

The London School of Economics and Political Science

Nationalism, Revolution and Feminism: Women in Egypt and Iran from 1880-1980.

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Abstract

The rise of women's rights movements in the Middle East has a long, varied, and complex historical trajectory, which makes it a challenging area of comparative study. This thesis explores the development of notions of cultural authenticity and womanhood, and how women struck bargains with men around such notions, by looking at the rise of women's rights discourses and movements in Egypt and Iran from 1880 to 1980. More specifically, it investigates how changing notions of 'cultural authenticity' and 'womanhood' affected the relationship between 'nationalism' and 'feminism', women's relationship with modernizing states, and 'female activism' within revolutionary and Islamist opposition movements. 1880 was chosen as the starting period of this study to assess the modernist and nationalist debates of the late 19th century, which incorporated new women's rights discourses in both cases. 1980 was chosen as an end point as the Iran-Iraq war, and the advent of 'Islamic feminism' debates over the next decades in both Iran and Egypt, introduced new factors and issues, which would not have been possible to assess properly within the scope of this study. The two countries were selected not only for their political significance, but because of key differences, particularly in terms of dominant language and religion, to help challenge generalizations about 'Arab versus non-Arab culture', and notions of a monolithic 'Islam', 'Muslim culture', and/or the Middle East. Differences between regional cases need to be highlighted to avoid generalizations and simplified readings of women's histories. This thesis places its original contributions within existing historiography on women's movements in Iran and Egypt, contributing to the wider debates on women's histories and 'feminisms' in the Middle East. Its arguments contribute to existing historiography on women and nationalism, women and revolution, and women and the state in Iran, Egypt, and wider studies on Middle Eastern women's histories.

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Note on Transliteration and Translation

All Arabic and Persian transliterations in this thesis generally follow the system adopted by the International Journal of Middle East (IJMES), with the omission of diacritics, except for the '*ayn* and *hamza*. Other exceptions include common English forms for words such as Tehran, Cairo, harem etc; and some personal names, titles, or words that appear as cited in particular works or texts in western languages (in these cases the source's own transliteration is cited). All translations from Arabic, Persian and French to English are my own, unless otherwise stated.

Thesis Introduction

Abstract

Women's rights in the Middle East, and women's rights in Islam remain highly charged and politicised subjects. The rise of women's rights discourses and movements in the Middle East has a long, varied, and complex historical trajectory, which makes it a challenging area of comparative study. This thesis explores the development of notions of cultural authenticity and womanhood, and how women struck bargains with men around such notions, by looking at the rise of women's rights discourses and movements in Egypt and Iran from 1880 to 1980. More specifically, it investigates how changing notions of 'cultural authenticity' and 'womanhood' affected the relationship between 'nationalism' and 'feminism', women's relationship with modernising states, and 'female activism' within revolutionary and Islamist opposition movements.

1880 was chosen as the starting period of this study to assess the modernist and nationalist debates of the late 19th century, which incorporated new women's rights discourses in both cases. 1980 was chosen as an end point as the Iran-Iraq war, and the advent of 'Islamic feminism' debates over the next decades in both Iran and Egypt, introduced new factors and issues, which would not have been possible to assess properly within the scope of this study. The two countries were selected not only for their political significance, but because of key differences, particularly in terms of dominant language and religion, to help challenge generalisations about 'Arab versus non-Arab culture', and notions of a monolithic 'Islam', 'Muslim culture', and/or the Middle East. Differences

between regional cases, whether they share a common language and/or religion, need to be highlighted to avoid generalisations and simplified readings of women's histories.

Edited volumes like Lila Abu Lughod's *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*¹, or Deniz Kandiyoti's *Gendering the Middle East: Emerging Perspectives*,² where different country cases like Iran, Egypt, Palestine, and Turkey were looked at separately according to different themes, highlighted the value of more and different comparative studies. Articles like Valentine Moghadam's study on Iran and Algeria³ highlighted the need for a historical lens through which to evaluate comparative studies on women's movements in these regions. More recent publications from writers like Sridevi Nair have argued the 'transnational turn' in academic fields, particularly women's, gender, and sexuality studies, has challenged west-centric scholarship, theories, and research methods, leading to new questions on 'what constitutes feminism, who the feminist subject is'.⁴

This thesis places its original contributions within existing historiography on women's movements and rights in Iran and Egypt, contributing to the wider debates on women's histories and 'feminisms' in the Middle East. A direct and detailed historical comparison between the cases of Iran and Egypt fills a gap within the existing historiography, which so far has not compared these two country-cases in this comprehensive and specific manner. It attempts to offer a

¹ Lila Abu-Lughod, *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998).

² Deniz Kandiyoti, *Gendering the Middle East: Emerging Perspectives* (London, I.B. Tauris, 1996).

³ Valentine M. Moghadam, 'Feminism in Iran and Algeria: Two Models of Collective Action for Women's Rights', *Journal of Iranian Research and Analysis*, Vol. 19, No. 1, April 2003.

⁴ Sridevi Nair, Transnationalism and Women of Color Courses: Diversity, Curricula, and New Pedagogies of 'Race', *Feminist Teacher*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 2014, pp. 1-17.

new interpretive layer by comparing developments in each case over a continuous 100-year period. The observations and arguments of this thesis contribute to existing historiography on women and nationalism, women and revolution, and women and the state in Iran, Egypt, and wider studies on Middle Eastern women's histories. Moreover, arguments on women's contribution to, and the effects of important events on women in Iran and Egypt, such as the 1906-1911 Constitutional Revolution, 1919-1922 Egyptian Revolution, 1952 Free Officers coup, 1953 Iranian Coup, and the 1979 Iranian Revolution add to wider and more balanced historiography on these events, by highlighting women's stories and contributions within them.

Analytical framework, Literature Review, and Thesis Arguments

Terminology and Historiography

Feminism is, a complex, slippery, and politicised word, which makes its use as a descriptive term problematic. In 2003 Iranian writer Muhammad Khosrow Panah asked 'what is a feminist?', 'who is a feminist?', defining it 'in the modern sense as a person who is pro-women, protects women's rights and struggles to improve their way of life', but added that some 'so-called feminists' were not motivated by these principles, but only by personal gain.⁵ He argued that no new research on Iranian women's history had been made, and that most of the recent studies were politically motivated. In his 2002 publication, *Tahrir al ma'rah*

⁵ Muhammad Hussein Khosrow Panah, *Hadaf'ha va mubarizah-i-Zan-i Irani az Inqilab-i Mashrutah ta Saltanat-i Pahlavi*, (Tehran, Nashr-i-Payam-i Imruz, 2003), p. 285.

bayn al-Islam wa al-Gharb (Women's Liberation between Islam and the West),

Muhammad Alwan rejected notions of 'western feminism' and argued that

following the west's model would be a 'harmful failure' for Muslim women.⁶

A host of Arab and Iranian writers like Amal al-Subki, Sawsan Naiji, Hoda el-Saada, Afsaneh Najmabadi, Pardis Qandahari⁷ and Pari Shaykh al-Islami⁸, have stressed the political nature of the 'woman's question' and the challenges this creates for academic researchers. Writing on the early Egyptian women's movement (1919-1952), Amal al-Subki argued that researchers looking into women's issues feel as though they are 'walking on a mine field, in every danger of colliding with sensitive social traditions', and that it was not possible for scholars to conduct scientific research on women's issues without being confronted with 'traditions and notions linked to religion, most of which are not at the heart of religion, but are used as a terrible weapon in the face of any researcher looking for the truth'.⁹ Najmabadi, El-Saada, and Azzah Baydoun have strongly emphasised the use of gender perspectives to revise official historical narratives, underlining its potential to challenge society's collective memory, and as such, social and national identity formation.¹⁰

⁶ Muhammad 'Alwan, *Tahrir al-mar'ah bayna al-Islam wa-al-Gharb: iftira 'at gharbiyah wa-haqa'iq Islamiyah* (Cairo: M. 'Alwan, 2002), p. 5.

