

BOZENA C. WELBORNE

RESEARCH STATEMENT

My primary research interests straddle comparative politics and international relations, focusing on the intersection of international and domestic gender and development-related policy in the context of the Middle East and North Africa. The importance of this research lies in its illumination of how institutional changes brokered by foreign interests can result in domestic social change within the region. Here, I provide a brief summary of my dissertation and its component chapters. In the second section, I elaborate on my post-dissertation plans and future projects.

I. DISSERTATION

“Between the Veil and the Vote: Exploring Incentives to Politically Incorporate Women in the Arab World,” defense expected May 2011.

The 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) renewed debate on proposed mechanisms to increase women’s presence in the political sphere across the developing and developed world. Despite common perceptions that women’s political opportunities are uniformly limited across the Arab world, considerable variation exists. While women still lack the right to suffrage in Saudi Arabia, more than 20 percent of parliamentary representatives in Tunisia, Iraq, and the United Arab Emirates are women. My research explores the incentives behind this unexpected variation through both cross-national statistical and case study analysis, relying on data gathered during two years of fieldwork and from over 100 interviews across Jordan, Morocco, Bahrain, and Yemen. I posit that international economic influence has an important role in creating these incentives, in particular development assistance and foreign direct investment. Alongside the humanitarian reasons for promoting women’s issues, there is a decidedly material interest in promoting gender empowerment for countries that receive significant financial inputs through development projects, which increasingly conflate women’s issues and democratization. Consequently, Arab policymakers hope strategic gender-related political reforms translate into greater donor and investor confidence in other indicators of development and democratization.

To evaluate my argument, I used data covering 22 Arab League member countries from the period of 1990 until 2009. Women’s political incorporation is modeled across three dimensions – the legislative (descriptive representation), social (political environment), and policy realms (gender quota adoption), with each representing an empirical chapter in the dissertation. I operationalize these three dimensions using data on women’s legislative representation from the Inter-Parliamentary Union, on women’s political and social rights (environment) from the Cingranelli-Richards Human Rights Data Project, and independently coded data on the adoption of gender quotas from the University of Stockholm’s Quota Project. Statistical analysis reveals robust relationships between development assistance and the likelihood of quota adoption, as well as higher percentages of women within Arab legislatures—hinting that foreign aid creates discrete incentives to cosmetically improve women’s status across the policy and legislative arenas. However, development assistance has a negative impact on the political rights of women within the region, implying it may hinder substantive socio-political outcomes for women without grassroots mobilization. Importantly, a structured focused analysis of three case studies: Bahrain, Jordan, and Morocco, shows that even strategically motivated institutional reforms can create the necessary political opportunity structures that allow for substantive results in the long-term.

Peer Reviewed Publications

"Piety and Redistributive Preferences in the Muslim World," Forthcoming with Dr. Thomas Pepinsky at *Political Research Quarterly*.

Works-in-Progress

"An A for Cosmetics and a C for Substance: Assessing Gender Quotas in the Middle East and North Africa." *Drafted and Presented at APSA 2010*.

"Smart Economics: Conditional Foreign Aid and its Impact on Women's Descriptive Representation in the Middle East and North Africa." *Drafted*.

"Private vs. Public Space in the Gendered Medina." *Drafted*.

"Blood for Money: The Impact of Private Military Companies on the Emergence and Duration of Civil War in Africa." *Drafted and Presented at APSA 2006*.

"Debt for Peace: Multilateral Debt and its Role in Demilitarizing the Developing World." *Drafted and Presented at ISA 2006/MWPSA 2006*.

II. ADDITIONAL PROJECTS

In the future, I intend to expand my dissertation research to broader Muslim populations. The exploration of the outcomes of gender quotas in the Arab world can be extended to yet another interesting and counter-intuitive Muslim context—namely, former Soviet Republics with Muslim majority populations such as Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan. Many of these countries utilized a *de facto* gender quota system under Soviet rule, yet have had a mixed legacy of gender empowerment with the end of communism. A significant amount of scholarship on gender quotas promotes the normative idea that quotas condition women's acceptance in politics and participation over time. The former Soviet Republics represent a unique opportunity to explore whether such "conditioning mechanisms" left any residual trace on gender relations within these newly Islamic publics.

A secondary research interest and ongoing project reflects an international collaborative effort between myself and three other female scholars (Ozge Celik, Aubrey Westfall, and Sarah Tobin) to conduct the first large-scale public survey of veiled Muslim women focusing on the reasons behind their choice to veil across select countries in the Middle East, the European Union, and Turkey. There is a concerted lack of quantitative data on this particular issue, yet this is an increasingly important topic as veiling has evolved into more than just a symbol of religiosity in the intervening years, and has created significant controversy across the aforementioned contexts. The choice of countries reflects our individual regional expertise, but also represents a ready point of comparison between Muslim immigrant populations in the E.U. and those in the home country, hopefully revealing new information on changes in preferences relating to veiling across Muslim immigrant vs. domestic populations. Furthermore, Turkey represents a unique opportunity to examine the reasons for veiling in a state that stands at the crossroads of both civilizations. We intend to apply for National Science Foundation funding, the UNDP-GERPA grant, and the Wenner-Gren Foundation's International Collaborative Research Grant, among others, to fund this project.

All of the aforementioned projects highlight my commitment to exploring the substance

and nuance of women's political and religious selves across variously Muslim contexts. Especially at a time when misconceptions abound regarding the Islamic faith, much less the role of women within it, I believe it is paramount to research these issues and educate the public on the sheer diversity of the faith and the dramatic social changes unfolding in the Muslim world.