. Special or preferential treatment is aimed to compensate for past and present discrimination. While theorist Nancy Fraser does not write specifically about quotas, her ideas about recognition and redistribution apply to and support quota critics in this particular argument. She writes how religious groups, women’s groups, ethnic groups or other similar ‘other’ groups “struggle for recognition” after being confronted with discriminatory practices. Acknowledging and enforcing reactionary policies aimed to rectify the unfair and unjust treatment of a perceived ‘disadvantaged’ group is inherently deficient, insatiable and would continuously need further action. Quota opponents use some of these ideas to state that quotas are the recognition of the marginalization of women in the past. They are unnecessary now because women are no longer marginalized and have the same opportunities as men to obtain seats in national decision making bodies. Quotas therefore serve as a constant reminder of past injustice. Furthermore, some believe that even if a quota is introduced, women’s groups and activists would not be fully satisfied because the quest for greater opportunities would never end.

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131 Positive discrimination is understood here to mean that while a greater number of women in parliament is positive, the methods for getting woman there are still discriminatory in nature
132 Bacchi, 33-34
133 Ibid, 33-34
134 Fraser, Nancy. Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the “Postsocialist” Condition. (Routledge, 1996) 68
135 Fraser, 115
A quota as an undemocratic practice is a further argument against their usage for women. 136 Reserved seats for women are the most contentious because reserving a specific number of seats in parliaments strictly for women limits the choices of candidates available to citizens when they go vote. However, political party and legislative quotas are also viewed as undemocratic as well. By mandating that women are placed on party lists in prominent, electable positions additionally limits the choice of party leaders on who to include on the ticket which in turn affects the choices of the voters. 137 Furthermore, opponents believe that quotas reinforce the idea women are a special interest group and their specific needs and interests must be represented. Opponents argue that women are a diverse group with varied opinions and beliefs which do not necessitate its status as a special interest group therefore the use of a quota for women as a special interest group is unnecessary and inappropriate. 138 Finally, it is a concern of some that the use of a quota for females will allow corrupt governments to use a quota to ensure that those elected are loyal to the regime and are malleable lawmakers. Many countries have a provision that if quota seats are not filled in the general election, the executive is allowed to choose who will fill the seats. It is a space for the president to ensure that more members of parliament are supportive of regime policies and practices while proving to critics the democratic and gender friendly nature of the regime.

Some arguments against quotas address local customs, cultures and religious beliefs. Gihan Abou-Zeid addresses some of the arguments brought up from regional actors against using a quota for women in the Muslim majority Middle East. Some opponents posit that a large percentage of all women in the Arab region are illiterate, which renders them unqualified to be elected to parliament. 139 A quota would in essence allow a mandated space for illiterate women to take part in national issues. Additionally, many of the resources Arab women have access to are provided through their husbands, not gained independently. Along with a lack of monetary support, women do not have a basis of power or civil support before being elected to parliament. As such, Arab women

136 Dahlerup, 143 ; Hoodfar and Tajali, 54
137 Ibid, 54
138 Ibid, 54
139 Abou-Zeid, 187
are not truly representing anybody, simply filling a seat. Without their own income, experience, qualifications, or power basis, it is argued that Arab women are not and will not be given the credit they are due or be taken as serious parliamentarians. Furthermore, women are the primary caretakers of the family and child-raising. When the mother is not in the home tending to these duties, it becomes an example of a society about to fall apart, as a mother’s first priority should be her children, not taking part in political dialogue and decision making. Conservative Islamist groups are also opposed to quotas as they will not accept the presence or opinions of women in national decision making bodies.

**Arguments for Quotas for Women**

Those in favor of quotas respond with many of their own arguments in support of using a quota for women in national parliament. Advocates respond to the claims of the discriminatory and undemocratic nature of quotas by pointing out that the political system itself is flawed. This shifts the focus of the argument from women to the inadequacies of the electoral system. The political arena is dominated by men and electoral systems are unfriendly in supporting women in their bid to become national lawmakers. Quotas are one way to address deep seated anti-democratic discrimination practices that have become institutionalized. Supporters also argue that quota opponents’ understanding of merit is too narrow. Merit and qualification are measured against a male understanding of qualification and fail to take into account various contributions women make to the reproduction of society and management of the community in addition to having acceptable degrees of higher education. Women’s qualifications are thus downgraded and discredited, not counted as equal to male qualifications. The issue shifts to the difficulties women face when competing against

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140 Ibid, 187
141 Ibid, 187
142 Bacchi, 35
143 Bacchi, 34 ; Hoodfar and Tajali, 52
144 Hoodfar and Tajali (2011) provide the example of Iranian parliamentarians. Female candidates in Iran have higher degrees of education than their male counterparts yet the government and male MPs continuously state that the lack of female representatives is due to the extremely low levels of female
the existing privilege of men, not levels of qualification and merit. Furthermore, some advocates state frankly that parliaments and other national decision making bodies include a number of underqualified men who have not made positive contributions to society, yet that has not stopped citizens from voting these people into parliament.  

As women make up half of the population, they are not considered a special interest group. A quota for women acknowledges the diversity and the wide array of interests each woman has while recognizing that legislation not only impacts each individual differently, but impacts women collectively differently than how it affects men. Some women might be inclined to bring up women specific issues and use her platform in politics to enact more gender friendly policies. Other quota supporters, however, are trying to move away from the argument that female parliamentarians will automatically and willingly be a champion of women’s rights. Instead, quota supporters focus on the diversity of interests women have. Each woman elected will have a platform to advocate for issues that are important to her and her constituents. The woman who chooses to call for community reforms, health and education reform and leaves women’s rights issues her colleagues is just as needed and necessary as the woman who advocates other issues. Many issues discussed affect women as well as men and reforms in these sectors benefit all members of society. Quotas will help ensure the diversification of women and their issues in parliament.

Advocates argue that quotas for women would be advantageous to political groups. Quotas can help to combat the ingrained patriarchal biases found in many political parties, thus making a step towards a stronger democracy, one based more on more egalitarian practices and less on discrimination. Advocates also suggest that a quota will force political parties to look critically at their makeup and encourage them to be

education and qualification. For a more detailed discussion, see Women and Work in Iran, Haleh Afshar (2002)


Hoodfar and Tajali, 2011: 54-55

more active in recruiting women. Parties that already include voluntary quotas for their
election lists are further encouraged to continue placing women in electable positions.
For conservative parties who did not voluntarily use quotas, quotas compel the party to
reevaluate their strategy and emulate their more liberal counterparts in order to compete
for votes. Quotas also ensure that more than just one or two ‘token’ women are elected
to national decision making bodies. Corrupt regimes can claim they are gender friendly
by appointing one or two women, usually from within their party. This ensures that
regime-appointed women perpetuate the system and do not challenge the regime rhetoric.

Finally, quota supports argue that a certain percentage of women allows for more
comfort once in parliament, as newly appointed women will have other female colleagues
to help acquaint them with the practices of parliament. There are a number of
international conventions, such as Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of
Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform, and the Millennium Development
Goals which set targets for women’s political representation to increase gender equality
and encourage countries to find ways to increase the levels of representation. A quota
provides an opportunity for countries to follow these policy guidelines.

Variations of these pro-quota arguments are found worldwide. As she did for
regional opposition to quotas, Gihan Abou-Zeid addresses positive arguments for
including quotas for women in the Arab region. The majority of them are already
embodied in the aforementioned arguments. She adds that a quota for women in the Arab
world will give women confidence and a voice in national debates and the public
sphere. The patriarchal nature of many Arab societies makes it more difficult for Arab
women to be seen and heard in the public arena. Quotas encourage more women to run in
elections and provide an opportunity to have a certain number of women elected. Quotas
will help challenge cultural assumptions that women do not belong in decision making

148 Hoodfar and Tajali, 52
149 Ibid, 52
150 Bacchi, 35, Dalherup, 142
151 Dahlerup, 142
152 Abou-Zeid, 188
bodies. A quota would also alleviate the burden and stress on new female lawmakers having only a small number of women in parliament while showing that women are capable of performing in formal politics. ¹⁵³ Finally, early Islamic history acknowledges the role of women in politics, which counteracts the claims that women are apolitical and uninterested in politics. ¹⁵⁴

**Case Studies of Quota Implementation**

International treaties and policy recommendations do not state that a quota for women in politics is the best or only way of increasing women’s representation. Lawmakers and civil society groups help influence the decisions to include quotas. If countries decide that they will try utilizing quotas in their parliaments, there are different ways of implementing and enforcing them. Interesting and important aspects to consider when using quotas for women include when quotas are first introduced at the national level, why they are used, and the extent to which they are enforced. This section will highlight countries that chose to utilize quotas from the Middle East and Africa. The countries highlighted are socio-economically and culturally more similar to Egypt than European countries who also use quotas for women. Like Egypt, these countries are representative of the global South, which were influenced by action plans such as the Beijing Platform for Action. Some of the countries have strong women’s movements while others experienced political instability that allowed for a space to address women’s representation in their transitional phase. The issues and struggles surrounding the use of quotas for women in national parliament in these countries are echoed in part in Egypt.

**Senegal**

While the 2001 Senegalese Constitution is considered progressive in terms of women’s rights, it did not discuss ways to increase the presence of women in the National Assembly. As a result, the number of women in the National Assembly hovered around

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 188
¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 188
twenty five out of 160 available seats. In early 2007, the Senegalese National Assembly, after encouragement by the president, passed a law that called for legislative quotas that targeted political parties. Parties would be mandated to include women on their party election lists through the use of alternating names, or the zipper/zebra system. Those parties who did not comply would be discredited. However, the law was unpopular with opponents and it was challenged and later struck down almost three months after it was passed. The Constitutional Council ruled the quota law unconstitutional, writing “the Constitution only knows the citizen, to whom it grants rights, and not categories of citizens.” The Council used the argument that women should not be considered special interests groups.

After the ruling, women’s groups and supporters of the quota law began lobbying the government. They were met by various religious groups who claimed that quotas did not uphold Senegalese religious and cultural customs. The Senegalese women’s movements responded by saying that the use of a quota would be a way to increase gender parity as well as strengthen democracy by ensuring that all voices had a chance to be heard. Moreover, some Senegalese political parties decided to uphold the now defunct law anyways, including women on their party lists and voluntarily placed them in electable positions. This challenged other parties as well as opposition leaders to be more cognizant of women within their own groups and helped the government to recognize the changing trends in gender parity in the Senegalese political arena.

Electoral Law 92-16 of 1992, as amended by law 2012-01 of 2012 introduced Article L.145. The law mandates that there must be parity in all political party lists used for national, regional and local elections. Parties are required to use the alternate/zipper/zebra system for their selection of candidates for parliament; those who do not comply are barred from the general election. As a result, the 2012 election saw sixty four women elected alongside eighty four men. Article L.145 is a good example of

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155 Inter-Parliamentary Union, Senegal
157 Global Database for of Quotas for Women, Senegal
using quotas in parliaments. It states the type of quota used and targets all levels of elections. Additionally, it includes consequences for those parties who chose not to follow the law. Parties will be disqualified if election authorities find that parties placed women in unelectable positions on the lists.

Senegal is considered a quasi-democracy country. The country has made great strides in promoting democracy, women’s equality and human rights. The successful passing of a quota law for women at all levels of government is a monumental gain and the 2012 elections attest to the women’s movement in their quest for further gender equality in politics. It is likely that the quota law, supported by the women’s movement, will help women become more active in Senegalese politics in the future.

**Tunisia**

Tunisian women enjoy more visibility in politics compared to their Middle Eastern North African counterparts. However, as a whole, Arab states have an abysmal record of female representation in national politics. Table 1 shows the percentage of women represented in Arab politics from 2010 to 2013. The countries with high levels of women in parliament, including Iraq, Tunisia and later Algeria are representative of countries who use quotas for women. Each country chose different percentages of women’s representation in Parliament. The difference between countries who use quotas or other politics that protect women’s entrance into politics and those who do not are apparent.

Under the twenty four years of the Ben Ali regime, there were attempts to increase the number of female politicians. In 2004, Ben Ali announced that his party, the ruling Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD) would voluntarily include twenty five percent of women on their party lists in electable positions. As a result, forty three women (representing twenty two percent) were elected to the National Constituent

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158 See Table 1, Percentage of Women in Arab Parliament
Assembly, along with one hundred forty six men.\textsuperscript{160} Tunisian women’s movements and opposition leaders were not convinced about the sincerity of their autocratic ruler’s motives. Furthermore, the women included in the RCD party list were considered token women and supportive of the Ben Ali regime. In 2009, Ben Ali announced his party would now include thirty percent of women on the party lists of the RCD. This time, fifty nine women (representing twenty seven percent) were elected with one hundred fifty five male colleagues. \textsuperscript{161} Throughout this time, no official legislation was passed that enforced quotas for women. The choice to include women in politics was left to the prerogative of party leaders. As critics and opponents to the regime saw this self-induced quota as a way to claim democratic practices without changing the authoritarian nature of system, voluntary quotas were not widely used by other parties.

Tunisia became the first Arab country to overthrow its longstanding dictator in December 2011 in what came to be known as the Arab Spring. Times of upheaval and political instability provide an opportunity for lawmakers and activists to introduce new legislation that includes increasing female representation. Though critical of the old regime’s use of a quota, the interim Tunisian government decided an official quota applicable to all parties would be a more proper way introducing a quota for women in national politics. In May 2011, Decree No. 35, Article 16 passed, which says that all political parties wishing to compete in national elections would have to submit lists with “parity between men and women”.\textsuperscript{162} Recognizing that there were opponents to the use of a quota, Tunisian lawmakers bypassed many of the quota criticisms by using a gender neutral quota. Tunisia, like Senegal, chose a political party quota which mandates that on all party lists, the names of candidates must be listed with alternating gender.

The first parliamentary election after the uprising took place in October 2011. Fifty eight (representing twenty seven percent) women were elected to the National

\textsuperscript{160} Inter-Parliamentary Union, Tunisia
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid, Tunisia
\textsuperscript{162} Decree Law N 35 on Election of the National Constituent Assembly. The Interim President of the Republic of Tunisia Fouad Mebazaa, 2011.
Constituent Assembly. The first election with an official quota did not significantly increase the number in women in parliament as hoped. However, over five thousand women did run for seats. On January 27, 2014, the National Assembly passed its first post-uprising constitution. Interim leaders hope to see parliamentary elections held by October 2014. Though the first election did not yield the more positive results, Tunisia’s lawmakers are supportive of the advancement of women’s equality in society as a whole. Even the conservative Islamist faction, the al-Nahda Party, issued a statement in favor of quotas, stating that all Tunisian voices must be heard and Tunisia’s past commitments to women must be honored and enforced. Tunisia is making great strides to ensure the country engages with a successful democratic form of governance and the women’s groups in the country are a positive force of change in the quest to enact gender equality in parliament and society.

Turkey

Turkey is a unique country that embodies both Middle Eastern and European characteristics. While declared a secular nation in the 1930s, religious ideologies play a more prominent role in Turkey today. Turkey has long tried to gain membership into the European Union, but the European Commission has continuously questioned Turkey’s commitment to strong democracy and human rights. Though it has not passed any constitutional amendments or electoral legislation enforcing a quota for women in its parliament, voluntary quotas began to be used by a few political parties in the early 1990s. A small party, called the United Socialist Party voluntarily instituted gender quotas within its ranks in 1994, while a second party, the Republican Peoples Party

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163 Global Database of Quotas for Women, Tunisia
166 Turkey is a signatory to CEDAW, but its commitment to gender parity has typically remained weak
(CHP), also adopted a party list quota in 1999.\textsuperscript{167} However, quotas for women only exist in local politics and by the prerogative of the party and its leaders. At the national level, women account for about two percent of all elected parliamentarians.\textsuperscript{168}

Though there are no institutional quotas for women at any level of Turkish politics, the women’s movement is influential in their lobbying efforts. National women’s NGOs work tirelessly to bring recognition to Turkey’s underrepresented female population. Working with women’s NGOs, the women of the Republican People’s Party (CHP), one of the few parties who use voluntary quotas, continue to make demands of the government for a quota. The CHP began to include thirty three percent of women on their candidate lists for local and national elections in 2012.\textsuperscript{169} Though this does not greatly affect the overall makeup of women in Turkish national parliament, women of the CHP and NGOs in Turkey continue to push party leaders to be more conscientious of the low numbers of women within their party and politics in general. However, the ruling party in Turkey, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan remain staunchly opposed to quotas for women in national parliaments. Party leadership continues to state that quotas impede the selection of parliamentarians based upon merit and equality, as well as presenting issues of democratization and justice.\textsuperscript{170} The AKP believes in the common argument that quotas are undemocratic, are discriminatory to men and restrict the election of qualified individuals to parliament. Non-governmental organizations, women’s groups, and female politicians in Turkey are hopeful that elections scheduled for 2014 will finally reflect their tireless efforts to not only introduce a quota but reflect increased gender parity despite having no significant gains realized thus far.

