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Gender Washing Autocracies in Egypt: Drawing on the Presidency's Of

Anwar El Sadat and Hosni Mubarak

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MASTERS THESIS

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction and Literature Review

1.1 Foundations of the Study

Gender washing is a novel concept in political science and was defined by Pratt (2020) as a governmental tactic where a regime portrays itself as dedicated to women's empowerment as one of the methods to conceal their autocratic leadership and the oppressive tactics directed towards civil society. Indeed, based on a review of the existing literature, it is clear that there is an increased interest in the role of gender¹ in politics and the rise of advocating for women's rights in the globalized era. Therefore, upon examining the technique of gender washing, there appears to be significant implications. Understanding the many points of view and variances potentially provides researchers and experts with a necessary insight to address some of the issues surrounding women's participation. Moreover, feminist movements that result in collective action could be argued to be crucial towards the advancement of women's rights in the future. In the case of women in the Arab region, the progression towards gender equality in a patriarchal² society appears to have achieved less prominence than western counterparts in the field of research. As such, examining the relatively new trend of woman empowerment in the Arab region is a very significant and overlooked matter that will be analyzed in this study, largely through what appears to be the adoption of regime gender washing.

To better understand this process, the literature review provided is intended to survey existing literature on gender washing and highlight potential gaps that exist within such work. The main question presented within this section is: “why the notion of gender washing plays a role in

¹ Gender is claimed to be a social construction that defines and differentiates the personal lives of women and men as shaped by social relations and culture (Peterson & Runyan, 2009; Connell, 2009)

² Patriarchy is a set of societal norms and systems where male subjects are considered dominant and therefore, are capable of exploiting and oppressing women in society (Walby, 1989).

21st-century politics”, with particular attention to the case study of Egypt under the Presidencies of Anwar El Sadat (1971-1981) and Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011). These Presidencies in particular are regarded as significant in terms of the increasingly major policies adopted by the respective presidents that signaled a dramatic move towards a Western and democratic orientation in comparison to the socialist policies of the main founder of the Egyptian Republic, Gamal Abdel Nasser (1954-1971).³

The Modernization policies under both the regimes of Anwar El Sadat and Hosni Mubarak is divided, for the purpose of this study, into five categories. First, the definitions presented on the issue of gender washing is broadly examined. Second, literature on the notions of gender washing from the perspective of feminist and social constructivists schools of thought are addressed. The conceptualization of the political aspects of gender washing will constitute the third aspect of the literature review. Last, a literature review that focuses on case studies that address gender washing is presented to provide some specific examples regarding the application of the hypothesis. Based on the above mentioned, ascertained literature regarding gender washing in Egypt during the leadership of both Sadat and Mubarak is presented.⁴

³ While Gamal Abdel Nasser is considered the ruler of the Egyptian republic, it should be noted that General Mohamed Naguib was the first declared president (1953-1954) before his rule was overtaken by Abdel Nasser who went on during the cold war era to shape Egypt’s direction and policies towards an Eastern Socialist direction.

⁴ Modernization is the movement towards development and progression and away from backwardness is within non-Western societies, which developed a prominent cultural, political, economic, and technological backwardness status (Peterson & Runyan, 2009).

1.11 Research Question & Hypothesis

Research Question:

The main research question this study seeks to address is: Why did the Presidential rule of both Anwar El Sadat and Hosni Mubarak decide to advance the legal rights of women and to what degree can it be considered, on hindsight, a political tactic of gender washing?

Hypothesis:

The main argument of this thesis is to examine why it appears that the modernizing nondemocratic regimes of Anwar El Sadat and Hosni Mubarak appear to have utilized certain aspects of gender equality as instruments to perhaps promote and enhance their leadership on the International Western arena.

1.12 Research Problem

Authoritarian regimes generally, and in particular the Arab world have long used different tactics in order to consolidate their power.⁵ This research focuses predominantly on one such tactic: the tactic of gender washing. Originally, scholars have applied this tactic in various countries where the rights of women in the community have been furthered as a mechanism to distract the narrative away from the often brutal governmental acts of oppression in attempt to portray themselves as moderate modernizing regimes in the quest of strengthening international alliances and acquiring international monetary aid. It is within this context, that the concept of gender

⁵ Authoritarianism is a "...political system predominantly characterized by a personalized method of rule, and in such cases, the state can be best understood as a government of men rather than law. Thus, while formal political institutions exist these, these institutions are usually devices manipulated to maximize the personal power of the rulers rather than to define and impose universally accepted rules of political conduct and constraint (Kassem, 1999, p. 3).

washing will be examined using Egypt as a case study to analyze the degree to which such tactics are successful.

Certain scholars address the topic of Middle Eastern countries and different developmental processes in the region. In the process of such research, the issue of the advancement of women rights are touched upon as we see in the following section. The main aim of this study is to tackle what seems to be a gap on the analysis regarding why authoritarian regimes in particular, appear to utilize gestures of women empowerment as a tactic to highlight their efforts of modernization on the international arena.

1.2 Literature Review

The research on gender washing that is focused on conservative and non-democratic regimes in the Middle East is limited due to various factors including but not limited to: difficulty in research within restricted political environments, cultural restrictions in view of barriers hindering researchers approaching women on such topics and religious impediments perceived or real that further prevents in depth research on what is considered a very sensitive topic. In other words, while environmental topics such as greenwashing may provide researchers with a more flexible framework to study, the limitations imposed on gender washing, cannot be compared on an equal setting.

1.21 Authoritarian Regimes in the Middle East

The Middle East region continues to be dominated by authoritarian systems of rule, the majority of which remain both widespread and enduring. Various research has linked Islam and religious culture as well as tradition as factors that contribute towards such persistence and

tenacity. Authoritarianism can be described as a “...political system predominantly characterized by a personalized method of rule, and in such cases, the state can be best understood as a government of men rather than law. Thus, while formal political institutions exist, these institutions are usually devices manipulated to maximize the personal power of the rulers rather than to define and impose universally accepted rules of political conduct and constraint (Kassem, 1999, p. 3). It is also argued that another reason the region lacks democracy is that Arab culture itself is considered underdeveloped, aggressive and unsuitable for democratic foundations (Barari, 2015). Furthermore, authoritarianism is perceived as a constant struggle in the quest for legitimacy, in comparison to democratic institutions that are perceived as legitimate simply on the basis of the system, rather than the achievements of the ruler. As such, it is perceived that the stability of authoritarian systems is dependent on the acceptance of the population of a ruler and their policies (Schlumberger, 2007). Such acceptance is achieved through repressive activities (using or threatening force), legitimacy (using non-coercive means) or other means, including cooptation(Gerschewski, 2011). The techniques of legitimation, repression, and co-optation are used to maintain authoritarian stability in Arab countries and monarchies. Repression takes the form of taking away people's rights to political or social freedoms, whereas legitimation is a process of self-justification that is more difficult to monitor and requires that repressive actions be kept to a minimum. Alternately, co-optation is used to provide political and economic favors to organizations that support the government (Gerschewski, 2013).

1.22 Authoritarians Regime Legitimacy in the Middle East

Furthermore, a regime's claim to legitimate authority, in turn, can be achieved also through international legitimation tactics. For instance, the concept of "expansive" international legitimation, which is based on legal foreign procedure agents, associations, military initiatives,

diverse formations of soft power deployment, or on the charisma of rulers' appeal that extends beyond the nation's domestic boundaries, seeking broad global support (Hoffmann, 2011). International assistance is subject to conditions such as liberal economic principles, political responsibility, and legitimacy. As such, tools such as legitimation, repression, and co-optation require ongoing foreign pressure since they lack an internal reinforcing instrument, thus making them more reliant on foreign donors for their required resources (Schlumberger & Bank, 2001). A regime's claim to authority can be achieved through two main types of legitimacy-oriented tactics: "expansive" and "defensive". The former refers to the use of legitimation strategies by the ruling elite, which employ general principles such as international law or democratic values in order to justify their actions. Conversely, the latter involves the use of internal ideologies such as nationalism, socialism, or democracy, which are meant to appeal only to domestic constituencies (Hoffmann, 2011). Both are dedicated to mainly reaching international legitimacy and recognition of the authoritarian ruler.

1.23 The Political Uses of Gender Washing for International Legitimacy Purposes.

Authoritarian systems are in a constant struggle for legitimacy, given that democratic institutions are largely a function for furthering their own power. As noted for instance by Schlumberger (2007), authoritarian systems, in order for a leader to rule under a stable political entity, need to be accepted by their own population. Such acceptance is achieved through repressive activities (using or threatening force), legitimacy (using non-coercive means) or other means, including cooptation (Gerschewski 2011).

A regime's claim to legitimate authority, in turn, can be achieved also through international legitimation tactics. Hoffmann (2011), for instance, introduces the concept of "expansive"

international legitimation, which is based on legal foreign procedure agents, associations, military initiatives, diverse formations of soft power deployment, or on the charisma of rulers' appeal that extends beyond the nation's domestic boundaries, seeking broad global support. Similarly, Schlumberger and Bank (2001) contend that international assistance is subject to conditions such as liberal economic principles, political responsibility, and legitimacy. As such, tools such as legitimation, repression, and co-optation require ongoing foreign pressure since they lack an internal reinforcing instrument, thus making them more reliant on foreign donors for their required resources.

The concept of “gender washing” suggests that states might their dedication to equal rights for women to their own advantage, as part of legitimation strategies and in order to help improve their international image, rather than the practical advancement of women's empowerment (Allan 2019). In other words, gender washing can be seen as a governmental tactic within autocratic regimes based on manipulating notions that "support" women's empowerment in order to serve their own autocratic consolidation. The fact that the promotion of gender-based rights might serve a political purpose, and is often utilized by the state in order to achieve political gains and to help improve their international image, is discussed for instance by Russell (2019), who also notes how the process of gender washing does not respect the commodified beneficiary of "exchanges" but instead reinforces the dominating standing of the reciter of these kinds of "exchanges." Gender washing serves a critical political purpose which is often utilized by the state in order to achieve political gains and to help improve their international image. Moral superiority is used to raise the stakes to extend civil liberties. As a result of these conditions, Mason (2013) argues that the state has deployed action to support gender and sexual identity, along with ethnic rationality- which is also characterized as gender washing as a humanitarian and defense mechanism. This is furthered

by scholar J. Allan who postulates that gender washing is what is also known as a 'discourse of false state feminism,' where authoritarian regimes make empty promises about promoting gender equality to appease international institutions or investors. (Allan, 2020, p. 106), as well as a specific organizational process that creates the illusion that an organization is acting equitably and fairly.' (Fox-Kirk et al., 2020, p. 587). The term is used in a variety of different fields and literature, making it hard to define. It includes many different phenomena and can be understood in various ways. It is argued that further research is needed on gender washing in two phenomena—Southern authoritarian regime gender washing and Western state and corporate gender washing—need not be examined separately and that, instead, they both serve to stifle dissent. The authoritarian government in the Obiang case is working together with Western nations and businesses to cover up their joint wrongdoings (Allan, 2019).

Literature has shown that gender washing serves key political purposes within autocratic regimes. According to Gray et al (2017), for instance, autocratic governments promote women's empowerment for different reasons. The authors postulate that gender washing is used as a means of maintaining control over their political opposition; to strengthen their status and image internationally (which is helpful when they seek foreign donors and the modernization of their states); and consequently, gender washing for authoritarian governments is seen as a “game of procedural legitimacy.” Similarly, Bjarnegård and Zetterberg (2022) note that gender equality may be used as a tool by authoritarian systems to hide authoritarian laws and regulations' repressive and damaging effects. Accordingly, gender washing is a tactic employed by authoritarian regimes to progressively represent themselves as directed towards modernization, enhancing their international standing and reputation. Through the practice of gender washing, an autocratic regime can earn international acclaim by projecting the image of supporters of gender equality.

The phrase "gender washing" refers to both this image-making and its political goals. This aligns with government financing policies and gender washing initiatives, which utilize funds to prop up oppressive regimes while seeming to promote "modernization," "progress," and "women's empowerment." Allan (2019) furthers her analysis by postulating that gender washing is a strategy employed to quiet dissenters and preserve those in positions of power.

Recently, although autocratic regimes promote women's rights, it is argued that they are only doing so to prove themselves as not extremists and to strengthen society both economically and to a path of modernization. In addition, governmental tactics are used to promote a more modern image of their societies internationally and maintain religious identities. In doing so, they are also gaining public support from women- women they are actually using and manipulating for their own benefit rather than empowering. Gender equality has been advocated in autocracies to gain support both on a domestic and international level (Tripp, 2019). As a result, gender washing may be utilized in a variety of circumstances, but they always serve the same purpose and are used as a political tool to conceal repressive regimes and their oppressive natures. Other scholars also highlight the politicization of women's rights. Indeed, when authoritarian regimes exploit and employ gender equality, it is pushed with covert goals. Making a dictatorship look contemporary, liberal, and democratic serves to hide its continuous repressive practices. Whether deliberate or accidental, a vulnerability analysis is a part of autocratic gender washing (Bjarnegård & Zetterberg, 2022).

1.24 Gender Washing Within the Context of the Middle East

With regard to the Middle East, it can be argued that gender washing is used for reasons similar to those discussed by previous authors. Indeed, scholars discussing gender washing in the

context of the Middle East draw connections between gender washing and modernization – the latter defined as the movement towards development and progress which, in a non-Western context, typically implies rejecting the supposed backwardness of non-Western societies in view of achieving cultural, political, economic, and technological development (Peterson & Runyan, 2009). In fact, the overall problem with literature on gender washing is that the understanding of women's rights is very Euro-centric, and arguably most of the literature produced is by Western men. Indeed, the literature discussed in this section gives insights regarding the tactics and implications of gender washing across different autocratic regimes, which will then serve as the bases for the analysis of gender washing in Egypt.

Several authors have discussed the implications of the political use of gender washing authoritarian regimes in the Middle East. For instance, Alili Mario, Tripp (2019) examines the broad subject of why authoritarian governments accept women's rights, recognizing that both the question and the solution are dependent on her analysis of addressing two main questions: why Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria have converged in their adoption of women's rights legal reforms? And, consequently, why did they do it in a more progressive and faster manner than other countries of the Middle East? The author tries to understand this by focusing her research on the fact that even though most middle eastern countries share a similar religious, linguistic and political history, women empowerment programs took place in a more progressive manner in states than others in the region (Tripp, 2019). The author's considerations of the motivations for implementing women's programs in autocratic settings are that it is significant to denote that female-friendly policies in democratic settings aren't always implemented with the primary goal of improving females' prosperity and position. Thus, Tripp (2019) claims that equality is established as an endeavor to construct democracies within a framework. There are several risks associated with such policies

that use women's rights to achieve other goals that may be metaphorical breakthroughs, but there is an element that is missed in the actual implementation and degree of woman inclusiveness in the overall system. Women and their rights, according to the author, brought about the tension between Islamists and females in all three countries. The border was shifted in terms of legislation, constitutional amendments, and conventions during the proceedings. It remains to be seen if these legal advances can be converted adequately into fundamental rights women can associate with within their societies (Trip, 2019).

Indeed, gender washing makes a notable appearance in Arab countries, where gender washing has helped cultivate an image of modernization in the World. Arab nations have a recognized trend of using women's rights to consolidate political power, improve international reputation, and distract from unfavorable domestic events. The tremendous shift of the Arab countries since the finding of oil wealth has necessitated a fresh look at the region's women's condition. Golkowska (2014) uses the case study of Qatar as an explanation of the rapid industrialization, modernization, and significant sociocultural transformation model. Qatar's path to modernization is associated with women's rights and equality of opportunity. Golkowska's article examines how young Qatari women fit into the national transformation narrative and believe it is the most significant road to autonomy and power (Golkowska, 2014).

Furthermore, it is argued by some scholars that female equality in Gulf nations is critical for the region's ongoing economic and social progress. The Gulf Nations have actively examined the status of women and their involvement in the development process. Women's role in the Gulf and their presence in the political realm is a complicated intersection for modernization and a sign of the region's continuous dedication to Islamic and Arabic history. Finally, the authors examine

the contradictions between the advancement of the UAE as a state and the preservation of Arabic identity and dedication to Sharia beliefs (Metcalf et al., 2009).

According to Mason (2013), following 9/11 and its effect on the portrayal of Arab and Muslim nations, failing governments, and developing countries were disproportionately branded as perpetrators of human rights violations against women. The author emphasizes that as a result of such discourse, gender washing became a technique for escaping their state's negative image (Mason, 2013). The exact mechanism could be discussed in the case of the UAE. Similarly, other scholars contend that a myth about female empowerment is a feature or tactic deployed by legislatures and therefore should be included in the mechanisms addressed in research about "nation branding." The authors support the assertion that Gulf elite groups implement customs in order to generate a view of history and accomplish three primary goals: first, instituting and symbolizing community stability or group identity; second, constructing and legitimizing entities, social standing, or authoritative interactions, and third, enabling internalization of perceptions, moral codes, as well as behavioral formalities (Allagui & Al-Najjar, 2018).

Allagui and Al-Najjar (2018) argue that along with many Arab countries, Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia are subject to perceptions of conservatism and even religious extremism, and therefore, that could be detrimental to their modernization efforts - given that stereotypes contribute to shaping people's behavior toward a country. With the help of existing literature, the authors believe that although the UAE and Qatar are becoming more well-known due to their worldwide reach and identity initiatives, other Arab nations continue to have issues limiting their ability to compete in the global market. The authors also denote that while Saudi Arabia has plenty of publicity, its image for fundamentalism - even though women have recently achieved the right to get a driver's license - the UAE still differentiates messages more convincingly (Allagui & Al-

Najjar, 2018). This source is significant to this literature analysis and argument suggesting that gender washing exists in Arab countries, but some are more convincing in terms of gender washing the public than others. Allagui and Al-Najjar also show how the modernization process of Gulf countries is closely linked to globalization, which in effect condemns my argument of leaders' gender washing to make their global image portrayed in a democratic sense. They support the argument that progress is essential in any project that aims to change and modernize a nation-state. They also support the claim that rather than reflecting actual attempts to empower women, political narratives are geared toward the world community to strengthen their image and status. The authors also claim that the government is devoted to assisting females in overcoming societal opposition and enforcing female employment and education, thus Perceiving the UAE's approach to women as a "state project" and "state strategy" that helps the country's goal of becoming a more democratic and cohesive nation in the eyes of the World (Allagui & Al-Najjar, 2018).

Also, Allagui and Al-Najjar (2018) conclude that the UAE used images of the first female air fighter to harness its brand building and counter the negative stereotypes about gender inequality in Arabian Gulf countries that became amplified with the rise of religious extremism. Nation branding helps "counter such potentially damaging national stereotypes." Furthermore, the authors note that the UAE exploited representations of the first feminine air defender to boost its reputation and combat unfavorable preconceptions about the disparity in Gulf countries, exacerbated by the growth of Islamic fundamentalism (Allagui & Al-Najjar, 2018).

Also, Cole (2020) elaborates on the fact that gulf governments have used various significant policies and programs to improve percentages of women's involvement in governmental, executive, and judiciary legislative bodies. According to the author, these developments and initiatives have resulted in significant increases in female social representation across the board.

However, due to differing internal political development and performance, nations and institutions have wildly disparate achievements (Cole, 2020).

In Arab nations, Cole (2020) comments that there has been much attention on women's representation. The introduction of mandates in Saudi Arabia and the UAE and increasing recruitment and recruitment rates in Qatar, Oman, and Bahrain have fueled regional improvements in females' political involvement. A visible gap remains in Oman, Bahrain, and Kuwait and female representation in politics. The gap, according to Cole (2020), reflects the presence of significant popular opinion opposing female political involvement and sociocultural hurdles that cause a barrier for females to receive equal representation to men. This quest for women's equality in government should continue academic study and development of policy choices to enhance women's election success in the Gulf (Cole, 2020).

However, the literature points towards the Gulf country's authoritarian regimes mainly increasing female representation as a mechanism to distract the World from other human rights atrocities. However, it is argued that while Saudi Arabia has plenty of publicity, its image for fundamentalism has dramatically hindered its image in the international arena; therefore, having recently granted women certain rights, such as the right to drive, has helped the authoritarian monarchy look more modern. Despite the still continuing abuses of human rights, most notably the assassination of journalist, human rights activist, and opponent of the regime, Jamal Khashoggi. This represents the fallacy of advancement in human rights in Saudi Arabia.

Further, highlighting the importance of discourse to gender washing, Cole (2020) notes that the regime engages in rhetoric cooperation for the purposes that serve the modernization programs. Accomplishments of female empowerment, where women carry on official offices, are incorporated into capitalist class governmentality practices. Nevertheless, Held and Ulrichsen

(2012) represent a fruitful component of female engagement. On the other hand, the book's argument comprises a forward-looking perspective that goes beyond the containment of adverse effects (Held & Ulrichsen, 2012). Similarly, Cole (2020) emphasizes that Gulf countries show that the deliberate incorporation of more female leadership secures females' political engagement.

In addition, Arenfeldt and Golley (2012) explain that women in the Arab World long before governmental initiatives proved their representative and active involvement in various roles, whether the Arab spring or feminist solidarity movements enacting and calling for a change in their societies and challenging societal imposed barriers. It is evident that females have been seen by much of the literature to have recently risen to positions of worldwide reputation and profound significance in several Arab states that were unfathomable. In addition, Arab states are currently at a crossroads, having made significant progress but also encountering several obstacles in their quest for equality organizations (Cole, 2020).

1.25 Gender Washing: Egypt

Gender washing is not exclusive to recent tactics applied by Arab and Gulf nations. Indeed, it can be seen as a tactic that is apparent in different authoritarian regimes across the Middle East. The focus of this study will be the practice of gender washing by Sadat and Mubarak in Egypt.

The struggle for women's rights has long been a theme within the history of Egypt. Individual feminist activists contributed to the development and liberalization of new governmental and societal structures during the 20th century. The rise of contemporary feminists took place during a post-colonial era (Badran, 2005). Feminist discourses were produced by Arab women criticizing how males had more significant opportunities than women and questioning women's denial of equal access to contemporary conveniences (Badran, 1986). The two main

paradigms of secular feminism and Islamic feminism must be highlighted while examining the development of the feminist movement in Egypt. Secular feminism has roots in Huda Al Sharawi, who founded the Egyptian feminist organization in the late 19th century. This movement advanced women's access to modern information technology and literacy (Al-Sharmani, 2014; Badran, 2005). Cultural and social reform are the critical elements of Shaarawi's feminist ideas. She questioned gender-based limits and the status of women in society. Shaarawi claimed that women should collaboratively support a feminist doctrine and sustain female networks of affiliation and cooperation without distinguishing between western and non-western women (Quawas, 2006). Others claim that feminist activists at this time were not political but instead framed as selfless acts for the betterment of women's lives (Pratt, 2020).