⁷ Pardis Qandahari, *Zan va qudrat: bar'rasi-i mardum'shinakhti-i 'arsah'ha va masadiq-i qudrat dar chand khanavadah-yi Tihrani*, (Tehran, mu'avanat-i Pizhuhishi-i Pizhuhishkadaah-i Mardum'shinasii, 2003).

⁸ Pari Shaykh al-Islami, *Zan dar Iran va Jahan/Zanan-i Ruznamahnigar va Andishmand-i Iran: Nakhustin Pazhuhish dar'barah-i Zanan-i Ruznamahnigar*, (Tehran: S.n, 1973).

⁹ Amal Kamil Bayumi al-Subki, *al-Harakah al-Nisa'iyah fi Misr ma Bayn al-Thawratayn, 1919-1952*, (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Misriyah al-'Ammah lil-Kitab, 1986), p. 3.

¹⁰ Hoda el-Sadda, *Zaman al-Nisa' wa al-Dhakira al-Badila: Majmu'at Abhath*, co-ed. Hoda al-Sadda, Sumayyah Ramadan, Umaymah Abu Bakr, (Cairo: The Women and Memory Forum, 1998), p. 1; Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Hikayat-i-Dukhtaran-i Quchan: Az Yadraftehaye inqilab-i Mashruteh*, (Tehran, Rawshangaran, 1995), p. 180-181; Azzah Sharara Baydoun, *al-Gandar, Matha Taqulin? Al-Sha'i' wa al-Waqi' fi Ahwal al-Nisa'*, (Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, 2012), p. 18-19, 24.

In *Feminism, Islam, and Nation*, Margot Badran wrote that while the Arabic Academy in Cairo had recently adopted '*Abawiya*' to denote patriarchy, it had not yet adopted 'a word for feminism'.¹¹ Yet, 'feminism's multiple meanings, which change over time, space, and location, complicate its interpretation and translation in different contexts. This is complicated further by troubled historical narratives and dichotomous notions of 'East versus West' in these countries. Rather than look for exact translations, or question the appropriateness of its application in such contexts, perhaps it is more useful to trace how women in these countries chose to define their own actions, and what terminology they used to describe their varied and interconnected activities. *Al-Nisa'iya/ Nisa'i* (women related, feminine), *al-Harakah al-Nisa'iya* (the women's movement), *al-Ittihad Al-Nisa'i al-Masri/l'Union Feministe Egyptienne* (The Egyptian Women's Union/the Egyptian Feminist Union), *al-Nahdha al-Nisa'iya* (women's awakening/renaissance) in Egypt, and *Bidari-i Zan/Zanan* (woman/women's awakening), *Huquq-i Zan/Zanan* (woman/women's rights), *Azadi-i Zan/Zanan* (woman/women's liberation), *Nehdat-i Zanan* (women's awakening/movement) in Iran, were among the many terms used to illustrate changing ideas of womanhood and women's rights in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Consequently, this thesis engages with feminism, women's rights, and female activism (in English, Arabic, and Persian) as observational terms, through which it explores how women in these countries defined their own activities, what they included or excluded as 'women's rights' at different points in time,

¹¹ Margot Badran, *Feminism, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 19.

and how they went about negotiating changes to these definitions over this period. Where the same source is available in both languages, both versions are used to compare wording/language. In the early 20th century female education formed a core aspect of what Egyptians and Iranians defined as 'women's rights', and much of women's social and nationalist activities were centred on this issue. While this remained a crucial part of women's rights activism, other aspects such as female employment, the vote, and greater political participation became central issues in later years and during particular time periods. For instance, women and men negotiated around changing ideas of female employment; in other words, what constituted appropriate jobs (women's rights) for women at one point in time, changed and began to include new and broader possibilities.

Similarly the type of 'activism' women took part in, and how they conducted their activism changed over time as well. Not only did female 'activism' encompass a wide variety of changing activities, from social work, education, journalism, writing, advocacy, political activism etc., but many women took part in multiple and different activities at the same time, so that some social work or educational activities overlapped with, or led to greater political activism.¹² For instance, 'women's activism' directly after the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911 was largely defined through independent social work and educational activities, however, by the 1960s it had come to include and overlap with political advocacy for suffrage, and lobbying for changes to existing legislation on women and the family. By the late 1970s

¹² Nadje al-Ali, *Secularism, Gender and the State in the Middle East: The Egyptian Women's Movement*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 6.

the definition of female activism in Iran had expanded to include guerrilla or militant activity against the state.

Furthermore, the term 'women' cannot be used to lump together diverse categories of female actors with different social, political, and ideological views, or women from different social, economic, ideological, and political backgrounds. As Khater and Nelson argue, it is 'misleading to talk of "women" as if they constituted some abstract all inclusive, homogeneous entity'.¹³ Moreover, concepts such as 'class' changed over time and came to encompass different socio-economic and ideological characteristics. For instance, as Khater and Nelson argue, late 19th and early 20th century Egyptian 'classes' were predominantly defined through Turko-Circassian elites and landowners, urban-guilds, merchants and peasants. However, Egypt's colonial experience and the advent of capitalism led to the emergence of new socio-economic classes, 'a national bourgeoisie, a comprador class, and the petite bourgeoisie'.¹⁴ Furthermore, during later decades, certain ideological movements appealed to particular classes, producing new or different linkages across society. For instance, the Muslim Brotherhood appealed to the 'petite bourgeoisie' in Egypt, while the communist movement was directed at a 'middle class vanguard'.¹⁵

The interrelationship or intersectionality between individual social factors such as gender, class, race, and communal factors such as nationalism, state, and socio-political movements, calls for an approach to changing terminology rather than the use of single definitions. This thesis, therefore,

¹³ Akram Khater and Cynthia Nelson, Al-Harakah al-Nissa'iyah: The Women's Movement and Political Participation in Modern Egypt, *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 11, No. 5, 1998, pp. 465-483.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

favours a constructivist approach to non-static terms, such as woman/women, activism, feminism, western, western feminism, international feminism, imperialist, culture, nationalism/nation, state, state feminism, radicalism, upper-class, middle-class, grassroots, lower-class, Islamism, modernism/modern, secular, traditional, or religious. Rather than a single definition, this work charts the transformation of multiple social and political discourses and the different types of women's rights activism demonstrated throughout this period. In so doing, it sheds light on the changes to women's social and political activities, their different strategies in negotiating such changes, and the implications of these changes for women's rights movements, feminism, nationalism, and revolution in these countries.