\textsuperscript{167} Global Database of Quotas for Women; The United Socialist Party changed its name to the Freedom and Demokrasi Partisi. Also, as there is no formal quota legislation or laws, only parties that are represented in parliament that use a quota are discussed. It is important to note that some local parties have used a quota. However, the focus of this paper is on national bodies and an in-depth discussion of local quota use will not be included.

\textsuperscript{168} Mencutek, Zeynep Sahin. “Gender Quotas and Turkey’s Political Parties” Turkish Review. March 1, 2013 \url{http://www.turkishreview.org/newsDetail_getNewsByld.action?newsId=223284}

\textsuperscript{169} Global Database of Quotas for Women, Turkey

\textsuperscript{170} Mencutek, Zeynep Sahin. “Gender Quotas and Turkey’s Political Parties” Turkish Review. March 1, 2013 \url{http://www.turkishreview.org/newsDetail_getNewsByld.action?newsId=223284}
Today, Rwanda is the global leader with the highest number of female parliamentarians.\textsuperscript{171} The road to this particular distinction was long and violent. In the late 1980s, political actors within Rwanda began lobbying for a more democratic form of government, which included many political and social reforms.\textsuperscript{172} After negotiations and talks between the two dominate parties failed, the country entered into a state of civil war from 1989 to 1993. When peace accords were signed in 1993, it was supposed to be the opening for a democratic Rwandan state. However, the perpetration of the Rwandan genocide which began a year later in April 1994 dashed any hopes of change for many years. The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was heavily involved in both the war and genocide. At the end of the atrocities in July 1994, the RPF announced a transitional democracy which they would oversee. The transition was tightly controlled and allowed the RFP to gain extraordinary powers and ensure their political longevity.\textsuperscript{173} Almost ten years later, a new Constitution was introduced by the RPF and approved by a national referendum in 2003. The 2003 Constitution established a quota to include thirty percent of women in all decision making bodies at all levels of government from national to local elections.\textsuperscript{174} As a result, Rwandan women are represented at the national level with almost forty nine percent of women in Parliament. In additional to formal quotas for women, there are many active women’s groups in Rwanda that play a strong role in shaping the trajectory of women’s rights.\textsuperscript{175} Despite the authoritarian nature of the regime, women’s groups flourished and are effective in lobbying for their goals.\textsuperscript{176} Women’s groups in Rwanda play a significant role in lobbying the government for more accountability and transparency and frequently engage with Parliamentarians in order to address women’s rights.

\textsuperscript{171} Global Database of Quotas for Women, Rwanda
\textsuperscript{172} Burnet, Jennie E. “Gender Balance and the Meanings of Women in Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda.” \textit{African Affairs} 107, no. 428 (2008), 364
\textsuperscript{173} \textit{Ibid.}, 365
\textsuperscript{174} Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda, Article 9, Section 4
\textsuperscript{176} Devlin and Elgie, 242
The ruling RFP voluntarily appoints women to high ranking positions within the
government and created the first Ministry of Gender and Women in Development
(MIGEPROF). National NGOs and MIGEPROF work closely with female
parliamentarians at both the local and national level and are tightly intertwined and
dedicated to the goals and wishes of the RFP. Non-governmental workers and opposition
citizens have begun to question some parliamentarians and women who chose to accept
positions in the RPF government. Some women who chose to work with the
government are no longer engaging in activism on behalf of other women, an activity that
many female parliamentarians have done in the past. Therefore, some of
parliamentarians, including female parliamentarians, who are involved with the
government are not trusted or viewed as legitimate sources of change or representative of
the greater Rwandan population. The use of a quota is enforced and Rwanda continues to
be seen as a success story of sorts for quotas for women in national parliament. Though
quotas have successfully made women visible in the Rwandan Parliament, the question
remains whether increased representation of women has given any meaning to the
authoritarian Rwandan government.

Uganda

The Ugandan government operates in a political system known as the movement
system since 1986. Its goal is to accommodate all citizens regardless of political
ideology, tribe/ethnicity, religion, sex, or social class. As such, the government
introduced and supported the use of quotas for women earlier than many of their African
counterparts. In 1986, the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) introduced a
small scale quota with one mandatory seat for women on executive councils of all
levels. Though enforced, women were not treated as equal members of a decision

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177 Burnet, 367-368
178 Ibid, 380-381
179 Ibid, 380-381
180 Ibid, 378
181 Tamale, Sylvia. “Introducing Quotas: Discourse and Legal Reform in Uganda.” The Implementation of
182 Ibid, 38
making body, instead being relegated to the status of a secretary or waiter for the male members of these bodies. The women’s movement in Uganda was unhappy with the results of the quota and began actively lobbying the government to reform its implementation and usage. The 1985 United Nations Conference for Women, held in neighboring Kenya, inspired the Ugandan women’s movement and provided leverage and legitimacy to their claims. The NRM changed its policies in 1989 and instated thirty nine reserved seats for women in parliament. Each district would vote on special lists comprised of only women, and the winner from the district would be represented in parliament.

The National Resistance Movement revisited quota legislation by enshrining it in the 1995 Constitution. Ugandan activists presented the use of quotas as an affirmative action policy to correct a wrong done to a marginalized group. The result of their efforts led to a change in Article 32 Section 1 which says “…the state shall take affirmative action in favor of groups marginalized on the basis of gender…for the purpose of redressing imbalances which exist against them”. The Constitution goes on to explicitly explain how a quota will work in both national and local elections and how many women will be represented in each. As such, Uganda ranks sixth in Africa for quota usage for women.

Despite these successes, the intentions of the National Resistance Movement are not genuine. The NRM did not intend to have politically active women in parliament. Their intention was to include a small quota for women in order to appease rights groups and NGOs that put pressure on the government to include a quota for women. The NRM intended for women in parliament to be ‘token’ women or regime supporters. The women elected through this measure would enable the NRM to tout its democratic nature without changing its undemocratic governance style. They simply wanted “‘descriptive women’

\[183\] Ibid, 38
\[184\] Ibid, 38
\[185\] Ibid:, 38 ; there are 112 districts in Uganda
\[186\] Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, Article 32, Section 1
\[187\] Tamale, 38
who symbolically ‘stood for’ women”.  

Additionally, the language reflected in the Constitution emphasizes the descriptive nature of female parliamentarians. Thus, the Constitution creates “‘status quo’ representatives and not ‘emancipationists’ as the NRM ‘allows’ women to participate but not as representatives of women as a special interest group”. 

Indeed, the president of Uganda continuously reminds his citizens that “quotas are nothing more than a ‘symbolic gesture’ to please women. As in Rwanda, at a glance, the quota for women seems to be successful. But internally, many question the policy as promulgated by the NRM.

The countries chosen highlight many of the different debates and struggles that lawmakers face if they wish to include quotas. Senegalese women advocated for quotas, but the Court found them to be unconstitutional. After a protracted struggle, quotas were reintroduced and their impact will be measured in the coming elections. Tunisia’s commitment to women’s rights and the usage of quotas after tenuous past experiences are commendable, but thus far quotas have not rendered a remarkable change in the representation of women in parliament. However, legislation is enshrined in the Constitution and different parties in Tunisia appear to be willing to follow the law, despite opposing ideologies. In spite of the wishes and lobbying efforts of NGOs, women’s rights groups and some political parties, Turkey remains opposed to their usage and a quota has not yet been used at the national level. The post-conflict countries Rwanda and Uganda are remarkable and tell a superficial story of success about the use of quotas. However, a deeper look at the government structure, intention and women elected tell a different story and pose serious questions about the efficacy of quotas in these two countries. Despite their controversial nature and the hardships countries face when deciding to use a quota, many countries are engaging with the idea of using a quota in their national assemblies. Several of these issues are present in Egypt, and they will be highlighted in the following chapters.
Conclusion

This chapter focuses on debates about using quotas in national parliament only. There are examples of countries such as India who use quotas at the local level successfully but have not achieved a national quota. Many conferences held by international organizations resulted in conventions and actions plans such as CEDAW and the Beijing Platform that addressed, among many important issues, women’s political participation. While CEDAW is a binding for its signatories, the Beijing Platform for Action is a series of policy recommendations that encourage lawmakers to address discrimination and inequality found in their countries. These conventions called on countries to address these issues in a manner that best suited the each country. The treaties do not specifically mention quotas as a way of increasing women’s political participation. However, after Beijing, quotas became one of the more popular vehicles of addressing and increasing women’s political participation. There are many other methods, but many countries chose to implement different forms of a quota, either by reserving seats or by placing women in certain positions on political party lists. Countries face debate about the pros and cons of using a quota for women and similar arguments present themselves in each country.

The countries highlighted in this chapter are socially and culturally more similar to Egypt than other countries that use quotas for women in Europe or elsewhere. They represent examples of countries that experience times of political instability and transition. In some countries, women’s groups play a prominent role in lobbying lawmakers for a quota to varying degrees of success, while in others lawmakers navigate social and cultural stereotypes and drastic political challenges. Variations of these experiences are echoed in Egypt, and in the next chapters, I explore the role of women’s groups and the experiences of parliamentarians as Egypt navigates their times of political change.
CHAPTER 3- Women’s Groups in Egypt

Introduction

The presence of Egyptian women actively protesting for rights did not start with the January 25th, 2011 uprisings. Women in Egypt have a long and rich history of political and social activism. Despite periods of repression throughout the years, Egyptian women “have maintained a strong tradition of independence (from the state and political parties) unparalleled elsewhere in the Middle East”. As far back as the 1920s, women’s groups and movements organized, leading the way for various forms of feminist and gender activism. Well known activist Huda Shaarawi founded the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) in 1923 which makes it the oldest feminist organization in Egypt. Throughout the decades, Ms. Shaarawi has inspired other notable Egyptian feminists, including Doria Shafiq, who staged protests at Parliament to demand better representation for women in the 1950s and Nawal al-Saadawi, a sexual rights activist who works tirelessly to bring awareness to the practice of female genital mutilation. Women’s activism since the early 1920s is indicative of women’s tireless commitment to improve the lives of their fellow citizens. Since that time, groups formed dedicated to women’s issues. Some, like the National Council for Women (NCW) are the product of a state mandate, while others try to maintain quasi-independence from either the State or other women’s groups. Many of these groups have similar goals, which is to improve the status of women, combat structural forms of discrimination and assist women in different endeavors.

This chapter seeks to explore the role of different Egyptian women’s groups in increasing and maintaining women’s political participation. State sponsored groups and independent groups will be featured in this chapter. I am specifically interested in the

192 Badran, 116
193 The Egyptian Feminist Union is sometimes referred to as the Arab Alliance for Women. The EFU has an office in Aguza, while the Arab Alliance for Women has an office Downtown. The EFU was dissolved by President Gamal Abdel Nasser in the 1950s. The Arab Alliance for Women was created after the dissolution of the EFU. After January 25, 2011, the Arab Alliance for Women, along with other functioning women’s groups in Egypt, helped the EFU reform. Despite having two offices, representative at each office assured me it was the same organization and they worked together on project initiatives.
work they do for and with Members of Parliament. I will discuss the different types of services women’s groups like the National Council for Women (NCW), the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU), the Egyptian Center for Women’s Rights (ECWR) and Nazra for Feminist Studies provided for candidates in elections beginning in 2005. These groups are indicative of the different types of women’s groups that operate in Egypt. I try to understand the relationship these groups have with the State as well as with other groups that work on similar issues in Egypt. I will assess their viewpoints on quotas and what, if any, action should be done regarding quotas now. I will also discuss the work these groups do with political parties in Egypt and how they see quotas being applied to parties. Finally, I will introduce a post-January 25th dialogue in order to highlight the trajectory women’s groups took in the new Egyptian political landscape.

Candidate Activism

2005 Elections

The National Council for Women (NCW) sits on a breezy, quite street away from the bustle and traffic in Dokki. However, the headquarters of the NCW was not always situated on this quiet street. Until three years ago, the NCW was housed in the National Democratic Party’s headquarters in Tahrir Square in Downtown Cairo, where it was burnt in the early days of the uprising against Mubarak. It is not surprising that this was the headquarters of the NCW for ten years; at the request of the NCW’s first president, Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, the NCW was established by Presidential Decree “to propose public policy matters for society and its constitutional institutions on development and empowerment of women to enable them to play their economic role…and to draft a National Plan for the advancement of women and to solve their problems”.

The NCW is Egypt’s state feminist organization that operated in tandem with state wishes for the last ten years of Mubarak’s regime. As I will show, the NCW came under criticism by other groups in Egypt for the way in which they handled issues. The NCW was involved

with a number of policy initiatives; however, I will focus on their work on behalf of women’s political representation in Egypt.

The Council prepared an action report sometimes before the 2005 parliamentary elections detailing Egypt’s achievements in promoting greater gender equality and women’s empowerment while recognizing the shortcomings that Egypt still faces. Section G.1 of the report discusses women in power and decision making and highlights the work that the NWC did and will do in the future to help ensure more women run for parliament.\footnote{The document, titled “Egypt” is undated. From its preface, “The present report was prepared through expert group meetings, organized by the National Council for Women, and based on information gathered from all governmental institutions, as well as from a number of active non-governmental organizations. The full report can be seen here http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/responses/EGYPT-English.pdf} The NWC established a division called the Center for the Political Empowerment of Women with a mission to provide assistance to women who wished to run in the 2005 parliamentary elections as well as women looking to run in local council elections in 2006. The Center for the Political Empowerment of Women supposedly held training sessions that helped in “specialized technical and managerial skills. Additionally, several training programmes/workshops, field missions and advocacy campaigns were carried out in cooperation with line ministries to stimulate women’s political participation and for assuming positions at decision making levels”.\footnote{Egypt, 12} Sections G.2 highlighted the structural division of labor present in Egypt, where men and women undertake traditional roles as a significant factor in deterring women’s participation in politics. Though the report does not explicitly express a desire to use quotas for parliamentarians, Section G.3 states that a goal would be to review Party Law to establish a certain percentage for women and youth to be represented in each political party.\footnote{Egypt, 13} This report is the only reference to quotas that I found for the 2005 elections.

I interviewed two women from the Research and Studies Department of the NCW. Both Rania and Laila\footnote{Names have been changed} work on issues relating to women’s political participation post January 25\textsuperscript{th}. I asked about the undated report and about further services, trainings

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{1} The document, titled “Egypt” is undated. From its preface, “The present report was prepared through expert group meetings, organized by the National Council for Women, and based on information gathered from all governmental institutions, as well as from a number of active non-governmental organizations. The full report can be seen here http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/responses/EGYPT-English.pdf
\bibitem{2} Egypt, 12
\bibitem{3} Egypt, 13
\bibitem{4} Names have been changed
\end{thebibliography}
or actions the NCW provided for women looking to engage in national politics in 2005. Rania stated that she did not recall the services the NCW provided in 2005 as it was a long time ago. Both women were much more inclined to discuss the current services the NCW was working on post January 25th. The website of the NCW provided little information about past elections, instead choosing to provide a few reports about the most recent elections held post-uprising. It is unclear if the NCW provided any services or worked with any Members of Parliament prior to 2012.

Before moving on to more recent events, I asked about the role Suzanne Mubarak played as President of the NCW. Laila stressed that even though the NCW was a state mandated organization, Mrs. Mubarak was largely a ceremonial president, one who was elected by the members of the NCW and supportive of her colleagues; members who worked at the NCW had agency and resources to enact the initiatives they proposed. However, comments made by Nehal Shoukary in 2009 contradict Laila’s statements. Nehal is a former member of the NDP Women’s Committee and the NCW’s Political Participation Committee. Nehal stated that she believed that women’s issues or laws are not introduced or passed without either President or Mrs. Mubarak’s initiative. This suggests that despite efforts by members of the NCW and other groups to influence the government to change laws about women, very little was done without their prior approval and action. Nehal further explained that the Political Participation Committee wanted to introduce a quota for women for parliamentary elections but the NDP rejected the idea. The NDP’s proposal was to introduce new electoral constituencies in which only women could run for these additional seats “so that we do not take away anything from men and their parliamentary seats in order to avoid upsetting them. We are pleased but we have argued that this will lead to an insufficient number of women joining parliament.” This is how quotas for women were introduced in 2009, where 64 new constituencies were reserved for women. Nehal concluded by saying that she and other members of the committee did not know of any decision being made in early 2009, but

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199 Dawoud, Aliaa Abdel Aziz “Utilizing Mass Media in the Political Empowerment of Egyptian Women” (University of Westminster, 2010)118-180
200 Ibid, 76
201 Ibid, 76
the issue was being raised by NDP Politics Committee, headed by Gamal Mubarak. A constitutional amendment was ultimately passed later in the year which introduced a quota for women for the next two parliamentary elections.