On the other hand, Islamic feminism emerged in the late 20th century and roots in Zainab Al-Ghazali. Her gender and feminine ideals were confined within Islamic thought, presuming greater mobility and liberty for herself than for other women, and she asserted that women would experience complete emancipation in Islam and praised the belief in the Islamic ideal of complete equality between men and women (Badran, 2005).

Without necessarily denying the role played by female activists in Egypt, this thesis focuses instead on how the authoritarian nature of Egypt has made the advancement of women's rights as a top-down process, functional to the consolidation of authoritarian regimes. Indeed, the cooptation of the women's movement was a response to the rise of political Islam.

Analyzing gender washing in the case of Egypt is critical when analyzing the politicization of feminism in the Middle East. Indeed, gender washing is used to highlight modernization efforts. Zakariya (2019), explored that gender washing is a tactic that has been employed by every autocratic regime in Egypt. For example, Gamal Abdel Nasser used women as a powerful

instrument to promote his socialist government that was founded on equality, social justice, and progressive culture. Nasser provides opportunities for women in the workforce, education, and healthcare but denies them political freedom or participation as they are still restricted by personal status rules that discriminate against them.

In the case of Egypt: gender washing is a mechanism that can be observed as critical when analyzing the politicization of feminism in the Middle East. Especially during Abdel Nasser's rule, the promotion of women rights can be described as functional to the country's ongoing modernization efforts, or to the cooptation the women's movement as a response to the rise of political Islam. As noted by Zakariya (2019), Gamal Abdel Nasser used women as a powerful instrument to promote his socialist government that was founded on equality, social justice, and progressive culture. Nasser provides opportunities for women in the workforce, education, and healthcare but denies them political freedom or participation as they are still restricted by personal status rules that discriminate against them.

However, for the purpose of this study, the focus will be on both the Sadat and Mubarak administrations, where the representation of state feminists was applied through the first ladies Jehan El Sadat and Suzanne Mubarak, which ultimately served and promoted Egyptian women's equality both nationally and internationally (Zakariya, 2019). With his open-door policies and peace treaty with Israel, Sadat reshaped state feminism. The Islamic movement used this to attack women's rights by linking them to corruption, injustice, and deference to Western geopolitical interests and cultural norms (Pratt, 2020). The First Lady was said to make reforms against sharia and the lack of representation of Egyptian culture and norms. The authoritarian way the changes were approved when Sadat was oppressing critical voices and antigovernment activists led secular groups to reject the revisions. The Egyptian National Council for Women (NCW), which answered

directly to the president during the Mubarak administration, was founded under the direction of the former first lady Suzanne Mubarak. Together with the National Women's Machineries, First Ladies and female royalty openly demonstrate their support for women's rights problems on a growing scale. NWMs are frequently seen as crucial tools for establishing gender equity standards inside the executive branch of government. In the Arab world, these organizations are often led by the First Lady or female royalty—international attention and thus funding from UN agencies and other international donors. Such international attention towards NWMs is only the result of the leadership and representation done by the first ladies, which therefore serve as an essential platform for the discussion of women's rights and participation and are more strongly represented than NGOs (Pratt, 2020).

The fate of women's movements in Egypt is not only linked to the overall trajectory of national and class battles for freedom but also serves as a tool of political patriarchy. Zakariyya's (2019) paper demonstrates how Egypt's failure to transition to democracy and respect human rights from the 20th century onward has impacted Egyptian women directly and is closely reflected in their struggles for equality and freedom. However, this paper argues that in the twenty-first century, a new wave of radical feminist public activists has joined forces with political opposition groups in Egypt to protest Mubarak's corrupt rule and continue to combat other forms of autocratic rule as well as previously unseen overt and organized forms of public sexual violence under post-2011 regimes.

Indeed, the current social and political landscape in Egypt and provides an opportunity for researchers to investigate how the newly formed government institutions will address violence against women and female rights within the context of a long-standing democratic struggle. According to Ambrosetti, Abu Amara, and Condon (2013), the importance of such a study to

further understand the implications of women's rights in authoritarian systems. Future research on markers of female autonomy - such as decision-making within the family, views against violence against women, and choice of spouse - might prove especially helpful in this area. Finally, research that follows a similar methodology and utilizes rich survey data collected from various cultural contexts can provide a greater understanding of this topic, and conducting research on a global scale will help to close the knowledge gap between developed and developing nations.

Actions of different governments highlight that governmental intentions behind such a tactic are political in nature. Furthermore, women's rights are essential to recognize the state of liberties within a civilization because they are a marginalized part of the community. Recently, Egypt has been promoting more liberal policies that advance and promote women's political recognition and participation. Through the contemporary Egyptian agenda to reach the modernization vision by the year 2030, women's empowerment and the advocating of women's rights have been applied like never before. Therefore, this sudden reform and changes bring about suspicion behind the sudden change in agenda and strategic planning and raise questioning on when this all started. Therefore, understanding the previous regimes of Sadat and Mubarak and examining their development in women's rights when they ruled is essential manner. Understanding the developmental achievements and promotions of women's rights in society when they ruled brings us to question how their change of policies and reforms instead manipulated the use of women empowerment without empowering them. Therefore, analyzing governmental tactics in notions of gender washing used by the previous regime(s) is a very critical one.

Much attention on women's representation has always been a crucial and critical topic in Egypt. Arab countries' introduction of mandates and increasing recruitment rates fueled regional improvements in females' political involvement (Cole, 2020). The autocratic regimes in recent

years could be argued to have been using gender washing tools as a way to promote women's rights and opportunities not for the benefit of women themselves within the state but rather to develop a more modern and liberal "image" of the state in both the national and international level. Arab nations have a recognized trend of using women's rights to consolidate political power, improve international reputation, and distract from unfavorable domestic events. Gender equality is used by the state as a way of "nation branding" (Mason, Ilhem Allagui, & Abeer Al-Najjar, 2018).

Trends of gender washing in Egyptian politics have arguably served a more important political purpose, as discussed by Bernard-Maugiron (2010). Rather than working to directly change personal status laws in order to improve the situation of women, they leveraged women's rights as a means of advancing democracy and building a secular political alliance opposed to Islamism. President Anwar Sadat enacted a series of executive orders to change personal status laws, which subsequently came to be known as "Jehan's legislation" in recognition of his wife, Jehan Sadat. Furthermore, as discussed by Hafez (2014), when the Egyptian society went through another wave of change and a new political climate emerged, both men and women were now encouraged to participate in economic liberalization. The implementation of the "Open Door Policy" and the rise in foreign investment in Egypt altered people's goals once more. As the socioeconomic gap between rich and poor citizens broadened, Sadat adopted a strategy of partnering with Islamist organizations to eliminate communist organizations whose principles aligned with those of the former administration. As Islamists gained traction, they became yet another obstacle to authority and Jehan Sadat's proposed changes for women. Islamist groups and even some feminists who thought the changes were being forced from the top violently opposed laws that would give a divorced woman information about when her husband remarries. Child custody and marital residence are essential rights for her to have. With the neo-liberalization of

the nation's economy, social values were subject to external forces of global capitalism and internal influences of Islamist extremism. Women's rights became caught in the middle of this heated ideological debate. Daughters from homes with a proclivity towards Western education and culture took on behavior that was chiefly Western in terms of outlook and dress." Islamic attire" is often worn by women who have been shaped by Islamic ideologies and traditions. The widespread adoption of veiling in Egypt was a crucial element in the spread of Islam. The Egyptian street resembled earlier decades of the century when women's bodies signaled an ideological divide in society as they increasingly became symbols of Islamization. A group of Islamist officers who were against Sadat's political plans and disapproved of his gender changes (which they believed were coming from his wife) ended both his presidency and life. Also, referring to a primary source, written by Jihan Sadat (2019). She discusses how women in the Arab region are distinct, but all similarly demand to be recognized and matter in society. The book discussions also include her life as Sadat's wife and first lady of Egypt and how the international media and west portrayed her relationship with her husband incorrectly with stereotypical ideas and biased ideals. Also, she discusses how even though during Sadat's rule, he had to prioritize other concerns beyond women's rights during his rule she has always fought for women's advancements and progression within Egyptian society. The concerns discussed by her in the book include marriage, divorce, polygamy, and inheritance. This source is particularly interesting, as it gives direct insight into the policies implemented during the rule of Sadat. However, it is critical to note that this could be argued to be biased (since someone within the system writes it) and is written in English, Thus not addressing Egyptian or Arab women.

Moreover, gender washing continued under the presidency of Hosni Mubarak. Mubarak, overthrown in the 25th January revolution in 2011 and whose wife Suzanne supported women's

rights and founded the National Council for Women, hired some of Egypt's most prominent feminists, and accordingly, women's concerns came to light. In a government committee over which the president's wife chaired, feminists were allowed to advocate in favor of women's rights. Autonomy for feminists became restricted as a consequence of their incorporation into a state-run panel. Although this was the case, the new *khol'* law, also known as the law for absolute divorce, which was passed in 2000, allowed women to divorce their husbands in accordance with Islamic law, or Sharia, as long as they gave back any possessions, their husbands had given to them while they were married. Despite the fact that numerous legal professionals and feminists toiled painstakingly for years to establish the law, it was Mrs. Mubarak who received the blame for the bill's widespread criticism. Moreover, legislation encouraging women's political participation was enacted, resulting in 12% of parliamentary seats being allocated to women. Additionally, women were appointed as judges for the first time ever in Egypt via presidential decree. Thirty female judges followed in Tahani al Gibali's footsteps after her in 2003. This ruling dealt a blow to the Egyptian State Council of Judges, who had voted overwhelmingly in favor of excluding women from the judiciary. Although it may have seemed like women's rights were making headway, the Mubarak era was actually a failed attempt at neo-liberalizing Egypt's economy - which ultimately had negative consequences for women (Hafez, 2014).

Indeed, it can be argued that both Sadat and Mubarak have utilized gender washing as a means to help direct attention away from authoritarian practices as well as to give the image of modernization to the Western World. Furthermore, as both countries were appealing to Western support to bolster their international alliances, gender washing became a cornerstone of the policies of both regimes.

CHAPTER 2: Conceptual Framework

As part of the feminist critique, there is a noticeable gap related to local knowledge in establishing a theoretical framework. Although the feminist ⁶ideology is constantly imperfect and debated, it still served as a deliberate alternative to mainstream views concerning human realities and developmental tactics. This study will use the social constructivist and critical feminist schools of thought. Within this social constructivist theory, gender is assumed to be a social construct subject to outside influences. Indeed, influential factors such as culture ⁷ affect gender and women's roles (Camargo-Borges and Rasera, 2013). Furthermore, an essential factor that has affected the role of women is modernization. Additionally, in the discussion of women's rights, feminist scholars critique the use of gender washing as it represents a detriment to the advancement of women's rights as a result of the political manipulation of women and their rights for the sake of the interests of the state and state laws that are developed in a masculine ⁸sense.

In relation to the instrumental use of gender by authoritarian regimes, this study will also rely on the approach within critical feminist theory known as “post-colonial feminism”. The inclusion of post-colonialism within critical feminist approaches provides as a conceptual tool that forces feminist theory to recognize diverse oppressive systems and refute the fallacies that fall under universalism, which leads to biased realities for both men and women. Especially when approaching “modernization” processes, it is crucial to draw a link between feminist and postcolonial theories to discuss the relationship between the state and its autocratic policies and

⁶ The feminist theory claims that due to the preexisting identities that can be defined through women that are represented both politically and within the discourse of the feminist school of thought. In this definition the term “representation” is used within a political contextual framework which aims to increase the political visibility and legitimacy (Butler, 2011).

⁷ Culture – Modes of internalized and socialized thought that enable individuals to act in certain "acceptable" behaviors. Such behaviors are normalized and constitute systems for identifying people and their actions (Peterson & Runyan, 2009).

⁸ Masculine and feminine are concepts used as identifiers of the developed external boundaries with represent signifying meanings and systems that are generated and socially and culturally contextualized (Beckwith, 2005).

activities. It can also be argued that, for a gendered understanding of political brutality, feminists believe that it is essential to acknowledge the patriarchal, militarized, forceful, and exclusive governmental systems. In fact, post-colonialism emphasizes the ways in which exclusion and oppressive means of state are embedded in governmental political systems. An important postcolonial critique highlights how the feminist theory neglects women's experiences and interpretations of political violence practiced by non-democratic regime (Parashar, 2016). Furthermore, the postcolonial feminist theory is particularly focuses on how gender, wealth, ethnicity, culture, and religion are linked to the identity and lives of women. Therefore, it can provide a particularly useful and insightful contribution since it criticizes the supremacy and recognition of feminists from western societies and the marginalization of non-Western women, who are considered different in the biased imaginations of Western societies (Al-wazedi, 2020).

2.1 Theorizing Gender Washing

According to Allan (2020), the term 'gender washing' does not have one distinct definition. The best approach to define the term is when claims of dedication to gender equality are utilized by the state for self-serving purposes, despite actual policies and actions that work against achieving said equality.

However, Payne and Tornhill (2011), argue that gender washing is a social construct and the concept's notions can be differently applied in various fields. For example, within the context of corporations, it is postulated that gender washing is an organizational strategy that uses conversation and language to convey the illusion of equality for women in corporations. This research offers a new viewpoint and conceptual description for gender washing to deconstruct this corporate fallacy. The authors look at how gender washing is motivated economically rather than

ethically. Therefore, it is a mechanism serving as an instinct to preserve an organization's reputation at the price of employees and their rights. In other words, the authors describe gender washing as a rhetorical tactic used by organizations to establish the fiction of equality, either openly or indirectly (Fox-Kirk et al., 2020).

The conceptions of gender washing can also be seen through the feminist school of thought. General popular views women in radical-right politics through the lens of traditional feminist ideology, which opposes the macho preconceptions of radical-right groups, changing their public portrayals. Therefore, North (2009) argues that women who hold powerful positions in society have feminist values but instead try not to associate themselves with such notions to avoid the mainstream and socially constructing labels that follow theories of feminism. Therefore, this is why this study will primarily focus on critical feminist theories that argue against how international relations theories exclude women in their analysis and how this is a vital issue within the study of international relations and global politics. Both theories indeed illustrate how governments' "sudden" inclusion of women is only a tactic the governments can use to benefit their behalf but does not bring fundamental rights and equal opportunities that women should be granted.

Furthermore, it is argued that in order "...for moving beyond knowledge frameworks that construct international theory without attention to gender and for searching deeper ways in which gender hierarchies serve to reinforce socially constructed institutions and practices that perpetuate different and unequal role expectations" (Tickner, 1997, p. 621). Also, liberal feminists are critiqued for their objectivity of moving towards a society that serves gender equality. Tickner (1997) added that "the Kantian project of achieving this goal through Enlightenment knowledge is problematic because of feminist claims that this type of knowledge is...gendered" (Tickner, 1997, p.621).

Also, Frisby, Maguire, and Reid (2009) argue that in order to avoid misinterpretations, the observation of social hierarchies and connections must not be overlooked to avoid potential transformational achievements. Tripp (2019) in her analysis further supports this argument; as she sees autocratic regimes promoting women's rights as a way of proving themselves as not extremist Islamists; popular pressures; strengthening society both economically and to a path of modernization; to promote a more modern image of their societies internationally and within maintaining religious identities; to gain public support from women. The author argues that gender equality has been advocated in autocracies to gain support both on a domestic and international level (Tripp, 2019). Moreover, the critical feminist approach criticizes how governmental actions are not addressing the actual problem of inequality and are not objectively providing space for women's rights.

Furthermore, scholars who discuss gender washing highlight the importance of the feminist school of thought as a lens to better understand the concept of gender washing as well as the reasons behind its use. As gender washing entails a discussion of women's rights, feminist scholars actually critique the use of gender washing as it represents a detriment to the advancement of women's rights as a result of the political manipulation of women and their rights for the sake of the interests of the state and state laws that are developed in a masculine sense.

Existing literature discusses the importance of gender matters in global politics. Furthermore, Shepherd claims that in order for women to be included in politics both domestically and globally, they ought to pay attention to how various women perceive power, citizenship, and barriers. As a result of Shepherd's identification of citizenship's gendered nature, feminists subsequently devised the notions of 'gendering' of citizenship. However, it suggests that a composite is required: a "woman-friendly, gender-inclusive" framework (Shepherd, 2014).

Also, Whitworth (1994), draws an analysis of the role of feminism and international relations. Whitworth elaborates on the fact that liberal feminists contend that females are marginalized in several of contemporary society's significant public arenas socially, politically, and economically. Liberal feminists who analyze females with regard to global politics typically use two approaches. First, they highlight the misrepresentation of women in conventional sectors that act in the international arena of politics; and secondly, they adopt liberal feminism to discover the manner in which women are representative throughout historical contexts. According to Whitworth, the goal of liberal feminists is objectively targeted at highlighting women's misrepresentation and the barriers that contend in their neglect in international politics. Whitworth emphasizes the breadth of conceptions of notions themselves in international theoretical frameworks - which are accused of being masculine and biased rather than inclusive or giving space to women as players and political figures (Whitworth, 1994). Consequently, it can be argued that gender washing is portrayed as a propagation of the women's cause on behalf of the state; it is instead an indication of the masculine biases that exist in the state. This is similar to the argument postulated by Whitworth and could be seen as an extension of the conceptualizations by authors such as Mason and Russell, which are mentioned below.

As part of the feminist critique, it is vital to argue that while some research includes feminist rhetoric, whether explicitly or implicitly, there is a noticeable gap related to local knowledge to establish a theoretical framework. Although feminist ideology is constantly imperfect and debated, it still serves as a deliberate alternative to mainstream views concerning human realities and developmental tactics. Therefore, it is encouraged individuals to question and observe social hierarchies and connections which are overlooked or misinterpreted. According to

the authors, these overlooked interpretations are a crucial part of transformational goals' actual achievements (Frisby, Maguire, & Reid, 2009).

2.2 Methodological Framework

This dissertation focuses on how Egypt's authoritarian nature has rendered the growth of women's rights as a top-down process, beneficial to the stability of authoritarian regimes, without inevitably disregarding the role performed by female activists in Egypt. Indeed, the political Islamization of society was a factor in the cooptation of the women's movement. Gender washing arose during historical transitions and advancements, in various times and locations, and is not unique to one particular period or country in the Middle East. It may be said that authoritarian governments throughout the Middle East use this strategy. The practice of gender washing under both Sadat and Mubarak's rule in Egypt will be the main topic of this research. The claim highlights how Egypt's authoritarian culture has made the growth of women's rights a top-down process, ultimately serving and promoting Egyptian women's equality internationally. Due to recent trends in Egypt and several other nations within the region, it is crucial to address the usage of gender washing tactics in the contemporary era and in the past. Women empowerment gestures by the government could be argued to be a façade used to cover up serious existing human rights abuses. In fact, women became an essential tool in propaganda campaigns and transitioning how Western and developing nations see states within the Arab region. The idea that woman is treated as a minority group within the state and with regards to their family hierarchical standing is a notion that has been ingrained into how the Western perspectives towards Egyptian as well as middle eastern culture. This notion stems from the fact that there is a clear gender divide in society and that families are patriarchal. In other words, women have less access to resources and opportunities than men.

Recent years have seen conservative governments, like Saudi Arabia, achieve various women's empowerment measures that history has never seen before. Other Gulf nations, like the United Arab Emirates, have been promoting innovations and women's empowerment initiatives that they have incorporated into their state representatives for many years. This was unthinkable in decades past. Moreover, different countries in the middle east deal with women's concerns differently, even though they follow the same essential law of Sharia. Nevertheless, the interpretations of the Islamic rule of law are perceived and adopted differently in various nations- and the extent to which restrictions towards women empowerment present a noticeable gap and diversifying extent from one state to another. It is crucial also to note that countries in the middle east are not democratizing, yet they continue to operate under an authoritarian system of government. This is why examining the practice of gender washing raises serious concerns and skepticism.

This study will utilize predominantly qualitative analysis. This research will rely on several scholarly articles as well as books in order to analyze the actions of the Egyptian governments of Anwar el Sadat and Hosni Mubarak. Furthermore, other sources will include the laws, policies and parliamentary bills which have resulted in these rights becoming laws. Also, this study will use discourse analysis of the speeches made by members of the government and leaders on women-related issues during their times of authority.

The approach that will be used in this study is the case study approach. The case study of Egypt under the regimes of Sadat and Mubarak has been selected because they displayed notable advancements in the status of women during their rule. Furthermore, they are similar as they are both autocratic regimes that desired and directed their purposes toward a modernization process. As such, these case studies will help demonstrate the relationship between gender washing and

modernization in an autocratic system. Furthermore, this approach will help establish an understanding of the common trend in the present situation in Egypt. Therefore, resulting in a better understanding of the political uses of gender washing in autocratic regimes and whether all advancements of women in the current regime's modernization process are a case of gender washing. Moreover, within the context of this study, the process of women's rights advancement is regarded as a top-down approach whereby the authoritarian regimes co-opted women's rights as a mechanism to advance their international legitimacy and image.

CHAPTER 3: Perceptions of Gender Washing Under Sadat

3.1 Introduction

Gender washing is seen as a tactic apparent in different authoritarian regimes across the Middle East. The focus of this chapter is on the practice of gender washing in Egypt under the Presidency of Anwar El Sadat. The struggle for women's rights has long been a theme in Egypt's history. Individual feminist activists contributed to developing and liberalizing new governmental and societal structures during the 20th century. The rise of contemporary feminists took place during the post-colonial era of the 1950s in Egypt (Badran, 2005). Feminist discourse were produced by Arab women criticizing on why males were given more significant opportunities than women and questioning women's denial of equal access to contemporary conveniences (Badran, 1986). The two main paradigms of secular feminism and Islamic feminism must be highlighted while examining the development of the feminist movement in Egypt. Secular feminism indicates its modern roots emerged with the rise of Huda Al Sharawi; a privileged and educated Egyptian woman who spearheaded the Egyptian feminist movement of the late 19th century. This movement advanced women's access to modern information technology and literacy (Al-Sharmani, 2014; Badran, 2005). Cultural and social reform are the critical elements of Shaarawi's feminist ideas. She questioned gender-based limits and the status of women in society. Shaarawi claimed that women should collaboratively support a feminist doctrine and sustain female networks of affiliation and cooperation without distinguishing between Western and Non-Western women (Quawas, 2006). Some researchers claim that feminist activists at this time were not political,

meaning they were not officially part of any kind of government supervision or support but were framed as dependent and selfless acts to improve women's lives (Pratt, 2020).