Thesis Arguments, and Historiography

This thesis explores the rise of women's rights discourses and movements in Egypt and Iran from several perspectives, asking a number of key questions concerning '*al-mas'alah al nisa'iyya*' and '*masale-i-zan*' (the 'woman's question' in Egypt and Iran, respectively) as it does so. One such viewpoint is through the analysis of wider ideological, social, and political movements, especially nationalist, revolutionary, and Islamist opposition movements, to see how they shaped women's discourses and how women's discourses simultaneously shaped these wider movements. Another perspective is provided through the analysis of power systems, such as the state; specifically how women's relationship with modernising states affected the dominant discourses of the period, and how this in turn affected women's activities. Historical

transformation of non-static terms such as nationalism, womanhood, western, modern, etc. and the construction of new terms such as '*gharbزادگی/westoxified*', are used to analyse notions of authenticity (discussed in the final section), providing another angle through which to analyse how limits on women's activities were revised in response to these changes. These approaches are used to ask, how did women negotiate their own definitions and ideas with the patriarchal forces around them? Echoing Joan Wallach Scott's argument on gender as a marker for power, Deniz Kandiyoti and Margot Badran have pointed to the crucial role gender plays in state attempts to compete for power,¹⁶ while Geraldine Heng has argued that feminism under threat or control of the state may adapt to conduct its activity along informal or less obvious lines.¹⁷ In fact, as gender plays a crucial role in all political attempts to compete for power, these arguments apply to gendered interactions within nationalist, revolutionary, and state contexts.

Patriarchal Bargaining

Studies on women's history and feminism have evolved considerably over the last 30 years, pointing to the need for more theoretical and interdisciplinary approaches. Since its publication in 1982 Kumari Jayawardena's influential book *Feminism and Nationalism in The Third World* has been widely cited by many scholars. Yet, her argument, that 'women's movements were to some extent determined by the wider social movements of which they formed a part', implied that women's behaviour within such movements was somewhat passive or

¹⁶ Margot Badran, 'Competing Agenda: Egypt', in Deniz Kandiyoti, *Women, Islam and the State*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), p. 201-202, p.228.

¹⁷ Geraldine Heng, 'A Great Way to Fly: Nationalism, the State and the Varieties of Third World Feminism', in M Alexander, C.T Mohanty (eds.), *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, (New York, London: Routledge, 1997), p.44

reactive, rather than pro-active and formative, and thus diminished their agency as negotiators of their own gender. Her arguments rested on assumed conceptions of 'feminist resistance', which did not satisfactorily highlight the different and sometimes un-expected forms 'women's resistance' could take in different scenarios. Such assumptions led her to make judgements that while women in these societies had 'achieved political and legal equality with men at juridical level' they had 'failed to make any impression on women's subordination within patriarchal structures of family and society'.¹⁸

In contrast, Kandiyoti's 1988 article, 'Bargaining with Patriarchy', drew attention to different, and less typical negotiation strategies used by women in a variety of different socio-economic situations. It argued that within kin-based family and labour systems in some sub-Saharan, Central-Asian, South-Asian and Middle Eastern societies, different patriarchal forms presented women with distinct rules and concrete constraints, which required them to strategise differently, with each 'patriarchal bargaining' strategy holding different gender implications¹⁹. In 1998 and 2006, Kandiyoti retrospectively criticised some of her article's analytical framework, 'simplifying assumptions', and use of 'ideal types' to discuss different forms of male dominance.²⁰ Incorporating these re-evaluations, 'patriarchal bargaining' theory nevertheless draws attention to how women's rights bargains, particularly short and medium-term strategies, may end up validating or reinforcing some patriarchal systems. Kandiyoti's argument that such bargains are 'constantly subject to renegotiation' as contextual factors

¹⁸ Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*, (London: Zed Books, 1986).

¹⁹ Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Bargaining with Patriarchy', *Gender and Society*, Vol. 2, No. 3, Sep. 1988.

²⁰ Rema Hammami, Reflections: Deniz Kandiyoti, Interviewed by Rema Hammami, *Development and Change*, Vol. 37, Issue 6, 2006, p.1349.

change, draws attention to less typically conceptualised/assumed forms of 'resistance'²¹ by showing, as Frances S. Hasso argues, how feminist resistance can often be 'built into, or easily work within subordinating structures without undermining them'.²²

This thesis extends Kandiyoti's theory of 'patriarchal bargaining' to test its historical implications within wider socio-political contexts in Egypt and Iran. It looks at how women negotiated different types of patriarchal bargains around changing and intersecting notions of womanhood and authenticity. As part of this bargain itself included what types of activities became permissible, and what patriarchal limits were upheld or redrawn around such activities, the changing nature of 'women's activism' and definitions of 'women/womanhood' are emphasised throughout this thesis to ask questions such as, how did women balance their bargaining between competing patriarchal forces? Given their intersectional identities, what sort of tensions or overlaps occurred between men and women's multiple bargains and their multiple identities, and how did such tensions/overlaps affect their actions and the development of women's movements in these countries? Moreover, patriarchal bargaining (bargains made with patriarchal forces to alter the status for certain groups of women) is not necessarily gender specific, in that both men and women can strike bargains with dominant patriarchal players in pursuit of change and different rights. Similarly both men and women can act as patriarchal forces, when their actions fortify the dominant patriarchal power or discourse of the period, or challenge the efforts of women (and men) in resisting that power.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Frances S. Hasso, 'Bargaining with the Devil: States and Intimate Life', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Spring 2014, p. 109.

Consequently this thesis argues that both women and men continuously struck bargains with patriarchal forces within nationalist, revolutionary, Islamist movements, and the state, actively altering and contributing to these phenomena as they did so. However, gender bargains within these contexts were multi-player, multi-lateral processes. Male and female actors within nationalist, revolutionary, Islamist movements, and the state incorporated multiple identities, bringing complex variables to the negotiating table. Moreover, players' bargaining powers changed over time in response to changing socio-economic and political factors.

This thesis will show that women's bargaining power did not necessarily decrease under increasingly patriarchal or dictatorial states, nor did they necessarily increase during periods of revolutionary or nationalist activity. Rather, it will show that the terms of their bargains changed, and that the leverage of certain groups of women changed vis-à-vis the particular patriarchal context within which they operated. For instance, state feminists (meaning women that the state looked to co-opt and that looked to be co-opted by the state), increased their leverage within that particular power system by striking bargains around common women's rights goals, while female members of revolutionary groups improved their bargaining position by joining revolutionary or opposition groups that offered them greater social and/or political space. Women manoeuvred and amended their strategies around changing patriarchal limits to better confront the dominant patriarchal discourse of the period, in order to improve the situation for certain groups/classes of women. Similarly, patriarchal players appropriated elements of dominant

women's rights discourses at the same time as offering their own gender definitions in order to assert power.

Moreover, this thesis argues that patriarchal players were also engaged in patriarchal rivalry or 'patriarchal battles' with their opponents, that is, power battles centred on definitions of womanhood/women's roles and notions of gender/gender relations. The state, in particular, as a patriarchal player, attempted to maintain dominance over patriarchal rivals (such as political opposition groups or the Islamist movement) by balancing between repressive tactics, and negotiating bargains with rival patriarchal powers, often with negative effects for women's rights movements and women's rights in general.