The Egyptian Feminist Union is housed in neighboring Agouza. The EFU is considered the oldest feminist union in Egypt. They were dissolved after Nasser became president in the 1950s. The Arab Alliance for Women was created in its stead and continued much of the work the EFU started. The EFU was reformulated in 2012 and continues its work on behalf of women in Egypt. The EFU is active in assisting women who want to run for Parliament. Prior to the 2005 elections, the EFU held training sessions and meetings in three areas, in New Valley, Sharkya and Fayoum, as well as occasional events in Cairo. These sessions were designed to help both female candidates as well as members of the community. With voting being held on November 15, 26 and December 7, 2005, the EFU held multiple events in the weeks leading up to the election. I had discussion with Sawsan, who worked directly with women who ran in the 2005 elections and helped organize the training sessions and workshops the EFU provided for candidates. Today, she and other members of the EFU are active in proving similar services for elections. In addition to speaking with me about these actions, she also provided documents that detailed the work the EFU did in 2005. Public events featured the women who were running for Parliament. This gave the candidates a chance to connect with their constituents to discuss candidate platforms as well as offer a chance for voters to meet their potential representatives and share comments and concerns. Though the events were spread out geographically, women who were running in different districts would often go to the other districts in order to support fellow female candidates. In each governorate, the EFU tried to have at least one session that specifically supported the local candidate, although other candidates were welcome to participate. Other events sponsored by the EFU focused on assisting female candidates specifically.

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202 Ibid, 76
203 History of the Egyptian Feminist Union, provided during an interview on February 27, 2014. Though the EFU was not re-established until 2012, the interviewee referred to the actions of the group in 2005 as the EFU. I will do the same
204 Name has been changed
received help and training in formulating their agendas and upgrading their campaigning
skills.²⁰⁵ Materials were also provided for candidates to use in their campaigns. These
sessions, not open to voters, provided an arena for candidates to ask questions and learn
new skills, where they could directly apply these new skills in the public information
sessions the EFU held.

Two other types of events held were media interviews and information sessions
for constituents. The EFU helped coordinate with local, national and international (when
applicable) television and radio programs which featured the female candidates. This
allowed a platform for female candidates to reach a greater number of voters and give
them a chance to speak to a variety of stations, including opposition media channels. The
EFU found that voters in New Valley, Sharqia, Fayoum and elsewhere benefited from
sessions which explained the different roles and functions of representatives from
national Parliament to local council representatives. The EFU held such sessions after
elections as well in order to “raise awareness on the importance of women’s political
participation in the 2006 local council elections either as a candidate or a voter”²⁰⁶ as well
as to explain national representative’s functions. Sawsan spoke of these events as she
herself worked on many of the initiatives around election time. I asked if she discussed
quota initiatives at any of the events sponsored for the 2005 women, and at that time, she
did not have conversations with candidates about this issue. She said that the EFU talked
about quota initiatives and the merits of different types of quotas at different levels but
said they did not pursue any measures that would attempt to change laws regarding
women’s political participation at that time.

²⁰⁵ Part III: Actions Description. Document provided from the Egyptian Feminist Union at interview
conducted February 28, 2014
²⁰⁶ Ibid
In conversations I had with members of various women’s groups and Members of Parliament, I heard one theme repeated. Many activists and women’s groups believed that positive change was slowly coming to Egypt after the quota amendment was passed in 2009. This idea was reaffirmed on January 25, 2011. During the eighteen days of the uprising, women were active participants, protesting alongside men in Tahrir Square. The women that I spoke with explained how they felt that there was a growing momentum, as if now, after the fall of Mubarak’s regime, is the time that they would be able to increase women’s participation in politics and representation in Parliament. All cited the 2012 elections, dominated by the Islamists, Morsi’s presidency and especially the 2012 Constitution as the time that the momentum was crushed and they witnessed a severe dialing back of women’s rights.

After the ouster of Mubarak, the National Council for Women faced difficulties due to its association with the old regime. The only president the NCW had was Suzanne Mubarak, and her husband’s regime and all their associates were categorically rejected on January 25th. As Suzanne Mubarak was elected by members of the NCW, she was not able to be removed in the same manner as her husband. The ruling generals of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) essentially ignored the NCW for the period they were in power, choosing not to acknowledge their presence until Suzanne Mubarak’s term ended later in the year. The NCW did not do any work between February 2011 and January 2012 and many women from the NCW quietly left the organization. After the parliamentary elections in 2011, the NCW was re-established in February 2012. SCAF appointed thirty women, including Parliamentarians Margaret Azer of the Wafd Party, who is now deputy Secretary General, Reda Abdullah of the FJP, and Sanaa el-Said of the Social Democratic Party. Mervat Talawi was elected as President of the new NCW. However, some of the appointed women chose to resign after only a few months.

207 The 2010 Elections took place on November 28th and December 5th, 2010. Because of the brief nature of this Parliament session, I chose not to focus on activity undertaken by women’s groups for this election. In Chapter 4, I will include voices of some of the women who ran for Parliament, as they were elected to quota seats.
as they felt that the new NCW looked very similar to the old NCW. Though not explicitly explained to me in my discussions with Rania and Lalia of the NCW today, the programs the NCW are working on now like women’s political participation are geared towards the future. The parliamentary elections of 2012 passed before the NCW was re-established, making it impossible for the NCW to provide trainings and services to candidates running in the last elections.

Laila talked of a training initiative for prospective parliamentary candidates that the NCW established post-uprising and after the re-establishment of the organization. The training will help women gain knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a candidate, how to run a successful campaign and what it would mean to be a future parliamentarian. The Egyptian Women’s Parliamentarian Programme208, discussed at length on the NCW website, affirms what Laila explained to me. The program is designed to raise awareness about the importance of having women in Parliament and help women learn how to propose legislation, lobby for causes important to them, and garner public support for their initiatives. It also states that the NCW wishes to establish a Center for the Political Empowerment of Women, which was a goal stated by the NCW in the circa 2006 report. At the end of these trainings, Laila said, the NCW will qualify and rank the participants and give this information to various political parties. Laila said that oftentimes, when pressured by women’s groups, political parties would say that they did not know of any qualified women to include on their election lists. By providing names of trained women, political parties would not be able to say they did not know of any women to include in electable positions; the NCW, as well as other women’s groups, will provide lists of educated, qualified, and trained women. Another initiative the NCW will engage in is a project for women once in Parliament. These meetings are designed to help newly elected members become more comfortable in their roles as parliamentarians. Meetings will be held to discuss current legislation and outside intellectuals and technocrats will be invited to explain the pros, cons and implications of passing various

pieces of legislation. These programs are similar to those of other women’s groups in Egypt. Parliamentary elections are tentatively scheduled for the Fall of 2014. Therefore, these initiatives have not been put to use at the time of writing.

I asked Rania if the NCW discussed the use of a quota for women in national Parliament. Rania said that the NCW tried to get a quota provision included in the 2012 Constitution, but they were not successful. In fact, after the uprising, quotas for women in national Parliament were not included at all. First, the quota amendment from 2009 was canceled by SCAF prior to the 2012 elections. SCAF mandated that parties were to include at least one woman on their electoral lists, but it does not say where women should be placed. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, party list quotas are more effective when the law clearly states that women be placed in winnable positions at the top, or to include an alternate/zipper/zebra list, where men and women’s names are alternated. As a result, most women’s names were placed in unwinnable positions at the bottom of party lists, resulting in very few women being elected to the 2012 Parliament. Furthermore, on February 21, 2013, Law number 2 of 2013, Section 3 Article 5 reversed the allowance of a quota for women at the national level.209

The NCW continued to fight for a quota for women in local councils and succeeded according to Rania. Laila echoed her colleague’s views regarding quotas and went further by saying that the NCW tries to work closely with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in various governorates in order to enact their initiatives and provide help to women who are elected through quotas to become successful representatives. One such initiative that was not mentioned to me was highlighted on the NCW’s website. According to the site, a day was held in March in Luxor and Aswan titled “How to Choose Your Candidate” in which local leaders, NGOs and political parties participated to connect with their voters.210 Laila explained that the NCW tries to work directly with local NGOs, as they are most knowledgeable about events and concerns on the ground. In working together, a more productive session ensues, as each

209 قانون رقم 2 لسنة 2013, المادة الثالثة الفقرة الخامسة
210 Know Your Candidate, National Council for Women, March 13, 2013
group can use the resources of the other to help work towards the same goal. Laila also said that the NCW uses international treaties and conventions, like CEDAW, as the basis for lobbying for gender equality and the use of quotas.²¹¹ Basing actions in international legislation such as CEDAW hurt the NCW under the Mubarak regime. Passing legislation that became known as ‘Suzanne’s Laws’²¹² provided a way for the regime to show commitment to international conventions and garner greater international credibility. Domestically, however, they created controversy and Islamists sought to legally reverse these laws once they came to power after the uprising.

Interestingly, the director of the Egyptian Center for Women’s Rights (ECWR), Nehad Abu Al-Qmsan, criticized the NCW for some of its international work in 2009 despite collaborating with the NCW occasionally. Nehad talked about the NCW as it functioned under Mubarak. She explained that the NCW wished to send a report to the CEDAW Committee which would update the Committee about the progress Egypt made. Nehad said the NCW asked other women’s groups in Egypt to review and contribute to the report.²¹³ Though the ECWR provided changes to the document, they were not allowed to view the final report that was submitted by the NCW to the Committee. Nehad believed that this is one such way for the NCW at that time to control what is being reported about the status of women in Egypt.²¹⁴ Moreover, when positive changes are made, the NCW takes all media credit for their implementation. Nehad also wrote that the NCW publically supported the charters and conventions that Egypt is a part of, as well as the recommendations they make. However, the old NCW then “obstructs these projects from being truly implemented to avoid having to truly support women or putting the

²¹¹ These sentiments are echoed very closely with the NCW’s new work plan, posted on its website on May 14, 2012. Objectives 3.1-3.10 echo everything Laila told me http://www.ncwegypt.com/index.php/en/about-ncw/planeng
²¹² Suzanne’s Laws pertain to laws passed that concern the rights of women during the Mubarak regime. Among these laws is granting divorced mothers custody of their children until they are 15 years old (changed from 9 years old), the khul law allowing women to divorce their husbands, and the rights of divorced parents to visit their children. – Leila, Reem. “Controversy over “Suzanne’s Laws” Al-Ahram Issue No. 1046 (May 5-11, 2011) http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2011/1046/eg14.htm
²¹³ Dawoud, 118-120
²¹⁴ Ibid, 118-120
government under pressure.\textsuperscript{215} Today, along with continuing to run the ECWR, Nehad is also a member of the newly recreated NCW.

The EFU is likewise active in assisting female candidates for parliament. In their 2005 action plan, they made note of things that worked positively for them as well as things that did not work as well in order to provide more effective and efficient services in the future. The EFU held training session prior to the 2012 elections that resulted in the qualification and ranking of suitable candidates in order to provide these names to political parties. The EFU also undertook various studies on relevant issues and presented the results to female parliamentarians. Sawsan gave the example of the discrimination in criminal law, where men and women receive different types of punishment for the same crime. She said this is just one of many issues that the EFU studies and tries to get female Members of Parliament involved in. Sawsan lamented about the status of women post January 25\textsuperscript{th} and how women were severely neglected. In former Prime Minister Hazem Beblawy’s cabinet, she said there were three women appointed to ministerial positions out of an available 32 and that there have not ever been a female governor.\textsuperscript{216} The EFU is looking towards the next round of elections, possibly held in the Fall of 2014, in order to provide the services they have in the past. One of the things the EFU is working on for the future election is to support one hundred women for election. The EFU will assist in providing monetary support; as Sawsan noted, elections and campaigns are very expensive for women. In keeping with their past activism, the EFU will select women from all governorates around Egypt and provide support and training for electoral campaigns and provide studies on various issues so candidates can prepare adequately. Some of these women will be future Members of Parliament and awareness of present and persistent issues before taking a seat in parliament will be useful. At the end of these sessions, as before, the EFU will rank and qualify its participants in order to ensure that they are suitable for Parliament and provide their names to various political parties. She also said a core focus of the EFU would be to work with local women running for local

\textsuperscript{215} Al-Qmsan, 14
\textsuperscript{216} In Morsi’s government, Prime Minister Hesham Qandil included only two women in ministerial positions
council seats as this provides a valuable learning opportunity on a smaller, more intimate scale.

I asked if the EFU was considering fighting for a quota now and if they would discuss it with candidates. Sawsan said that they would work within the framework of the new 2014 constitution. The word ‘quota’ is not mentioned at all, so Sawsan and the EFU believe that if they lobbied for a quota for women, they would not be successful. Nonetheless, she said the EFU would work on increasing women’s participation and representation in Parliament but they would not call their initiatives a quota; a different term would be used to make lawmakers and others more amenable to increased women’s representation. She said the EFU would like to see women represented in all public governance positions, including Parliament, at fifty percent but she said realistically, that is a high number for a country that typically has no more than ten to twelve percent of women represented. By asking for fifty percent but getting thirty women elected to all decision making bodies, both national and local, would be a good place to start in order to continue increasing women’s representation.

In October 2011, Nazra for Feminist Studies established the Women’s Political Participation Academy. They, like other groups, believed that it was important to assist women who wished to run for political elections. The Academy was designed to help support female candidates and to build their capacity to compete in different types of elections, such as Parliament or local council elections. 

Nazra for Feminist Studies, like other women’s groups in Egypt, were disappointed with the results of the 2010 elections, as only women from the National Democratic Party won quota seats. Advocates believed the best way to be competitive in the future would be to assist women and train them to be the best possible candidates in an electoral system that is not favorable to women. Though the newly created Academy was open to any interested women, none of the women from any of the religious groups chose to participate. Nazra did, however, refuse to support any women who had been associated with the NDP in the

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past. This logic was grounded in the fact that female NDP candidates received the support of the former regime and thus did not experience electoral hardships in the same manner as women outside of the regime did. Members of the Academy team worked with sixteen women throughout the election campaign by providing on the ground support and training for candidates and their campaign staff. They saw Sanaa al-Said, a member of the Social Democratic Party, successfully elected to Parliament at the end of the process. As part of the Academy, Nazra published a guide after the end of training, which provided information about the candidates, such as their age, governorate, prior education and experience in politics. This provided transparency for voters who had access to this brochure, as they had access to vital candidate information that was not provided in other locations.

**Political Parties**

In 2006, the Egyptian Center for Women’s Rights wrote in a report that the NDP is “a party without ideology where all the members are gathered for their own personal interests.” The NDP was, unquestionably, the strongest and most represented party in politics, as it was the party of longtime President Hosni Mubarak and his predecessors. Of the 454 members of parliament elected in 2005, 324 were members of Hezb el-Watiny (NDP); the four women elected were all from the NDP as well. The ECWR was unhappy with the level of support given to women, even those from the NDP. Of the 444 female NDP candidates, only six were nominated for seats in parliament, despite the

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219 “16 Female Candidates for the People’s Assembly Elections 2011/2012” Nazra for Feminist Studies (September 2012)
220 Al-Qmsan, 12
221 International Republican Institute “2005 Parliamentary Election in Assessment in Egypt” November 15-21, 2005
NCW saying that they would support woman by nominating one woman from each of the twenty six governorates.\textsuperscript{222}

The ECWR, in its post-election report, also wrote that it was not only the NDP that was lax in their support of women. Opposition parties in 2005 also pledged to nominate and support women but come time for elections, “the opposition both openly and covertly chose to employ the same methods [as the NDP] depending on the influence of money and the twisting of tribal values\textsuperscript{223} to defeat women candidates.”\textsuperscript{224} The ECWR reported that the NCW held a conference prior to elections in which the NCW met with the heads of the opposition political parties in order to better understand their stance on women and what could be expected of them regarding their support of female party members. El-Tagamo’a’a and el-Omma parties both pledged to nominate ten women; el-Geil party stated they would nominate two women; Shebab Misr and Misr al-Fata parties declared they would nominate women; and el-Nasery party “refused the principle of reserving seats for politically marginalized groups; at a time when the party was fighting to reserve half of the parliamentary seats for labors and peasants.”\textsuperscript{225} The ECWR expected these parties to follow through, however, this was did not materialize. After the election, when it became apparent that the majority of political parties were not interested in supporting female candidates, the ECWR post-election action plan vowed to work more closely with other women’s groups in Egypt to change the standing political party law to include better inclusion of women and establish the fact that the newly elected parliament needs to have women’s issues on its agenda. The ECWR recognized that in order to present these changes to lawmakers, they would have to make a concerted effort to study different types of quotas, or as they wrote, the reserving of seats for women and to legislate a new law for that.\textsuperscript{226}

\textsuperscript{222} Al-Qmsan, 12
\textsuperscript{223} The report states that by ‘tribal values’ it means the harassing and attacking election campaign representatives and assistants, as well as voters, for supporting women instead of men and accusing them of disintegrating traditional values, so as to obstruct the support of female candidates (Al-Qsman, 15)
\textsuperscript{224} Ibid, 12
\textsuperscript{225} Ibid, 13
\textsuperscript{226} Ibid, 17
In June 2009, Parliament changed the constitution to reflect a quota for women. In the following two election cycles, starting in 2010, 64 seats would be reserved for women. Women’s groups were pleased with the change, as many felt this would be one such way increase participation for women. Parliamentary elections were held on November 28th and December 5th, 2010. The January 25th, 2011 uprising began a month later and one of the first responses Mubarak undertook was to dissolve the Parliament on January 28th, 2011. The intricacies of establishing a quota will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, which will focus on Members of Parliament in 2005-2012.