On the other hand, Islamic feminism emerged in the late 20th century with its roots established by Zainab Al-Ghazali. The gender and feminine ideals according to Al-Ghazali, appeared confined within the framework of traditional Islamic thought. The main assertion she presented was that women could only experience complete emancipation within the teachings of Islam. Al-Ghazali perceived the belief of the “Islamic Ideal” to be complete equality between men and women (Badran, 2005). The role played by prominent female activists in modern Egyptian history cannot be ignored. It is important however, to examine, as the following chapter will provide, the manner to which the Sadat Presidency contributed towards women’s rights and the factors that encouraged such attempts and the factors that hindered the efforts of his regime.

3.2 Egypt before Sadat

In the case of Egypt, gender washing could be argued to have existed within the transition from monarchy to a republic sovereign nation-state. Indeed, gender washing, in this case, is crucial since it highlights the regime's modernization efforts after decades of colonial authority. According to one author, gender washing is a modern traditional tactic that is commonly used by authoritarian regimes, including Egypt (Zakariya, 2019). For example, The second President of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser, used women as a powerful instrument to promote the socialist policies he eventually adopted most prominently in the early 1960s. Since taking power as President in 1954, Nasser over a decade gradually instigated policies and laws that included equal opportunities for women in the workforce, education, healthcare, as well as granting them the right to vote.

Nevertheless, he denied women other political freedoms and political participation, but it should be noted that it was not gender based policies, as men were also denied such rights. It should be pointed out however that laws limiting the personal status of women were overlooked during his period of rule.

As such, it is crucial to note that societal values of female dependence on males remained institutionalized by both personal laws and political frameworks that were not been challenged by governmental policies (Hatem, 1992). In this regard, while Egyptian women were provided with certain political privileges including the right to vote and the ability to occupy governmental positions (Van der Lippe & Van Dijk, 2002), the personal status laws that were last amended in 1929 were not altered throughout the Nasser period (Farah, 2005). It can also be argued that although state feminism under Nasser initially helped women gain some form of professional and economic independence, many gradually relied on government agencies and subsidies for employment and social welfare. According to Hatem (1992), females remain dependent on males decades after Nasser's rule, due to the same repressive structures and the inability of the post Nasser state to challenge the fundamentals of pre-existing male-dominated control within the personal realm of societal and domestic boundaries. According to the same author, Nasser's governance displayed evident efforts towards the regulations governing the status of a citizen, nevertheless it continued to reinforce the preexisting and highly established public patriarchy (Hatem, 1992).

Furthermore, part of Nasser's strategies was to grant women constitutional and financial liberties, which significantly increased. Women fought to overturn various personal ethics standards of a woman's right to divorce, inheritance, and citizenship in 1956, in addition to securing the right to vote and the opportunity to run for office (Badran, 2009). Employment in the

public sector for anyone that holds an education, irrespective of their gender, as well as the labor laws put in place to help protect female rights in the workforce and assure maternity leave with pay, are all positive benefits that the new state feminism provided for many women (Hatem, 1992). Strengthening women's liberties through state gender equality helped Nasser's government's established objectives for modernizing the nation go digital. However, the Liberalization of women in Egypt at the time was solely impacted within the public sector, which made women reliant on the government for their welfare.

Political factors are claimed to be the main reason behind the Nasser regime's unwillingness to modify the personal status legislation. By placing Al-Azhar University under state control and adding secular learning programs to the national educational system, Nasser's attempts were considered acts of limiting the significance of religious entities. Islamic and Coptic organization resources were put under government management and control. Furthermore, he abolished the Sharia rule of law and courts and incorporated personal status laws into the state's contemporary legal institutions. Modifying the personal status laws would have excluded strong entities such as Al-Azhar entirely from power and could have made Nasser face resistance from dissidents inside the state. Nasser was unwilling to enter into another dispute with internal factions after he managed to imprison most of those who led organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood (Farah, 2005).

In the case of Egypt: gender washing is a mechanism that can be observed as critical when analyzing the politicization of feminism in the Middle East. Primarily during Abdel Nasser's rule, the promotion of women's rights can be described as functional to the country's ongoing modernization efforts or the co-option of the women's movement as a response to the rise of political Islam. Nasser used women as a powerful instrument to promote his socialist government, founded on equality, social justice, and progressive culture. Nasser provides opportunities for

women in the workforce, education, and healthcare but denies them political freedom or participation as they are still restricted by personal status rules that discriminate against them (Zakariya, 2019).

Even though Nasser's women empowerment achievements are significant for the overall developments that women have received throughout Egyptian history, for this chapter, the focus will be on Anwar El Sadat, where the representation of state feminists was applied through the First Lady Jihan Sadat, which ultimately served and promoted Egyptian women's equality both nationally and internationally (Zakariya, 2019). Anwar El Sadat, who assumed power after the death of Nasser, changed the nation's system of government entirely.

As Kassem (2004) stated, the Arab Socialist Union chose Sadat to serve as a powerful emblem of the revolution's guiding principles. Sadat reportedly called for the "corrective revolution" and enacted the 1971 constitution (El-Hassan, 2005, p. 53). Therefore, with the desire to democratize and extensively restructure the state through adopting new fiscal and political initiatives that went counter to the leaders' revolutionary socialism and nationalistic objectives; instead, they prioritized the West and strived to enhance and modernize the state's image on an international scale. Sadat reshaped state feminism with his Western ideologies and diverse frameworks, which started with the adoption of a liberal open-door policy, followed by surprising the global arena with the establishment of a peace treaty with Israel and the emergence of the idea of "First Lady" dominating the Egyptian political sphere like never before.

3.3 Opening the doors to the West (1974)

When it comes to a state's economy and employment rates, it is argued that asserting restrictions on women within the labor force is necessary for their well-being and the general well-

being of their families. It has been proposed that government regulations supportive of accommodating women's greater economic involvement, such as the availability of daycare for working mothers and paid maternity leave regulations, have an impact on women's job prospects and opportunities (Van der Lippe & Van Dijk, 2002). According to the traditional viewpoint, economic development elevates the status of women. The position of women has an impact on advancement, and the world bank's strategies adopted this during the 1990s. For economic prosperity to happen more significantly, gender disparities must be eliminated, and the position of women must be substantially enhanced (Badran, 1996). However, adjustments in gender power relations are necessary to reduce gender inequities. The Egyptian state has made it more difficult for women to achieve equal opportunity by being inflexible about wanting to amend the personal status laws based on limiting and conservative interpretations of the Sharia. Since Egypt got rid of colonial rule, the state has neglected the equality concerns for females to appease Islamist political organizations to oppose or ally with them. It is vital to note that the formulation of political authority dynamics within a nation, rather than economic progress solely, will ultimately improve women's positions (Farah, 2005).

From the start of his presidency, Sadat struggled with an overwhelming sense of an approaching economic collapse. Sadat was popularized and capable of successfully legitimizing his rule after his successful encounter during the Israeli war. The president's power and confidence to alter the nations through developing his relationships with the international community and liberal economic strategies (El-Hassen, 2005). However due to the prospects of war, society, especially those from the younger generations who just started to join the labor force, were affected by such economic crises. There was also a very recognizable gap among people within society. The income gap interacts with the gender divide to worsen the disparity between genders regarding

school enrollment in Egypt, highlighting the significant disparity between genders in educational opportunities(Farah, 2005). The reduction in state salary put numerous college students' chances for work in the government sector following the completion of their education in jeopardy, as well as their social standing.

Given that, the public sector was the most significant employer, especially for women, over decades prior. Therefore college women expecting to graduate started to get concerned about whether they will become capable of entering the governmental working sector (Hatem, 1992). Therefore, applying the open-door policy institutionalization, coupled with the state's Liberalization of the economy, led to an integral transformation of the nation's political, economic, and societal values (Cook, 2012).

During the era prior to Sadat's (in 1959), Article number 91 in the Egyptian constitution granted the freedom to pursue careers while also providing them with social security benefits, including a fifty-day paid pregnancy leave along with a requirement that enterprises that hire more than 100 women offer childcare facilities. Additionally, regardless of gender, individuals with any education degree were offered opportunities for employment which influenced women's participation within the public sector and resulted in significant development and growth (Farah, 2005). However, with the liberalizing of the economy, just a minority of wealthy women benefited, whereas the potential for those who came from middle-class and low-income households deteriorated, placing considerable pressure on the conceptual division among the women's movement even though women saw an increased opportunity in fields of education and with regards to their financial possibilities (Hatem, 1992). Women, even those educated and trained, lack employment opportunities due to a society that is violating and discriminating against their rights and overall limiting the economic prosperity and development of the nation(Klasen, 2000).

Furthermore, Sadat attempted to repair the state's relations with Islamists to forge a stronger conservative cooperation that would promote the newly implemented open-door policy. The government's general elimination from backing women's visible equality became particularly evident. However, The Islamists, whom he chose to release and give minor liberties to, used this to attack women's rights by linking them to corruption, injustice, and deference to Western geopolitical interests and cultural norms. Sadat's authoritarian regime started to amicably interact with Islamists and freed those previously detained under Nasser. On the other hand, after the Muslim Brotherhood assassinated the minister of religious affairs in 1977, Sadat realized that the Islamists must be limited (Cook, 2012). Which led the regime's recognition of the need for backing from various secular organizations, and second-class citizens who were not granted equality in society. Sadat took this as an opportunity to reinstate the political organizations he had worked so hard to eliminate after assuming government. The first strategy for restoring legitimacy was undertaken by recognizing women's liberties utilizing political adjustment of obviously biased personal status. Among these is the legislation regulating multiple marriages, women's ability to divorce, and custody rights for children (Hatem, 1992).

Furthermore, as discussed by Hafez (2014), when Egyptian society underwent another wave of change and a new political climate emerged, men and women were now encouraged to participate in economic Liberalization. Implementing the "Open Door Policy" and increasing foreign investment in Egypt altered people's goals again. As the socioeconomic gap between rich and poor citizens broadened, Sadat partnered with Islamist organizations to eliminate communist organizations whose principles aligned with those of the former administration.

Another major decision that surprised the world and drove the Islamists within Egypt and throughout the Arab world to turn against Sadat's rule was the signing of the peace treaty with

Israel in 1979. Nevertheless, Sadat did not care as he was also aware that after signing the peace treaty with Israel, which offered a crucial attempt to liberalize Egypt, it would get sizable funding from an international organization. Therefore, the governmental developments only needed to enhance its standing in perspective on a global scale, which it did by coming off as more democratic and modern towards the Liberalization of women within its society. Therefore, the attempts were successful. Sadat's adherence to Western society's international policies, especially after making peace with Israel, infuriated Islamists, who were already enraged over the recent Liberalization of women's personal status law. However, it is claimed that strategies adopted by the state towards modernization processes advocated by states entail successive stages of modifications within state laws, legal validation, and structural modernization is connected to the modernism of organizations and entities. Social and economic modernization and development processes are linked to moral frameworks and are wanted primarily to indicate the dominance of particular cultures. Cultural modernity is related to economic and social modernity, which is argued to be challenging since evolution occurs gradually but frequently faces opposition; certain rituals and customs that are firmly ingrained cannot change even when it is attempted modernization(Majed, 2005).

Actions of different governments highlight that governmental intentions behind such a tactic are political in nature. Furthermore, women's rights are essential to recognize the state of liberties within a civilization because they are a marginalized part of the community. It is crucial to understand the developmental achievements and promotions of women's rights in society when they ruled brings us to question how their change of policies and reforms instead manipulated the use of women empowerment without empowering them. Therefore, analyzing governmental tactics in notions of gender washing used by the previous regime(s) is critical. Much attention on

women's representation has always been a crucial and critical topic in Egypt. Arab countries' introduction of mandates and increasing recruitment rates fueled regional improvements in females' political involvement (Cole, 2020). The autocratic regimes could be argued to have been using gender washing tools as a way to promote women's rights and opportunities not for the benefit of women themselves within the state but rather to develop a more modern and liberal "image" of the state in both the national and international level. Arab nations have a recognized trend of using women's rights to consolidate political power, improve international reputation, and distract from unfavorable domestic events. The state uses gender equality as a way of "nation branding" (Mason, Ilhem Allagui, & Abeer Al-Najjar, 2018).

3.4 Making Peace Internationally and Enemies Nationally (1977-1978)

The role of women in the employment sector was weakened due to the shift in Egypt's economic policy during the Sadat regime in the 1970s and the nation's increasing dependence on the private sector. Following the implementation of the open door policy in 1974, the government's dedication to women's inclusion and equitable treatment in the labor force has significantly deteriorated. The nation's amended laws revoked the promise to provide secured work, leading to an elevated unemployment rate in the labor market. The private sector predominance became especially antagonistic concerning women's participation within the workforce, and male employment rates became prioritized again. TEconomic restructuring programs also heavily weakened the government's ability to establish within the public sector and state-owned corporations also 2005). It was claimed that Egypt's implementation of industrialization policies geared towards exports resulted in the exclusion of women from the labor force, which was reasonably opposite to how they benefited other developed nations (Assaad & Arntz, 2005).

Sadat was capable of grabbing the attention of international audiences also through many interviews and speeches which praised and showed his support towards women within societies. For instance, his political speeches praised women and mentioned them before men, even when speeches were given for unrelated political purposes. One of these speeches is, for instance, In Israel in the Knesset, during his decision to sign the Camp David Accords. During his visit to Israel to establish a peace treaty, his famous speech quoted the following "You bewailing mother, you widowed wife, you the son who lost a brother or father, you all are victims of war fill the earth and space with recitals of peace" (Youtube, 2015). As mentioned above, the main and prominent purpose of the peace treaty was to create peace with Israel and reach his ultimate desire for international legitimacy. Yet he did not make them proud with just that; one could argue that he was also capable of showing the world during his speech that he had a liberal and democratic mindset that fit those of Western values and that prioritizes women; he did this by mentioning women even before other victims of war.

Another example is after making peace with Israel and receiving much resentment from other countries in the Arab region. In a speech that serves and speaks to the infuriated Arab, he mentions an example of Prophet Ibrahim and his Egyptian wife, Hagar. The Islamic Hadith of Safa and Marwa; expresses how her son was thirsty, and she was left alone, struggling to fulfill his thirst by finding water. He gave this example in many of his speeches as a way for the international to understand that women are essential in society and for the national or the regional area; he gave it as a way to say that Egyptian society should be considered Arabs, not just part of pharaonic heritage. Furthermore, explaining that Prophet Ibrahim was Egyptian and that he, along with his son, those who built the Kaaba (God's house located in al-Masjid al-Haram in Makkah, Saudi

Arabia) and thus emphasizing that Egypt and its societies are a significant part of that and are not excluded from the Arab region and solely part of ancient Egyptian Pharaohs (Youtube, 2013).

Even Though it was evident that signing the peace treaty with Israel in 1979 offered a crucial attempt to liberalize Egypt, it would get sizable funding from an international organization. Therefore, the governmental developments only needed to enhance its standing in perspective on a global scale, which it did by coming off as more democratic and modern towards the Liberalization of women within its society. Therefore, the attempts were successful. Sadat's adherence to Western societies' international policies, especially after making peace with Israel, infuriated Islamists, who were already enraged over the recent Liberalization of women's personal status law. As a result, he was assassinated by an Islamist extremist in 1981 and was succeeded by Hosni Mubarak the following year.

3.5 The First "First Lady" of Egypt

3.51 Political empowerment

In times of rapid change, ideological turmoil, economic upheaval, and feelings of identity loss, women are often tasked with maintaining the country's cultural authenticity. However, they often find themselves between the state and conservative religious institutions. Women are considered second-class citizens in public discourse. As a result, women's concerns have remained stagnant. Government resistance to lobbying on nationality is much stronger than any attempts to change legislation in this area. Ultimately, women's issues are either overshadowed and neglected in favor of other "more pressing" concerns, or progress is made at their expense. If these elements are addressed, they will ensure women's progress this century and impede their ability to achieve their remaining objectives (Guenena & Wassef, 1999). Understanding the developmental

achievements and promotions of women's rights in society when they ruled brings us to question how their change of policies and reforms instead manipulated the use of women's empowerment without empowering them. Therefore, analyzing governmental tactics in notions of gender washing used by the previous regime(s) is critical.

Within Sadat's regime, significantly gendered implementations and the creation of a new political landscape, women were now not only encouraged to participate in economic Liberalization. However, they were also given significant recognition in the nation's politics. Sadat made significant changes in the political structure of the Egyptian state by initially declaring the Arab Socialist Union's dissolution and transition to the multiple-party structure in 1976. According to Kassem (2004), "the adoption of a multiparty system, however, was part of the president's wider reorientation of the 59 Egyptian political arena" (Kassem, 2004, p. 52). Furthermore, he gave many empowering benefits to women within society- giving them a space of engagement they were not immensely granted before. Political empowerment for women under Sadat was being accomplished to transform and generate modernization by integrating internationally accepted standards within a developing society's economic, social, cultural, and geopolitical conventional structures. The nation-state is adopting foreign developmental tactics, which is argued to manipulate their population to enter the twenty-first century and compete at the level of developed nations of the West. Suppose women desired to impact the well-being of their families and become influential in their life and status. In that case, they must have the power and capability to achieve sources of income throughout various fields and positions through great opportunities offered by society. (Mason, 2002).

In political discourse, Egyptian women are notably underrepresented. Egyptian women face considerable challenges when attempting to become involved in the political sphere, alongside

the challenges they experience when pursuing careers in the state's public and private sectors. In this respect, gender gaps not solely prevent women from achieving their legal entitlement to rights associated with citizenship but also stand in the way of their enlightenment(Hassan, 2019). The private sector marginalized and neglected women's involvement and supported men's employment opportunities within society. Nevertheless, since different policies were implemented throughout Sadat's rule, it argued that women's entitlement to opportunities in workplaces. By forcing women to abandon traditionally male-dominated fields and increasing their dependence solely on the males considered their guardians, the reforms undermined their entitlements and social advantages. Women's life as mothers and spouses were drastically altered by the significant changes that national and international forces imposed on Egypt and by Sadat's response(Mason, 2002).

It is commonly known that developing gender equality is a requirement for developmental processes, and the Egyptian government is openly aware of this. The accomplishment of the authority's intended initiatives depends on its capacity to overcome barriers impeding advancement and transformative possibilities. It is crucial to involve women actively in all spheres to ensure the prosperity of the nation's overall betterment and modernization of society. Arguably, the essential foundations of this engagement are a gendered understanding of constitutional legitimacy and appropriate political engagement, even with the president's earnest efforts to create laws that promote increased rights for females and more prominent political engagement prospects for them (Hassan, 2019). Egyptian presidents (whether in the past or the present) efforts to fight economic crises and to encourage funding and support from international organizations and hegemonic world leaders recognize the importance and crucial element come partially as a result of Egyptian women's involvement rates and as part of appealing less autocratic but democratic and modernized in a way that reaches expectations of westernized and developed states of the West.

The politically motivated abandoning of the Arab Women Solidarity Association (AWSA), founded and managed by the Egyptian feminist Nawal al- Sa'dawi, could be considered an example of repression of female organizations. The governmental decision to give the Muslim Brotherhood another chance and free those who were detained by the previous regime of Nasser led to the emergence of conservative social, economic, and political systems—which were critical to government activity as a whole and its advocacy for equal opportunity for women which was associated with these types of policy reforms. The first attempt at regaining credibility resulted from political reform of outdated legislation concerning the liberties of exclusionary women. The enactment of state feminism by the Egyptian government was a crucial contributor to the state's enlightened reputation and was made possible by external pressure and the proliferation of democratization and modernizing reform within the country (Hatem, 1992).

Different new laws were enacted by presidential order despite objections and resentments. The two presidential decrees issued in 1979 were pointed out as instances of state feminism thriving throughout the 1970s since they were claimed to have increased female political and personal rights. The government tried to promote liberalizing the economy while disregarding its responsibility to protect women's rights(Sabbagh, 1996). The Egyptian constitution granted women the ability to politically engage in the voting processes and running for office beginning in 1956. 2 out of 8 women running for parliament won in 1957. In 1964, 8 women were also elected to parliament (El Baradei et al., 2017). Achievements were granting thirty seats in parliament to women and a presidential order authorizing 20% of all seats in local people's councils in June 1979 (Sabbagh, 1996).

Moreover, implementing a system of quotas demonstrates an intent to strengthen the representation of women in political activity to enhance Egypt's standing in the international arena

and retrieve legitimate activity both nationally and, more importantly, internationally (El Baradei et al., 2017). The quota system was not implemented until 1979, during the Sadat era, when the president's order established a minimum allocation of thirty positions for women, which was upgraded to thirty-one in 1983. Each district was accounted for a single seat. Males could not compete for those seats since they only served, yet women could compete for any desired seat. Such developments resulted in 200 women competing for office in 1979, where females represented more seats than initially planned.

Furthermore, other women received appointments by presidential decree, conveying the total number of ladies in the legislature to 35. The quotas were implemented in 1984 to guarantee the participation of unrecognized females. As a result, 36 women were elected to the parliament (El Baradei et al., 2017). The state is argued not to have had a commitment to nor desire to empower women and give them space within the political arena but was just an attempt that mainly depended on the political intentions and interests it had in the designated period (Sabbagh, 1996)

Prejudiced social and political convictions exacerbate women's exclusion from liberal feminist organizations; men make better leaders, and since the job market is minimal, then men should be prioritized over women to attain employment; and a wife is obligated to follow her husband's order and decision even if she does not accept them (Kucinskas, 2010). This is especially true in societies where men predominate, like Egypt. Jihan Sadat and later, as will be discussed in the following chapter, Susan Mubarak, the first ladies of Egypt, were widely acknowledged as trailblazing Egyptian women that accomplished equality for women, both nationally and internationally. The emergence of First Lady Jihan emphasizes how the state aimed to become more like modernized nations of the West and was pushing to develop women's rights within Egyptian society, which was permanently excluded throughout Egyptian history. Trends of gender

washing in Egyptian politics have arguably served a more important political purpose. Rather than working to directly change personal status laws to achieve the advancement of concerns faced by women, they leveraged women's rights as a means of advancing democracy and building a secular political alliance opposed to Islamism (Bernard-Maugiron, 2010). Since Nasser is credited with establishing state feminism in Egypt, Jihan Sadat could also be claimed to have established standards for upper-class feminism within her husband's period of rule. Jihan Sadat, unlike the previous first lady Tahia Abdel Nasser, reveals an undeniable disparity between both of the former first ladies and the functions that both performed in politics throughout their husband's presidency period.