Bargaining with Nationalism and the Nation-State

The intersection of feminism and nationalism is a complex area of study that engages scholars from diverse academic fields. Many writers link the beginning of women's rights activity in the Middle East with early nationalist movements in the region. Jayawardena has argued that women's movements in the 'third world' were influenced by wider social factors, and thus resulted from, and formed a part of, wider social and political movements in their societies.²³ Scholars like Leila Ahmed, Amal al-Subki, Latifa Mohammad Salim, Buthayna Sha'ban, and Muhammad al-Jawawadi have linked the 1919 Egyptian Revolution, a nationalist independence movement, with the beginning of serious Egyptian women's rights activism.²⁴ Similarly for Iran, scholars like Janet Afary, Parvin

²³ Jayawardena.

²⁴ Leila Ahmed, Feminism and Feminist Movements in the Middle East: Preliminary Explorations in Turkey, Egypt, Algeria and the People's Republic of Yemen, *Women's Studies Forum*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1982; Amal Kamil Bayumi al-Subki, p. 15; Latifah Muhammad Salim, *al-Mar'ah al-Misriyah wa-al-Taghyir al-Ijtima'i, 1919-1945*, (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Misriyah al-'Ammah lil-Kitab, 1984), p. 45; Buthayna Sha'ban, *al-Mar'ah al-'Arabiyah fi al-Qarn al-'Ishrin*, (Damascus: Dar al-Mada lil-

Paidar, and Eliz Sanasarian have pointed to the 1906-1911 Constitutional Revolution as a key event in awakening their political consciousness, and driving women's rights activity in its aftermath amongst more educated classes of women.²⁵

While writers like Soha Abdel Kader, and Muhammad Kamal Yaha have argued that the first calls for women's reform in Egypt came from men like Qasim Amin,²⁶ later studies by Ahmed²⁷, Beth Baron²⁸, Margot Badran²⁹ and Lila Abu-Lughod³⁰ argued that women's participation in the 1919 Revolution was a continuation or development of their earlier activities as writers and journalists. Iranian writers like Pari Shaykh al-Islami and Afsaneh Najmabadi have criticised the masculinist (*tarikh-i muzkar*) readings of women's histories and nationalist contributions, calling for gendered readings and further research on these 'hidden histories'.³¹ However, as these masculinist histories formed part of national construction processes, gaps on women's roles within existing historiography are just as telling as emphasised narratives. For instance, Najmabadi's research on the 'Story of the Daughters of Quchan' showed how Iranian historians deliberately excluded this story because it did not fit the

Thaqafah wa-al-Nashr, 2000), p. 73; Muhammad al-Jawwadi. *Mudhakkirat al-Mar'ah al-Misriyah: al-Thawrah wa-al-Hurriyah*, (Cairo: Dar al-Khayyal, 2004), p. 27.

²⁵ Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy and the Origins of Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Parvin Paidar, *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-Century Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Eliz Sanasarian, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran: Mutiny, Appeasement, and Repression from 1900 to Khomeini* (New York: Praeger, 1982).

²⁶ Soha Abdel Kader, *Egyptian Women in a Changing Society* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1987), p. 50; Muhammad Kamal Yaha, *al-Judhur al-Tarikhayah li-Tahrir al-Marah al-Misriyah fi al-'asr al-hadith: dirasah 'an makanat al-marah fi al-mujtama' al-Misri khilala al-qarn al-tasi' 'ashar* (Cairo: al-Hayah al-Misriyah al-'Ammah lil-Kitab, 1983), p. 5.

²⁷ Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of A Modern Debate*, (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1992), p.185

²⁸ Beth Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society and the Press* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 193.

²⁹ Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, p. 3.

³⁰ Abu-Lughod, *Remaking Women*, p. 261.

³¹ Shaykh al-Islami, pp.180-181.

dominant, accepted narrative of the Constitutional Revolution.³² Thus, Najmabadi joins scholars like Anthony D. Smith, Ruth Wodak, and Tamar Mayer³³ in highlighting the special role that myths and historical memories play in defining the nation and national identity, and how cultural rituals are used to sustain such national constructions.³⁴

It is in this context that the arguments of scholars like Chatterjee, Anthias, Yuval-Davis, Mayer, Kandiyoti, and Peterson, on women's special roles as 'cultural carriers' of the community or nation,³⁵ are crucial in understanding the ways in which women negotiated bargains with changing patriarchal forces in their societies. Throughout this thesis, examples of women's renegotiation of patriarchal bargains within nationalist movements, revolutionary movements, and the state, is assessed to analyse their motives, approaches, and the effects such bargains had over time on women's rights movements and on definitions of womanhood.

This thesis argues overall that women often sought the role of cultural carriers or symbols/protectors of national culture as a crucial part of ongoing, revised, and new patriarchal bargains with nationalist movements, revolutionary/opposition groups, and the State. That is, women renegotiated bargains around their ability to represent, symbolise, carry and protect new and

³² Najmabadi, *Hikayat*, pp.1701-174.

³³ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991); Ruth Wodak, Rudolf de Cillia, Martin Reisigl, Karin Liebhart, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999); Tamar Mayer, *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation* ed. Tamar Mayer (London: Routledge, 2000).

³⁴ Najmabadi, *Hikayat*, pp. 2, 7.

³⁵ Floya Anthias, Nira Yuval-Davis, Jo Campling, *Woman- Nation-State*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 85, 143, 155; Partha Chatterjee; The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question, in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, ed. Sangari and Vaid, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1990), p. 243; V. Spike Peterson, Sexing Political Identities/Nationalism as Heterosexism, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 1:1, 1999, p. 47; Tamar Mayer, pp. 7, 10, 18; Deniz Kandiyoti, Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation, *WLUML DOSSIER* 26, 2004, pp. 49, 51.

changing notions of cultural and national authenticity (discussed below), particular at times of heightened political change or instability.

During periods when the nationalist movement or the state became increasingly intolerant of independent feminist activity, women manoeuvred around these increasing limits using a variety of resistance approaches: bargaining 'from within' or along official lines (state feminists), bargaining with various influential or oppositional patriarchal forces within the state (opposition, revolutionary, and Islamic groups) and/or using less obtrusive voices through journalism and independent social work. Women responded to changing levels of male hostility to women's rights activism by fine-tuning their negotiating skills to maintain their struggles in less obvious ways.

As the following thesis chapters will demonstrate, Egyptian and Iranian nationalist movements at the start of the 20th century provide examples of different forms of bargaining, as some women chose to initiate independent women's rights activity in the wake of disappointment from male-nationalists, while others maintained their affiliation to patriarchal nationalist parties and leaders, preferring to bargain from within. Similarly, during periods of no independent feminism or political repression, such as the 1930s and 1960s/1970s in Iran, or the 1960s and 1970s in Egypt, some female activists were able to negotiate exceptional spaces for their activity within the state by striking bargains around common goals. Bargains between patriarchal state players and female activists were often motivated by individual goals and ambitions, which sometimes conflicted with the wider agenda/views of their class, or political/ideological group.

Patriarchal Rivalry between the State and the Opposition

The state also bargained with patriarchal forces within the opposition, often employing a dual strategy of balancing between repression and negotiation, to maintain its power. This thesis will argue that by employing such dual tactics in its 'patriarchal battles', the Egyptian and Iranian states (under Nasser, Sadat and both Pahlavi Shahs) produced a far more contradictory than conservative stance on women's rights, by promoting conflicting notions of modern womanhood as they compromised on women's rights in order to appease and control patriarchal/political rivals. Moreover, by sacrificing women's rights in order to appease Islamist opponents in the 1960s and 1970s, the Egyptian and Iranian states maintained, promoted, and redefined the historically constructed dichotomy between Islam and feminism.