One of the most common things I heard in conversation with members of different women’s groups in Egypt was how weak political parties are post January 25th. Rania, a member of the National Council for Women, stated that as before, the majority of political parties are not interested in supporting women, and in elections, most unfailingly place women at the bottom of their lists, in positions where they cannot win. She believes that quotas for women are the only method to increase women’s presence in Parliament because right now, there are too many obstacles in the way for women who wish to run. Reserved seat quotas are contentious in Egypt, Rania said, because opponents believe that women should take the same chances as men and not have special seats just for women. Rania believes political party quotas are best for Egypt, but because of the weakness of the political parties, now is not a good time to introduce a political party law that governs where women are placed on lists. She said the focus must be on strengthening the parties so they can function credibly. Instead, women’s groups should work to get reserved seats in the meantime as a way of increasing women’s political participation. Once women are present in acceptable numbers and political parties are firmly established, a credible and acceptable political party law can be passed. As part of this law, Rania said that there must be a provision that states the consequences should a party chose not to follow the law. Rania’s colleague, Laila, agrees. She hoped to see greater support and accountability of political parties; laws need to be enforced and consequences must be handed out for those parties who do not support women or place them in winnable positions.
Relationships with Female Parliamentarians

In providing trainings, conferences and other various support systems for candidates, women’s groups would conceivably establish relationships with some of the future parliamentarians. Despite asking about the nature of these relationships, many of the women’s groups I spoke with did not elaborate. Sawsan at the EFU thought they did work with Parliamentarian Georgette Qellini, who was appointed by Mubarak in 2005 and a member of the NDP. Laila from the NCW said that their future programs would be open for all, including Islamist candidates. However, she said female Islamist candidates and representatives are not supportive of women’s rights as their parties are not supportive of them. Therefore, it is difficult to discuss issues with women from those parties. The year that the FJP was in power, from 2012-2013, there was a reversal in the progress of women’s rights. Laila explained that the post uprising period is the perfect time to discuss women’s rights, not neglect them. She said it is imperative to take back what was lost since the uprising. She explained how the NCW’s current president, Mervat Talawi, who was part of the Constitutional Committee of 50 in 2013, is disappointed that there is no quotas for women included at the national level and that the NCW would continue to work for one. However, they were pleased with the new Constitution, as Ms. Talawi believes it is more supportive of women and it will now provide an opportunity for activists to regroup in order to fight for a recognized national quota and fairer laws towards women.

Laila said female parliamentarians should be interested in women’s rights and it should be their duty to address women’s issues in their new positions as parliamentarians. Women’s rights are more than just political rights, she said, as in all social issues like health and education, improvements made will affect women positively. Laila’s colleague Rania agrees. She portrayed a more pessimistic side than Laila, though. Rania said logically, all parliamentarians should be concerned with gender issues, but not all are, instead many focus on their popularity. As an example, she said if there were nine female parliamentarians, three would be sincerely interested in working on women’s issues. Rania stated that not only is the greater Egyptian population not overly concerned with
greater female political participation, but some citizens believe that women’s rights are inextricably linked to a foreign (Western) agenda that is being imposed upon society.

At the Egyptian Feminist Union, Sawsan echoed many of the same sentiments. She said the EFU does ask female parliamentarians to lobby for greater women’s rights, and said she believed that parliamentarians should be interested in using their position to advance this cause. The EFU tries to work with any women who are interested in running for Parliament, but Sawan did say that the group did not reach out or work with any women from the Freedom and Justice Party or any other Islamist group. Sawsan stated that the FJP women are not proactive in fighting for women’s rights. She talked about how part of the electoral process is putting a candidate’s picture on the ballot; the FJP chose to put a picture of either their husbands and the al Nour party put flower next to their few female candidates. She said this is an indicator of how the FJP and al Nour parties’ views women- they should not belong in public life. With the SCAF mandate that at least one woman be placed on party lists, Islamist parties had little choice but to abide. The FJP fielded four women into parliament. However, Sawsan said the FJP was not supportive of women and these female parliamentarians would likewise be unsupportive of advocating for progressive gender laws. Though the al Nour party has stated they do not believe women should be active in politics, the FJP should not be elided with the al Nour party. The FJP is marginally more open to having women active in politics and Brotherhood women did participate in elections. However, within the internal Brotherhood hierarchy, female members are not allowed to vote.

Post-January 25th Dialogue

The days after January 25th were days of activity for women’s groups in Egypt. Youth groups and political groups struggled to figure out the best course of action in an Egypt they had never witnessed before. Women’s groups joined together in this newly open space in the hopes that their demands and wishes would be heard as well; after all, women constituted fifty one percent of the Egyptian population and demonstrated just as fiercely as men. In June 2011, the Arab Alliance for Women and the Egyptian Coalitions
released a charter entitled “Egyptian Women’s Charter: Partners in the Revolution & in Building Democratic Egypt”. The charter had six demands the groups would like the government to recognize and work on in post-uprising Egypt. The very first demand is about the representation of women. “There should be no exclusion of women or discrimination against them; women’s representation in various fields is a right”. Points one through five states that women should be represented in all decision making bodies, including the constitutional drafting committee, legislative committees and any forum in which national issues are discussed. Furthermore, “parliamentary elections should be run through proportional representation (PR) electoral lists that have at least thirty percent women and the constitution should spell out clearly fully equality between men and women and eliminate all forms of discrimination.” The charter goes on to address better social and economic opportunities for Egyptian women, demands that ask that “all discriminatory legislation against women be reviewed and readdressed on the basis of equality and justice” and asks that all international conventions are upheld. This charter was distributed in twenty seven governorates in Egypt after June 2011, and over three thousand men and women registered for the first National Women’s Convention.

Despite SCAF ‘amending’ the quota system for women in the run-up to the 2011-2012 Parliamentary elections, women’s groups continued to fight for its reestablishment. With the ‘quota’ of one woman on each political party list, only two percent of newly elected parliamentarians were women, despite having 376 women run for a seat. In September 2012, then President Morsi spoke before the United Nations. He was questioned about women’s rights and responded that “Egyptian women have the same equal rights as men; there are even some men who ask to be guaranteed the same rights as women.” With this rhetoric in governance, women’s groups prepared for their next

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228 Ibid
229 Ibid
challenge: the drafting of the new constitution in 2012. Women’s groups like the EFU, ECWR and the NCW long hoped for the formal inclusion of a quota for women; as Rania stated, there were just too many obstacles in the way for women to successful enter Parliament and a legislated quota would be a solution to rectify that problem. The 2012 Constitution did not include quotas for women. In fact, most women’s groups felt that this constitution severely curtailed rights women had been entitled to for many years.

The 2012 Parliament consisted of seven elected women, and two appointed by SCAF. Four of the women were from the FJP, which formed a majority in Parliament. Not all Egyptians were pleased with the low levels of women or the high levels of conservatives in Parliament. Aida Noureldin is a lawyer and human rights advocate from Alexandria. She formed the parallel parliament which she hoped would function in tandem with the official 2012 Parliament. She established this body because “women were just used as voting blocs in the last elections and we do not have any women MPs from Alexandria in the new parliament so we decided to create a parallel parliament which will be made up of a majority of women with a few men and young people”. 231

Women of all ideological and political backgrounds joined. Aida envisioned the parallel parliament as sort of a watchdog which would be able to monitor the happenings of the real parliament. She said this would provide an opportunity to practice for the future and that women participating in this would be in a better position to fight [for seats] in the future. 232

On July 3, 2013, the day before the military ouster or “popular impeachment” 233 of Morsi, Drs. Laila elBaradie and Dina Wafa’s report on the women of the 2012 Parliament was published. Entitled “Women in the Second Egyptian Parliament Post the Arab Spring: Do They Think They Stand a Chance” it presents a bleak outlook on women in Parliament and voters in Egypt. They tried to asses why, despite having women present in Tahrir Square and a large number of women run for political office,

232 Ibid, 1
233 This is the term Mona Makram Ebeid used in her interview
there was a low number of women actually elected. They wrote that some of the factors that discouraged the involvement of more women in politics post January 25th to be the diminishing role of the NCW, the abolition of the quota for women, the rise of Islamist groups and the Islamist women’s performance in the 2012 parliament.\footnote{ElBaradei, Laila and Dina Wafa “Women in the Second Egyptian Parliament Post the Arab Spring: Do They Think They Stand a Chance” Journal of International Women’s Studies Vol. 14, No. 3 42-63 (July 3, 2013) 43 http://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1713&context=jiws} They concluded that part of the reason the NCW and the quota were unpopular was due to their association with Suzanne’s presidency of the NCW and Mubarak’s authoritarian regime. Surprisingly, it was Rania at the NCW who mentioned how the regime used women’s rights as tools in order to showcase Egypt’s commitment to gender rights while privately not supporting them. The ECWR criticized the NCW for this, as they believed that the NCW were intimately tied to the regime by having Mrs. Mubarak as their president.

The report found that some Egyptians perceived female parliamentarians as weak because they needed special services, such as trainings and support sessions provided by women’s groups in Egypt and a reserved seat quota.\footnote{Ibid, 46} ElBaradei and Wafa surveyed 152 Egyptians about a variety of issues concerning women in Parliament and they asked about using a quota for women. Though this covers a very small percentage of the population, they found that fifty five percent of Egyptians supported quotas, but they were surprised at the responses received by those who are opposed to quotas. Among the responses are ‘men perform better’; ‘women are not qualified for election wars’; ‘competency should be the reason, not positive discrimination’; ‘Egyptians need those who can solve their problems and there is no need to be gender biased’ ‘quotas are degrading to women’ and ‘women are not disabled’.\footnote{Ibid, 54} Finally, of the women they spoke with, only twenty seven percent felt they had the necessary skills and qualifications necessary to run for parliament.\footnote{Ibid, 56} That leaves seventy three percent of the women participating in the survey to believe they are not qualified to run for public office. Though this research was done under Morsi’s regime, these are important and telling findings. It helps target areas which women’s groups can focus on. The training and
services provided by women’s groups are even more important knowing that most women feel they are not qualified for political participation.

In the months leading up to the referendum of Egypt’s new 2014 Constitution, the group Karama held a conference in Alexandria in September 2013 to discuss how the Constitutional Committee was handling women’s rights. They found the draft lacking and thus titled their conference “Women’s Demands from the Constitution of 2013”. Participants of the conference went through the constitution and made changes where they felt women’s rights were lacking. They criticized Article 87 which states “it is a national duty for citizens to participate in public life; every citizen is entitled to vote, run for elections, and express opinions in referendums…” Karama and the other groups requested that this article be changed in order to reflect a quota for women. They demanded that this be added, “…and the State guarantees and commits itself to take temporary procedures and measures ensuring fair representation of women and youth in Parliament councils with a percentage of no less than forty percent so as to achieve representation balance of all classes of the people”. Karama and their partner groups were not successful in getting a quota for women passed at the national level, just as the other groups highlighted here. Though continuously discouraged, women’s groups expressed a commitment to continue fighting for a quota in national parliament.

Conclusion

This chapter presents the various work women’s groups do in Egypt. Especially in the post-uprising period, groups try to work with candidates and Members of Parliament in order to discuss the importance of women’s rights. Many groups hold training sessions for candidates, campaign staff and constituents to discuss important issues and concerns held by all. These services are beneficial for women, as it helps them learn how to run effective campaigns and provides monetary support. For those who have never been

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238 Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Article 87

239 “Egyptian Women in the Constitution Roundtable Discussion: Women’s Demands from the Constitution of 2013” Karama (September 9, 2013), 4
active in politics before, it provides an introduction into public life and introduces candidates to other women who are having similar experiences. Drs. ElBaradei and Wafa’s study highlight the low points for women during Morsi’s regime. The report supports the importance of the services as women’s confidence in their abilities to partake in political life is low. The services provided assist women and their staffs to reach out to their future constituents; they are assisted in putting together a strong campaign program and interacting with voters. Though the majority of participants of Nazra’s program did not win a seat in the 2012 Parliament, many said they would continue working in politics and would consider or will run again in future elections.

Members of women’s groups I talked with reiterated the weakness of political parties and much work needs to be done internally before they become serious contenders in the political sphere. Women’s groups spoke of political party quotas as a positive goal but before considering mounting a lobbying effort for one, political parties would need to be more cohesive and better functioning. Many parties were formed after the revolution while the NDP was dissolved. Parties are fractured and are still establishing themselves as political contenders. It is a perfect moment for new parties to include and encourage women to take an active role in the party and run for seats at both the national and local levels.

Though not spoken of directly to me, other women’s groups question the legitimacy and usefulness of the state feminist group the National Council for Women. During the Mubarak era, in which the NCW was established, actors within the organization focused on raising awareness of issues, but were criticized for their lack of action plan or failure to adequately and effectively follow through in providing a policy recommendation. McBride and Mazur describe different types of state feminist groups; the actions and plans of the NCW did not aim to address the patriarchal nature of government nor promote gender equality. In a document provided to me by the Egyptian Feminist Union, they wrote that the NCW had “no outspoken statement or clear programme to address these important issues of gender discrimination”. The Egyptian Feminist Union, 3
Center for Women’s Rights, in a report released after the 2005 parliamentary elections criticized the NCW as well. The report states they consider NCW one in the same with NDP, which is focused only on enacting and supporting the goals and wishes of the party. Furthermore, the NCW increases its support by “issuing ID and voting cards for many women during times when the media is focused on women’s rights issues.” The ECWR goes on state that despite what the NCW brings up as policy initiatives and recommendations, what is said is usually not what is implemented. Additionally, the ECWR believes individual women’s groups should be active in grassroots organizing and direct interaction with women and the NCW should support the actions of all these women’s groups by collaborating with the groups and inviting them to meet in order to propose legislation. Instead, the NCW “get side tracked with administrative work to hold trainings and to prepare women for political participation, but this isn’t really its role, this is the role of women’s organizations”. Though the NCW is re-established today, its capacity to act is still undetermined and the programs Rania and Laila discussed with me have not been implemented. Other groups active in Egypt do not wish to associate or enter into alliances with the NCW due to its past regime connections.

While Drs. elBaradei and Wafa did not call for the outright dissolvent of the NCW, Nazra for Feminist Studies, along with the Arab Alliance for Women and nine other women’s groups did. They believed that the past association with the regime made it an illegitimate body to represent women’s rights both in Egypt and internationally. The NCW was affected badly after the uprising due to its association with the regime and Suzanne as its president. It was reformulated in 2012 after the parliamentary elections and is working on establishing new trainings and series that will assist women.

Despite the belief of some women’s groups in Egypt that the NCW is not overtly supportive of women’s rights, all groups face contention when they deal with institutional

242 Ibid, 14
243 “Coalition of Women’s NGOs in Egypt: National Council for Women Doesn’t Represent Egyptian Women...Call For Rapid Dissolution” Nazra for Feminist Studies and the Coalition of Women’s NGOs in Egypt (February 25, 2011) http://nazra.org/en/2011/02/call-rapid-dissolution-national-council-women
gender biases. Many heads of political parties promise to either support women in individual elections or include women on party lists and place them in winnable positions, yet during elections, they renge their promises. There is a strong belief among men, from male parliamentarians to citizens that women’s groups are trying to feminize society. Therefore, placing women in decision making bodies is detrimental to the rights of men. This belief is strongly reinforced by Traek Imam Allam, President of the NGO “Freedom NGO: Friends of Men and the Family”. In 2009, he made the following comments on a program called 90 Dekika. He said,

“The NGO specializes in issues to do with men, in other words it opposes the unjust laws that feminize society. With all due respect to Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak and the National Council for Women, some people are trying to tailor laws so that they lead to the feminization of society at the expense of men. Our first priority is opposing such laws. We call upon Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak to transform the National Council for Women into a National Council for the Family in order to avoid discrimination on the basis of men, women, disabled people…”

Members of the FJP as well wanted to transform the NCW into a National Council for Family. Azza Garf, who will be featured in more detail in Chapter 4, believes that a family council would be more beneficial to Egyptian society than a council that focuses specifically on women’s issues. A National Council on Family would allow for women’s issues to be elided with family issues.

The FJP and MB are not the only group who feel that a quota is discriminatory to men and that women should not be singled out for special treatment. This belief is reinforced by Mr. Allam, and Ms. Shorky, who stated that male parliamentarians would be upset that their seat might be taken by women and in the research presented by Drs. ElBaradei and Wafa. Due to its association with the old regime, some groups suggested political party quotas instead of reserved seats for women while the EFU decided they will try to be creative in advocating for a quota without calling it a quota. Despite these

244 Dawoud, 13-14
societal misconceptions and setbacks, women’s groups in Egypt play an integral role in lobbying for a national quota for women. As discussed in Chapter 2, quotas for women are only one vehicle of increasing women’s representation in legislature. In Egypt, women’s groups have consistently lobbied for the use of quotas for women. The women I talked with and the reports their organizations released call for some form of quota for women in national Parliament. There are different alternatives of increasing women’s representation in Parliament, but all call for the use of a quota. There is no consensus on which form of a quota is the best or most effective method, but all agree that there should be legislation that enforces the use of a quota for women in Parliament.