Furthermore, Sadat made his wife Jihan a prominent public figure, and this was not something that was experienced within Egyptian society before. The First Lady was said to make reforms against Sharia and the lack of representation of Egyptian culture and norms. The authoritarian way the changes were approved when Sadat was oppressing critical voices and anti-government activists led secular groups to reject the revisions by utilizing gender equality as a vehicle for modernization to forge a more vital secularism anti-Islamist political cooperation. Therefore, the president's attempt is not strategically advocating reforming personal status legislation to advance women's equality. President Anwar Sadat enacted a series of executive orders to change personal status laws, which became known as "Jihan's law," in recognition of his wife, Jihan Sadat.

3.52 The Newly Established "Jihan's law" and The Personal Status Law

The only area of law that is tightly controlled by Sharia customs and male intellectual perspectives of Islam is the Egyptian personal status law. However, even though the majority of countries in the Arab world adhere to Islamic law or Sharia, each country in the region has a unique and diverse personal status because of the way that Sharia is interpreted and utilized (Bernard-Maugiron & Dupret, 2002). The responsibility of ensuring a nation's authentic culture is argued to partially rely on women during periods of social transformation, ideological defects, economic collapse, and an awareness of one's identity destruction. Therefore, governments are commonly forced to advocate state laws or follow the more conservative and religious perspectives within society. The outcome is evident in how women are treated when participating in public discourse, which often regards them as inferior beings, along with the lack of progress that has developed on several matters affecting women.

Moreover, having to contend in the crosscurrents of religious conservatism and governmental uncertainty implies that either the needs of women are prioritized and abandoned in favor of other "more important" matters or concessions are made to their detriment of them. These elements will jeopardize the liberties that women have recently developed and prevent any recognition of their unfulfilled aspirations (Guenana & Wassef, 1999). The Sharia law or the interpretations of Islamic law is also argued to support the government's intent to grant women political equality in both the social and cultural spheres under Article 11 in the country's constitution. Notably, governmental efforts towards the advancement of women within the legal system were the most appropriate way to bring a better and more liberal presentation of regime autocracies as this was favorable for the regime at the time so they could attract international attention and therefore yield both monetary funding and political support (Sabbagh, 1996).

Women within Egypt are claimed to experience life by means of their children, who, when necessary, are exposed to the virtues of male methods of authority and dominance by members of their family involving their mothers (Mason, 2002). Since Egyptian society is argued to be relatively male-centric, the state is usually understood to be positioned towards empowering male figures while disregarding equality for females. Therefore, positioning women in ways that portray them within their households and dependant on their male guardians. Within Egypt, feminist intellectuals claim that men and women are constantly interacting. However, it is evident how women in Egyptian communities perceive men in their social context in a more superior position, which hinders their own recognition and capabilities(Singerman & Hoodfar, 1996).

Within his framework of reform and modernization, Sadat adopted several changes to policies that affect women. Governmental efforts to advance women's rights and equality have been quite successful, whether in academia, labor force, or political involvement. While in power in the 1970s, the president worked with Jihan el Sadat, the first lady, to advance the personal status law by enforcing "Jihan's Law," which provided several liberating decisions for women. Despite initially failing to pass, In 1979 when President Sadat marked among the most significant amendments toward women's empowerment in Egyptian history. Since the majority of neighboring nations turned their back against his rule following the recent implementation of the Camp David Accord, he started to objectively develop the state in a way that would attract western attention and that would fulfill the desires and standards of developed nations. In a biography created by ABC Channel at the time, it reports that Egypt was recognized by the US as the most prestigious in the region due to the efforts of Anwar El Sadat. Indeed, the efforts applauded were the expulsion of the Russians from Egypt, Sadat's relatively great efforts that presented himself amenable to negotiation, his overall openness within the country to Western investment, and he

was also recognized as a leader that displayed an admiration for foreign policy at the time. This was not possible in the view of the US under Gamal Abdel Nasser and was only possible as the result of the Sadat being the leader of Egypt and presenting him in the international arena as the first moderate Arab leader in history⁹. Also, in an interview by Peter Jennings in 1974, streamed for the American ABC Channel, Sadat explicitly said in his new chapter that it is vital for him to develop Egyptian and US relations positively, no matter the consequences. He also mentions in the interview that he does not plan any offense against Israel and considers the US a dominant actor in achieving peace in the Middle Eastern area with Israel¹⁰.

Further to Sadat's speeches to ensure the perpetuation of Egypt's acceptance of Western relations, Sadat's effort to appeal to international setting was evidently represented with his attempts in establishing new laws that would change the western perception of Egyptian society. With his wife's influence and effort to empower and develop women's rights initiatives, Sadat established new laws which directed and focused greatly on personal status law; this law which is frequently dismissed and neglected but now became targeted to serve purposes and intentions which one could argue is an act of political manipulation.

Jihan el Sadat had a significant influence on legislation that was introduced to encourage the advancement of women's rights under the administration of President Sadat. The first lady's initiative constituted an attempt to unite progressive activists and feminist organizations. Yet, they were never given that much recognition and empowerment, similar to nearly all other social organizations. This was not only due to the insufficient governmental attention drawn to the topic but also due to how the religious segments within society compelled the execution of such laws,

⁹ YouTube. (2010). *Sadat interview with ABC Channel with Arabic subtitle 1* لقاء نادر للسادات YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kazbEUawWb4>

¹⁰ YouTube. (2022). *خطاب السادات في الكنيست الإسرائيلي عام ٢٠ نوفمبر ١٩٧٧ م / كامل*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uX2PJlo9e3s>

opposing the Egyptian legislature (Bernard-Maugiron & Dupret, 2002). Efforts to pass a newly established "Jihan law" could push for the establishment of Law number forty-four in the constitution, which required male partners to either notify their spouses of the divorce choice or file a divorce petition with the court (Farah, 2005).

Additionally, the mandate from the law points out that choosing to have an additional spouse is substantially harmful to the first wife. Therefore she is rightfully given the right to choose and be granted an instant divorce. This was done in order to pose limitations on husbands' entitlement to polygamy. If a divorced wife obtained legal custody of her children, she was permitted to live with her husband. The legislation also increased the length of compensation for women, which was typically 1-3 years if the divorce was finalized despite his wife's disagreement (Farah, 2005).

Jihan's law included and gave women rights to remain in their marital residence after receiving a divorce, the right of women to be informed beforehand their spouses decided to marry another woman, and an updated interpretation of the law stating that a male's choice to get married an additional spouse might negatively impact the first spouse, as well as providing the initial spouse the right to apply for a divorce (Bernard-Maugiron, 2010). However, these modifications appear minor and do not prohibit polygamy; religious and nonreligious males are considered unacceptable and have fought to overturn the law (Hatem, 1994). These changes attempted to extend and restrict the advantages of polygamy and divorce granted to men beneficiaries(Farah, 2015).

As Islamists gained traction, they became yet another obstacle to authority and Jihan Sadat's proposed changes for women. Islamist groups and even some feminists who thought the changes were being forced from the top violently opposed laws that would give a divorced woman

information about when her husband remarries. Child custody and marital residence are fundamental rights for her to have. With the neoliberalization of the nation's economy, social values were subject to external forces of global capitalism and internal influences of Islamist extremism. Women's rights became caught in the middle of this heated ideological debate. Daughters from homes with a proclivity towards Western education and culture took on behavior that was chiefly Western in terms of outlook and dress." Islamic attire" is often worn by women whom Islamic ideologies and traditions have shaped. The widespread adoption of veiling in Egypt was a crucial element in the spread of Islam. The Egyptian street resembled earlier decades of the century when women's bodies signaled an ideological divide in society as they increasingly became symbols of Islamization. A group of Islamist officers who were against Sadat's political plans and disapproved of his gender changes (which they believed were coming from his wife) ended both his presidency and life (Hafez, 2014). Despite Sadat, according to Kassem (2004), "the 1971 constitution legally enshrines the preeminent position of the president over government and state institutions in contemporary Egypt" (Kassem, 2004, p. 25); the president's extensive freedom to pass any law did not stop the constitutional court rejection in 1985. The efforts of Islamic representatives and other conservative and communist organizations, who advocated the ruling of the Sadat regime, led to the overturning of the law (Farah, 2015). Others also argued that the rejection resulted from many opposition groups which resulted from his decision of jailing all his rivals and opposition (Kassem, 2004). However, the main argument that follows the purpose of this research is to highlight the extent in which the law becomes implemented and adopted in reality. The amendments were achieved and recognized on a global scale, but the actual implementation of them is what the main objective should be in order for the elimination of the various concerns faced by women within the society.

3.53 Jihan's Writings

In Jihan Sadat's books: *A Woman of Egypt* (1987) and *My Hope for Peace* (2009), Jehan discusses her achievements and efforts in developing and advancing women's rights and liberation within Egypt and the overall Arab region. Jihan shows her numerous commitments and efforts toward women's empowerment. For instance, "Anwwar, please, you must mention family planning in your speeches. At least just mention it. Anwar, today you will meet briefly with the foreign cancer experts here for my conference? All you need to say is Hello, I promise" (Sadat, 1987, p.299). Jihan's writing illustrates a first lady's dominating and influential role that has never before been openly exposed and publicized in contemporary Egyptian politics.

Furthermore, Jihan el Sadat acknowledges how varied women are from one another and that this differentiation results from various circumstances, including political, social, economic, and geographic ones (Sadat, 2009). She contends that women have always sought to be taken seriously in society and that they should be recognized as such. They should each have a cause, whether it is the right to participate in politics or to generally avoid being accepted by their communities as mainstream members. According to Sadat (2009), the attitudes of Muslim and Arab women in the West are biased and inaccurate. Being a part-Westerner and the wife of Egyptian President Sadat, she claims that the West and international media have portrayed her marriage mistakenly and in a very stereotypical manner. However, one could argue that in a 60-minute interview, he was asked about shouting at his wife, and this was precisely what I quote his answer "In my house, this is my way I like it" (Youtube, 2018, 1:26). One could argue how this is the president that is trying to support in any way women's rights or empowerment; violence towards women was not even argued against.

Sadat (2009) emphasizes in her book her passionate compassion and the battles she waged on her own behalf for the progress and rights of women, particularly in Egypt. Despite the fact that President Sadat stressed other issues throughout his administration and paid little attention to the progress of women's emancipation, she carried out this responsibility. During his administration, she worked to further female liberty (Sadat, 2009). The Holy Quran affirms women's rights and describes them as being on par with males. Islam emphasizes the value of advancing women's education so they may contribute to society's general developments and successes (Sadat, 2009). International attitudes tend to be confusing about marriage in Islamic countries. Muslim marriages have a reputation for being portrayed in ways that resemble slavery. However, Sadat (2009) disputes this claim and asserts that when it comes to the marriage contract, both Egyptian society and Arab societies as a whole treat women's rights as equal to those of men. This could be considered possible due to numerous reasons, including the fact that various state laws are subject to varying interpretations according to local Islamic traditions, which, in turn, denies women in marriages equal power.

Jihan el Sadat was a crucial figure in the governing body when she was the first lady of Egypt (Sadat, 1987). In several instances throughout the text, Sadat strives to make clear that her commitment to politics is motivated by her goal to make life in Egyptian society better for women and make them more prominently engaged and represented in Egyptian politics. In her writings, she shows her struggles with the more conservative communities within the society. For instance, she says the following: "I too had been denounced by the religious extremists, for my encouragement for Muslim women, for choosing or to cover my head in a veil" (Sadat, 1987, p. 123). But this did not stop her from encouraging the state with her liberal aspirations, and that is when Jihan's Law was established. Although there were many that tried to stop the implementation

of this law, this law still succeeded in passing through a presidential decree but unfortunately became unlawful as a result of it not passing with the necessary and democratic agreements and processes. This brings us to further argue that even though the law may be stated in the constitutional documents, if many factions within society do not consent with the developments, then to what degree is the advocating and adoption of such efforts actually empowering women. Even Though, the regime knew that the proposals were rejected by many individuals and groups within society, they enforced it- therefore one could argue they never intended to actually implement it and were just attempting to represent their efforts for their personal and political purposes and interests- not for the purpose of empowerment at all. Female organizations throughout Sadat's presidency, several independent feminist voices managed to emerge, aiming to make use of the pre-existing secularist setting, such as Nawal El Saadawi. Nevertheless, the dissolution of Islamist organizations prevented any other views from finding a place to speak in the hostile atmosphere (Eltaweel, 2013).

Additionally, according to Sadat (2009), women can divorce men if they so choose and have good reason to do so, and this is supported by legal precedent. However, one could argue that she is ignoring the fact that women must go through a lengthy process before they are granted the right to divorce. Sadat (2009), on the other hand, argues that it is oversimplified compared to how things actually are. Furthermore, Sadat (2009), the Egyptian first lady, worked very hard to increase participation and integrate women's empowerment, particularly during the 1977 reform of family status laws. The family status was primarily concerned with developing the laws which deal with polygamy, inheritance, child custody, and divorce.

One may claim that Jihan Sadat's book is objective because it primarily targets Western readers rather than Egyptian women, who are the subject of her writing. Since she repeatedly states

throughout the book that one of her main goals while serving as first lady and beyond was to change the Western bias and stereotypical perspectives and that the empowerment of women is for the sake of Western recognition rather than Egyptian or Arab recognition, it could be claimed that she is aiming to change Western thoughts and their perceptions of Egyptian and Muslim women. This implied that the book was an attempt to change how the West views Egyptian and Muslim women. Additionally, the book is written in English, which does not serve the Egyptian Arabic-speaking majority.

Mrs. Sadat, in her books, continuously says that women are powerful and should be treated equally as men in society and explains how woman today in Egypt have the ability to divorce their husband if she has a legitimate reason proven through judicial law- my argument for this is that she seems to dismiss the fact that there's a long process that woman goes through to reach the right for divorce, but she explains it in a way that seems to show a very simplistic situation which is not really in reality.

Another example was told by his daughter Camailia al Sadat In an interview on Dream TV (Egypt). In the interview, Camalila explained that at the age of 12, when the minimum age of marriage was 16, she was married without her own consent and forced by her father (President Sadat). An illegal child marriage that took place "misplacing" her birth certificate, which meant that she had to have two people that would confirm that she was not under age legal minimum age for marriage; in her case, those two people were Sadat, her father and the previous president Gamal Abdel Nasser (During his rule of state). This brought about Camalia's experience of being forcibly married. She even said that Mrs. Tahia Kazem (Nasser's wife and first lady of Egypt at the time) told both Nasser and Sadat to take legal action against them for doing such a disgraceful action. The interview also brings about Camalia's relationship with her partner, which was filled with

domestic violence on levels that mentally and physically influenced her. As a result of her suffering, she experienced two miscarriages. Nevertheless, when Sadat took over the presidency, she discovered her age from a newspaper article that had her picture on while she was voting for him. This made her realize she was now 21 and immediately filed for divorce (Memri, 2006).

In conclusion, the purpose of this chapter was to demonstrate the use of gender washing under the authoritarian presidency of Anwar El Sadat. Throughout his term as president, Sadat saw the importance of solidifying the relationship between Egypt and the West. Indeed, he believed that with Western aid, Egypt would go through a much needed modernization process. In order to accomplish this, Sadat adopted many domestic changes in order to signify to the West that Egypt's values were more similar to the West than otherwise presumed. These domestic changes included the adoption of the Open Door Policy, otherwise known as a period of liberalization for Egypt. Moreover, Sadat used women's rights as a mechanism through which to perpetuate these liberal ideals, hence the use of gender washing. Most significantly, were the changes adopted for women pioneered by First Lady, Gihan El Sadat. The role of Gehan El Sadat, in of itself, represented a liberal image of Egypt to the world, a drastic change from that under Gamal Abdel Nasser, who's wife had no role in Egyptian politics. Under the auspices of these changes, women were able to have easier access to divorce, and thereby giving them equal rights in the process of divorce. Such changes were critical in Sadat's reign, in addition to highlighting the accomplishments of a new, open Egypt, they helped hide the fact that during this time there were several abuses to human rights, which included arrest of political opponents and journalists, as well as notably the quashing of the Bread Riots. As such, the use of gender washing became critical for Sadat to accomplish his international vision of Egypt, while drawing attention away from his authoritarian practices.

CHAPTER 4: Gender Washing Under Mubarak

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the nature and utilization of gender washing during the Mubaraks Presidency. This chapter will start off by providing a brief background on Mubarak's political system and will be followed by two main sections in this chapter; the first will discuss the Mubarak regime's tactics in the 1990s and the subsequently relevant laws concerning his attempts to attract Western alliance. The second section will analyze the laws during the post-millennium period in an effort to examine why the president's policies during this period does not appear solely on the international agenda but rather appears focused on the regional pathway.

This chapter attempts to provide an overview of the personal status law in Egypt under the Mubarak Presidency, with particular reference to the issues of polygamy and divorce. The topic regarding the First Lady, Suzanne Mubarak, and her role within the National Council for Women (NCW) and the institution's contribution to amendments relating to personal status laws are also addressed. In addition, this chapter attempts to illustrate the weakness of female-based policies attempted to strengthen the empowerment of women within the personal status realm. Moreover, as an attempt to act similar to developed and democratic western societies, in this regard, the argument presented indicates that the women empowering initiatives during the Mubarak regime were initiated to conceal human right violations from western and international donors and allies but appears to be most prominently hindered due to regional and domestic resistance.

4.1 The Political System Under the Mubarak Regime

Hosni Mubarak, formerly the Vice President of Egypt when Sadat was assassinated, was perceived to be more of an Egyptian bourgeoisie than his predecessors (Byman, 2005). In addition

to rebuilding connections with neighboring Arab regimes who cut diplomatic connections with Egypt following the 1979 peace process with Israel. Also managed, to continue and expand Egypt's relations with the United States. Mubarak reinstated Egypt's Emergency Laws following the assassination of President Sadat. Due to the Peace Treaty with Israel, the rise of opposition particularly violent Islamism, and inter-linked, the rise of terrorism, domestic stability was the priority of the new President. Particular attention to the needs and strength of Egypt's armed forces and police apparatus consequently became the main focus of support during the President's first decade in power (Byman, 2005). According to Egypt's Emergency Laws, the head of state or his appointees can try civilians in military courts rather than regular courts-bearing in mind that military sentences do not provide any avenues of appeal. In addition, Emergency laws provided the state with "the right to censor, seize, or confiscate letters, newspapers, newsletters, publications, and all other means of expression and advertising before they are published" (Kassem, 2004, p. 55). In other words, any citizen accused or charged within this broad framework could potentially be legally imprisoned for an unspecified and arbitrary duration (El-Hassan, 2005). Mubarak's rationale for extending the emergency regulations implied the defense of order and justification of protecting national stability against acts of terrorism (El-Hassan, 2005). While Mubarak initially appeared to favor a democratic order during his first term in power, he still considered the use of the Emergency Law as the best choice for the Egyptian Nation's future prosperity (El-Hassan, 2005). The President's apparent dedication to the path of democratization in Egypt, appears to have been dramatically altered once he consolidated his personal power and established his full authority within the State (Kassem, 2004).

The 1993 bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York City, carried out by a Kuwaiti national, several Saudi nationals and Egyptian nationals, acting upon the orders of the Islamic extremist political orientations of Osama Bin Laden and his depute Omar Abdel Rahman.¹¹ Abdel Rahman, a radical Islamist, and senior leader of the Egyptian Jihad became the second in command to Osama Bin Laden, following the migration of his militant group to Afghanistan and his decision to unite with Bin Laden's Al Qaeda. As a result of Abdel Rahman's involvement in the World Trade Centre massacre, he received an absentee life sentence within the American penal system. American policymakers believed that backing Mubarak against Egyptian Islamists would secure the USA against further terrorist attacks (Smith, 2020). At the same time, Mubarak had just completed his fourth term as president, making him the longest-serving leader in Egyptian history. Also, Mubarak was responsible for 41% of political violence against Egyptian civilians since the 1952 Coup d'état, with more arrests than previously under Sadat and more political violence fatalities. With 93.79 % of the overall vote, he received another term as President in 1999 (Brownlee, 2007). Interestingly, the start of Mubarak's 1999 term as president also marked numerous women empowerment policies, that coincided with the rise of the First Lady, Suzanne Mubarak. It appeared that her public image and influence increased as she became increasingly vocal and apparent advocate of the rights of Egyptian women.

Due to the international economic policies imposed on both Sadat and Mubarak, the economic advantages enjoyed by both men and women under Nasser, became restricted. In the case of women, the consequences appeared more severe due to the fact that their economic power can be considered their main strength, in view of the fact that women's personal status laws were

¹¹ Assessment, C. T., & Unit, W. (1999). Counterterrorism Division.(1999). Terrorism in the United States, 30.

not reformed. Consequently, repositioning women to restricted economic frameworks influence the development and rise of liberal feminist organizations in the 1980s and 1990s. In the words of one author, restricting the financial access of women to resources and the limited social influence it entailed reversed the limited advantages gained by women during Nasser period (Zakarriya, 2019). Analyzing the economic and political liberalization measures that the governments of Sadat and Mubarak enacted can help define women concerning the state and the role and status of their governments' situated women. Such policies that demonstrate state encouragement and support for female equality, especially in national positions of power, are linked to the formation of conservative socioeconomic and political institutions that are resistant to government involvement. However, the vast majority of women from middle- and lower-class families had fewer possibilities due to the state's socioeconomic withdrawal and the repudiation of state feminism in the 1980s (Sabbagh, 1996). When Mubarak became in charge of the state, the previously implemented economic liberalization policies put the legitimacy of his administration and its governing NDP at risk. The position of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Egyptian public sphere was changed by Mubarak in the 1990s due to the state's increasing fiscal restrictions. This was done to aid the government in its efforts to grow and prosper. During his many years in power, the number of civil society organizations, especially women's organizations, grew tremendously (Sika & Khodary, 2012).