Bargains with Islam

The discourses of Islam and women's rights/feminism, though often presented as a static dichotomy, have been historically formulated by multiple, interconnected, and changing notions, around which women struck patriarchal bargains in different contexts. This thesis argues that contemporary 'Islamic feminism' is also a form of patriarchal bargaining, which had an earlier historical precedent than most contemporary debates suggest.³⁶ Some scholars such as Miriam Cooke³⁷, Nayereh Tohidi³⁸, Saba Mahmood³⁹ and Margot Badran⁴⁰ have

³⁶ Huma Ahmed-Ghosh, Dilemmas of Islamic and Secular Feminists and Feminisms, *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3, May 2008, p. 108; Ziba Mir Hosseini, 'Islam and Feminism: Whose Islam? Whose Feminism?', *Contestation: Dialogue on Women's Empowerment*, Issue 1, 2010; Valentine M. Moghadam, Islamic Feminism and its Discontents: Toward a Resolution of the Debate, *Signs*, Vol. 27, No. 4, Summer 2002, pp.1135-1171.

³⁷ Miriam Cooke, *Women Claim Islam: Creating Islamic Feminism Through Literature*, (New York: Routledge, 2001).

pointed to contemporary 'Islamic feminism's' links with the late 19th/early 20th century Islamic modernist movement. However, their approach is still a-historical in that it does not satisfactorily assess how 'Islamic feminism' or 'Islamic women's discourses' developed or changed in response to wider socio-political factors, or how these ideas influenced, or were influenced by, other developing women's discourses. This thesis will show that Islam and women's rights discourses intersected right from the start of the period under examination, as they intersected with secular ideas, modernist ideas, nationalism and changing forms of patriarchy, and thus Islamic women's rights discourses or forms of 'Islamic feminism', as a product of this intersection, have been developing since, continuously modifying and altering their bargaining strategies in response to changing socio-political factors, such as the growth of political Islamism, or the establishment of Islamic states.

Furthermore, this thesis will explore how Iranian and Egyptian feminist discourses incorporated Islamic, modernist, and secular ideas to varying degrees, resulting in different forms and levels of Islamic and secular-grounded feminisms co-existing and inter-bargaining with each other at all times. Thus, it is misleading and historically inaccurate to promote the notion of 'Islamic feminism' as a more authentic alternative to other women's rights discourses in

³⁸ Nayereh Tohidi, 'Islamic Feminism: Perils and Promises', *Woodrow Wilson International Centre For Scholars, Middle East Project*, October 2001, pp.141.

³⁹ Saba Mahmood, *The Politics of Piety: the Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject 1962-*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), p.82-94; Margot Badran, 'Between Secular and Islamic Feminism/s: Reflections on the Middle East and Beyond', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, Vol.1, No.1, 2005, pp.6-28.

⁴⁰ Margot Badran, 'Toward Islamic Feminisms: A Look at the Middle East', in *Hermeneutics and Honor: Negotiating Female "Public" Space in Islamic/Ate Societies*, Asma Afsaruddin, Anan Ameri (eds), (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 168-169.

these societies, over which writers like Haideh Moghissi⁴¹ have critiqued the arguments of scholars like Valentine Moghadam⁴², Margot Badran⁴³, and Saba Mahmood,⁴⁴ as different forms, including many secular women's rights discourses or feminisms, developed out of the same processes and mutually influenced each other. At the heart of all religiously, Islamic, or secular grounded patriarchal bargains, lies the ever-persistent question of 'cultural authenticity', which continues to cast a shadow over different forms and notions of Middle-Eastern feminisms.

Cultural Authenticity

Debates on Middle Eastern women's movements have been plagued by perpetual questions of authenticity; specifically whether or not the origins of such movements can be attributed to 'indigenous'/'authentic' factors, as opposed to foreign, specifically western sources. Thus, while most scholars link the beginnings of Middle Eastern women's movements to their corresponding nationalist revolutions, they disagree over whether or not feminism in these societies was an indigenous development. Leila Ahmed and Thomas Phillip are among those who argue feminism is essentially western, while others like Badran and Jayawardena argue that feminism was an indigenous development and not a product of Western imposition.⁴⁵ Contemporary debates on 'Islamic

⁴¹ Haideh Moghissi, 'Islamic Feminism Revisited', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 2011, pp. 76-84.

⁴² Moghadam, 'Islamic Feminism and Its Discontents'.

⁴³ Badran, 'Understanding Islam, Islamism and Islamic Feminism', *Journal of Women's History*, Vo. 13, No.1, 2001, pp. 47-52.

⁴⁴ Saba Mahmood, Feminist 'Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival', *Cultural Anthropology*, Vo. 16, No. 2, 2001, 202-236.

⁴⁵ Leila Ahmed, 'Feminism and Feminist Movements in the Middle East: Preliminary Explorations in Turkey, Egypt, Algeria and the People's Republic of Yemen', *Women's Studies Forum*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1982; Thomas Philip, 'Feminism and Nationalist Politics in Egypt' in Lois Beck and Nikkie Keddie, *Women in the Muslim World*, (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press,

feminism' reflect these disagreements, as debates remain plagued by the historically disconcerting relationship between Islam and feminism and conflicting ideas of 'authenticity'. Some scholars, like Nayereh Tohidi, remain engaged in this exercise, pointing to historical examples of 'contemporary Islamic feminism' to prove its 'authenticity'.⁴⁶ However, such debates and exercises often underline and ask the wrong questions, as they often inadvertently validate the idea of authenticity as something essential, rather than as a social construct within history.

A host of scholars have emphasised women's privileged role as symbols and markers of cultural authenticity, and how patriarchal movements have used this to the detriment of women. Mohanty, Narayan and Chatterjee have pointed to how the dichotomy of nationalism and Imperialism in such societies led to a 'cultural competition' around Eastern/Western constructions of womanhood.⁴⁷ Jayawardena showed how patriarchal nationalism pushed women into public life while trying to preserve 'traditional culture', perpetuating their subordination.⁴⁸ Chatterjee, Badran, Yuval-Davis, Anthias and Kandiyoti showed how women's privileged role as symbols of 'authenticity' and the 'spiritual quality of national culture'⁴⁹, or as 'boundary markers of their communities'⁵⁰ meant 'burdens of

1978) cited by Margot Badran 'The Origins of Feminism in Egypt', in *Current Issues in Women's History*, ed. Arina Angerman, Geerte Binnema, Annemieke Keunen, Vefie Poels and Jacqueline Zirkzee, (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 155-156; Badran, *Feminists, Islam and Nation*, Jayawardena.

⁴⁶ Tohidi, p.141.

⁴⁷ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Mohanty, Russo, Torres, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions and Third-World Feminism*, (New York: Routledge), 1997); Partha Chatterjee, The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question.

⁴⁸ Jayawardena.

⁴⁹ Chatterjee, p. 243.