Interestingly, the women that I spoke with at the NCW and the EFU believed that female parliamentarians should be interested in women’s rights, that it should be a duty. Women’s groups buy into preconceived expectations that because one is female, one must also be automatically concerned with women’s rights. Rania stated that perhaps three out of nine female parliamentarians would be interested in women’s rights while the rest would be more concerned with their popularity. However, the other six women might be interested in improving the education system or fighting illiteracy or poverty, important issues that affect a large number of both men and women. These contributions are quite important as well, for not only improving the living conditions of fellow citizens, but these improvements pave the way for women who may choose to run in parliamentary elections in the future.

Though women’s groups do not all work together, many provide similar services for candidates and show genuine interest in improving women’s political participation. Faced with many criticisms of their activities on behalf of women, it is clear that there are real and ingrained obstacles present to Egyptian women who wish to be active in politics. Political parties to politicians thwart the efforts of women, yet many women who work with groups in Egypt say that they will continue to fight to become a political figure, starting either at in local councils or as a Member of Parliament. The next chapter will highlight Members of Parliament from 2005, 2010 and 2012 in order to viewpoints on quotas and greater women’s rights.
CHAPTER 4 – Women in Parliament

Introduction

Egypt was one of the first Middle Eastern countries to adopt a quota for women in Parliament in 1979. As discussed in Chapter 1, the quota was declared unconstitutional in 1986 and since then, quotas for women have been a highly debated topic. Though national quotas were not reintroduced in Egypt until 2010 the conversation continued, pushed along by women’s groups, advocates and international conferences about its usage. After the passing of the quota amendment in 2009, the conversation exploded in the media and in the post-uprising period, quotas once again were fiercely debated as different groups weighed in in post-Mubarak Egypt.

This chapter explores the use of quotas for Egyptian women in the People’s Assembly. I will begin by introducing the 2005 Parliament. This was a turning point, for after almost twenty years, quotas for women were the center of a prominent debate. I highlight the arguments brought up for and against using national quotas for women by using meeting minutes from the Fourth Regularly Convened Session of Parliament. I will then discuss greater party platforms and viewpoints on women’s political participation. I turn to the experiences of the women who ran for quota seats in 2010 and the media debate that surrounded the elections. Finally, I will conclude with the 2012 Parliamentary session, the experiences and viewpoints of female Members of Parliament and the public discourse that took place in 2012 and 2013.

Announcing a Quota Amendment


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246 Law No. 174 for the year 2005 on Regulating the Presidential Elections (file:///C:/Users/Kristen/Downloads/Law%20No.%20174%20of%202005%20-%20english.pdf)
the empowerment of women along with “the concept of citizenry as the basic rule for equality among all Egyptians.”\textsuperscript{247} Though Mubarak won the election easily, some activists saw this as a slight ray of hope. Multi-person presidential elections, engagement with women’s rights, and greater equality were issues Mubarak discussed in the campaign. Perhaps Egypt would slowly begin to engage with more democratic practices during this term. Women were hopeful that reforms would be made that would increase women’s rights and equality. Women’s groups hoped for a quota to address women’s political participation.

However, change did not come immediately. It was not until 2009 that the members of the 2005 Parliament address women’s rights in the form of a quota. The 128\textsuperscript{th} Meeting Minutes, taken June 16, 2009 show the discussions Members of Parliament had about the quota.\textsuperscript{248} Ahmed Ezz addresses the discussion held by the NDP about the party’s goals to modernize and push society forward. Earlier efforts undertaken by Parliament include economic initiatives to modernize Egypt. Ezz said these modernization efforts were done to help empower women in the future. He explained that the NDP had been working with many different political parties (but did not elaborate on which parties they worked with) on women’s initiatives, but the proposed amendment should not focus solely on quotas for political parties. Ezz stated that the empowerment of women should be addressed at the country level, not only in political parties because it affects and reflects on society. Women’s empowerment reflects the wishes of the citizens and people of Egypt, not just the opinions of some political parties. Ahmed Muhamrn supported Ezz. He argued that gender equality is present in Islam but societal traditions and customs in Egypt still result in discrimination towards women. A quota for women in the People’s Assembly would help end practices of discrimination which would benefit both men and women. Additionally, a quota will still leave the NDP as the majority party in the People’s Assembly and he did not believe a quota will lead to significant changes

\textsuperscript{247} Ezzat, Dina. “In the Waiting Room” \textit{Al Ahram} Issue No. 774 (December 22-28, 2005) \texttt{http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/774/fr1.htm} \\
\textsuperscript{248} 128\textsuperscript{th} Meeting Minutes of the Fourth Regularly Convened Session of Parliament of the Ninth Legislative Term, June 16, 2009
for the members of the Assembly. It will empower women; therefore, he supported the draft law.

Members also held a discussion about how to go about establishing a quota. Mohamed Gouli clarified that the proposed quota amendment would be limited to individual elections and to the People’s Assembly, not the Shura Council. Mohammad Dakrawi further clarified that the law would fulfill constitutional obligations and that a quota for women will guarantee a minimum level of female participation in the People’s Assembly. He proposed that the minimum number chosen will be distributed among the different regions of the country according to an administrative and population evaluation. As long as we give women less than the 222 districts currently existing, he explained, we will need to expand the districts.

Ezz, Gouli, Dakrawi and Muharaan are members of the NDP. They introduce and clarify the conditions they believe are important for introducing a quota for women in Parliament. Many begin by thanking the President, Hosni Mubarak, for introducing the draft law they were talking about. NDP supports explained that as a member of the ruling party, they needed to carry out the program of the president and pass his laws. Ezz and Dakrawi frame their argument and support of a quota as a way of securing women’s empowerment. As Sardenberg points out in her analysis of liberal and liberating empowerment, the NDP understood empowerment through the introduction of quotas as a way of enhancing a marginalized group. A quota for women in Parliament would increase the physical number of female parliamentarians. However, in the discussions that members of the NDP took part in, there was no discussion of using a quota in any other governmental institutions or at any other election level. There was no discussion of introducing mechanisms that would protect women against the ingrained patriarchal structures of government. Members of the NDP seem to be more concerned with ensuring that the power of the NDP remains intact than actually addressing women’s political participation or empowerment. A quota for women, though supported and eventually passed by the large support found from members of the NDP, was not a mechanism designed to enhance democracy in Egypt or to ensure women’s political empowerment.
A quota would not challenge patriarchal relations and it would not genuinely reduce inequality that is found in Egypt. It is questionable that, elected through this conceptualization of a quota, if women would have the power to introduce various pieces of legislation and be supported in their policy initiatives.

While there appeared to be significant support by Parliamentarians, many of whom were from the NDP, of introducing a quota for women, there were concerns that a quota for women would be unconstitutional in Egypt. Member Tahar Hussein Bedwi, an independent/Brotherhood member, frames his argument against quotas for women by calling them unconstitutional and discriminatory. He cites Articles 26 and 40 which guarantee a quota for workers and farmers and that all citizens are equal before the law, regardless of race, ethnic origin, language, religion or creed, respectively. Therefore, quotas for women would be a form of discrimination against men in addition to being unconstitutional. He disagrees that the proposed law will actually empower women. Instead, Bedwi and his supporters see quotas for women as a measure that is being pushed through by the NDP for their own political gain. Saad Abd al-Wahib Qutb, also an independent/Brotherhood member, further explains that nobody is disagreeing with the notion of women’s empowerment, but he rejects this proposed amendment because it would not genuinely empower women. He states that the proposed district sizes are large which would make campaigning effectively in the whole area difficult. Furthermore, the small number of seats given to women, 64, does not actually increase equality. An additional 64 women in Parliament will not enhance empowerment or promote democracy.

Eighty eight of the Independents in Parliament were members of the conservative Muslim Brotherhood. As I will show later in this chapter, the MB is a longstanding opponent to introducing quotas as a way of increasing women’s political participation. However, Badwi and Qutb frame their arguments against quotas for women as unconstitutional and discriminatory, not in religious rhetoric. Their arguments are more in line with Sardenberg’s idea of liberating empowerment: they recognize that the

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249 Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 1971
proposed method of introducing quotas for women will not actually empower women. There are many hardships presented, including large districts and a comparatively small number of reserved seats. However, the Constitution does not say it affords equality to both men and women, nor does it provide protection on the basis of sex or gender. It says all citizens. This distinction allows more conservative factions of society to perpetuate instances of discrimination and inequality, the very principles some of the quota opponents claimed to try to uphold.

Though this Parliament passed a quota amendment that affords 64 seats in the People’s Assembly to women, the quota did not address greater forms of women’s empowerment or other areas where women are discriminated against in politics or society. An apparently strong motive to introduce and pass this law was that it was the wish of Mubarak as cited in his 2005 presidential platform and as the majority of Parliament was part of the NDP, it was their duty to pass his laws. Some NDP members said that a quota would not change the makeup of the Parliament. An effective quota would change the nature of past parliaments as it would allow women to have a voice in politics and have the ability and agency to introduce and pass policy initiatives. When Dakrawi said that Parliament would not change with a quota, he did not believe nor did he expect women to be anything more than just a physical presence in Parliament. He called into question her power, agency and efficacy to act as inconsequential. Furthermore, aside from introducing a 64 reserved seat quota, there is no further discussion about women’s political participation or additional ways in which women could be included in politics. Women’s empowerment or enhancing democracy does not appear to be a central objective to members of the National Democratic Party as they discussed quotas for women. It was the Independent/Brotherhood opponents of a quota who raised relevant and pertinent objections to this inception of a quota. As I will show later in this chapter, their concerns about district size did play a significant role in elections.

Women’s empowerment is equated by members of the NDP as quantitatively increasing the number of women in Parliament. The intent of the NDP was to remain in
power. As I showed in Chapter 3, the state sponsored NCW was incorporated as part of the state machinery. As the state feminist organization, they were tasked with working to improve that status of women in Egypt. The NCW couched its support of quotas for women as part of Egypt’s commitment to CEDAW and therefore, with the approval of Suzanne as head of the NCW, and the majority of Parliament being a member of the NDP, a quota for women was passed. A 64 reserved seat quota would be in place for two election cycles. After this time, a quota for women would no longer be necessary because women would be ‘empowered’ and they would be able to run in elections without policies that assist and protect women.


With the quota in place for the 2010 elections, women had a chance to participate in elections with the knowledge that there would be 64 seats reserved for women. This was a step forward in increasing women’s representation in national political decision making bodies in Egypt. While candidates were amassing campaign staff and launching their campaigns, the debate about quotas for women exploded in the media. The first section will highlight the voices of female candidates and Members of Parliament, while the second section will focus on the media response to the 2010 elections. Three hundred seventy eight women decided to run for one of the 64 reserved quota seats, with the National Democratic Party fielding 69 women. The outcome of the election led to 64 women from the NDP winning a seat in Parliament.

Campaign Experiences

In past elections, Egypt traditionally held a two week long campaign period in which candidates would travel to governorates to speak with constituents and hold rallies to garner support from their voters. For the 2010 elections, the campaign period was

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shortened by five days due to the *Eid* holiday falling right before scheduled elections.\textsuperscript{251} One candidate, Mona Makram Ebeid, spoke out about this. “It’s absolutely ridiculous. You don’t have time to do anything. It’s as if they’re putting up obstacles, and particularly for women, who have to cover all this enormous area.”\textsuperscript{252} I spoke with Mona about her experiences in Egyptian politics.\textsuperscript{253} She comes from a Christian family and is a longstanding member of the Wafd party. She first ran for Parliament in 1987 on the Wafd party lists, but did not succeed. However, she ran again five years later and became a Member of Parliament for the first time in the 1990-1995 Parliament. After a ten year hiatus from Parliament, Mona ran once again in 2005, but did not win. Running for a quota seat in 2010 would be a new experience. Mona explained how she ran in Shubra, and due to the provisions of the quota, covered the surrounding 10 districts as well. Due to the combination of a shortened campaign time and the vast area she had to cover, it was difficult to visit each constituency, hold events and spend time with constituents. It is also difficult monetarily to travel such a large area. Mona was displeased with the number of districts women running on quota seats had to cover; male candidates were required to cover only one. Included in most of the women’s constituencies are rural areas where added difficulties await. Many female candidates are not as well-known in some of the areas they cover, yet candidates still must go to campaign in these more rural areas. Mona explained the contradictions she faced when talking in front of largely male crowds in some of the smaller areas. “They [the men] accept you, but they don’t accept that their women will go out”.\textsuperscript{254} Despite various hardships in the campaign process, Mona ran a successful campaign on the platform of empowering women through microcredit. In the days after the campaign, however, she found out that she in fact would not be a Member of Parliament. Though this election was not marked by the widespread violence that took place in 2005, she discussed how the 2010 elections were incredibly corrupt. Mona ran against a woman from the National Democratic Party. She predicted


\textsuperscript{252} Ibid, 1

\textsuperscript{253} Interview with Mona Makram Ebeid, Wafd Party, Member of Parliament (1990, 2010) Cairo, March 9, 2014

\textsuperscript{254} Topol, 1
that the NDP would take three quarters of quota seats but thought she had a shot at winning due to the fact that she had better name recognition than her NDP opponent.\textsuperscript{255} Part of her prediction came true: after she won her seat in Parliament, the NDP announced the following day that her opponent had in fact won. Mona was therefore not sworn into the 2010 Parliament. After, Mona was quotas as saying “I was too independent-minded, they [the NDP] wanted yes men and women. They want to be surrounded by imbeciles and the Mafiosi.”\textsuperscript{256} The majority of the seats won, including almost all quota seats, were won by members of the National Democratic Party.

One of Egypt’s many talk shows, \textit{Masr elNahrda} did a series of interviews with parliamentarians and other journalists and scholars about the 2010 elections with an emphasis on quotas for women. These interviews took place right around election time in late November and early December 2010. Nermine elBadawi participated in elections as a National Democratic Party candidate for the quota seat in 6\textsuperscript{th} of October City and won.\textsuperscript{257} Though this was her first time in Parliament, she ran in 2005. Nermine stated that her experiences in running in 2005 gave her the strength to run again in 2010 and she would have run even if there were not quotas. After her failed 2005 campaign, she spent the next five years active in her constituency by informally preparing for the 2010 elections. One of Nermine’s districts included Fayoum, and despite the time and cost involved in traveling so far from her other districts, she said she made a point to go there frequently. These trips to Fayoum and the rest of her areas helped her become known to her constituents and learn what they needed most. In listening to their concerns, she was able to begin to help even before she became a Member of Parliament. She worked on addressing pressing issues as they arose, and she helped build a post office in one district and in another, addressed the village’s pressing bread shortage. Nermine stated it was this

\textsuperscript{255}\textit{Ibid}, 1
\textsuperscript{256} Nkrumah, Gamal. “Copts Step Out of Church’s Shadow” \textit{Al-Ahram} Issue No. 1098 (May 17-23, 2012) \url{http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2012/1098/intvw.htm}
\textsuperscript{257} elBadawi, Nermine. \textit{Masr Naharda} (November 30, 2010) ; Part 1 \url{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3L4BMv-vfhY} ; Part 2 \url{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knCKB44Kx5w} ; Part 3 \url{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNqFtbCrJk}
sort of public service that endeared her to her constituents as she was able to interact and gain their trust. This, she said, was a large factor in her victory in 2010.

Nermine’s colleague, Hanan alSayyid, was also on the program as a newly elected parliamentarian from the NDP.\(^{258}\) Like Nermine, Hanan also ran in 2005 and did not win. She wanted experience in running for elections and after her loss she spent time analyzing her campaign by writing about her experience and seeing what worked best for her and what could be improved on. She, like Nermine, reiterated the necessity of getting to know her constituents as one of the best ways of reaching out. She targeted leaders in each community she represented in order to discuss with them the most pressing issues as well as becoming potential campaign assistants. One of her biggest goals in the interim between elections was to raise awareness for constituents. She wanted to explain what her role as a candidate was and what her constituent’s role as voters were; therefore, meeting with community leaders helped her, as it provided an opportunity to explain what she would do for them if she was elected as their representative. On Election Day, Hanan reiterated that there was indeed violence and corruption, but agreed with Nermine that it was on a much smaller scale, and was targeted more in poorer areas, especially in Upper Egypt. She pointed out that the party [the NDP] was very supportive, and party men helped her prior to Election Day by campaigning for her, but members of the NDP were also present on Election Day for support and security.