4.2 Mubarak and Gender Washing During the 1990s

4.21 Female Genital Mutation (FGM)

This section will aim to discuss the changes made to eliminate the practice of FGM. The first part will give a historical background to clarify these laws as well as their development under

Mubarak in the 1990s. Furthermore, this section will also analyze the continuation of economic liberalization policies which Mubarak inherited from the earlier regime of Sadat and the consequences it had on international negotiation that lead to Egypt joining the Euro Mediterranean Partnership Agreement (EMP) that brought much funding into a country that face a severe debt crises. Also, the section's discussion of the policies highlights the manner in which the Mubarak regime applied gender washing, since he used to apply empowering initiatives for women primarily for attracting support from international organizations and Western investors.

Female genital mutilation has been included in the set of concerns that Egyptian women's organizations intend to tackle throughout the preparatory phases for the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994(Al-Ali, 2000). The FGM Task Force was created under the National NGO Commission for Population and Development in late 1994. Initially, the FGM Task Force consisted of a coalition of advocates, a community mobilization team, and an investigative group that produced records, studies, and other research on FGM (Guenena & Wassef, 1999). The domestic and international publicity impetus generated helped the FGM Task Force advance.

In a 1994, an event that caused anger worldwide, resulted from a CNN reporter capturing footage of a child being forced into the disgraceful act of genital mutilation in a Cairo barbershop. The Washington Post reported in 1994 that a cameraperson from CNN captured mutilation on camera and that it was eventually broadcasted globally. 1994 the subject gained extensive publicity in national media sources when CNN released its shocking mutilation story at the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo. Following that, U.S. dignitaries, along with others who opposed the immoral conduct displayed in the CNN video, encountered the topic with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who claimed that such activities

do not happen in his country- even though such process was experienced by almost 80% of the female in the population.¹² The girl's aunt, her father, a man who is said to have talked to the girl's father about authorizing the photo shoot, and the two men who allegedly carried out the operation were detained by police shortly after the interview aired. The authorities finally decided not to press charges against the CNN reporter even though it was illegal to harm Egypt's image per Egyptian law. This was shortly followed by a governmental decision from The Ministry of Health to outlaw FGM in public medical facilities and to start a significant media campaigning effort opposing it.¹³

Furthermore, another event also occurred, which attracted a lot of international media coverage and according to a 1997 The Washington Post report, resulted in the deaths of two young girls in the summer of 1996. This episode also demonstrated the Egyptian government's incapacity to deal with such odious and alarming circumstances. The Ministry of Health made an urgent effort to quiet global outrage over the deaths of young girls forced to undergo such inhumane processes because of multiple events that attracted noteworthy global concern and pressure regarding rates of FGM in Egypt and resulted in several girls bleeding to death.¹⁴

This led the government of Egypt being forced to make pledges to the world population resulting from the issue sparked by CNN's coverage of female mutilation in Egypt despite Egypt continuously denying the practice. The declarations and vows to stop the custom infuriated orthodox organizations who asserted that it was part of Islamic culture and traditions. In order to

¹² Napoli, J. J. (1997). Cairo communique: Furor abating over CNN report on female circumcision. WRMEA. <https://www.wrmea.org/1997-january-february/cairo-communique-furor-abating-over-cnn-report-on-female-circumcision.html>

¹³ Napoli, J. J. (1997). Cairo communique: Furor abating over CNN report on female circumcision. WRMEA. <https://www.wrmea.org/1997-january-february/cairo-communique-furor-abating-over-cnn-report-on-female-circumcision.html>

¹⁴ Mann, J. (1994). When journalists witness atrocities. The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1994/09/23/when-journalists-witness-atrocities/18adacd7-49b1-408f-aaa2-ac730308c773/>

avoid offending either faction, the administration reached a compromise. In 1996, the Minister of Health passed legislation limiting female genital mutilation to medical experts exclusively. Shortly after, organizations focusing on women started a pressure group in reaction to the law that made female genital mutilation acceptable in hospitals. (Al-Ali, 2000). In 1997, FGM was declared illegal in all state-owned hospitals and clinics, except it was possibly substantiated by medical urgency (Guenena & Wassef, 1999).

It is very important to highlight that such decision resulted from substantial international pressure towards the Mubarak administration and was in fact due to the CNN reports that brought the topic a lot of attention at the time. Therefore, making it illegal only in state-owned medical facilities could be argued to be a way to shut down international anger and pressure to stop the topic being propagated putting Egypt in an unpleasant light. However, at the same time, the government could have been also threatened to receive disagreement from the national whom included many who were illiterate and believed FGM is traditionally an important procedure throughout their family heritage and traditions; and the government needed it time to educate its citizens of the wrongfulness and dangers such procedure poses on Egyptian young females. Therefore, this could be a reason of why FGM processes were not announced completely illegal under Egyptian law until 2008¹⁵; meaning, that it took the government almost 10 years to criminalize such violent procedure that poses a life-threatening procedure that threatened and remains to threaten the young girls lives who make most of the Egyptian overall population. Therefore, one could question that if Mubarak cared about the suffering of women and objectively wanted to make a real change within their everyday lives within a patriarchal society then why would such a disempowering and life-threatening decision take almost 10 years to completely

¹⁵ Female genital mutilation. UNFPA Egypt. <https://egypt.unfpa.org/en/node/22544>

implement? Therefore, this brings us to the research's purpose which argues that Mubarak and his government were supporting and promoting the empowerment of women within the Egyptian society as a means towards elevating and campaigning a favorable image on an international scale not to improve the realities that females suffer from within the Egyptian society.

Moreover, various other campaigns and movements were established to end the health complications caused by female genital mutilation (FGM) throughout Egypt. The percentage of people engaging in the practice dropped from 100% in the 1970s to 75% by 2008. In addition, because of various awareness-raising campaigns that explained the harmful consequences of FGM, 63% of women now believe the practice is necessary - down from 82% in 1995. (Sika & Khodary, 2012). However, the number is still relatively high, and the fact that FGM is being practiced in clandestine clinics or homes across the country to this day illustrates how little the government is doing to put a stop to this social embarrassment.

The Supreme Court of the Constitution's (SCC) 1997 ruling is another example of how much focus was placed on the community's welfare (Rutherford, 2013). Significant monetary alterations that the Paris Club demanded Egypt perform to comply with an IMF restructuring program were a condition of a portion of this debt reduction and aid. Egypt and the IMF agreed in May 1991 following protracted discussions. Egypt was to become a market economy incorporated into the more extensive economic system through this accord. It consisted of three main elements: an ambitious plan to reduce government spending by eliminating amenities, the liberalization of rates of interest, and the currency exchange rate, which made it impossible for the authorities to influence those rates in order to preserve political and social confidence; and a sizable privatization program that focused on public companies engaged in assistance and manufacturing.

The changes made under Mubarak during the 1990s can be better understood through the lens of gender washing. Indeed, in the light of an economic crisis, the Mubarak regime opted to utilize gender washing as a means to appear more appealing to the international arena in order to attract financial support from international organizations. Therefore, the Mubarak regime adopted policies which would portray the image of modernization to western communities as the ideological transformations and programs would be regarded as evidence of developing rights for those vulnerable within Egyptian society. Accordingly, the negotiations led to pledges resulting in significant structural adjustments. Government spending decreased from 11.5 percent of GDP in 1992 to 5.4 percent in 1997. Additionally, it decreased the GDP allocated to subsidizing from 5.2 % in 1992 to 1.6 % in 1997 and decreased the number of subsidized products from 18 to 4 (Rutherford, 2013). In reality, business expenditure remained essentially unaltered; by 1997, it barely accounted for 15.7% of GDP. This presented a significant reason for worry. Government expenditures on economic activity had decreased from 12 % of GDP in 1987 to 6 % in 1994. Around the same time, the nation was required to add 600,000 job openings per year to accommodate new workers and maintain employment at present levels. Government agencies require private and international investment to launch new businesses, provide money, and generate employment.

Also In 1994, Egypt's imports increased, while exports declined by 11.4%, broadening a gap in trade by 47.3%. Therefore, rather than resolving the issue of the trade deficiencies due to the country's hard currency, the ERSAP ended up making the situation more severe. After years of negotiations in 1994, the new EU-Egypt Association Agreement was ultimately signed in June 1999. In June 2004, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Agreement (EMP) between Egypt and the European Union came into effect. Egypt's main challenges in this context thus include

maintaining social and political stability, increasing employment, completing the economic transition process, and stabilizing its foreign relations with Europe and its nearby neighbors.¹⁶

Between 1990 and 1997, Egypt dropped out of the top 20 list of developing nations that received the most FDI. Egypt's position among the top nations receiving FDI decreased from 16 in 1994 to 19 in 1995 to 18 in 1998. The contribution of Egypt and the overall MENA area fell from 3% in 1970s to approximately 1% in 1996, while the percentage of emerging nations increased from less than 10% in 1985 to over 35% in 1996. Since the developing world has been getting more significant inflows, the expansion of FDI into Egypt has yet to be maintained.¹⁷

Egypt joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) in the year 1995 (Rutherford, 2013). A variety of bilateral association arrangements involving the European Union and other nations within the region fosters economic development in the area. The goal was that by 2010, all EMP members were expected to have established a free-trade region due to the accords mentioned above.

According to a press announcement from the EU from September 1996, Egypt has received a Social Fund for Development of ECU 155 million. The Social Fund for Development in Egypt was founded in 1991 to eradicate poverty and generate employment. During the initial phase, donors contributed the equivalent of \$ 700 million to the Fund, which includes the EU's contribution of \$ 157 million. In support of the project's second stage, introduced in Brussels in April, over \$ 600 million were dedicated to Egypt. Through financing startups and small enterprises, the EU assistance aims to enhance and increase long-term job development throughout Egyptian society. It seeks to increase the availability of infrastructural facilities, particularly in

¹⁶ Ghannam, O. (n.d.). Written by - ecesr.org. <https://www.ecesr.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/IMF-English.pdf>

¹⁷ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development - UNCTAD. (n.d.). https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/iteiipmisc.11_en.pdf

areas lacking services.¹⁸ Also, The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in October 1996, awarded a 24-month standby loan for Egypt of about \$391 million in support of the government's strategy for economic and financial reform. Due to Egypt's solid position in foreign reserves, the government has yet to use the standby credit.¹⁹

Furthermore, in another press release in December 1996 emphasized that the Commission had agreed to finance a program costing ECU 100 million aimed at improving educational opportunities in Egypt.²⁰ In a later press report from the EU in May 1997 also discusses that one of the topics included in the Barcelona Declaration, which was signed by the EU and the Euro-Mediterranean nations, including Egypt, is focused on space applications. The declaration mentioned above established the collaboration, which also provided funds for collaboration in various areas throughout five years.²¹ Finally, in October 1999, an EU report indicates that the Commission's primary goals are to support free trade initiatives while offering indicative programs that provide yearly financial plans and aid.²²

The cooperation pact between the European Union and Egypt was completed in 2001 and was enacted on June 1st, 2004. By drastically reducing duties on Egyptian exports and entirely abolishing them on manufacturing items, the deal boosted Egypt's accessibility to the European market (Rutherford, 2013).

¹⁸ Press corner. European Commission - European Commission. (n.d.).

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_96_847

¹⁹ Press release: IMF approves 24-month stand-by credit for Egypt. IMF. (1996, October 11).

<https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2015/09/14/01/49/pr9650>

²⁰ Press corner. European Commission - European Commission. (n.d.-a).

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_96_1136

²¹ Press corner. European Commission - European Commission. (n.d.-a).

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_97_446

²² Press corner. European Commission - European Commission. (n.d.-a).

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/bio_99_250

4.3 First Lady Suzanne Mubarak, the First National Council For Women (NCW) and Gender Washing

Regardless of their level of modernity, Arab countries like Egypt have been seeking to include women in their systems and structures for their strategic development and modernization programs. Nevertheless, as Farah (2005) notes, particularly regarding the conflicts and worries of the legislation practices within family courts which were argued significantly unjust in several cases. In March 2000, First Lady Suzanne Mubarak was appointed head of the National Council for Women (NCW), which had been constituted by presidential order. NCW, led by First Lady Suzanne Mubarak, is claimed to be Mubarak's regime's attempt to act supportive of the advancement of women in Egyptian society (Sika & Khodary, 2012). Prior attempts to create a national woman's apparatus following the U.N.'s request have previously been made. However, The National Council for Women became more potent in 2000 after receiving additional power and budget from the government (Khodair & Hassib, 2015). The National Council for Women's declared objective is to improve Egyptian female status in society and provide them with further opportunities to contribute to developing the nation's economy.

Even though women were subject to authoritarian rule, many influential persons in the Mubarak government worked to improve gender equality, particularly following efforts adopted by Suzanne Mubarak, who served as the country's first lady at the time (Dawoud, 2012). The National Council for Women (NCW) had a considerable role in creating political space for women's representation, and as a result, the initial female Judge was elected. This was not the only progress that took place. However, also in the year 2000, an innovative law known as Khul', a phrase in Arabic that means "to get rid of," allowed women to file for divorce upon a requirement that they return their dowries and forfeit all their financial matters entitlements. The concept was

seen as widely offensive to men due to the patriarchal attitudes embedded within society and the fact that women can quickly get rid of their husbands (Dawood, 2012).

The organization's primary goals were NCW's attempts to reduce socioeconomic disparities between men and women and address urgent female demands for social, economic, and political empowerment. However, according to Hatem (1992), some of the criticisms addressed against the NCW and other women's organizations at the time were the organizations' tight ties to Mubarak's authoritarian regime, which led to the perception that they had become instruments of the state rather than natural advocates for the empowerment of women. Nevertheless, the UNDP's programs and various U.N. Associations that work on women's initiatives help to expand the recognition and appearance of women's organizations; these programs increase understanding of women's concerns not solely in Egypt but also all over the rest of the Arab region (Hatem, 1992).

Furthermore, the NCW was given a broad mandate to accomplish that by its establishment declaration, which includes the following (National Council for Women, 2007): Policy reforms should promote women to become financially independent, and growth programs should consider their involvement. Through tackling specific difficulties, this national strategy aids women in making progress; the panel is in charge of evaluating women's policies and making suggestions to the relevant institutions; to examine proposed female-related legislation and regulations prior to they being approved in order to advance the situation of women; To offer women guidance on numerous situations to promote women's rights in forums and organizations throughout the world; the creation of a documentation center to gather data on women and the execution of research and studies; to hold occasions focused on women's problems; To better comprehend the role of women, their rights, and their duties, organize educational seminars; The public is kept informed of the Council's objectives and actions through publications. The Council may also be consulted on any

matters by the President in office. The constrained attitude towards women's liberty has significant repercussions. It prevents women from participating in social issues and encourages discrimination against women in powerful positions (Zakariya, 2019). In addition, the politics of economic liberalization, which had a significant strategic value, significantly impacted the increase of female affluence. Due to the economic, social, and ideological divisions among genders within the government of Egypt, the liberties of women have been neglected or dismissed on both an international and national scale, making it more critical than ever to establish a coherent entity that helped and sought to fulfill the requirements of Egyptian society (Sabbagh, 1996).

The National Council for Women also offers initiatives funded by modest funds and empowering programs for women who are the primary responsible of households. In addition, there are also resources for female entrepreneurial development and political involvement. The organization includes chapters in 26 governorates and 11 panels to handle concerns from women. One of the panels is charged with enacting the function of NGOs. NGOs promote their endeavors, satisfy the requirements of the communities that they help, track, and assess their actions, provide ideas and suggestions on how to improve their positions and raise knowledge of their privileges and rights (National Council for Women, 2007). Some of the most potent feminist NGOs have not been featured on this panel, even though occasionally, they are requested to attend events. However, since there has yet to be a national agreement on women's concerns and its close relations to governance, the NCW's power to influence government policies is constrained even though it helped establish Khul' law and family justice systems and modify the Citizenship Law. Functioning inside the state, even if it contradicts its policy, is necessary for the organization's effectiveness.

Nawal El Saadawi, one of the NCW critics, claimed Egyptian authoritarianism intended Suzanne Mubarak to be the head of the women's organization and that it sought to do this by excluding other organizations, notably Nawal's own Arab Women Solidarity Association. She also noted the positive contributions made by NCW, including helping to end female genital mutilation and helping women acquire the right to divorce and name their children regardless of their marital status (El Saadawi, 1977). Later in this chapter, these subjects will be covered in greater detail. The women's movement has addressed These kinds of problems for many years (El Saadawi, 2013). Later in this chapter, these subjects will be covered in greater detail. However, it is crucial to highlight that even though such topics were raised and recognized throughout the establishment of this organization, another governmental objective was to reach international audience attention. The NCW, along with the leadership of Suzanne Mubarak, was capable of being acknowledged for its efforts on a global scale and helped bring in numerous funds to the country under the hidden frame of it being towards empowerment of women in Egyptian society. Mubarak periodically supported women's rights to win over international donors. Autonomous women's organizations remained legally allowed, but the state tightly supervised and controlled their operations (Johansson-Nogues, 2013).

Nevertheless, following the years of 2000, however, several new laws were adopted and approved to enhance the liberties of women in many circumstances (Farah, 2004); among the essential legislative restrictions on female liberty, which were eventually reversed with the support of the government, including the elimination of the prohibition of females traveling abroad regardless of their male partner's approval and the citizenship legislation.

This contributes to the understanding that NCW could be one of the main pillars that advocated gender washing tactics under the Mubarak regime. The emergence of advocating

women's empowerment and recognizing their concerns being connected with Suzanne Mubarak; was claimed to be part of the Mubarak regime's goal of becoming recognized by the international world as a civil society arbiter. Given the fact that every organization had a unique perspective on how women should be seen as citizens and that certain groups were under the jurisdiction of the government, the size and breadth of civil society organizations increased and finally matured into women empowerment initiatives and movements (Sika & Khodary, 2012). For instance, the fact that the first lady was primarily responsible for the women's initiatives and organizations meant that it was closely tied to political intervention and manipulation. For instance, the Council advocating for women's empowerment highlighted the problem of domestic violence towards women in Egypt before the initial Beijing Conference for Women. However, the government attempted to prevent this issue from being tackled in Beijing (Sika & Khodary, 2012). As a result, newly formed women's organizations frequently discover that their perspectives on subjects could be improved. These organizations have also strongly contested other organizations' positions on women's rights, such as the right to inherit property, which Sharia law prohibits.

Both the legal and democratic facets of universal rights are effectively addressed by the National Council for Women. Instead of criticizing the legal framework, they contend that perhaps the best approach to advance women's rights is to recognize how it disadvantages their ability to have a well-written law. They can use global law as a framework and therefore fall inside the realm of law by citing The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). They emphasize that female liberties are a requirement for effective administration by highlighting the significance of women's rights, and making the case for upholding them would result in stable government, democratic systems, and a more powerful Egypt. The NCW is a government agency that promotes Egyptian women's empowerment by

organizing programs that assist women and their liberties under the management and supervision- which, with the government's leadership and the President's wife, was perceived liable. They can acquire state funding and get around rules which pertain to non-governmental organizations because of their national and international connections. Additionally, by endorsing their projects with Islamic credibility, working with religious authorities strengthens their case. During this process, the organization attempted to import women's rights into the Egyptian setting.

Nevertheless, needs to be clarified to what extent the laws they changed and the effects they had. Furthermore, it needs to be evident whether their programs and amenities are adjusted to the concerns women face in their lives and to what extent it eases their access to their rights. The NCW uses the legal and judicial systems that already exist to further its objectives, but when we come to accessing the actual empowerment and rights that women could obtain, it becomes apparent that not much was achieved.

Globalization and the ensuing global debates regarding the significance of rights for humanity, especially women's rights, have become essential factors in any nation's political framework and must be addressed. Women's rights are considered an integral, perhaps the most important, component of fundamental human rights. The rights of women and societal autonomy have been addressed at several global conventions, including the International Conference on Population and Development in Egypt in 1994, the Fourth International Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the First Arab Women's Summit in Cairo in 2000, and the Second Arab Women's Summit in Casablanca in 2001(Majed, 2005). Developing women to become more productive across every aspect of a nation is crucial for the advancement of civilization, according to the present global discourse. Since women need to have roles of significance and influence and

become involved in the decision-making process in their nations, women must be encouraged to prosper and be recognized, especially within a state's establishment and execution of public policy- women's concerns must be considered for them to be capable of overcoming their challenges (Majed, 2005). Moreover, the Egyptian state establishment of the NCW served and showed an increased interest in boosting the role of women within society. This stemmed from the belief that the autocratic Mubarak regime could rule and shut down opposition nationally and criticism internationally.

Moreover, the formation of the Ombudsman Office for Gender Equality in 2002, which accepted suggestions from women and offered services for them, was one of the accomplishments of the National Council of Women. Although they investigated women's complaints, this office lacked the legal jurisdiction to do so, hence one could claim that the office's viability and efficacy were seriously questioned (Kansouh-Habib, 2011). The following section will discuss the most important law that's Suzanne Mubarak was greatly recognized for which was the law of 2000, namely the Khul' Law.

4.4 Mubarak and Gender Washing During the 2000s

The following section will begin by discussing Khul' law and showing how it was implemented as an attempt of the Mubarak regime gender washing the global arena, since the law was implemented in times of international negotiations with Egypt. Following, will be an overview of the transformations and developments of personal status laws, citizenship laws, polygamy laws, as well as child custody and divorce laws. Each law will be briefly discussing the historical developments that were undertaken as an attempt to better understand the context in which these laws were formulated. This section will end with how such laws were only modified in favor of

women in society and how changes were made at a time where the regime was being globally criticized for violating human rights. The analysis at the end of this section serves to explain how the Mubarak regime use of the gender washing tactic was an attempt to manipulate the use of family laws and policies that empowered women in a way that would improve the overall reputation of the regime on a global scale and improve the image of Egypt in response to international pressure that pushed the regime to follow democratic transition and in order to hinder the human rights violations that predominated the Egyptian society's political climate.