⁵⁰ Kandiyoti, 'Identity and its Discontents', p.45, 48; Anthias, Yuval-Davis, Campling, pp. 85, 143, 155.

continuity were placed on women'⁵¹, which translated to different limits of modernity and westernisation for women compared to men. Joan Wallach Scott's argument that 'old notions of gender have served to validate new regimes', highlights how old definitions are recalled to express authenticity in modern times.⁵²

The cases of Egypt and Iran show women were often constructed as symbols of indigenous culture to illustrate the binary of authenticity versus inauthenticity, often revolving around changing limits and definitions of westernisation. This thesis argues that women were not passive participants in these processes and that notions of what was authentic were revised over time. More specifically, it argues that women themselves actively contributed to, negotiated, and employed changing ideas of cultural authenticity, 'transgression of social boundaries', competing constructs of modern womanhood and manhood, and what/who constituted western and non-western at different points in time, to strike various patriarchal bargains. Their contribution was not only influenced by wider socio-political factors, but by individual experiences, through the intersectionality of their class, race, and gender, which often led to competing definitions of gender, nationalism, and national identity. Thus, it was not purely that changing forms of patriarchy emphasised certain definitions of authenticity, but also how women interacted and negotiated bargains around these definitions of authenticity, and in response to changing social and political contexts, that decided their fate.

⁵¹ Badran, 'Competing Agenda: Feminists, Islam and the State in Nineteenth-and Twentieth Century Egypt', in Deniz Kandiyoti (eds.) *Women, Islam and the State*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), p. 209.

⁵² Joan Wallach Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 91, No. 5, December 1986.

Scholars writing about the interaction of imperialism and nationalism have pointed to the importance of constructed ideas of westernisation, modernisation, feminism, and culture. Edward Said argued that opposition and resistance to Imperialism were articulated together on 'a largely although disputed terrain provided by culture', highlighting the centrality of women's movements in this context.⁵³ Leila Ahmed argued that the discourse of 'patriarchal colonialism', through advocates like Lord Cromer in Egypt, used women's status to attack colonised societies, and by doing so tainted their movements as inauthentic or 'westernised' agents of Imperialism.⁵⁴ Uma Narayan and Deniz Kandiyoti pointed to how definitions of westernisation varied with 'time, place, and community'⁵⁵, and often also reflected internal struggles to do with class, religion, and ethnicity within the nation itself.⁵⁶ Khater and Nelson also pointed to class as a historically developing term, rather than a static idea.⁵⁷ Similarly to changing definitions of westernisation and class and their gender implications, Leila Ahmed has argued that the meaning of gender in Islam is not fixed, but historically derived.⁵⁸ Abdullahi An-Na'im has pointed to how the *Shari'a* itself reflects specific historical interpretations of the *Qur'an* and *Sunna*.⁵⁹ Badran correspondingly points to the historically changing definitions of the terms 'secular' and 'religious' in the Middle East.⁶⁰

⁵³ E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (London: Vintage, 1994), p.24.

⁵⁴ Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, p.243.

⁵⁵ Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures*, p. 28.

⁵⁶ Kandiyoti, 'Identity and its Discontents', p.53.

⁵⁷ Khater and Nelson, 'Al-Harakah Al-Nissa'iyah'.

⁵⁸ Leila Ahmed, 'Women and Gender in Islam', p. 236.

⁵⁹ Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, Abdullahi, 'Human Rights in the Muslim World: Political Conditions and Scriptural Imperatives: A Preliminary Inquiry', *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, Vol. 2, 1990.

⁶⁰ Badran, 'Between Secular and Islamic Feminism/s', pp. 6-28.

These scholars are among many that argue ideological definitions of culture, modernism, secularism, westernisation, nationalism, Islam, feminism, social class, etc, are not static concepts, but changing discourses made up of conflicting and variable notions. Since these discourses, which influence ideas of authenticity are not givens, and since the notion of gender within such discourses is not fixed, gendered notions of authenticity are similarly not givens, but evolving discourses that change over time and according to complex socio-political factors. Arguments about whether or not feminist developments in such societies were/are authentic can only be made when notions of 'cultural authenticity' are misleadingly validated as static.

This thesis examines how the notion of cultural authenticity changed over time to argue that feminist ideas developed intrinsically as part of the cosmopolitan processes of modernisation and nationalism in Egypt and Iran, which it mutually influenced and shaped, and that as it developed, so did the notion of feminism as a western import. Notions of feminism and/or feminism as a western import were shaped by cultural tensions at the heart of modernisation and anti-imperialist movements and the different discourses and definitions they promoted. These discourses not only changed in response to external socio-political factors, but were also influenced by how intra-communal factors such as gender, class, race, and ethnicity intersected with each other in different societies and groups. These ideological struggles were indicative of political power plays between oppositional forces, both external and internal, who all used constructed ideas of authenticity, and the gender constructs they promoted, often framed within the dichotomy of 'West versus East', to assert their political power. Once again throughout this period, women are often seen

seeking the role of cultural carriers and symbols of national culture, as part of changing patriarchal bargains about what was authentic and what/who constituted appropriate models of womanhood.

Methodology

In a part of the world where access to undiscovered historical records is unlikely given the political climate and the extreme difficulty that international researchers face in accessing national archives and libraries, particularly in Iran where such access is virtually impossible, a critical re-reading and re-interpretation of available sources is crucial. Iranian writers Panah and Shahidian have argued that the lack of primary sources on women in Iran, particularly over the last 100 years, explains the 'patchwork nature of Iranian women's history'.⁶¹ Yet, Najmabadi argues that, the problem is not a lack of sources, but the lack of any gender analysis of available sources. She affirms that her work on the 'The Story of the Daughters of Quchan' was not based on any new primary or historical material, but upon a new reading of the same material used by others writing about the Iranian Constitutional Revolution.⁶²

This thesis uses a varied combination of primary material selected based on the analytical perspectives it uses to investigate historical developments. By triangulating a wide variety of primary material and by applying a more critical methodology for the reading, or re-reading of such sources, original arguments, both country-specific and comparative about women's discourses over this period are made.

⁶¹ Panah, p. 8; Najmabadi, *Hikayat*, p. 182

⁶² Najmabadi, *Hikayat*, p. 182.

Literary and post-colonial theorist Edward Said argued that 'narrative itself is the representation of power', and that authors are 'in the history of their societies', being affected, albeit in 'different measure', by the social changes and experiences that form that history.⁶³ Thus, a critical reading of texts, from official state documents, journal publications, to life-writing requires an analysis of what was included in that writing as well as what was excluded from it,⁶⁴ to illuminate what forces were in effect at the time, and what affects they had on particular social groups and/or individuals. Post-colonial and transnational feminist theorist, Chandra Talpede Mohanty has argued that 'history and memory are woven through numerous genres: fictional texts, oral history, poetry, as well as testimonial narratives-not just what counts as scholarly or academic ('real?') historiography'.⁶⁵ Autobiographies can thus provide alternative narratives, to help historians cover areas where there are archival gaps or where there has been a 're-writing of historical memory' by power systems such as a colonial state,⁶⁶ or patriarchal nation states. Moreover, by highlighting that 'writing itself is an activity which is marked by class and ethnic position'⁶⁷ questions about which or what type of audience such texts were written for become highly relevant to any understanding of such sources.

Discussing women's biographical writing in late 19th/early 20th century Egypt, Marilyn Booth has argued that 'biography was one means by which women might assert subject positions within the nationalist collectivity, writing themselves into life narratives that represented the sorts of subject positions

⁶³ E. Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 2003); *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 24, p. 330.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 79.