*Masr elNaharda* had one other Member of Parliament on, briefly, by telephone. Medeha Khtob was a member of the NDP and a doctor.\(^{259}\) She, too, reiterated many of the same experiences as Nermine and Hanan in that there was some violence and tension on Election Day. She did not run in 2005, but was just as active in providing public services to her constituents in the time leading up to the 2010 elections. Though women

\(^{258}\) Interview with Hanan alSayyid, *Masr Naharda* November 30, 2010 ; Part 1 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3L4BMv-vfhY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3L4BMv-vfhY) ; Part 2 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knCKB44Kx5w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knCKB44Kx5w) ; Part 3 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNqFtbCrlJk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNqFtbCrlJk)

\(^{259}\) Interview with Medeha Khtob National Democratic Party, Member of Parliament 2010 *Masr Naharda* November 30, 2010 ; Part 1 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3L4BMv-vfhY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3L4BMv-vfhY) ; Part 2 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knCKB44Kx5w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knCKB44Kx5w) ; Part 3 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNqFtbCrlJk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNqFtbCrlJk)
running on quota seats had extraordinarily large districts, Medeha said she travelled to
districts that were not included in hers because she said she wanted to be a representative
for all people, not just those in her specified constituency. She said quotas added
additional protection for women because they competed against other women, not men.
However, running a political campaign is difficult if you are not a member of an
organized party. Being a part of a party provides a large network of support during
campaigns and once in office. She said she would be focusing on health care initiatives
and reforms. Medeha said as a doctor, she is able to recognize the shortcomings of the
current system and would work to help Egyptians both inside and outside of her
constituency. Everybody needs health insurance and as this was one of the issues she
worked on with her constituents before elections and she would continue her efforts in
Parliament.

Egyptians who chose not to run in parliamentary elections had their own opinions
about quotas for women. In the days leading up to elections, debates in the media
abounded. On November 23, 2010, Alia elMahdi went on *Masr Naharda* to discuss her
opinions on quotas for women in Parliament.260 A member of the NDP, she was active in
their Policy Committee along with being the Dean of the Faculty of Economics and
Political Science at Cairo University. She did not run for Parliament but was supposed to
provide an alternative voice about the quota system. She, along with her NDP colleagues,
presented a positive quota experience, free from much of the fraud and election rigging
that others wrote about in the media. She began by saying that parties, including the
NDP, do not give financial assistance to help women run campaigns. The NDP, however,
does support women in their quest to be more active in political life, which includes
running for a parliamentary seat. Alia explained that men organize campaign events for
women to participate in in different constituencies. This circle of support by other party
members provides an opportunity for women to reach out to their constituents in a safe

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260 Interview with Aliaa elMahdi, Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo
University, Member of the National Democratic Party, Interview on *Masr Naharda*, November 23, 2010;
Part 1 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEvkjwEHY9s; Part 2
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIi6N5RLve8; Part 3
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqEFmsMJusg
environment. Multiple events are sponsored by the candidates, with assistance from the party, in which women have the opportunity to talk directly to voters. Some events feature just female candidates being interviewed in their districts while others provide an opportunity to interact directly with constituents. Male members of the NDP assist in setting up and ensuring the female candidates are safe. Nermine explained how the majority of her campaign staff were men and Hanan as well stated she reached out to leaders of large families. Alia said not all support should be financial, and this type of electoral support was beneficial and is provided to both party men and women.

Mona, Nermine and Hassan all had different experiences in running for elections. For each candidate, the 2010 elections were not their first time in participating in elections. Mona was the only person highlighted here who had previous campaign experience. She was supported by Wafd Party in her bid to be a Parliamentarian. Running again on a quota seat was a new experience. However, she explained how the quota was not introduced in a way that encouraged women to participate in politics. The large districts provided many hardships and getting to each area was difficult. However, the 2010 elections were wracked with vote rigging and buying and the seat Mona won was ultimately given to her NDP opponent.

Nermine and Hanan present a different viewpoint of their campaign experiences. Supported by the NDP in campaign rallies and having assistance in traveling between all the districts they were required to cover, they explained how the quota was an initiative that would be a good way of helping women become active in politics. Both Nermine and Hanan explained that they had time between 2005 and 2010 to assess their mistakes and strengthen their campaign agendas in order to become more active and known to their constituents in this time. They both believed that violence and fraud that was present in past elections did not play a large role in the 2010 elections, or that it was contained to certain areas. Nermine and Hanan, along with Aliaa, presented the NDP as a progressive party that was concerned with women’s political participation. In order to rectify the problem, the past Parliament introduced a quota that would ensure more women would be able to enter politics. These party women explained that the support of a party was
essential in obtain a seat in politics; without party support, it would be difficult to win elections. However, this narrative leaves out the vast network of influence the NDP wielded over many districts. They did not address the fact that all women who won a quota seat in this election were from the NDP.

**Goals for Office and Views on Quotas**

While Mona was denied the chance of being a member of the 2010 Parliament, she spoke of her time in Parliament from previous years as a parliamentarian in the 1990s. She remembers trying to form a women’s caucus in Parliament with her 10 other female colleagues. They approached Suzanne Mubarak, who was active in supporting women’s rights before the creation of the NCW, but no serious attempts to organize this caucus were formalized. She noted how the atmosphere in Parliament was not a supportive place to bring up women’s rights. She explained that other male Members of Parliament were helpful with new initiatives and ideas as long as they were not about rights for women because the men were just as conservative as the MB [Muslim Brotherhood].

I asked Mona about the efficacy of a quota system in Egypt. She referred me to a statement she had previously written. She said,

“Although no quota is perfect, it is better to have an imperfect system than no system at all. While quotas alone will not solve the problems of patriarchal systems, the mere presence of women change the face of decision making and provide opportunities for substantive input.”

Mona further explained that the method of implementation for the quotas in 2010 was distorted. As previously discussed, women having to cover multiple districts was both time and cost consuming. It was not an effective way of including or encouraging women to become more active in politics because the burdens attached to quota seats were difficult. Not all women have money, support or the means to travel around to many areas to campaign. After the disappointed outcome of the 2010 elections, Mona said that the quota amendment passed just the year before was not aimed at supporting women’s rights. Instead, it was just one way for the NDP to grant more women who support the
Some women’s groups also connected quotas to the NDP through the NCW. The NCW’s reputation was badly damaged after the uprising due to its connection with the NDP and the regime.

Mona believes that the new 2014 Constitution, which has twenty articles supporting women’s rights, is a positive step in the right direction. With the promulgation of the constitution, the focus is now on electoral law. Mona said a proportional representation (PR) system would be best for elections. Chapters 1 and 2 highlighted that PR systems support the election of women to parliament above other types of electoral systems. Additionally, she believed that a clause should be added into law which stipulates that parties must include women at the top of the party election lists, in winnable positions, through the alternative/zipper/zebra lists, like the ones used in Tunisia. Whichever system is chosen, however, it must be explicitly stated in law for it to work properly. She concluded that she felt some NGOs are not helpful towards female parliamentarians, despite numerous NGOs pledges to work with women. However, Mona plans on running in the upcoming Parliamentary elections, tentatively scheduled for Fall 2014. She will be working with the Egyptian Feminist Union in their program to support one hundred women running for elections, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Nermine and Hanan did not get a chance to enact any of their goals as Members of Parliament due to it being dissolved at the beginning of the uprising a month later. However, both discussed their platforms and goal for Parliament. Nermine explained that the first issue she wished to address was the Personal Status Law; specifically, she was interested in alimony and wished to expedite the process that allowed women to get money from their estranged husbands more quickly. She was quick to explain, though that just because she was female does not mean that all women in Parliament should be addressing women’s issues. She hoped to change the ingrained mindset of women being interested in women’s issues simply because they are of the same sex. Nermine wished for women to be able to bring up other issues outside of women’s issues, such as health care and education because she, like other women in Parliament, wanted to serve everybody.
Hanan explained that she was excited to run for a quota seat in 2010 as it provided a new and unique opportunity for her. She said Egyptian political leaders saw the introduction of a quota for women as a chance for the world to see the how quotas really work and this election with 64 quota seats for women would prove to the world that Egypt is becoming a more democratic country. Furthermore, other countries will see the positive experience of Egyptian female parliamentarians and will wish to emulate Egypt. By using quotas, it is one such way of proving that women belong in politics and the women elected on quota seats will help change past laws to reflect better political access for women. She said quotas added additional protection for women because they competed against other women, not men, but regardless, running a political campaign is difficult if you are not a member of an organized party. Being a part of a party provides a large network of support during campaigns and once in office, you can find support and assistance from other members of your party. Hanan’s goals for Parliament included working on social laws and education, which she said has not been properly reformed since the 1950s. She said these are important issues for her, as she wants to serve all people, not just women.

Although not a candidate for parliament, Alia provided her viewpoints on quotas as part of the debate prior to elections. She believed that parties benefit when there are quotas for women, because the party can run their women on a quota seat thus guaranteeing the party a seat in Parliament. Alia stated that she thought that the nature of Parliament would change with the introduction of a quota because the elected women would address women’s issues more than men because women care more about women’s issues than men. She explained that a female parliamentarian is perfectly positioned because she has an opportunity to discuss women’s issues but also any other issue she is interested in such as economics, health care and many others. Alia stated that another benefit of the quota was that it encouraged a great number of women to run. She believed that before the quota, many women were nervous or did not think they would be able to run a political campaign against men. Reserved quota seats allowed for women to run against other women for a seat in Parliament. She said most women did not feel they were prepared nor had a chance of winning in an electoral battle against a man, therefore
many chose not to participate in politics. Now, with the quota, women are happy to have a realistic chance of engaging in politics and possibly winning a seat in Parliament. Alia further explained that the 2010 election supported her viewpoint because thousands of women decided to run in these elections, where in previous elections, it was a very small number. Quotas gave women confidence. She further explained how she believed that after the quota amendment expired after two election cycles\textsuperscript{261}, the nature of Parliament would be fundamentally changed and there would be no need to continue using a quota. Women would find confidence to run in elections and after seeing the successes of other women in campaigns and in Parliament, more women would run and win against men. In Parliament, women would change laws to be more gender friendly, thus continuing to pave the way for greater gender equality in Parliament and politics.

The women who ran in 2010 all expressed excitement about the use of a quota system and the chance they had to run for one of the available quota seats. The parliamentarians all expressed a desire to bring up different issues that plague Egypt, from health care to education reform. Both Nermine and Hanan explained that they wanted to be representative of all of their constituents, not just women. Nermine expressly pointed out that she wanted to be seen as a strong parliamentarian interested in all issues, not just women’s issues. Though Mona spoke of her time in Parliament in the 1990s, she explained the difficulties she faced in trying to address women’s rights and political participation. She stated that she was supported in her initiatives as long as they did not focus on women’s issues.

The two NDP parliamentarians as well as Aliaa, a member of the NDP who did not run for elections, were all interviewed on Masr Naharda and explained how the party supports women both before and after elections, and how there was less violence and fraud at the polls during elections. The NDP candidates spoke at length about the many years of public services they provided in between losing elections in 2005 and winning in 2010. They all mention that their party, the NDP, supported them in campaigning. Though the NDP may or may not have supported their candidates financially during the

\textsuperscript{261} Had the quota amendment continued, it would have been canceled after the 2015 parliamentary elections
campaign, the broad network of influence the NDP exerted over voters is extensive and greatly influenced the outcomes of voting. National Democratic Party officials and members were present at polling stations and provide service on election days, such as bussing in voters from remote areas to vote, presumably for the NDP candidates. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Nazara for Feminist Studies elaborated about the amount of support NDP candidates had which greatly increased their changes whereas candidates not associated with the NDP had vastly different experiences and did not have the same level of access to support and services, both of which would help in travel experiences, and increased campaign and constituent assistance. Additionally, as Wafd candidate Mona Makram Ebeid explained, the elections were rigged so that almost all the women sworn into Parliament on the quota seats were supporters of the NDP. The use of a quota is closely associated with the old regime because of its use in this election. Though the Parliament itself did not last for more than three weeks, the results are not forgotten.

While women’s groups are working to engage parliamentarians to be more interested in women’s issues, thus perpetuating gender subjectivity present in society, parliamentarians themselves are looking for ways to be involved in issues that they feel will directly benefit all their constituents, including both men and women. Women in Parliament struggle with addressing issues while facing beliefs from some members of society that their presence in a national decision making body aids in the feminization of society as a whole. Discussing gender issues and attempting to create greater gender friendly laws is difficult because there is little support inside Parliament while support outside in communities is just as weak. Women’s groups provided assistance to candidates prior to elections, but many candidates expressed interest in other issues, not just women’s rights.

Alternative Responses to the 2010 Elections

The way the quota was used was decried as a way for the regime to maintain power while promulgating its commitment to gender equality. Sixty four new constituencies were created for women. This was done so women would be able to compete in new areas only against other women. However, candidates had to cover up to
10 constituencies, whereas their male counterparts only covered one. This created hardships for women because, as previously discussed, women had a large area to cover in a short amount of time. Additionally, other women stated they would not be running for a quota seat because the ulterior motive was not about increasing women’s representation or enhancing gender equality but instead a sneaky way for the NDP and the regime to hold onto power.262 There were many reports of vote buying, bribery and intimidation. Though this occurred during many Egyptian elections in the past263, the three NDP candidates spoke of the noticeable decrease of violence and fraud in the 2010 election. Yet many opposition candidates reported on the bribery and intimidation of voters on Election Day, and how prior to elections, campaign offices were ransacked and destroyed. Some even reported that they were put under surveillance.264 One male opposition candidate reported that despite having around 1500 votes, including his vote for himself, the final tally of votes reflected that he received zero.265

Nazra for Feminist Studies released a post-election report in which they observed a number of election irregularities. They found multiple constraints placed on women from other parties, including the independents, members of the opposition and members of the Muslim Brotherhood which lead to a breakdown in communication between candidates and constituents, as well as the outright exclusion of other candidates.266 In the first round of voting, the NDP won 46 out of the 64 seats while the second round resulted in further NDP victories, because in many of the runoff elections, the competition was either between two NDP women or NDP women and an ‘independent’

262 Topol, 1
affiliated with the NDP who would later officially declare their party orientation once in Parliament.\textsuperscript{267} These inconsistencies resulted in a deep mistrust of the use of a quota system for women as well as increased social frustration with the NDP “since all the winners of the quota seats are NDP and that will mean that there is no other discourses than the NDP discourse.”\textsuperscript{268}

The 2010 elections were the first where a quota was used in many years. Members of Parliament discussed its usage and women’s groups long lobbied for some form of institutional quota for Egyptian women in national politics. This election was supposed to pave the way for greater women’s representation in Parliament and provide a secure way for women to enter and experience electoral politics. Parliamentarian Hanan explained how the world would see how effectively Egypt used a quota and thus other countries would be compelled to use a quota for women as well. The results, however, present a greatly different picture. The National Democratic Party relentlessly worked to increase the number of their own party members and ensured that all of the quota seats were won by NDP women. Egyptians reached the end of their patience with not only many years of corrupt elections, but with the never ending presence of the NDP. January 25\textsuperscript{th}, 2011 stopped this Parliament before it really began. After the ousting of Mubarak and his NDP regime, discussions about quotas for women once more resumed. Its future was uncertain.

**Interim Discourse about Quotas March 2011-December 2011**

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) took over ruling the country after Mubarak’s demise. Though they did not have a clear transitional roadmap, they decided that new parliamentary elections would be held by the end of the year with new presidential elections in the spring. It was not immediately known if the quota amendment, passed only a year ago, would stand, but many women’s groups and activists hoped that it would continue. As the quota provision of 2009 was a constitutional amendment, it seemed unlikely that it would continue after the majority of the country

\textsuperscript{267} Ibid  
\textsuperscript{268} Ibid
voted to suspend the constitution in a referendum held in March 2011. Still, women’s groups continued to call for the use of a quota for the upcoming parliamentary elections. Ultimately, SCAF decided to discontinue the use of quotas for women. In a statement released after this decision, an unidentified source said, 

“Our society calls for equality between men and women. Therefore, we cannot allocate a quota for women alone. The existence of such a quota might also provide Parliament membership for feminist elements that are not suitable for the task. Hence, the military council is seeking to achieve a Parliament that represents the people’s actual will.”

This response was criticized by many women’s groups and activists, who continued to discuss the numerous ingrained obstacles present to women. Indeed, SCAF’s response to quotas for women included the detrimental effects of the feminization of Egyptian society which would be a result of the increase of women in Parliament. Some worker and farmer candidates also spoke out about SCAF’s decision on quotas. A farmer candidate from the Tagammu Party, Wafaa Ezzat, after learning that quotas for workers and farmers only would continue, said “the authorities should have canceled the 50 percent workers’ and farmers’ quota rather than women’s quota. Reserving 50 percent of seats for workers and farmers only serve to protect the interests of those who are backed by the ruling forces.”

Though SCAF scrapped quotas for women, they decided a token reference to the past provision should be made. Therefore, they stipulated in the election law that on each party’s PR list, a minimum of one woman had to be included.