4.41 Law of the Year: The Khul' Law

The enactment of the current marriage contract to defend women's rights and the Khul legislation was a first step towards democratizing the international image of the Mubarak's autocratic rule. In order to clear up an accumulation of situations, Law No. 1 was passed in January 2000. It allowed women to file for Khul's divorce in exchange for giving up their monetary entitlements. Nevertheless, it made it easier for urfi relationships to utilize the legal system and establish an additional marriage contract (Alsadda, 2011). The implementation of Khul' Law in 2000 had been seen as a novel idea in the media and the Egyptian legislature, although the Quran and Islamic culture already outlined very similar conceptions. The Quran indicates securing procedures even if the term "Khul'" is not mentioned directly in the text. Khul represents a similar instance that was formed throughout the period of the Prophet and approved by him throughout Hadiths and Sunnah (Soliman, 2022). To reduce the judiciary's queues, the Khul' Law No. 1 of 2000 was implemented to simplify and expedite the rejection of legal proceedings and personal status law matters (Al-Sharmani, 2011). A woman is granted the right to lawfully divorce her husband without his agreement, provided she returns all the financial rights that are within the

marriage contract and gives up her dowry (Al-Sharmani, 2011). A woman could lawfully divorce her husband despite having to prove what went wrong throughout her marriage experience (Al-Sharmani, 2011).

The changes in 2005 can be better understood through the lens of important changes that were occurring within the region. First and foremost, the March 2003 US invasion of Iraq prompted waves of democratic reforms across the Middle East, driven by the fear that the US would cause further conflict in other countries (Looney, 2004). As a consequence of this wave of liberalization, Egypt saw changes to its electoral laws resulting in the somewhat loosening of restrictions. Moreover, in the 2000s the Mubarak regime was faced with several obstacles such as the reduction of aid. Given the aim of cutting financial support by 50% over ten years, the US started to reduce its aid in 2000 at a pace of 5% annually. Budgeted at \$105 million in 2005, USAID significantly raised its spending on promoting democratization in Arab nations from \$27 million in 2001 (Rutherford, 2013). Furthermore, activists and members of civil society organizations participate in protests alongside other forms of open opposition in favor of governmental reform. For instance, the Kifaya protest in Egypt organized many protesters to demand the resignation of President Mubarak's administration's resignation and hold free and fair presidential contests in the early months of 2005 (Rutherford, 2013).

In the face of such obstacles, the Mubarak regime resorted to previous tactics of gender washing laws in order to divert attention away from the human rights violations. Moreover, these changes can be better understood against the backdrop of the wave of liberalization in light of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Indeed, the regime was constantly urged to permit greater political competitiveness and to show better regard for the rights of people by the United States in order to achieve this aim. In response, Mubarak declared that he would permit free parliamentary elections

in the autumn of 2005. This led to a constitutional amendment in May 2005 that allowed candidates to go against Mubarak in elections, but he still won, stayed in power, and served for his Fifth term (Rutherford, 2013).

Mubarak tried to announce his developments and promote his national reforms on a global scale and in internationally view media outlets. A good example is in an interview with The Bloomberg Edge, on the Charlie Rose Show in 2009_Mubarak announces his constitutional changes of more than 30 articles of the Egyptian constitution in the interest of stability and in order to ensure them with a good future that would last even beyond to his rule.²³ In addition, he discusses several times throughout the interview his support to opposition groups and the freedom of speech which he encourages the Egyptian population to practice within society- this completely contradicts the relatives and many human violations which he was attempting to hinder and which lead to his overthrow less than 2 years post this interview.²⁴ This shows how part of his plan to empower women through making reforms in the constitution (even if those reforms did not get implemented adequately) a gender washing tactic which served as an attempt to hinder his autocratic behaviors, many human right violations as well as represent himself in an image of a “democratic” ruler in a way that is favorable on a global scale.

4.42 Sharia and Family Laws

Overall, the personal status law in Egypt is an example of the conventional patriarchal Islamic social system that restricts women's freedoms outlined in the Quran and Islamic scholarship. The immutability of Sharia as a body of principles binding Muslims is not supported

²³ YouTube. (2009). Egypt Under President Mubarak - Bloomberg. YouTube. Retrieved June 16, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXFghnNbG30>.

²⁴ Ibid

by historical Muslim practice. Further, throughout history, Sharia has not had exclusive jurisdiction. Instead, the state has always exercised some level of secular jurisdiction. Even in the areas where Sharia has historically been applied, it has always been subject to state supervision. Also, social developments and legal reforms change and are exposed to selective enforcement of norms of different interpretations of Sharia (Soliman, 2022). What remains to be determined is how personal status law remains to operate under the rule of Sharia, whereas secular principles regulate other factors within the legal framework.

Nowadays, except for personal status law, all facets of the legal system in the majority of Muslim nations are controlled under secular state legislation. The law of Sharia which covers much of personal status laws due to the fact that family law was formerly the most advanced section of Sharia, where judges possessed the most significant amount of authority. A possible explanation in this regard has been offered that family law problems are governed Islamically more comprehensively than various topics. Sharia cannot be rigorously applied to issues about business, crimes, or land ownership, and therefore, it is claimed that it is more realistic and doable to undertake improvements in such legal areas for this very reason. Furthermore, the administrations of Muslim nations adopted the West's divide of the public and private spheres. Therefore, due to personal status legislation being politically irrelevant, it legally remained neglected and limited to Sharia laws and customs (Soliman, 2022).

Gender discriminatory laws cause a national challenge and international pressure remains in the Arab world where sharia law is adopted. However, governments such as that of Mubarak at the time continued to show their interest in modernizing, democratizing, and becoming increasingly secular; and thus, the regime developed policies and constitutional articles, but the

fundamental ideas guiding family law remained constant (Farah, 2005). In other words, even in times of Mubarak where women were being granted with laws that gave them their right to divorce legally, the procedures and processes were not flexible nor easy and therefore the changes were not as favorable towards women as they were expected to be and announced of being globally. The primary fallacy in framing the concerns of women and in attempt to resolve them within modifications done to existing family law, could be argued inadequate since the existing laws are extensively grounded in the traditions and principles of Sharia (Soliman, 2022). Secularizing personal status legislation has been frequently contested due to the overwhelmingly male-dominated culture within the Egyptian and Arab world societies. Therefore, women's equality has been overlooked because of family law being based on the diverse religious interpretations that inherently developed on unnecessary traditions and principles (Farah, 2005).

Regarding citizenship laws, many improvements were made in Egypt, whereas the government chose to provide policies which were more favorable for women. Prior to 2003, only the children of a man were eligible for citizenship- even if he was married to a foreign woman; however, following an additional two years of marriage, the mother qualified as well. A marriage involving an Egyptian female and a foreign male partner could not grant him the Egyptian nationality that she held. Throughout 2009 various women favorable policies were passed. Such polices included the possibility of imprisonment for a male that does not pay alimony owed by his former wife and the elimination of the rule requiring a woman to have her husband's consent before traveling (Dawoud, 2012). By clearly contradicting Article 7 of Law 97 of 1959, which declared that all Egyptian citizens, regardless of their sexual orientation, had the freedom to obtain a passport, the Supreme Court concluded in 2000 prohibiting the law and stating it as unlawful (Farah, 2009).

However, when discussing the issue of polygamy, it is crucial to highlight that it is legal under Egyptian personal status legislation. In 1985, the need for the husband to disclose his marital status within a marriage contract was no longer legal and there was a modification in the law that required a to inform his wife(s) of the other marriage he implies to commit. Even though, as Abu-Odeh (2004) highlights that the Quran condemns polygamy, it is also essential within the Islamic texts that a husband must inform and get the consent of his earlier wife(s). Also, the Quran also says that there should be a necessary reason that reconcile with Islamic Sharia for another marriage and that a man has the responsibility to treat and represent equal supervisions for each wife. Therefore, one could argue that polygamy is only accepted in Islam due to Prophet Muhammed's obligation from God to expand the predominance of Sharia and Islam not due to his high sexual needs for instance. However, a wife(s) has the right to ask for a divorce from the husband if he got married without her knowledge and if the new marriage will harm her either morally or financially. A woman is given one year after being formally notified of her partner's new relationship to file for divorce. On the other hand, in these situations, it is relatively challenging to demonstrate damage, particularly emotional suffering is hard to prove (Abu-Odeh, 2004). Even though the law allowed women to file for divorce on various grounds, such as mishandling money, leaving the marriage, or having significant defects such as a long-term disease, nevertheless, the court's judgment in evaluating these potential outcomes remained unclear (Abu-Odeh, 2004). For instance, a woman must have at least two witnesses who can verify the husband's abusive behavior to show how it has negatively impacted her. This testimony is subject to the jury's unrestricted interpretation. Therefore, if the wife cannot obtain medical reports documenting the abuse or does not have witnesses, it is unlikely that her case would easily be settled in court. (Edwards & Cornwall, 2014).

On the other hand, when discussing child custody and divorce laws it is essential to note that establishing the family law mechanism to enhance women's rights included attempts to safeguard female entitlement to alimony, child support, and custody of children until age 15 (Alsadda, 2011). In 1985, according to Law No. 100, a mother was granted custody of her children up to a particular maturity- 10 years of age (Abu-Odeh, 2004). According to Egyptian law, the father is obligated to provide financial support to his children until they reach maturity age as well as grants the mother retains a constitutional right to remain in her marital home for as long as she has custody of her children and in some cases until she chooses to remarry (Abu-Odeh, 2004). The law was amended in 2005 Law No. 4 establishes that the custodial period for a child ends when they turn 15 years old, and that the judge has the power to give the children the option of living with the custodial mother once they reach adulthood (Soliman, 2009). The question here remains whether the autocratic leader did such women empowerment tactics to gender wash the international audience away from the current social, political, and economic disappointments the government faced. Furthermore, more changes were made in laws granting women the ability to file divorce legally thanks to the later establishment of Khul' law of 2000. The reasons for a woman's legal divorce in the Personal Status Law 1929, revised in 1985 but as mentioned before, there are several limitations that apply in a most of these situations (Soliman, 2022). Also, it is argued that a woman is required to present reason and proof for wanting to get a divorce (Chemais, 1996). However, there is no specified legal standards that she should base her reasoning upon. According to the legal system of cassation, a husband's injury might result from abuse that is either verbal or physical (Chemais, 1996). The extent of the harm can only be visibly determined and seen to be used as evidence; after that, the court evaluate the case. Different degrees of injury are experienced in different cases throughout Egyptian society. In this regard, if local societal practices

and conventions allow the husband to discipline his wife through violent means or acts of aggression, a court can conclude that limited physical aggression is not “too damaging”. Despite many perceived inconsistencies, harm is defined by the Egyptian Court of Cassation as "inflicting verbal or physical injury on the woman in a way that does not benefit people of her social status" (Abu-Odeh, 2004, p.1136).

Nevertheless, Islam and Sharia do not support such injustice towards women and harmful and limiting directives that restrict women from achieving their rights and in which concern issues of family law are unacceptable by Islam itself. The Quran explicitly states that Islam rejects rules stating that both genders ought to enjoy equal privileges and that husbands should not abuse or harm their wives in any way. "Women shall have rights similar to the rights against them." (Sura 2, verse 228 of the Holy Quran). "Men must... not take (their wives) back to injure them, (or) to take undue advantage" (Sura 2, verse 228 of the Holy Quran). Therefore, it is clear that the way that legislators handled divorce in family law was and remains discriminatory. Discriminatory to the extent that Sharia law does not justify women’s lack of rights within Egyptian society, but rather the Islamic law itself does not accept injustice for women.

Therefore, the efforts became questionable since women continued to have increasing concerns even after the many modifications in law that the Mubarak government implemented in favor of women. The governmental objectives and tactics of representing their many "democratizing," "modernizing," and "liberalizing" tactics could again be argued to be serving not the national audiences and those vulnerable and suffering within the state but rather to be internationally applauded and recognized for the positive achievements the regime was objectively aiming to show the global arena. Such efforts were being made to shift away the actual suffering of those vulnerable within the state, to quiet western nation's multiple allegations of human rights

violations which the autocratic Mubarak government was nationally prosecuting, and to have a favorable image to the world to achieve financial assistance. Transforming or concealing?

In the 2000s the Mubarak regime was marked by international attention and efforts of pressure to stop numerous human rights violations. Accordingly, the regime could be argued to choose to utilize the aforementioned laws, through gender washing to export the image of liberty and democratization, rather for the actual objective to transform realities of the women suffering within the Egyptian society. Therefore, changes in policies and developments in family laws during the 2000s could be argued to be the regime's attempt to divert attention from several issues that will be further discussed below.

Developed nations of the West, recognized the absence of democratization in the area as the primary cause of the present political crisis. At the time, there was also the development of the Arab Human Development Reports for 2002-2005. The three main topics focused for this research were: the absence of liberty in the Arab world; the lack of rights for women; and the poor quality of educational facilities. The report was mainly implemented as an attempt to help every civilian achieve their right to exercise their freedoms, political liberty, and their right to participate in national governance. The results showed that upholding these ideals is essential to preserving human freedom, which is the foundation for social and economic progress (Rutherford, 2013).

Throughout Mubarak's administration, the implementation of the Emergency Law was maintained. Such law was used as a tool for the government to be capable of justifying the imprisonment and biased prosecutions of innocent civilians. Amnesty International labeled the national security forces' breaches of human rights in Egypt throughout the 1990s and 2000s as "systematic" (Reza, 2007). Many human rights activists were facing prosecution in 2000. Among

them was Saad Eddin Ibrahim, who was detained on suspicion of receiving unauthorized international money to create and disseminate reveals that were detrimental to Egypt's socioeconomic and political endeavors and that risk threatening the sustainability of the government, endangered the security of nationals, and reflect poorly on Egypt's image internationally (Yefet-Avshalom & Roniger, 2006). This incident seemed to impact the groups advancing democratic and gender equality within Egyptian society and the broader civil rights movements. This was because it aroused awareness in Western nations and demonstrated the workings of an authoritarian administration. The fragile equilibrium of rights for individuals with rhetoric that promote democratic transformation was jeopardized by the administration's hostility to networks arguing for multiple opinions and reforms (Yefet-Avshalom & Roniger, 2006). Despite this, the authorities prosecuted Eddin Ibrahim with the accusation of his intentions to spread untrue information to the international community, which they assumed he practiced alongside Western efforts to delegitimize the Egyptian legal framework (Yefet-Avshalom & Roniger, 2006). Ibrahim was entitled to protection from the U.S. since he was an American citizen, and the United States applied financial pressure even though Israel was receiving funding and assistance from the U.S. while violating the rules of international human rights. Following Ibrahim's arrest in July 2000, the Egyptian government came in for severe condemnation from the international community, which considered the incident politically motivated (Yefet-Avshalom & Roniger, 2006).

The Mubarak government faced numerous objections against its legitimacy due to the Egyptian state's apparent lack of legitimacy, ideological hegemony, and, most importantly, economic repression. The economic situation in Egypt at the time was in an extreme and weak position, and foreign assistance and funds were its primary source and objective. Therefore, the

state needed to repress those internal political opponents by enforcing coercive measures(Cook, 2000); and, at the same time, mediate relationships with the U.S. and those from whom the state needed to yield funding. Challenges to Mubarak's authoritarianism included Egypt's dependence on significant foreign financial support, which originates from the same source and nation that it despises for its impact on the international movement for human rights(Yefet-Avshalom & Roniger, 2006).

Furthermore, the Ibrahim case was not the only human rights violation act that the Mubarak regime objectively worked on hindering at the time. Government representatives frequently took pride in Egypt's substantial freedom of expression and media censorship. Once more, the truth is quite distinct, and international media were heavily restricted and sometimes even shut off. For instance, the authorities purportedly banned the Ibn Khaldun Center's Civil Society publications, Huquq al-Insan, and numerous publications related to concerns of the Egyptian Organisation for the Protection of Human Rights throughout 2000 (Cook, 2000). Another instance was the Secretary General of the EOHR was charged in 1998 and 2000 with taking cash from outside to harm Egypt's reputation abroad. This followed the EOHR's publication of papers detailing police abuse of people in the primarily Coptic Christian town of al-Kushah in 1998 and the causes of civilian unrest and violent activities in early 2000 (Pratt, 2006).

Nevertheless, given Mubarak's regime's insufficient internal finance sources, foreign financing was of requirement. Foreign funds appeared necessary to revive the nation's struggling economy and reform its political structure to benefit the regime and the nation's image throughout the global community and within reestablishing regional relations. This is very widely depicted in the interview with the President in the American show featuring Charlie Rose (2000). Throughout the interview, Mubarak is asked about Middle Eastern relations with the U.S. and Israeli relations

within the Middle East. The interview discusses that the primary purpose for his visit to Washington D.C. was to meet up with President Bill Clinton and numerous other U.S. leaders to negotiate the Middle Eastern peace process. Mubarak was performing in a sort of mediating tone to negotiate and discuss the establishment of peace with American and Arab relations. In the interview, he discusses that the lack of international governments and the Israeli government's understanding of Arab mentality may be the leading and most significant cause behind the concerns they have among each other. Mubarak also discusses the need for an international organization that collaborates with global powers to fight terrorism since numerous funding is being driven from European countries to arm and strengthen terrorist groups. Despite Mubarak's several Human Violations and autocratic ruling strategy, he spoke in a way intended to show his determination for the security of civilians, especially those within the Arab region (Rose, 2000). Even though, as mentioned before, the peace of Egypt with Israel was regarded as a "cold peace" to most developed countries, Mubarak was trying to develop his relations with the nations of the Arab region with great efforts to participate and help security within nations of the Arab region for instance by participation in the gulf war and many others which eventually let Egypt previously become readmitted to the Arab League.

After Mubarak prioritized the protection and security of the Gulf as a crucial component of Egypt's security during the First Gulf War between Iraq and Iran, the Gulf nations acknowledged the strategically important necessity of the Egyptian Military to secure them (Elmaghraby, 2019). Many efforts were taken to support the establishment of networks on a global level. Additionally, amid the Egyptian management's employing force to block the formalization of the system of government, there was a continual attempt to maintain the impression of democratic change. Yasir Arafat, the leader of the Palestinians, regularly traveled to Egypt in late 1999 and early 2000 in

order to win the Egyptian President's assistance in challenging discussions with the Israeli government. Mubarak, trying to reestablish strong ties with neighboring Arab nations, represented himself in a position that made him stand out as the defender of Arab interests by publicly criticizing the Ehud Barak administration on issues such as Israeli collisions, Jerusalem's situation, and the implementation of U.N. resolutions (Cook, 2000).

Hosni Mubarak was not only acting as a mediator between the gulf states and their US-Israel relations, but Mubarak's only option, with the economy suffering severe damage and repression, was to regulate, reach an agreement, and entice investment from abroad with support from the international community and regional governments. This was also a crucial purpose that he went to the U.S. then.

As a result, privatization failed to alter the balance of power in politics despite the Egyptian government having 29% of its state-owned enterprises in the year 2000. The Mubarak dictatorship failed to preserve its hold on authority utilizing encouraging civic engagement and plurality, but rather by means that objectively maintained distributive socioeconomic patronage along with a limited kind of authoritarian rule of leadership which enabled direct influence on parties and electoral processes (Kienle, 2004).

After Mubarak prioritized developing relations with the Arab world and significantly acting upon the protection and security of the Gulf as a crucial component of Egypt's security during the First Gulf War between Iraq and Iran, the Gulf nations acknowledged the strategically important necessity of Egyptian Military to secure them (Elmaghraby, 2019).

Furthermore, Egyptian-American ties were further influenced by the 9/11 terrorist attack due to Egypt's outspoken support for the battle against terrorism. However, the relationship was in jeopardy primarily because of the regime's persistent human rights violations and because it

decided to send technical aid and training instead of sending soldiers to Baghdad or Kabul. Additionally, it opposed the 2003 American invasion of Iraq (Elmaghraby, 2019).

Nonetheless, as mentioned before, the Mubarak dictatorship was also attempting to get financial assistance from outside. In addition, creating a uniform bloc of Western interests aiming to rule Egypt sought to conceal autocracies and human rights abuses to safeguard Egyptian global image under the umbrella of preserving national interests (Kienle, 2004). This brings us to the main argument of this thesis that the regime's sudden initiatives and implications towards empowering gender relations and women's status within the nation were an attempt for the state to improve its international standing and not for the intentions of empowering women and resulting in women suffering from the system even until this day. Notwithstanding, Due to the government's inability to address women's fundamental requirements, the U.N. and its branching institutions that concern women have long-established women's agendas on the global level (Guenena & Wassef,1999). Therefore, the Egyptian state's attempts to empower and create a policy that aids vulnerable women within society could be argued as a result of international pressures. Analyzing the governmental motives compared to the actual intentions of empowering women in society becomes very important. Therefore, it could be argued that the implementation and amendments of laws do not effectively nor significantly influence women's role in reality. The governmental efforts were not empowering women with intentions to support those discriminated against nationally but rather for gender washing the international arena to mediate relations with them to attract foreign investment and financial support and improve the image of the Mubarak regime's autocratic political order.

In conclusion, this section aimed to analyze the Mubarak regime's use of gender washing as well as the manner in which his regime advanced women's rights in the name of democratization

in order to export the image of a liberalized Egypt in the face of numerous obstacles. Indeed, while these tactics did aid in the advancement of women's rights, offering women similarly restricted privileges as men in an autocratic political system which is said to be an illusory way of thinking, because it will not make a country closer to democracy or make it look and be represented in a democratic manner. This is particularly true when discussing attempts of democratization of Egypt, since different autocratic governments attempted to democratize the Egyptian state through incorporation and empowerment of Egyptian women (Kansouh-Habib, 2011).

CHAPTER 5: Gender Washing within the context of the Middle East.

5.1 Women's Rights in the Post-Colonial Middle East

In the post-colonial era and as an effort by Arab nations to fight for national independence, modernizing processes were done by nationalist leaders using a strategy of universalism and the modernization of regime leadership programs. They adopted Western practices in legislation and operation, finance, and socio-cultural traditions. Post-colonial states within the Arab region became aware of their rule lacking progress and therefore progressed and developed towards liberating and empowering women within their society by promoting and creating a contemporary society, which would serve as the foundation for modernization and sovereignty for their regimes and nations. They supported a new foundation and empowerment towards well-educated women to make them nationally and internationally represented and recognized in a contrasting perspective created by the West. Therefore, patriotic efforts to modernize and authoritarian leaders' fight for legitimacy became symbolized and represented through the empowerment of women (Pratt, 2020). This brings us to the central proposition of this research, which is that authoritarian regimes modernize and empower women in their societies not because they are supporters of state feminism but rather to gain greater recognition from democracies and the international arena.