⁶⁵ Mohanty, *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, p. 36.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 33.

they envisioned for themselves and their daughters'.⁶⁸ Linking this argument to those of Said and Mohanty, one question that arises is how does memory become a historical source that can illuminate the cultural, political, and economic processes that defined the author's lifetime? Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson argue that in autobiographical writing, the author becomes both the 'observing subject and the object of investigation', and is thus addressing an audience they want to convince of 'their version of experience'.⁶⁹ Historian, Jermey D Popkin has argued that 'life writing 'does not have to engage the moments of shared experience that historians identify as significant in the collective time of an era, nation, or culture, or present the 'big picture' expected of a historian'.⁷⁰

Yet, autobiographical works link the 'big picture' to real people, their lives, and the effects that historical events had on them. Reading the text not only shows what the author wanted their particular audience to know, but also what they didn't want known. When such writing is triangulated with other primary material, it allows historians to arrive at a fuller picture of the forces in effect at the time and how personal subjectivities negotiated around such forces, and what this tells us about the 'bigger historical picture'. In this context, Smith and Watson's arguments on the 'emphasis of reading' are extremely useful.

Rather than view it as a story to be proved or falsified, the emphasis of reading shifts from assessing and verifying knowledge to observing processes of communicative exchange and understanding. It redefines the terms of what we call 'truth': autobiographical writing cannot be read solely as either factual truth or simple fact.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Marilyn Booth, *May Her Likes be Multiplied: Biography and Gender Politics in Egypt*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 14/xiv.

⁶⁹ Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives: Reading Autobiography*, (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis, 2010), pp. 1, 7.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 13. p. 727.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.17.

However, the more our critical reading of such sources improves, the more autobiographical sources can be used to demonstrate additional, or different 'truths' and perspectives, which when combined with other historical sources can add another layer in our understanding of the past, and its implications for the future.

This thesis uses life-writing, and autobiographical writing in particular, to explore changing expressions of culture, cultural resistance, and patriarchal resistance, albeit for certain groups and classes of people, to shed light on the subjectivities of such complex socio-political processes. This type of primary source provides a particular insight into the author's cultural and political experiences, what they selected to project of those experiences at the time of writing, and thus how they wanted to be remembered for their actions, by whom, and why. It therefore offers an alternative view of the dominant power players and social factors that shaped the author's choices, with whom the author is sometimes negotiating patriarchal bargains and/or resisting and straining them through the act of writing. For instance, it could be argued that the published tracts and autobiographical writing of pioneering female educator Nabawiya Musa constituted both acts of resistance and negotiation with male nationalists and conservative patriarchal forces, whilst the writings of Doria Shafiq and Nawal el-Saadawi constituted acts of resistance and rebellion that often transgressed existing patriarchal bargains, making clear what the limits of those bargains were at the time.

Sources

Primary sources used are highlighted in each chapter introduction. Main sources are summarised below according to different analytical perspectives.

Sources on Women's groups and Individual Women's perspectives

Archive collections at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, Women's Library Archives in London, American University in Cairo, United Kingdom National Archives, United States National Archives and The British Newspaper Archives are combined with publications, tracts, letters, poetry, and autobiographical work by ideologically diverse Iranian and Egyptian female intellectuals and activists, like Sedigheh Dowlatabadi, Bibi Khanom Astarabadi, Taj al-Saltaneh, Qurrat al-'Ayn, Badr ol-Moluk Bamdad, Afsal Vaziri, Sattareh Farmanfarmaian, Ashraf Dehgani, Ashraf Pahlavi, Shirin Ebadi, Azar Nafisi, Mahnaz Afkhami, and Zaynab Fawwaz, May Ziyadah, Malak Hifni Nasif, Nabawiyah Musa, Huda Sha'rawi, Doria Shafiq, Inji Aflatun, Munirah Thabit, Ruz al-Yusuf, Nawal el-Saadawi, Amina al-Said, Bint al Shati', Jehan Sadat, Zaynab al-Ghazali and Fatima Abdel Hadi. Iranian and Egyptian women's organisation pamphlets and statutes, and relevant women's journals like *Zaban-i-Zanan*, *L'Egyptienne*, *Bint al-Nil* magazine are combined with newspapers sources throughout the period to get a sense of key issues at the time, and how women chose to present and negotiate them. These are supplemented with archival and published writings, speeches, and interviews of important figures such as Mohammad Naguib, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, Tahia Nasser, 'Abd al-Rahman Abu al-Khayr, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Farah Diba, Fatemeh Pakravan, Manouchehr Ganji, and Mehdi Rezai. These varied primary sources are used to

get a deeper understanding of men's bargaining motives and to assess the growing competition and rivalry that developed between female activists over their different views on women's rights, nationalism, female activism, and cultural authenticity.

Sources on Broader Socio-political Movements

The writings and publications of Rafi' Rifa'ah al-Tahtawi, Mohammad Abduh, Qasim Amin, Mansur Fahmi, Muhammad Farid Wajdi, Taha Hussein, Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, Abdel Salam Faraj in Egypt, and Abbas Effendi, Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh, Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani, Nabil Zarandi, Ahmad Kasravi, Ali Shariati, Jalal Al-i-Ahmad, Ruh-Allah Khomeini, The Tudeh party of Iran, the Iranian People's Mojahedin (Mojahedin-i-Khalgh), the People's Fadayan (Fadayan-i-Khalgh), CARI (Committee Against Repression in Iran), are analyzed to get a deeper understanding of ideological debates that helped transform notions of nationalism, womanhood, and cultural authenticity.

Sources on International Observers and Foreign Policy

Orientalist writing on Egypt and Iran is used to help assess how imperialist views affected notions of cultural authenticity, modern nationalism, and gender norms. These include the writing of Sophia Poole, Ellen Chennells, Lucy Duff Gordon, Elizabeth Cooper, Thomas Russell Pasha, Lord Cromer, Valentine Chirol, Edward Granville Browne, Morgan Shuster, and George Nathaniel Curzon. British Foreign Office documents related to the political views and activities of Egyptian women, the Wafdist Women Central Committee, Saffiya Zaghlul, Esther Fahmy Wissa, and Huda Sha'rawi are used to shed light on both colonial attitudes to the movement, and the nationalist activities of women during the

early 20th century. Reports of International Alliance of Women (IAW) held at the Women's Library Archives are used to explore the relationship between international, Egyptian, and Iranian feminists, and to assess the development and implications of constructed 'East/West' dichotomies at different points in time. Reports and correspondences between the Egyptian Feminist Union, Arab Feminist Union, and the IAW are used to highlight changing Egyptian and Arab perspectives on this relationship. British and US National Archives are used in conjunction with Egyptian and Iranian sources to gain greater insight on foreign policy over particular periods, and to assess how this affected or altered notions of authentic culture and womanhood. These are supplemented by press publications throughout the period, held at The British Library Newspapers, International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, American University in Cairo Archives, UK National Archives, US National Archives, and various digital newspaper archives.