Political activists responded in a variety of ways to the one woman ‘quota’. Because the law did not state where women had to be placed, many women were included at the bottom of the list in unwinnable positions. Islamists groups have long been opposed to any quota for women. In a pre-election conference sponsored by the Salafi al Nour Party entitled “The Role of Women”, an all-male panel spoke to male and

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269 Othman, 1
female attendees of the ‘evils’ of fielding women for parliamentary seats and they would grudgingly place one woman on their lists only because they did not have a choice. “No nation will succeed if it is ruled by women”, stated Yasser Burhamy, a Salafi leader.272

Other activists and candidates spoke out against the flaws in the electoral law. Gameela Ismael of the Ghad el-Thawra Party was displeased with the lack of regulation governing the order of names on lists. “Us women played an important role in the revolution, so it doesn’t make sense that they put us at the end of the candidate lists, because this shows a form of discrimination that we reject.”273 Ismael was surprised to find her name only third on the list; her party, once part of the Democratic Alliance headed by the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party, withdrew once she realized that the FJP was not going to support women in winnable positions. Indeed, Essam el-Erian, a spokesman for the FJP, reiterated the longstanding Brotherhood stance on quotas and women in politics. He said, “Islam mandates equal civil and political rights for men and women, but it is not the place of a democratic government to reverse social and cultural norms. That is an American way of thinking, of dividing societies into women and young men and minorities and so on.”274 The Brotherhood couches their opposition to greater women’s political participation, as well as using a quota to increase the number of women in Parliament, in Western terms. This enables the Brotherhood to explain to their followers that quotas are a Western import and the appropriate alternative is an Islamic approach. The NCW and other women’s groups grounded their calls for quotas in international conventions such as CEDAW. These actions were not popular with some factions of Egyptian society and as a result, support went to the MB and FJP who were against the ‘Western’ idea of quotas as a way of increasing women’s representation.

272 Fathi, Yasmine. “Will Women Make it into Egypt’s Upcoming Parliament?” Ahram Online October 20, 2011 http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/24583/Egypt/Politics-/Will-women-make-it-into-Egypts-upcoming-parliament.aspx
273 Ibid, 1
Additionally, el Erian’s rhetoric explains that Islam already advocates for equality between men and women, therefore, forced policies such as quotas are an unnecessary measure. As women are equal in Islam, they should have the same chances and opportunities as men in running for political office. Because they were mandated to place one woman on party lists, Islamist groups largely placed women at the bottom. Additionally, in the place where the candidate’s picture is placed, women’s pictures were replaced with either their husband’s photo or a photo of a flower by Salafi parties. If the Salafi position was not already clear, this proved a visible sign of their views on women in political and public life. The Islamists groups had four women elected to Parliament, all from the FJP.

Other parties responded by staying they would place women in the first and second places. The Wafd Party, who had previously supported Mona Makram Ebeid in elections, fielded Margaret Azer and Magda elNawashi in its number one and two positions while the Social Democratic Party put Sanaa elSaid as its second candidate. Margaret and Sanaa both went on to represent their parties in the 2012 Parliament. Unfortunately, the uprising produced in a large number of new, yet fractured political parties, many with an unclear agenda or set goals. Political parties proved in the past that they are more focused on winning a seat in Parliament then enacting gender equality within their rank. Only three other women were elected to the 2012 Parliament. Nine out of 508 seats went to women after Egypt’s uprising.

**The Experiences of a 2012 Parliamentarian**

The Members of the 2012 Parliament, as in 2010, did not serve long. The Parliament gathered in January 2012 and was dissolved in June 2012, right before Presidential elections. Though only working for a few months, there were several important discussions that took place. I talked with Sanaa elSaid about her time in Parliament. Sanaa was a first time Parliamentarian in 2012, despite running for office

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both in 2005 and 2010. Both times she spoke of the fierce competition by NDP opponents. Officials from the NDP were present on election days in order to sway and influence the outcomes of elections. Interestingly, Sanaa equated some of NDP’s tactics to the way Islamist groups campaigned. Whereas the NDP influenced voters with bribery, the Islamists influenced voters with religion. Sanaa explained that the use of takfir, or rumors, were especially effective for the Islamist candidates and their supporters and there were many rumors about other candidates, stating that they were non-religious. This tactic was intensified against other women candidates, including her.

Once in Parliament, Sanaa noted some of the prominent debates that she took part in. One debate was related to the Salafi al Nour Party’s attempt to lower the age of children kept in their mother’s custody. Sanaa received calls from feminist organizations that were aware that this issue would be address in parliament. Sanaa, along with another female colleague, engaged in this debate with leaders of the Salafi parties in order to reach an acceptable compromise. Sanaa said the discussants decided to reach out to al-Azhar to obtain a fatwa, or legal opinion on the matter. However, they never revived the fatwa because Parliament was dissolved shortly thereafter. Another issue Sanaa was involved in concerned the legalization of the Muslim Brotherhood. She, along with other colleagues, called for the establishment of budgetary supervision and methods of accountability for the MB, but again, Parliament broke up before substantial gains were made on this front. Sanaa explained that much of her time was taken up by addressing issues related to her constituencies. Due to major political events during the short period of time Parliament met, such as the Port Said massacre, other important debates did not arise.

I asked Sanaa about women’s issues and the use of quotas for women in Parliament. Sanaa said there were no discussions in the general meetings about a quota. She attributed this to the fact that it was known that the Islamists were strongly against a quota for women. She said that Islamists knew a quota would be a way to get more women into politics and as such they did not want to publically discuss a quota. However, Sanaa herself believes that there should be a quota, but for the workers and
farmers. She also advocated for a quota for women especially in local councils. Women’s representation is starting to increase and it is a good first step towards encouraging more women to become involved in politics. A strong quota system should be in place, and while she did not state which type of quota she thought would be best for Egypt, she said that there should be more action and legislation in getting political parties to place women at the top of party lists.

Talking about politics is becoming dangerous and many women I reached out to did not respond to my invitation to talk about their experiences in Parliament and politics. However, many of the Parliamentarians I wished to speak with did give interviews to media outlets, wrote op-ed pieces, and made statements concerning the issues I wished to discuss. The next section features their voices as part of a larger debate concerning women’s issues in 2012.

2012 Parliamentarians in Public Discourse

In addition to Sanaa, eight other women were elected to the 2012 Parliament. Margaret Azer joined Sanaa as a Member of the 2012 Parliament. Running as a member of the Wafd Party Margaret rejected the practice of Presidential appointments, but said she would like to see a temporary quota for women or Copts until both groups are fully accepted. A temporary quota would be one way to address the low numbers of women’s political participation. She attributed low representation to three main reasons. First, the whole of Egyptian society does not readily accept the presence of women in public work, and especially in politics; second, political forces have no impetus to empower women or to put them on their party lists; and finally, some religious groups marginalize women completely and only put women on the bottom of party lists because it is mandated in electoral law. Speaking in 2012, Margaret felt that establishing a quota would be one way of addressing all three obstacles present to women.


277 Ibid, 1
Margaret is active in her constituency and spoke out about actions she has taken on behalf of her districts. She met with people there and organized training and information sessions about the electoral process and the opportunities it provides. The ECWR attributed the following quote to Margaret:

“As a female parliamentarian I am not concerned now with women issues and will not stand for it now, as there as so many important issues that need to be considered now in order to retain balance for the whole society. The first issue I am going to propose on the parliament will be a minimum and maximum salary limits, so that the poorer can live in dignity.”

However, as Margaret is currently the deputy general of the new National Council for Women, it is unlikely that she is unconcerned about women’s rights. Margaret spoke of issues she would like to have addressed in Parliament, including her concern for issues in her constituencies. Though women’s issues might not be one of the first things she addresses, other comments she made indicate that she is concerned about women’s and Copt’s political representation.

Magda Newashy, a fellow member of the Wafd party, shared Margaret’s views that a temporary quota should be included for national Parliament. Magda unsuccessfully ran for Parliament in 2005 and was one of two women appointed in 2011. After her first campaign in 2005, Magda spoke out about her experiences. She said, “The men, our guardians, do not give us the opportunity to compete in elections, even though a great number of men who ran for their parties entered the elections and lost. There needs to be a quota to raise the percentage of representation of women in parliament, at least for a specified length of time.”

She further spoke of the contributions women have been making in society and that there are strong, successful female leaders in Egypt, despite society sometimes

278 Hofstee, 1
280 Krauss, 1
choosing to ignore this fact. These comments came before January 25th, which only further affirmed her position. Women have been active in every process since the 25th, either voting in large numbers in constitutional referenda or by organizing and participating in protests that call for greater rights and recognitions. It is clear that women will continue to demand their rights and will organize demonstrations and hold conventions in order to be heard.

Women who ran for parliament but did not win also discussed their experiences and beliefs on women’s rights and quotas. Maguie Mahrouds took part in the training Academy sponsored by Nazra for Feminist Studies alongside Sanaa elSaid. Maguie, too, is a member of the Social Democratic Party. She spoke of the positive experience she had in the trainings and noted how all the participants all came from a variety of different political, social and economic backgrounds. The one thing in common between these women was their courage to stand for political elections in Egypt. Though she did not win in this election, she spoke out about women’s rights in post-Mubarak Egypt.

“Since the revolution, many people have said now isn’t the time to talk about women’s rights. At the same time, the public discourse has been counterproductive like never before. Women have consistently been talked about as being “somebody’s” somebody’s mother, somebody’s wife- a person that is the possession of the family. As women, we need to put a stop to this nonsense. Women are first and foremost women, with equal rights-including the equal right to take part in decision making. The revolution set Egypt back, but we have to keep on arguing for women’s rights. It’s the men’s decisions that have got us into the situation we’re in now, and things aren’t looking good.”

The uprising was an impetus for Maguie to stay in Egypt and become more active in Egyptian politics. She declined a “dream job” in Afghanistan, became a member of the newly formed Social Democratic Party and enrolled in training sessions with Nazra as a stepping stone to running for parliament. Though she did not succeed in the 2012 elections, she stressed the importance of women continuing to demand equality and better

281 Ibid, 2
283 Ibid, 1
284 Ibid, 1
285 Ibid, 1
representation. “We need to campaign politically for quotas and new laws that ensure equal rights for girls and women, and we need to be vigilant to ensure that these laws are upheld.”

Maguie explained that she plans to stay active in politics and would like to work with youth in creating more effective political participation.

These women all come for different religious and political backgrounds. Though there is no set consensus, all cite quotas as a policy they would like to see to increase women’s political representation. The quota serves as a way to protect women running in elections and provides a space where women can run against another woman in Egypt. Additionally, women expressed interest in the training services which assist in learning about running electoral campaigns and how to reach out to voters. Many women were happy and excited to take part in these initiatives in order to engage with other women going through similar experiences. They spoke of wanting to engage in politics and be accountable to the wishes of their future constituents.

Not all Egyptian women hold viewpoints similar to Maguie and Magda and the other women represented above. A large faction of women held opposing views about the time to address women’s rights and the use of quotas for women. Azza el-Garf of the FJP presented the importance of women taking part in politics. “People still think women are no good at politics. We want to change this view.” She believes women should be included on party lists, as they are a credit to the party and the larger political process. Furthermore, she recognized that the successes of women now [in 2012] would pave the way for new cadres of women parliamentarians in the future. She spoke of her wish to see a better electoral system, one free of the vote rigging, and for more women to take part in demanding better access to politics. However, Azza was severely criticized in the media for comments she made about women’s rights. She made controversial remarks about the *khul* law, which would allow for a marked increase of divorce and deterioration

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286 *Ibid.*, 1
287 16 Female Candidates for the People’s Assembly Elections 2011/2012, 2
288 Gray, 1
289 Topol, Sarah A. “Feminism, Brotherhood Style: Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood Have Their Own Take on Women’s Liberation” *Foreign Policy* (April 23, 2012), 1
290 *Ibid.*, 1
of the family, and that Egypt should lift its ban on female genital mutilation, which she called a ‘beautification’ process.”

Once in Parliament, Azza explained that women’s rights were not discussed frequently. Though she says she believes in and supports women’s rights, she said that the transition Egypt is going through means that “we must give priority to more pressing issues” and “at this pressing time, I have other issues to attend to.” She explained that she has to face all the problems Egypt is facing now, including those facing Egyptian women. However, “I don’t restrict my role as a woman; it is broader than that.”

Azza, like the FJP and the MB, does not support the use of a quota as a way for women to enter politics. “The quota is a form of discrimination, while citizenship is the proper foundation. Women will convince the people and win their confidence through hard work, social service and great efficiency.” However, she does “enthusiastically support women’s political emancipation and participation in politics.

Azza presents a contradiction, one who supports women’s political participation but does not support mechanisms to be included that would allow for a greater number of women to take part in politics. She believes the best way for women to become active in politics is through providing social services to her community.

Azza’s colleague from the FJP, Huda Ghania, reiterates similar sentiments about women’s rights. “Islamists are the ones who adhered to providing equal rights and duties. Women refused discrimination. This makes the Egyptian women a first-class citizen….thus there is no need for women to stipulate a certain quota. More importantly, they should be strongly active, present and positive in public and charitable work.” As a Parliamentarian, she was asked if she would champion women’s rights. She replied,
“People now have equal rights regardless of their colour, sex, race, or religion. There will be complete rights for all citizens and we will all feel the existence of these rights in the coming period. This is why people voted for us and this is what we promise to deliver, God willing. *Inshallah.*”

Huda did not directly address the question; instead, she implied that since all citizens will have complete rights, championing for gender specific rights would be unnecessary.

Along with being one of the nine women elected to Parliament, Huda was also a member of the Constituent Assembly, the body that was tasked with writing a new Constitution in 2012. She was privy to and took part in the discussions that took place in the drafting of the Constitution. Huda expressed amazement at some of the complaints the Committee received, especially from the National Front for Women of Egypt about the makeup of the Committee. She explained that “the current representation of women in the CA is very balanced, comprising of women from the full ideological, political and social spectra of Egypt.”

Out of one hundred participants, six were women and sixty six were Islamist members.

The Constituent Assembly held discussions about women’s rights and the possible use of a quota for women national parliament. Regarding women’s rights, the constitution of 2012 would be sufficient to protect rights for all people and “preserve their [women’s] right to participate in public work.” Regarding the use of quotas, they would be unnecessary because women’s rights were already fully protected. Quotas, Huda explained, are an insult to women, because “the societal culture and women’s endeavors are the main factors that should impact women’s presence on the political scene.”

Human Rights Watch wrote an open letter to the members of the CA,

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300 “Only Six Women in the Constitutional Assembly” *The Egyptian Center for Women’s Rights* (March 26, 2012) [www.ecwronling.org/blog/2012/03/26/only-six-women-in-the-constitutional-assembly/](www.ecwronling.org/blog/2012/03/26/only-six-women-in-the-constitutional-assembly/)

301 “Huda Ghaniya: New Constitution Will Make Women Worth First-Class Citizens”

302 *Ibid*
addressing what they saw as problematic and contradicting. Of women’s rights, they questioned Article 36 which states,

“The State shall take all measures to establish the equality of women and men in the areas of political, cultural, economic and social life, as well as all other areas, insofar as this does not conflict with the rulings of Islamic Sharia. The state shall provide free motherhood and childhood services, shall provide women with healthcare, social and economic care and the right to inheritance, and with reconciling between her duties towards the family and her work in society.”

Human Rights Watch took issue with the phrase “in accordance with Islamic Sharia” as it was already referenced in Article 2. They were also troubled with how this Article was not in accordance with international human rights law and created a way of perpetuating discrimination and inequality towards women. After the passing of the 2012 Constitution, women from all backgrounds protested in Cairo against the Constitution and the vague and unsatisfactory way in which the new Constitution addressed women’s rights.

Both Azza and Huda stressed that women should be active in charitable and social work as one of the best pathways to a political career. Both women also explained that the time they were in Parliament was not a good time to address women’s rights and it should not be a priority for politicians at that time. As members of the FJP, they supported the party line about women’s quotas, which is to say they rejected any inclusion of any affirmative action politics, including quotas. Azza and Huda believed that there were more important issues to attend to in Parliament than women’s rights, despite the strong presence of women in the streets during the 18 days of the uprising. Women would take the same chances as men and they would succeed. Affirmative action policies were discriminatory towards women and would not be used.

As discussed in Chapter 3, many women’s groups felt that 2012 was a negative time for women’s rights and the women I talked with were unhappy with how Parliamentarians responded to the calls of women’s group to address rights. Egyptian

303 Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 2012
citizens also spoke out during this time to express their frustration. Activist Howeida Abdel-Alim Fouda explained how she, and many others, had high hopes for greater women’s rights after the uprising, but now, “these hopes have been crushed with the rise of those who speak in the name of Islam.”

As a veiled Muslim, she felt that those in Parliament only defended their own ideologies, which did not represent her, or the majority of Egyptian females. Others, too, felt that the female parliamentarians did not represent them. The head of the ECWR, Nehad Abu Al-Qmsan said, “I do not consider Brotherhood female members as representatives of Egyptian women because their first loyalty is to the Brotherhood.”

She went on to say “The whole idea of having a woman on every electoral list is just there to send a message to the Brotherhood's foreign ally that they are not against women. If they were truly keen on women's empowerment, they would have invested in developing new female cadres able to compete and win.”

Active and vocal in every process since January 25th, women expressed their opinions about the way women’s rights was being handled. They discussed their dissatisfaction with some of the women in Parliament and the way the Constitution was being written. Women were active in staging protests against the Constitution and its writers. This Constitution, along with way it was passed, was a major influence on the massive protests that took place on Jun 30, 2013, which ended the rule of Morsi.