Furthermore, the Cold War was advantageous for advancing women's rights because it ended ideological disputes that prevented the emergence of a unifying position towards women globally with the UN international conferences that are argued to have achieved collaboration between the government and nonprofit organizations expanding and branching networks with women activists from different nations (Chen, 1995). Additionally, it was argued that the Women's Summit in 1995's dominant voice concerning gender equality preserved the status quo by

advocating advancing gender equality within the frameworks already in place and dismissing the potential political and social changes (Otto, 1996). Arab governments became active concerning global standards for gender equality. Many joined the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), demonstrating their commitment to developing their nations and following globally recognized gender equality standards. The endorsement of universal gender equality principles by Arab governments has positively influenced legislative and policy reforms. At the same time, the extent and reality of the adoption of laws for the benefit of women remain questionable (Pratt, 2020).

After analyzing and reviewing the Presidential regimes of Sadat and Mubarak, this chapter is intended to represent a general overview of why policies within the contemporary Arab world maintain and continue to utilize similar gender washing strategies until. To paraphrase, the purpose of this chapter is to show why this topic does not only compromise a historical perspective but continues to remain relevant in the contemporary era and requires continued research within the political science realm to deeper understand its significance. Gender washing could be argued to predominately exist within current policies adopted by not only democratic but also more importantly, nondemocratic and conservative systems that attempt to portray their nations within the framework of modernizing systems. Also, it is worth noting that Middle Eastern states do not appear to be democratizing yet at the same time, indicate strategies including but limited to gender washing, thus appealing to the international arena but not the domestic front. Therefore, reviewing the practice of gender washing requires further research in order to assess the degree to which it affects the women and families living in such conditions.

5.2 Gender Washing Within the Middle East

When there is a notable and recognizable representation of women, prominent governments and the country figures show drastic support and commitment in advocating international women's empowerment and rights. In this context, gender washing is sometimes reflected as "whitewashing," due to the fact that both concepts describe efforts to hide unfavorable facts concerning an organization, a group, or a person from the general population (Pratt, 2020). The concept of gender washing also suggests that states may be using their dedication to equal rights for women to their advantage as part of legitimation strategies and in order to help improve their international image rather than the practical advancement of women's empowerment (Allan, 2019). In other words, gender washing can sometimes be viewed as a governmental tactic within a regime that is based on manipulating notions of support for women's empowerment. Promoting gender-based rights might serve a political purpose and is often utilized by the state to achieve political gains and to help improve its international image. The process of gender washing does not respect the commodified beneficiary of "exchanges" but instead reinforces the dominating standing of the reciter of these kinds of "exchanges" (Russell, 2019). Gender washing serves a critical political purpose which is often utilized by the state in order to achieve political gains and to help improve their international image. Moral superiority is used to raise the stakes to extend civil liberties. As a result of these conditions, Mason (2013) argues that the state has deployed action to support gender and sexual identity, along with ethnic rationality- which is also characterized as gender washing as a humanitarian and defense mechanism. Furthermore, gender washing is also known as a 'discourse of false state feminism,' where authoritarian regimes make empty promises about promoting gender equality to appease international institutions or investors

(Allan, 2020, p. 106), as well as a 'specific organizational process that creates the illusion that an organization is acting equitably and fairly.' (Fox-Kirk et al., 2020, p. 587).

It is argued that gender washing primarily serves a fundamental political purpose especially within nondemocratic regimes. Such administrations may illustrate support for women's admittance and engagement in public involvement resulting in essential contributions towards to what appears to be the modernization of their own countries. Thus, it is asserted that such feminist ideals can be transformed into a legitimization tool in response to overall criticism. The long-standing interaction between gender and modernity and the sovereign position may help explain the paradoxical relationship between women's rights and authoritarianism (Pratt, 2020). For instance, nondemocratic governments appear to promote women's empowerment for different reasons. Certain authors postulate that gender washing is used as a means of maintaining control over their political opposition; to strengthen their status and image internationally (which is helpful when they seek foreign donors and the modernization of their states); and consequently, gender washing for authoritarian governments is seen as a "game of procedural legitimacy" (Gray et al, 2017).

Similarly, it is argued that gender equality is often used as a tool by nondemocratic systems to hide stringent laws and regulations with repressive and damaging effects. Accordingly, gender washing can be perceived as a tactic employed by nondemocratic regimes to progressively represent themselves as modernizing entities, subsequently enhancing their national and international standing and reputation. Through gender washing, certain regimes can earn international acclaim by projecting the image of supporters of gender equality.

Gender washing refers to this image-making and its political goals. This aligns with government financing policies and gender washing initiatives, which utilize funds to support the

power of these regimes while appearing to promote "modernization," "progress," and "women's empowerment" (Bjarnegård & Zetterberg, 2022). Advocating for women's empowerment helps regimes obtain substantial financial support at the price of independent women's action. Government agencies have argued to have taken donations from unaffiliated community organizations. Additionally, significant foreign funding from international organizations (i.e., USAID, the EU, UN agencies, and the World Bank) has contributed significant sums of money to support women throughout the Middle East (Tadros, 2020). The advancement of women represents one of the significant funds provided by the US Middle East Partnership Initiative, which took place after 9/11 to fight terrorism in the Middle East (Salime, 2010). Promoting the advancement of women globally, and in particular, Arab states, is an essential revenue. It is utilized as a prospective funding technique that allows the co-option of national women's activists and feminist organizations to expand their networking and partnership on a broader scheme.

Gender washing strategies are employed to regulate and control dissent, and subsequently preserve those in positions of power (Allan, 2019). Furthermore, state policies and regulations restricting women's conduct create distinctions between genders. Therefore, a regime's promotion of constructing international gender equality and standards platform, can be argued to be predominantly serving a propagation that naturalizes the distinctions between the interest of establishing a governing body and securing a system of rule (Pratt, 2020).

Even though many countries in the Arab region have issues that resulted from the widening socio-political gaps concerning liberties and the rising rates of poverty due to liberal economic policies, gender equality, and women integrating a positive impression of the authoritarian government's behavior, in practice, governments seem to be responsive to calls for democratization by enacting improvements for female liberties without endangering the institutional framework

and governmental strategies that advocate the leader's autocratic legitimacy and centralized power (Ottaway, 2004). Therefore, although autocratic regimes promote women's rights, it is argued that they are only doing so to prove themselves as not extremists and to strengthen society economically and to a path of modernization. In addition, governmental tactics are used to promote a more modern image of their societies internationally and maintain religious identities. In doing so, they are also gaining public support from women. Indeed, it can be argued that these regimes are simultaneously manipulating women for the benefit of the regime rather than to actually empower women. Gender equality has been advocated in autocracies to gain support both on a domestic and international level (Tripp, 2019). As a result, gender washing may be utilized in various circumstances. However, they always serve the same purpose and are used as a political tool to conceal repressive regimes and their oppressive natures. Other scholars also highlight the politicization of women's rights. Indeed, when authoritarian regimes exploit and employ gender equality, it is pushed with covert goals. Making a dictatorship look contemporary, liberal, and democratic serves to hide its continuous repressive practices. Whether deliberate or accidental, a vulnerability analysis is a part of autocratic gender washing (Bjarnegård & Zetterberg, 2022).

Women's rights movements in the Middle East have traditionally benefited from or been hampered by cultural norms and gender roles. In the past, states within the Middle East have restricted political, social, and cultural rights for women, especially since they lacked appropriate and adequate levels of knowledge regarding political and civic knowledge and experience (Establishment, 2012). Each state must invest in empowering women via education, political engagement, and economic opportunity to attain the same social and economic growth. This component of modernity and equality is complicated by the deeply ingrained cultural norms that have characterized Arab governments throughout history. Even though Sharia law is argued to

have great potential in advancing and strengthening Arab states economically, the economic prosperity within countries in the region is argued to be due to the women's limited and rather restricted economic participation – such limitation being posed by regimes who limit women's rights according to cultural customs and conventions rather than Sharia (Baderin, 2003). However, one could argue that in Islam, women are said to have the right to access and be granted equal educational privileges as males. Therefore, Islamic traditions and values prioritize education and do not put any guards on women regarding learning but instead promote the pursuit of information and the acquisition and dissemination of it (Buang & Suryandari, 2011). Unlike in the past when countries within the region did not provide equal educational opportunities, today, women in the region and countries such as the UAE have been able to enter historically male-dominated areas, and this is due to the increased incentives for them to pursue higher education and the fact that they now make up the majority in numerous professions (Kirdar, 2010).

Furthermore, it is crucial to say that all Abrahamic religions are argued to include patriarchal aspects. This imbalance cannot be primarily attributed to Islam. Therefore, it is crucial to pinpoint the local circumstances that have impeded the growth, empowerment, and progress of women's rights. The Middle East has varied policies on equality, hence elements like modernity have varying effects depending on the state. As an alternative, Moghadam (2003) argues that the Middle Eastern nations' cultural foundation and political structure are to blame for bias against women. Understanding women's rights is essential for providing insight into the broader status of rights and liberties for socially excluded groups. Even though there have always been female advocates for women's rights in the Middle East, male intellectuals have dominated and led most reforms and initiatives to advance women's roles in government (Kousha, 1994).

When discussing the Middle East and gender washing practices of the region's authoritarian regimes, it is crucial to make the connection between the advocacy and the shift towards the modernization of the states. It is argued that the state uses gender as a tool to further its political objectives and foreign policy objectives (Gerami, 2009). The modernization theory suggests that a state's modernization and shift from a traditional to a contemporary society are related. Haghghat (2012) argues that Arab nations' progress towards modernizing the economy followed an advancement of women's rights and empowerment. This uncertainty is likely linked to women's unequal economic possibilities and political disengagement. However, the overall problem with research on gender washing is that the understanding of women's rights is very Euro-centric, and arguably most of the existing research is done by Western men. Indeed, This section will focus on the use of different tactics and implications of gender washing within the Middle Eastern region and under diverse autocratic rulers and regimes. This section serves as the basis for the analysis of gender washing in Egypt.

Indeed, it is crucial to understand and question the broad subject of why authoritarian governments accept women's rights. Many Middle Eastern nations have recently pushed for new political procedures that allow women to become politically active and engaged (Sadiqi & Ennaji, 2013). For instance, states such as Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria have converged in their adoption of women's rights legal reforms. Compared to other nations in the region, it is undeniable that they have done it more progressively than others. Therefore, it is essential to note that even though most Middle Eastern countries share a similar religious, linguistic, and political history, women empowerment programs took place more progressively in states than others in the region (Tripp, 2019).

There are obstacles faced with the realization of advancements in women's rights. This is argued to be mainly due to how authoritarian regimes follow a system of "politics from below". Women confront several obstacles on their path to empowerment. Cultural influences, the stereotypical illustration of females, female's low self-confidence, a lack of integration among women's organizations, the efficiency of gender equality programs, flaws in the regulatory and administrative constructs, political party practices and electoral processes, skepticism about Initiative for Female empowerment, and the process of creating Women's rights Strategies are some of the challenges. However, it is argued that Arab women holding legal and professional positions is a significant accomplishment that should be maintained and honored (Al-Maaitah, et.al, 2013).

It is also crucial to highlight that there are more reasons than just religiosity determining women's advancement in the Middle East. Apart from religion (Islam), culture, economic growth, the government, socioeconomic status, and world affairs also impact the rights of females (Moghadam, 2003). There are several reasons why autocratic regimes choose to implement or further women's rights. Many incentives and motivations exist for implementing women's programs in autocratic settings. It is significant to denote that female-friendly policies in democratic settings are not always implemented with the primary goal of improving females' prosperity and position. Therefore, it is claimed that equality could serve as the foundation within which democracies are constructed. There are several risks associated with such policies that use women's rights to achieve other goals that may be metaphorical breakthroughs, but there is an element that needs to be included in the actual implementation and degree of woman inclusiveness in the overall system. During the proceedings, the border was shifted in terms of legislation, constitutional amendments, and conventions. It remains to be seen if these legal advances can be

converted adequately into fundamental rights women can associate with within their societies (Tripp, 2019).

Women's rights and the symbols that they accompany other ideals in society: modernism, development, democratization, civil rights, rationalism, a more liberal mindset of Islam, and even nationalism. Societal culture significantly impacts the modernization process and the roles of men and women within a state. As society changes and develops as a result of modernization, it is argued that top-down policy measures are adopted by governments (Inglehart & Norris, 2009). Overall, legislative revisions that empower women are planned symbolic laws and ordinances by the authorities to express a particular perspective on equality of the sexes, modernization, and particular religion. Their symbolism extends well beyond fundamental rights and is the proxy for a range of ideas from modernity to progress, nationalism, democracy, and secularism. (Tripp, 2019). Authoritarian regimes use gender equality to appear democratic to foreign audiences while enacting oppressive and harmful laws and reforms. Thus, the term gender washing and legitimization strategies advocated by regimes is used as an attempt to hide their oppressive practices and to portray themselves as a supporter of gender equality and as democratic without actually putting any effort towards democratization of their governmental ruling (Pratt, 2020; Bjarnegård & Zetterberg, 2022). For instance, Queen Rania declared improvements in female constitutional rights in Jordan in 2002 during the Arab Women's Summit in Amman. The introduction of interim legislation, previously rejected due to security concerns and the fight against terrorism, included revisions that were part of a larger package.

Also, The Jordanian King, in 2002, to promote national unity and establish national goals, included revisions pertaining to women's rights. Nevertheless, Opposition groups criticized the initiative for advancing neoliberal ideals while indirectly denying legitimacy to those disagreeing

with the political strategies of the regime (Pratt, 2020). Gender washing tactics are used not only to elevate state image to the West but also to persuade funding nations and gender washing their regimes out of their oppressive and autocratic practices; authoritarian governments may use the benefits of expanding women's rights as part of their justification efforts. For instance, in Algeria, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika improved women's rights during his rule from 1999 to 2019. He modified Algeria's 1984 Family Code in 2005 while finalizing a peace accord with Islamist insurgents. The modification raised the legal age for marriage to nineteen and stated that only the woman herself may give her approval to marry someone. More significant gender empowerment measures were also implemented under Bouteflika, giving women higher political standing and more outstanding legal options to protect themselves from assault (Bjarnegård & Zetterberg, 2022).

Another example that could be also considered is within the Lebanese government. There is no correlation between the Lebanese government's utilization of political empowerment programs designed to enable women to run for office and the institutional problems women confront. Such empowerment programs are said to be ineffective and disempowering. Consequently, it has been observed that women's political empowerment programs in Lebanon are used as a tool or used to create international propaganda without any natural substance or value, and has made it easier for women to get involved rather than to create opportunities within political institutions (Geha, 2019). Therefore, it is critical to evaluate whether women's political empowerment programs in Lebanon do not serve the purpose they are initiated to provide but instead could be argued to manipulate the use of women as a tool to gender wash nationally and internationally their governmental representation. Even Though gender washing tactics are argued to be more convincing in some countries than others (Allagui & Al-Najjar, 2018). Nevertheless, it

is critical to highlight that gender washing makes a notable appearance in Arab countries, where gender washing has helped cultivate an image of modernization in the world. Arab nations have a recognized trend of using women's rights to consolidate political power, improve international reputation, and distract from unfavorable domestic events. The tremendous shift of the Arab countries since the finding of oil wealth has necessitated a fresh look at the region's women's condition. The Middle East's prevalent oil resources have significantly aided several of the countries in the area in developing their economies. As a result, women now have more opportunities in areas like the workforce, which has helped several Middle Eastern countries participate more actively in the global economy (Moghdam, 2003).

Another recent example that surprised the world occurred in June 2018 in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), which has never garnered attention for enforcing gender equality or empowering women, and made a notable change in this area. When the KSA became the last nation in the world to grant women the right to drive, this was greatly celebrated and published in international news. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) has gained significant support from the younger generations. He has advanced many top-down reforms and policies that have led the modernization of KSA like never before. MBS aspires to present himself as a modern, reform-minded individual. Action on women's rights issues is conducive to these aims. To assist the KSA in expanding its sources of income and wean itself off the dependence on just oil. MBS's national modernization strategy, "Vision 2030," advocates empowering women to join the workforce. MBS's abrupt strategy change, which started with imprisoning women's rights activists (including those who asked that women be allowed to drive), and then transformed into a leader who is a strong advocate for women's equality and empowerment, is called into skepticism.

Furthermore, the government's persecution was only one instance in a long history of abusive human rights violations, which most recently included Jamal Khashoggi's murder in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, also in 2018. Undeniably, the decision to let women drive was driven partly by a desire to win over the Saudi populace. However, the decision has also received a tremendous amount of attention and support on a global scale (Bjarnegård & Zetterberg, 2022). Similarly, Qatar's path and progression towards modernizing the state have shown many transformations associated with women's rights and equality of opportunity. Qatari women fit into the national transformation narrative and believe it is the most significant road to autonomy and power (Golkowska, 2014).

Female equality in Arab nations is critical for the region's ongoing economic and social progress. The Arab nations have actively examined the status of women and their involvement in the development process. Women's role in the Middle East and their presence in the political realm is a complicated intersection for modernization and a sign of the region's continuous dedication to Islamic and Arabic history. However, there have always been contradictions between the advancements of states and the preservations of Arab identity and dedication to Sharia beliefs - such contraindications are especially around actions and openness within the UAE (Metcalf et al., 2009). For instance, even though many Arab nations in the region joined international conventions which address women's liberty and equality, regimes of the region were capable to adhere to all of its standards and commitments but eliminated those that linked to equality and changing the personal status law since they contradicted with the nation's Islamic sharia law (Mayer, 1997). Even though state adherence to international women's rights standards was seen as a progressive development within the Middle Eastern region, others thought about it in a different light. It was claimed that the regimes that followed advocacy of internationally accepted women's

equality standards have had unintended outcomes. What they have done was an authoritative approach that aims to change traditional norms of behavior and extend the government's authority over domestic and household concerns. At the same time, some scholars argue that Arab governments' adherence to the worldwide gender equality regime presents a more accessible and advanced image to the Western populations. However, official objections to specific global agreements based on religious grounds are a feature of diversity and national sovereignty (Chatterjee, 1993). Therefore, governmental sudden international intervention in the advancement of women's equality could be claimed to be an attempt that serves the regime's political interests, which thus disregards the manipulative actions they are taking at the expense of those who are vulnerable and violated in terms of rights in society (Pratt, 2020).

Following 9/11 and its effect on the portrayal of Arab and Muslim nations, failing governments and developing countries were disproportionately branded as perpetrators of human rights violations against women. Therefore, the Bush administration proclaimed the equality and advancement of women, pushed for democratization and promoting free market economies, which they perceived as central principles of the "war on terror," and utilized the rhetoric of female empowerment to legitimately rationalize the use of force and occupation in Afghanistan and Iraq (Salime, 2010). As a result of such discourse, gender washing became a technique for escaping their state's negative image (Mason, 2013). The mechanisms that advocate for female empowerment are a feature or tactic deployed by legislatures and therefore should be included in the mechanisms addressed in research about "nation branding." *Nation branding* is a perception created by authoritative bodies to create governmental organizations, people, and businesses using marketing and branding strategies in concert to contribute to a particular location's identity. It acts as a method of preventative management and control and a communication strategy aimed toward

the international arena (Aronczyk, 2008). In addition, support for gender equality indicates that a government is progressively developing and modernizing, especially in comparison to Islamist organizations. Therefore, promoting and encouraging networks with Western nations in fighting global terrorism and winning those secular-minded communities within the nation (Pratt, 2020). Arab countries and leaders are argued to implement customs in order to generate a view of history and accomplish three primary goals: first, instituting and symbolizing community stability or group identity; second, constructing and legitimizing entities, social standing, or authoritative interactions, and third, enabling internalization of perceptions, moral codes, as well as behavioral formalities (Allagui & Al-Najjar, 2018).

Arab countries, including Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), are subject to perceptions of conservatism and even religious extremism. Therefore, that could be detrimental to their modernization efforts - given that stereotypes shape people's behavior toward a country. Although the UAE and Qatar are becoming more well-known due to their worldwide reach and identity initiatives, other Arab nations continue to have issues limiting their ability to compete in the global market. Also, even though Saudi Arabia has plenty of publicity, its image for fundamentalism - even though women have recently achieved the right to get a driver's license - the UAE still differentiates messages more convincingly (Allagui & Al-Najjar, 2018). This, therefore, suggests that gender washing exists in Arab countries, but some are more convincing in terms of gender washing the public than others.

Also, Arab countries' modernization process and its connection with globalization, in effect, condemn my argument of leaders' gender washing to make their global image portrayed in a democratic sense. Progress regarding women's rights is essential in any project that aims to change and modernize a nation-state. The rulers of the states however are not reflecting actual

attempts to empower women. However, their political narratives and strategies are more motivating towards strengthening their global image and status. Governmental devotion to assisting females in overcoming societal opposition and enforcing female employment and education, thus Perceiving the UAE's approach to women as a "state project" and "state strategy" that helps the country's goal of becoming a more democratic and cohesive nation in the eyes of the World (Allagui & Al-Najjar, 2018). Given the stereotypical perceptions that play a role in influencing how people behave towards a country, Qatar and the UAE, as well as Saudi Arabia and other nearby nations, are vulnerable to conservative views which are drawn from religious extremist views that may harm their attempts to prosper (Anholt, 2007). However, in many Arab states, autocratic rulers have shown to move away from their conservative natures and advocated to support state feminist strategies in a way that represents them in a more appealing vision that portrays them in a more modern, and developed way. For example, the UAE used images of the first female air fighter Mariam Al-Mansouri to harness its brand-building and counter the negative stereotypes about gender inequality in Arabian Gulf countries that became amplified with the rise of religious extremism. Nation branding helps "counter such potentially damaging national stereotypes" (Allagui & Al-Najjar, 2018).

Furthermore, it is claimed that the UAE exploited representations of the first feminine air defender to boost its reputation and combat unfavorable preconceptions about the disparity in Gulf countries, exacerbated by the growth of Islamic fundamentalism (Allagui & Al-Najjar, 2018). Al-Mansouri is one of the few active combatants in the Arab army. The UAE's authoritarian monarchs effectively use her as part of their propaganda campaign to showcase its women's capability and power in the war against ISIS. As the Syrian government has included women in its armed forces as part of its propaganda campaign, other Arab militaries and their non-state allies have done

likewise. (Szekely, 2020). This sudden shift in how the region starts to empower the representation of women in their conservative societies is what brings on the questioning. Why now? Al-Mansouri is not the only woman to be put on display as a propaganda tool. Other female fighters have also been featured in videos and photographs doing things considered "empowering" by their male counterparts, such as carrying heavy weapons or participating in firefights. This phenomenon may seem like it is coming from within the societies themselves, but there is more to it than what meets the eye- which brings on questioning how women are being empowered as tools of the governments to attract foreign attention for diverse intentions.

In Arab nations, great attention towards the representation and empowerment of women has been evident and widespread. Implementing mandates in Saudi Arabia and the UAE and increasing recruitment rates in Qatar, Oman, and Bahrain have fueled regional improvements in females' political involvement. Nevertheless, there remains in Oman, Bahrain, and Kuwait and female representation in politics. This gap shows the presence of significant popular opinion opposing female political involvement and socio-cultural hurdles that cause a barrier for females to receive equal representation to men. This quest for women's equality in government should continue academic study and development of policy choices to enhance women's election success in the Gulf (Cole, 2020). However, for this research, it is argued that authoritarian regimes mainly increase female representation as a mechanism to distract the world from other human rights atrocities. However, it is argued that while Saudi Arabia has plenty of publicity, its image for fundamentalism has dramatically hindered its image in the international arena; therefore, having recently granted women certain rights, such as the right to drive, has helped the authoritarian monarchy look more modern despite the continuing abuses of human rights, and as mentioned above the incident that notably marks the assassination of the journalist, human rights activist, and

opponent of the regime, Jamal Khashoggi. Therefore, this represents the fallacy of advancement in human rights in many Arab countries.

Further, highlighting the importance of discourse to gender washing shows regimes' continuous engagement in rhetoric cooperation to serve the modernization programs. Accomplishments of female empowerment, where women carry on official offices, are incorporated into capitalist class governmentality practices (Cole, 2020). Although the government's advocacy towards female engagement is a forward-looking perspective that goes beyond the containment of adverse effects, Middle Eastern governments prove that deliberate incorporation of more women leadership positions secures more significant political opportunities for marginalized groups in societies such as women (Held & Ulrichsen, 2012; Cole, 2020).

Women in the Arab World, long before governmental initiatives proved their representative and active involvement in various roles, whether the Arab Spring or feminist solidarity movements enacting and calling for a change in their societies and challenging societal imposed barriers (Arenfeldt & Golley, 2012). Nevertheless, in recent years, females have risen to positions of worldwide reputation and profound significance in several Arab states that were unfathomable. Also, states within the region are currently at a crossroads, having made significant progress but also encountering several obstacles in their quest for equality organizations (Cole, 2020)

Internationally, many initiatives have addressed barriers to entry for women. However, traditional Arab nations that share Islamic laws and customs have been reluctant to grant women the freedoms they need to exercise their right to equality. These nations shifted their beliefs and modernized their Islamic rituals, arguing that religion already gives women all their rights (Fatima, 2020). Although customs, tribal traditions, and a resulting patriarchal and masculine intellectual

framework obstruct development, this attitude has become more problematic(Sharabi, 1988). However, Muslim female activists claim that their understanding of women's rights is culturally acceptable and push for differentiating themselves from conservative and tribal perspectives. Modernist ideals within the Middle East conceptualize that Islamic discourse supports women's advancement in society (Abu-Lughod, 1998).

In addition, the construction and normalization of specific relationships among genders and identities, as well as cultural diversity, have been facilitated by personal status laws, which govern spaces such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and parental rights. Such regulations codify disparities in gender within the household which are frequently based on a conception of domesticity; the male partner serves as the dominant patriarch of the household and is responsible for providing for his family's monetary requirements. Therefore, the women within the household become the critical responsibility for serving and obeying the head of the household (Pratt, 2020). As a result, a male-biased perspective has been firmly ingrained in society. It takes time to deconstruct societal significance in a way that adheres to the standards of Western and more developed societies.

Also, there are still significant deviations from global norms in marriage, divorcing, and parental rights because the Sharia remains the major source for governing family-related matters (Welchman, 2004). Family-related matters and hereditary rights are also differently conceptualized radically in Islamic law, making it challenging to completely harmonize Arab nations' laws with globally accepted norms (Hashemi, 2008). The concept of marriage has advanced significantly, and increasing the minimum age of marriage or planned unions with extended family are becoming unacceptable, unlike in the past. Although a man can divorce his wife for any cause, women have additional restrictions and are often restricted by their obligation

to give up their financial rights (Rashad et al., 2005). Although there has been progress in providing women access to family-related rights, the actual progress still needs to be made public and debatable due to societal limitations and the inadequacy of the unjust judiciaries.

CHAPTER 6: Summary, Discussion, Analysis and Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Major Outcomes

In sum, this study sought to investigate the applications of the notion of gender washing and its political applications during the Anwar El Sadat and Hosni Mubarak. With the rise of advocating for women's rights in the globalized era, it is critical to discuss how these rights are used by the state and to what end. Examining the technique of gender washing, which could be argued to be a governmental tactic, has significant implications. Indeed, understanding the many points of view and variances might help us address some of the issues surrounding women's participation in feminism and, as a result, collective action. This might be crucial to advancing women's rights in the future.

Furthermore, women in the Arab region have always pushed for equal rights in a patriarchal society; however, masculine intellectuals are in the vanguard in most developments and initiatives to enhance women's standing. For this reason, examining the relatively new trend of woman empowerment in the Arab region is a significant matter that could be analyzed through the lens of gender washing processes adopted by regimes. This dissertation focuses on how Egypt's authoritarian nature has rendered the growth of women's rights as a top-down process, beneficial to the stability of authoritarian regimes, without inevitably disregarding the role performed by female activists in Egypt.

The research problem from which the research question of this study stemmed questioned the mechanisms used by authoritarian systems to control their international image and achieve their goals. Indeed, authoritarian systems in the Arab world have long used different tactics to consolidate their regimes. One such tactic is the use of gender washing. Gender washing is used as a tactic in various countries where women's rights in the community have been furthered as a

mechanism to distract the narrative away from the actions of government oppression against other groups and seek to attract foreign attention to portray themselves as modernized and just regimes. In the context of this research, the concept of gender washing will be used to study how Egyptian rulers Anwar El Sadat and Hosni Mubarak applied this tactic to further women's rights and change the narrative regarding their actions. There exists a recent trend where women in the Arab world are being empowered by the government and placed in unprecedented leadership positions. The findings indicated that among such tactics are the techniques of legitimation, repression, and co-optation are used to maintain authoritarian stability in Arab countries and monarchies. International assistance is subject to conditions such as liberal economic principles, political responsibility, and legitimacy. As such, tools such as legitimation, repression, and co-optation require ongoing foreign pressure since they lack an internal reinforcing instrument making them more reliant on foreign donors for their required resources

The main research question in this study is: Why did the autocratic regimes of Anwar El Sadat and Hosni Mubarak choose to advance women's rights? Accordingly, the hypothesis assumed that the autocratic governments under Sadat and Mubarak used gender instrumentally, and their focus on empowering women in their societies was functional in promoting their vision of "modernization" internationally and enhancing their image while at the same time concealing their autocratic practices. The findings of this study have indicated that the hypothesis is valid.

The concept of "gender washing" suggests that states might use their dedication to equal rights for women to their advantage as part of legitimation strategies and in order to help improve their international image rather than the practical advancement of women's empowerment. Research indicated that gender washing is used in the context of the Middle East as part of their strategic programs for democratic transformation and the modernization of nations within the Arab

region. These transformations towards development and progress, which, in a non-Western context, typically implies rejecting the supposed backwardness of non-Western societies given achieving cultural, political, economic, and technological development. Gender washing is not exclusive to recent tactics applied by Arab and Gulf nations. Indeed, it can be seen as a tactic apparent in different authoritarian regimes across the Middle East. The focus of this study will be the practice of gender washing by Sadat and Mubarak in Egypt.

6.2 Discussion and Analysis

The practice of gender washing under both Sadat and Mubarak's rule in Egypt will be the main topic of this research. The claim highlights how Egypt's authoritarian culture has made the growth of women's rights a top-down process, ultimately serving and promoting Egyptian women's equality internationally. Due to recent trends in Egypt and several other nations within the region, it is crucial to address the usage of gender washing tactics in the contemporary era and in the past. Women empowerment gestures by the government could be argued to be a façade used to cover up serious existing human rights abuses. Women became essential in propaganda campaigns and transitioning how Western and developing nations see states within the Arab region. The idea that women are treated as a minority group within the state and with regards to their family hierarchical standing is a notion that has been ingrained into the Western perspectives towards Egyptian and Middle Eastern culture. This notion stems from the fact that there is a clear gender divide in society and that families are patriarchal. In other words, women have less access to resources and opportunities than men.

Recent years have seen conservative governments that follow religious interpretations of the Islamic rule of law are perceived and adopted differently in various nations- and the extent to

which restrictions towards women empowerment present a noticeable gap and diversifying extent from one state to another. It is crucial also to note that countries in the Middle East are not democratizing, yet they continue to operate under an authoritarian system of government. This is why examining the practice of gender washing raises severe concerns and skepticism.

In the case of Egypt, gender washing could be argued to have existed within the transition from monarchy to a republic sovereign nation-state. Indeed, gender washing, in this case, is crucial since it highlights the regime's modernization efforts after decades of colonial authority. Gender washing is a tactic that every autocratic regime in Egypt has employed. It is crucial to note that societal values of female dependence on males that were institutionalized by both the personal status laws and the political framework had not been challenged by governmental strategies of state feminism, which established and organized an apparatus of patriarchal leadership under Anwar El Sadat, where the representation of state feminists was applied through the First Lady Jihan Sadat, which ultimately served and promoted Egyptian women's equality both nationally and internationally. Sadat reshaped state feminism with his Western ideologies and diverse frameworks, which started with the adoption of a liberal open-door policy, followed by surprising the global arena with the establishment of a peace treaty with Israel and the emergence of the idea of "First Lady" dominating the Egyptian political sphere like never before. Such was apparent through policies such as "Jihan's Law." The role of women in the employment sector was weakened due to the shift in Egypt's economic policy during the Sadat regime in the 1970s and the nation's increasing dependence on the private sector. Following the implementation of the open door policy in 1974, the government's dedication to women's inclusion and equitable treatment in the labor force has significantly deteriorated. The nation's amended laws revoked the promise to provide secured work, leading to an elevated unemployment rate in the labor market.

Within Sadat's framework of reform and modernization, he adopted several changes to policies that affect women, which have succeeded overall. While in power, the president enforced "Jihan's Law," which provided several liberating decisions for women. President Sadat's 1979 amendment was one of the most significant moments for women's empowerment in Egyptian history. Since most neighboring nations turned their back on his rule following the recent implementation of the Camp David Accord, he started to objectively develop the state in a way that would attract Western attention. His efforts to establish new laws aimed to change the Western perception of Egyptian society. With his wife's influence and effort to empower and develop women's rights initiatives, Sadat established new laws which directed and focused intensely on personal status law; this law which is frequently dismissed and neglected but now became targeted to serve purposes and intentions which one could argue is an act of political manipulation. Even though the law passed through a presidential decree, the extent to which the law becomes implemented and adopted. The amendments were achieved and recognized on a global scale. However, the actual implementation of them is what the main objective should be in order the elimination the various concerns faced by women within society. Hence, Jihan's law was later outlawed due to concerns by many conservatives and male intellectuals that make up Egypt's patriarchal society. As mentioned above, State feminism under Sadat was utilized in the way of nation branding the country in better light to Western societies. Sadat's adherence to Western societies' international policies, especially after making peace with Israel, infuriated Islamists, who were already enraged over the recent Liberalization of women's personal status law. As a result, he was assassinated by an Islamist extremist in 1981 and was succeeded by Hosni Mubarak the following year.

Due to Sadat's and Mubarak's policies preventing Egyptian women from the economic advantages they enjoyed under Nasser and positioning them as susceptible to restricted economic frameworks, liberal feminist organizations began to develop in the 1980s and 1990s. The findings within this study indicated Mubarak's authoritarianism and the evident employment of vast "state feminism" and an attempt to gain Western recognition. This also supports the arguments of this research, which follows that gender washing tactics are used within the autocratic rule of Mubarak. Even though illiteracy rates for women were much lower than those of men, their opportunities in the labor force- whether governmental or private enterprises were much lower. Also, even though the government banned FGM and put great effort into campaigning to eliminate such procedures, the situation could be argued to have been an attempt to market the state and gain international attention and support. Moreover, FGM is still practiced in many rural areas and illiterate communities until this day. The Personal Status Law in Egypt is an example of the conventional patriarchal Islamic social system that restricts women's freedoms outlined in the Quran and Islamic scholarship. During the 2000s, Mubarak developed the personal status law in Egypt in three main areas: citizenship laws, Polygamy laws, and child custody and divorce laws. The amendments to the laws ranged from giving women the liberty to obtain their passport independently, males' obligation to inform their wife/wives before marrying another, a mother's custody of her children until the age of 15, and the law of the year 2000, which is namely the right for women to file for divorce through the Khul' law.

The changes made under Mubarak during the 1990s can be better understood through the lens of gender washing. Indeed, in light of an economic crisis, the Mubarak regime opted to utilize gender washing to appear more appealing to the international arena to attract financial support from international organizations. Therefore, the Mubarak regime adopted policies that would

portray the image of modernization to Western communities as the ideological transformations and programs would be regarded as evidence of developing rights for those vulnerable within Egyptian society. Similar to the approach undertaken by the Mubarak regime in the 1990s, the 2000s were marked by international pressure to eliminate flagrant human rights violations by the Mubarak regime. Accordingly, the regime chose to utilize the aforementioned laws through gender washing in order to export the image of liberty and democratization. This was aimed to divert attention away from several issues, which were notable criticisms of the authoritarian regime of Mubarak. Moreover, developed nations of the West recognize that the absence of democratization in the area is the primary cause of the present political crisis. From the perspective of significant changes in the region, the changes that occurred in 2005, including adjustments to governmental and socioeconomic laws and regulations, may be more effectively-acknowledged. First, and most notably, the March 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq prompted waves of democratic reforms across the Middle East, which resulted in changes to its electoral laws resulting in the somewhat loosening of restrictions. Moreover, in the 2000s, the Mubarak regime was faced with several obstacles, such as the reduction of aid. In the face of such obstacles, the Mubarak regime resorted to previous tactics of gender washing laws in order to divert attention away from human rights violations.

Moreover, by analyzing the mechanisms through which gender washing was employed, this study found that, similar to the Sadat regime, the first lady utilized a prominent role in leading the changes to women's rights. Under the Mubarak regime, First Lady Suzanne Mubarak was appointed head of the National Council for Women (NCW), which had been constituted by presidential order. NCW, led by First Lady Suzanne Mubarak, is claimed to be Mubarak's regime's attempt to take action supportive of the advancement of women in Egyptian society (Sika & Khodary, 2012). Prior attempts to create a national woman's apparatus following the U.N.'s request

have previously been made. However, The National Council for Women became more potent in 2000 after receiving additional power and budget from the government. The Mubarak regime's use of gender washing was always very evident with the president's positioning of Suzan Mubarak's prominent appearances and her engagement in the Egyptian political sphere, especially with regard to advancing women's rights in the name of democratization in order to export the image of a liberalized Egypt in the face of numerous obstacles. Indeed, while these tactics did aid in the advancement of women's rights, offering women similarly restricted privileges as men in an autocratic political system are said to be an illusory way of thinking because it will not make a country closer to democracy or make it look and be represented in a democratic manner. This is true even though a country like Egypt democratizes through incorporating women, while Mubarak adopted several prosecutions of human activists that drove Western efforts to delegitimize the Egyptian legal framework. However, Egypt's economy at the time required foreign financing to revive its economy and reform its political structure. Egypt's peace with Israel was considered a "cold peace" to most developed countries. Mubarak was trying to develop his relations with the nations of the Arab region with great efforts to participate and help security within nations of the Arab region, for instance, by participating in the gulf war and many others, which eventually let Egypt previously become readmitted to the Arab League. Mubarak, trying to reestablish strong ties with neighboring Arab nations, represented himself in a position that made him stand out as the defender of Arab interests by publicly Hosni Mubarak was not only acting as a mediator between the gulf states and their US-Israel relations but Mubarak's only option, with the economy suffering to reach an agreement, and entice investment from abroad with support from the international community and regional governments. This was also a crucial purpose that he went to the U.S. then. The regime's sudden initiatives and implications towards empowering gender

relations and women's status within the nation were an attempt for the state to improve its international standing and not for the intention of empowering women and resulting in women suffering from the system even until this day. Due to the government's inability to address women's fundamental requirements, the U.N. and its branching institutions that concern women have long-established women's agendas on the global level. The Egyptian state's attempts to empower and aid vulnerable women could be because of international pressures. It is essential to analyze the governmental motives compared to the intentions of empowering women in society. The implementation and amendments of laws do not effectively nor significantly influence women's role in reality. The governmental efforts were not empowering women with intentions to support those discriminated against nationally but rather for gender washing the international arena to mediate relations with them to attract foreign investment and financial support and improve the image of the Mubarak regime's autocratic political order. The rulers of the nationalist movement used a strategy of universalist beliefs and modernized government administration programs to modernize procedures throughout the post-colonial era as Arab nations fought for their autonomy. They followed European procedures in terms of governance, administration, finances, and sociocultural norms. Arab post-colonial states realized that their government systems needed improvement. They moved forward to free and advance women in their societies by fostering and establishing a modern society that could function as the cornerstone for their governments' modernity and independence.

Indeed, gender washing has a notable presence and application in the context of modern authoritarian systems in the Middle East. Today women in the Arab region are often regarded as a disparaged group; they also often face various obstacles in achieving equality in society due to cultural and Sharia law/religious interpretation of their rights. As mentioned above, an excellent

example is the sudden transitional phase the Saudi Arabian monarchy adopted towards women. The country's strategy transformed drastically from being the most masculine state in the region to one of the most applauded internationally for applying women's rights and justice. There is a recognized and readily apparent appearance of women in the modern Middle East and, in recent instances, within the region. Significant leaders and nationwide figures demonstrate significant encouragement and dedication in promoting the advancement of women's empowerment and rights that may be regarded as regime use of Gender Washing, which is a legitimization tactic for autocratic regimes.

As a result, more solutions are available to decrease or remove the adverse effects of the factors preventing women from participating in politics. Due to more exposure to the international realms and the continued progress in implementing democratic ideals, a general atmosphere that transcends the traditional cultural legacy concerning women's roles and position in the community is forming. Despite this trend, women are also growing more politically aware and hopeful about their ability to succeed in politics. Ultimately, it seems that the interaction between these positive and bad aspects of Arab states and the Arab women living there helps to grow and expand their role. However, it is crucial to highlight that the extent of fundamental change in policies and empowerment is only documented and advertised to reach the attention of international powers. The sufficiency and actual implementation of empowerment is a complex process. Women are more recognized in Arab communities, but exclusion and inferior societal positions have not been eliminated. It is safe to say that most Arab nations are still masculine states; the significant development is that they started to acknowledge women's presence and existence- their actual rate of empowerment remains in question. For instance, in Egypt, women are significantly active in ministerial leadership positions. Women in Egypt in the past few years have become ministers of

many state institutions that are cooperative on an international scale- but has the nation seen a female become Minister of Defense, Ministry of Civil Aviation, or even Minister of Finance, for example? For this reason, women's position and extent of empowerment remain under suspicion. Although there has been progress in providing women access to family-related rights, the actual progress still needs to be made public and debatable due to societal limitations and the inadequacy of the unjust judiciaries. While many have applauded the efforts for women's rights, it has also been used to shed light away from the other human rights abuses being committed. Furthermore, while there have been advances on paper in women's rights, the societal perceptions of these advancements have not been favorable and are arguably a risk to women's rights. Indeed, as these advancements have been made to help give the image of modernization, one can argue, given the personal nature of the regime, that the next ruler will reverse these changes.

6.3 Conclusion

Women's empowerment within societies has become a crucial and global objective for nations. For this reason, the concept of Gender washing is becoming predominantly questioned in political science and international relations. As mentioned earlier, there is a noticeable gap in the literature and a lack of research on areas that are related to feminist criticism relating to the use of local information in developing a theoretical framework. Even though feminist theory is sometimes flawed and subject to disagreement, it still serves as a purposeful substitute for conventional understanding regarding the realities of humanity and developmental strategies. This brings us to argue that the authoritarian governments in recent years, especially those within the Middle Eastern region, have utilized gender washing techniques to advance women's rights and opportunities, not for the domestic prosperity and advancement of women within the state but

instead to create an enhanced contemporary and liberal "image" of the state nationally but more importantly on an international scale. For this reason, this paper argues explicitly that Arab countries are increasingly using the rights of women to increase their political leverage, enhance their reputation globally, and in order to deflect attention from adverse and autocratic actions they take on within their state and which are repelled and considered unacceptable to more developed and democratic states. Since developing nations have strived for modernization in recent years, women's development and issues have become significant, recognized, and addressed. The argument over women and modernization involves several significant issues. For instance, we must reexamine archaic notions regarding women's difficulties. Women's contributions to society are essential and a sign of advancement. Modernization is unlikely to be achievable, and accomplishing the privileged position of advanced nations could only become more challenging if a nation did not recognize the value of women and denied them access to their various authorized, ideological, and economic freedoms as well as complete equality in possibilities and position in society. Promoting women's growth in a social and political modernization setting is paramount.

Women's contributions to the development and their function as advocates of modernism and development are also essential. The involvement and independence of women within a society are essential for the progress, modernization, and democratization of that civilization to accomplish those objectives. Women must be equitably recognized and active in political issues alongside other spheres of society. Organizations from civil society have pushed for the inclusion of women in leadership, decision-making, and academic positions within the community, and even though autocratic governments in the Middle East seem to respond to their demands and have implied several implications that advanced women in Arab societies, it is yet evident. The goal is

to speed up their modernization processes and attract international attention away from their autocracies rather than benefiting those vulnerable nationally.

In conclusion, It is crucial to acknowledge and champion a nation's efforts toward women's empowerment by questioning the practical and considerate issues and discriminatory laws they tend to face. Society and the government must recognize that women, just like men in society, have significant contributions even though they tend to have more significant challenges to accomplish them. As seen by the most recent struggles, women still have difficulty getting into positions of influence and authority. Nevertheless, in reality, the amendments in laws or progress of justice that are written on legal documents could be considered illusionary because, in reality, women in Arab societies are still faced with struggles and challenges until this day, and men are who are considered superior. Suppose progress is to be achieved toward equality between men and women. These obstacles must be faced in that case, and society's patriarchal divisions and beliefs must be addressed and implemented adequately.

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