**Conclusion**

In 2009, the issue of a quota was discussed in Parliament. Different actors participated and were affected by the decision to pass a quota amendment. Members of the National Democratic Party said it was their duty to pass Mubarak’s laws as they were of the same party. Some of the supporters from the NDP explained how quotas would empower women by increasing their numbers in Parliament. After using a quota for two election cycles, women would be fully empowered in Egypt and therefore a quota would no longer be necessary. This discussion critically does not address how empowerment is viewed. It

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305 Shahine, 1
306 Ibid, 1
308 Ibid, 1
assumes that women’s empowerment is synonymous with an increased physical presence of women. The quota as introduced in 2009 was a way to ensure that more women take part in and participate in the People’s Assembly. However, whether or not they are enabled to have a voice that is credibly considered, have power to introduce legislation and policy initiatives is questioned.

Independent/Brotherhood opponents to the proposed quota legislation argued that they felt that quotas violated the constitution and were discriminatory to men. Badawi and Qutb raised relevant objections to the number of seats that were reserved for women as well as the large districts they would be required to run in. They believed that the quota would not enhance democracy or empower women; they spoke against the arguments that were raised by the NDP. Ezz and Dakarwi of the NDP, among others, explained how democracy was for everybody and that as women constituted half of the population, women should be represented in Parliament.

After discussion, the quota amendment was passed which called for 64 new constituencies for women to contest. A quota would be included for the next ten years, after which it was hoped that it would no longer be necessary. While this was a good for women, the intentions of Parliament do not reflect as positively. The quota created large, difficult districts for women to run in. Members of the NDP cited their wish to pass the draft laws that President Mubarak sent to Parliament, as was their duty. Supporters said they wished to empower women, but the finalized amendment created large districts for women. These presented hardships in running for women, for while they were covering up to 10 constituencies, their male counterparts were covering one.

Thousands of women chose to run in the election hoping for a chance to become a Member of Parliament. However, these elections were marred with fraud. Some women, including opposition and Brotherhood candidates spoke of having difficulties in their campaigns like having voters and campaign staff intimidated. Mona spoke of how the outcomes of her election were changed in order for her opponent to win. All attributed these tactics to the NDP. Prior to elections, Nehad Soliman, head of the Women’s Committee of the Egyptian Arab Socialist Party said, “We are pleased with the quota and we would like to thank his Excellency the President, but the type of quota which was adopted focuses on
quantity not quality…female members of the NDP will end up winning all of the seats.”³⁰⁹ This indeed was the result of the 2010 elections. The belief that the only NDP women would win was echoed by women’s groups, who recognized the significance of having a quota but lamented that many would be supporters of NDP policy. Women’s groups felt that some of these women would not be interested in supporting women’s rights, instead perpetuating the wishes of the regime.

The passing of the quota, a measure that the NCW played an instrumental role in, enabled Egypt to publicly show its adherence to international conventions like CEDAW. Indeed, one of the Parliamentarians, Hanan, explained how the world would now see Egypt as committed to upholding women’s rights and would be compelled to implement a quota for women in other countries. The NDP Parliamentarians interviewed on Masr Naharda all stated they wished to be seen as more than just a female parliamentarian. They wanted to focus on many issues, not just on gender issues simply because they were female. It is not possible to assess their effectiveness as parliamentarians or if they would have committed to working on women’s rights because this Parliament lasted for about three weeks. It is probable that the women elected would have upheld and supported NDP initiatives seeing as how the party worked to ensure these women wins a seat in Parliament. Women expressed their dissatisfaction with the outcomes of this election, and three weeks later, the uprisings began as a result of a growing frustration with the NDP and Mubarak. This was a long awaited outlet that allowed Egyptians to publically and forcefully express their desire for more accountability and transparency in government. Mubarak was removed from office and the NDP as a political party was banned from participating in future elections. Active in the uprisings, women continued to voice their demands when they felt they were not being addressed in the way they hoped.

The new parliament resulted in a large number of Islamist representatives. Some, like Azza and Huda from the FJP believed that the country should be focusing on more important issues. They both encouraged and expressed a wish that more women would participate in politics and believed the best way to achieve this was do social work. They, along with the MB, did not support including any mechanisms that would protect women in running for

³⁰⁹ Dawoud, 163
Parliament. Additionally, women’s issues would be adequately enshrined in the Constitution; therefore there would be no need to address them further. Other Parliamentarians, like Sanaa, recognized the futility of discussing quotas as a way to increase women’s political participation and instead worked to ensure previous laws that protected the rights of women were not reversed.

Many spoke of their wish to be accountable to their constituencies, reflecting a hope that they would be able to address the most pressing needs of their communities. While party platforms would be important, candidates and Parliamentarians did not reference party goals when talking about being their future as a parliamentarian. This indicates that candidates and parliamentarians looked to be more than just a sexed body filling a gender seat. Egyptians too were vocal about perceived injustices. Many spoke out against the Parliament and the Constituent Assembly as being unrepresentative of Egyptian society. Many Egyptian women did not relate to the FJP parliamentarians and felt that the way women’s rights were addressed in both Parliament and the Constitution were not satisfactory. As before, women spoke out about their dissatisfaction with perceived attempts of some Islamist factions of reversing laws that protected women. Men and women continued to call for better governance practices which should be the basis of newly elected bodies. They were vocal when their voices continued to be ignored. Determined to not settle for less than what they deserved, women, along with men, took to the streets in large numbers to protest against the Constitution and Morsi, which resulted in his ouster after one year in power.
CHAPTER 5- Conclusion

Women in Egypt have long fought to have their voices recognized in politics. Women’s groups and activists lobbied the government to enact changes to legislation that would encourage women to become more active in politics. Egypt had a history of using quotas to increase women’s political participation in national Parliament in the past. In the 1970s, Egypt became the first Arab country to introduce quotas for women. The 1970s was also a decade that saw many conferences convened which addressed global rights for women which aimed to eradicate discrimination against women and promote equality. These international conventions influenced Egyptian lawmakers to address their own levels of female representation. The quota amendment passed earlier in the 1970s was enforced and in 1979, thirty six women became Parliamentarians but when the Supreme Constitutional Court ruled quotas for women unconstitutional, there were little repercussions to the end of quota usage.

The rise of women’s groups in later decades played a prominent role in advocating for quotas for women. As I explained in Chapters 1 and 3, women’s groups play an important role in transitional governments for bring awareness to women’s rights issues, such as political participation. Each group represented a different ideology with a different approach to issues. In Egypt, women’s groups have been influential in their work of advocating for quotas for women. They called on the government to address Egypt’s low levels of female representation and urged the country’s lawmakers to consider using quotas. I discussed the state sponsored feminist organization, the NCW, the Egyptian Feminist Union, which is the oldest feminist organization in Egypt, the quasi-independent ECWR and the independent Nazra for Feminist Studies as just some of the different types of organizations in Egypt that aim to address women’s rights and political participation. Under Mubarak, the NCW was tasked with addressing issues of women’s rights. They lobbied the government and were active in bring the issue of a quota into public debate. After January 25th, the NCW came under fire for their relationship with the regime and lost much of its credibility. The new regimes under SCAF and the Islamists vilified the NCW for trying to implement legislation that
affirmed CEDAW; especially the Morsi regime was critical of Egypt implementation policies such as a quota which they saw as a Western mechanism. The ECWR chose to collaborate with the NCW on some projects. After the reformation of the NCW, the president of the ECWR took a position with the NCW. Nazra has remained critical of the NCW and the group refuses to work with anybody who was associated with the NDP. Each group has a different approach and interpretation of quotas. I have argued that quotas are one of many ways which increase women’s political participation and though they are not referenced in international legislation; Egyptian women’s groups have been calling for their use for many years, and continue to do so today. Quotas are an effective method that Egyptian women’s groups and some parliamentarians have advocated for because they provide protection and security to women entering politics.

In addition to calling on lawmakers to use quotas, some of the groups like the EFU and Nazra for Feminist Studies organized training and other services for women who chose to run for parliament. These activities are important as they work with women, campaign staff and oftentimes voters in explaining the critical roles parliamentarians do as their representatives. These programs also address the some of the arguments quota opponents make which state that women, especially Arab women, are not qualified to be members of national decision making bodies. These trainings help women in learning new skills which will assist her in becoming a future parliamentarian.

The year 2009 seemed to be a turning point in the quest to implement quotas for Egyptian women. In June, a Constitutional Amendment was passed which created 64 new constituencies for women to contest. However, the outcome of the elections was a blow to many as all 64 seats went to members of the National Democratic Party. Vote rigging and intimidation was cited by most opposition parties. Before the new Parliament commenced, the protests of January 25th, 2011 began and one of the first steps Mubarak took was to dissolve Parliament. A goal of the uprisings was to end the endemic cycle of corruption and for Egypt to become a democratic society based upon freedom and justice. One of the many outcomes of the uprising was the deterioration of the NCW as it functioned under Mubarak. Its credibility was called into question by women’s groups.
who associated quotas with the regime. As a result, the NCW was dissolved from February 2011 until its reformation and reestablishment in 2012.

The post-uprising time saw women become even more vocal than before. Most of the women I talked with expressed hope for this period as it created a new opening in which women’s rights would enter into the national dialogue and protected in a new constitution. As discussed in Chapter 2, many countries take the time after political change to reassess and readdress their commitment to those who have been marginalized. In some countries after transitions, women’s rights and affirmative action policies are encouraged and included in legislation. Therefore, women were outraged when SCAF chose to discontinue the use of a quota for national elections scheduled at the end of 2011. The election of only nine women further angered women who had worked for many years in attempts to increase the number of women at the national decision making level. Interviews and statements from Members of Parliament in this time show that women’s rights were not a priority on the agenda. Outspoken members of the FJP explained how quotas were a form of discrimination, an insult to women and would not be protected in the Constitution. Furthermore, Azza said she had more pressing issues to attend to. Huda implied that since all citizens would be afforded the same rights, women’s rights should not be a specific concern. Social Democratic member, Sanaa, explained things differently. She explained how she worked to ensure that past rights were upheld as more conservative groups tried to change many of the laws that protected women. A discussion of women’s rights in the 2012 Parliament was not designed to provide greater protections; she and her colleague worked to ensure past gains were not completely lost. Other parliamentarians, like Margaret, spoke of concerns that plagued their constituencies from poverty to illiteracy to education. Women’s groups I spoke with believed they thought it was a female parliamentarian’s duty to use her position to support women’s rights. All of these issues affect Egyptian women and addressing them in parliament and enacting legislation that targets effective change will be beneficial for all citizens. Female Members of Parliament showed that they were concerned with many important issues that affect Egyptians and they wished to be accountable to their constituents. They did not express that it was their ‘duty’ to be a champion of women’s
rights simply because they were women. However, as Sanaa and Maguie worked with women’s groups prior to election and Margaret is now a high ranking member of the NCW, gender equality and women’s rights are important to them.

The overthrow of Morsi after just one year was a result of the frustrations the majority of Egyptians felt during his rule. Protesters and activists were unhappy with the makeup of the Parliament as well as the Constituent Assembly and felt that the FJP did not represent their ideologies and beliefs. It is difficult to tell if Islamism was the reason for only 2 percent of women being elected to Parliament. The many years of Hosni Mubarak yielded similar percentages of women in governance. However, by placing women’s names largely at the bottom of party lists and the treatment of women’s rights in the Constitution was not a positive indication of their stance regarding women’s rights. Many of the women I spoke with, from women’s groups to parliamentarians, lamented that this time was one of the lowest since the start of January 25th.

Quotas are a mechanism that helps protect women enter and participate in politics. As I explained in Chapter 2, quotas became one for the more popular methods of increasing women’s political participation, although some countries had previously used them voluntarily. Quotas are used more successfully in countries who implement them through formal legislation. The percentage of women a country hopes to include through quotas should be clearly stated in either the constitution or electoral law. The law defines the time period a quota for women is used. Further consideration and consequences are stated for those actors who chose not to follow the law by either disqualifying the party for politics or monetary fines. In Senegal as well as Tunisia, these rules are implemented and enforced by the state. They are known to all actors. In Egypt, the implementation of quotas has not been handled in such a way that enables success. Vague wording, such as “the state will ensure the appropriate representation of women” is not an acceptable way of including quotas. Under SCAF, one woman was mandated to be included on all party lists. However, SCAF did not clarify in what position the name should be one. Research I explained in Chapter 2 shows that a political party quota is most effective if women’s names are placed in winnable positions. While some parties will voluntarily include
women in winnable spots, others will not. With a lack of uniform implantation and no clear consequences to those actors who do not follow the quota amendment or regulation, a quota will not be implemented in a way that helps ensure women gain access to politics.

Egypt entered into a transitional state beginning on January 25th, 2011, which continues until today. The fluidity and ever-changing nature of the political arena make it difficult for lasting changes to be made. In 2009, members of the NDP in Parliament talked about quotas both as a way to enhance democracy as well as a way to enhance women’s empowerment. For quotas to be used as a tool to increase democracy, contributions of women must be acknowledged in other parts of society. Waylen’s studies on Latin American include important aspects of countries who attempt to transition from authoritarian to democracy governance. Women must be included in all aspects of decision making and in all formal and informal institutions. Women must have power and agency to promote ideas and agendas. A quota can be a tool to increase democracy. However, in Egypt, a quota for women was not intended to increase the democracy process. This is highlighted in the conversations had by members of the NDP in Parliament, when a member stated that quotas would increase women but not change the nature or makeup of Parliament. A quota that enhances democracy would give newly elected women the power to introduce and enact legislation that rectifies past discriminatory practices.

Quotas can also be a way of enhancing women’s empowerment. Drawing on Sardenberg’s intervention about liberal and liberating empowerment, liberating empowerment aims to address the patriarchal structures of government and promotes true equality between men and women in all aspects of government and society. Liberating empowerment can dovetail with increasing democratic practices in society as well. If quotas are implemented in a certain way, as I previously explained, quotas can an effective tool for women’s political participation. Once again, in Egypt, this did not materialize. Quotas were understood as simply a quantitative method of increasing the physical number of women in one part of decision making. Equality was not addressed in
other institutions, nor was quotas considered at other levels of government. Actors in Egypt since 2011, including SCAF and the Brotherhood, were not supportive of quotas.

Political transitions are an opportunity for countries to address their engagement with democracy and empowerment marginalized groups. It provides a space for lawmakers to introduce and enforce laws that help ensure genuine equality between all groups. Mechanisms such as quotas can be used by countries to give voice and protect groups that were previously silenced. I have explained ways in which this can be done to ensure quotas are used effectively and efficiently. Egypt has yet to engage with a quota that enhances democracy or empowerment for women. Because Egypt is in flux, there is still time to address this issue.

Today, women’s groups and parliamentarians are being to feel encouraged once again. In January 2014, the latest Constitution was passed. There are twenty articles that address women’s rights. I had a conversation with Khalid, who worked closely with the Committee of Fifty in drafting the new constitution. He spoke of the discussions the Committee had regarding quotas in Egypt. One early conversation included having a 50 percent quota for women and youth to be divided equally. There were negotiations on how to include a quota for women, youth, workers and farmers. Each party had representatives in the discussions and different solutions were proposed. It was finally agreed that workers and farmers, youth, Christians and people with disabilities would be “appropriately represented” in the House of Representatives and Articles 243 and 244 enshrine this right. Article 11 also affords the same rights to women which says that the State will ensure all appropriate measures to be taken to ensure women are adequately represented in all legislative, judicial and senior management positions without discrimination. Khalid explained that the State would determine what constituted appropriate representation, which is a vague phrase that is open to many forms of interpretation. It will be up to the prerogative of the State through the new president to determine what is “appropriate”.

310 Khalid, an advisor to a member of the Constitutional Committee of 50, Cairo, January 27, 2014
311 Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 2014, Article 243 and 244
312 Ibid, Article 11
Though women’s groups were disappointed that a national quota for women was not included, there is still a quota for women. Thirty percent of the local council seats across Egypt will go to women.\(^{313}\) This is good first step as it provides many more opportunities for women to engage in politics in a smaller, more comfortable and affordable setting. Local council quotas provide a space for women to learn how to run campaigns and become a representative before being thrust into national parliament. After experiencing politics on a smaller scale, women will have experience and knowledge about running a national campaign and representing a greater number of constituencies.

Quotas do not inherently result in equality for women. They are simply one vehicle used that increased women’s political representation. In Egypt, they are the preferred method of most women’s groups and many women active in politics. With a local council quota in place, women in their communities will be encouraged to run. After her term is over, she will be equipped with the knowledge and experience to run a campaign on a larger scale. Trainings and services provided to women will provide more nuanced information and help about national elections.

Egyptian women constantly vocalize their demands for better rights. At every step of the way, they have been present in the streets, calling for better rights, and oftentimes, for a quota for women. Though a national quota for women did not materialize, local council quotas did. This will be an important stepping stone that will increase the future representation of women at in national decision making bodies. If Egyptian women are unhappy with the handling of their rights, expect to hear about it. They haven’t been quiet.

\(^{313}\) Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 2014, Article 180
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