Structure

Chapter 1, Founding Mothers and Fathers (1800s-1900s) will show how the modernisation reforms of Mohammad Ali challenged the educational leadership of the Egyptian *ulama*, and motivated more extensive debates on the women's question than in Iran, where the Qajari state's lack of support for female education and the persistent power of the Iranian clergy limited such discourses. The first section analyses Imperialism's role in influencing notions of cultural authenticity and how European traveller accounts used notions of European tutelage to justify imperialist intervention in both countries. It additionally

explores the way Qurrat al-'Ayn challenged patriarchal definitions of Iranian womanhood through a rejection of orthodox Iranian *Shi'ism*. Themes of women as symbols of national purity are used to analyse how most Iranian men labelled Qurrat al-'Ayn morally, and thus nationally, impure. Pointing to how myths and legends are often revised to authenticate new discourses, it is argued that as definitions of Iranian womanhood changed, some Iranian feminists in the late 20th century reinterpreted Qurrat al-'Ayn's 'legend' to define her rebellion as a pioneering form of Iranian feminism. In the second section it is shown how male and female reformers had to navigate around the competing patriarchal forces of imperialism, the state, and the conservative religious establishment to advance their goals. The tensions this created led to many limitations in the arguments of men like Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh in Iran, and Rifa'a al-Tahtawi and Qasim Amin in Egypt. In Iran, Bibi Khanum and Taj al-Saltaneh used different 'gradual change' approaches to barter on common ground with constitutionalist men around notions of female education as nationalist activity. In Egypt, Malak Hifni Nasif, May Ziyadah, and Nabawiya Musa struck bargains around the arguments of modernist men, while simultaneously challenging their limits on women's reforms.

Chapter 2, Feminism and Nationalism (1890s-1920s) looks at the relationship between the women's rights movement and early nationalist movements in these countries, namely the 1906-1911 Iranian Constitutional Revolution and 1919-1922 Egyptian Revolution/independence struggle. It will show how different notions of women's purity and modesty were tied to new definitions of womanhood, which intersected with nationalist discourses of authenticity. It will show how Egyptian and Iranian women used nationalist

language to exercise their own agency through organisations like the Egyptian Wafdist Women's Central Committee and The National Ladies Society in Iran, to negotiate bargains with nationalist men around new socio-political roles. It will argue in contrast to Jayawardena, that women did question traditional patriarchal structures within the family, but that their bargaining strategies were shaped differently by the specific context out of which they operated. In both countries, men appeared to encourage women's participation in anti-colonial/foreign policy contexts more than their participation in domestic politics.

Chapter 3, Changing Bargains: From Nationalism to Internationalism in Egypt, and Independent Activity to State feminism in Iran (1920s-1940s).

This chapter looks at Iranian women's activism under Reza Shah to show that state co-optation was a form of patriarchal bargaining for some activists, who chose to exchange their gradual change approach for more revolutionary change through Reza Shah's Women's Awakening Project. Similarly, the EFU struck common ground with nationalist men over notions of 'educated motherhood', whilst it challenged patriarchal limits on women's higher education and travel abroad. Moreover, women presented themselves as cultural ambassadors through their international feminist activities as a way of questioning patriarchal limits on their political roles. The EFU in particular, by presenting itself as a forum for cultural exchange between 'East and West', defined itself as a national and social necessity, signalling to nationalist men that it could contribute to both foreign and domestic policy. The EFU's employment of pan-Arab discourse in the context of the Palestinian-Zionist conflict drew revised lines around the constructed opposition of 'Eastern versus Western' feminism. Encouraged to

view the International Alliance of Women (IAW) as a colonial force in this context, the EFU moved towards a regional-Arab alliance as the better-perceived bargain at this point in time.

Chapter 4, Feminisms, Class, and Political Diversification (1940s-1950s)

will show that elite women in both countries drew class lines around their leadership of the women's movement. Reza Shah's Women's Awakening project in Iran reaffirmed elite women's leadership of the movement through the *Kanoun Banovan*, while his Unveiling Decree helped turn veiling into a symbol of political resistance and authenticity against the Pahlavi state. A new generation of women from more diverse social backgrounds began to challenge elite women from political, cultural, and class perspectives. Despite growing competition, this chapter will also show that ideologically diverse activists joined forces over common feminist and/or nationalist goals when it constituted the better-perceived bargain, such as the 1951 Egyptian women's march on parliament and 1952 suffrage petition in Iran. However, where ideological differences or actions appeared to threaten revised patriarchal bargains, women diversified and criticised each other, as illustrated by criticism of Doria Shafiq after the 1951 ICW conference. It is argued that the political instability, revolutionary environment, and renewed anti-colonial battles that characterised this period in both countries rendered unification over nationalism the better patriarchal bargain for most female activists at the time.

Chapter 5, Nationalisation and Co-optation: Mohammad Reza Shah and Gamal Abdel Nasser (1950s-1970s)

will show that in both countries Nationalisation policies promoted anti-westernisation, but that definitions of

anti-westernisation developed differently. The CIA's role in the overthrow of Mossadegh's regime helped redefine notions of western imperialism as 'American', while British and French reaction to nationalisation of the Suez Canal encouraged Nasser's turn towards the Soviet Union, promoting a more socialist, Arab, and anti-capitalist model of Egyptian nationalism. It will also show that while the Shah and Nasser granted women greater social and political rights, both leaders promoted women's political position as secondary; the former by primarily defining them as wives and mothers, and the latter by emphasising a balance between familial and national duties in the 1956 Constitution, and 'different' political/military duties for men and women. Some women negotiated new bargains around the different modernising impulses of the Shah and Nasser to advance their own goals. However, these revised patriarchal bargains were not necessarily acceptable to all state feminists, as illustrated by Nezhat Nafisi's outspoken criticism against the 1967 Family Planning Act, and Amina al-Said's criticism of some Egyptian state policies.

Chapter 6, The Political Opposition and Alternative Models of Womanhood (1960s-1970s) will show how certain events and policies in both countries alienated people from the state, and helped spur the opposition towards militancy and increasing violence. These changes compounded the portrayal of state feminism as inauthentic, and encouraged some women to strike patriarchal bargains with the opposition for spaces that were otherwise being denied by the state. Within the Iranian opposition, themes of female loyalty and sacrifice were equated with arrest and martyrdom as part of new patriarchal bargains with revolutionary groups. It will be shown how desire for arrest and martyrdom within the Mojahedin-i-Khalgh was a manifestation of

these themes realised through Shariati's revolutionised models of Fatima and Zaynab. Whilst exalting notions of female sacrifice and endurance of hardship, it will be shown that the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood/Sisterhood promoted different models of authentic Islamic womanhood. The case of al-Ghazali is compared to women in the Muslim Sisterhood to illustrate how al-Ghazali was able to strike exceptional patriarchal bargains with Muslim Brotherhood leaders based on modernist Islamic notions of religious equality in *da'wa*, as well as modern nationalist notions of educated motherhood. However, despite initially putting forward a more independent, political definition of Islamic womanhood than Muslim Sisters like Fatima Abdel-Hadi, increasing state crackdowns on the Brotherhood and her own Muslim Ladies Group made joining and merging her activities with the Brotherhood the better bargain in her view by the 1960s.

Chapter 7, The Iranian Revolution of 1979 and The Fall of Sadat (1970s-1980s) shows how the state and opposition groups entered into 'patriarchal battles' using their different definitions of womanhood and cultural authenticity. In both cases, the state promoted its women's reforms against the opposition's alternative models of womanhood. However, it will be argued that by employing a dual strategy of compromise and repression against the opposition, and compromising women's reforms as part of conciliatory gestures, the Egyptian and Iranian states validated contradictory notions of womanhood, undermining their own state feminist projects. Moreover, although veiling formed a crucial part of 'patriarchal battles' between the opposition and the state, the re-veiling phenomenon in Iran and Egypt formed part of very different patriarchal bargains with the opposition. It was only in Egypt that veiling formed part of actual bargains struck between women and the Islamic opposition who wished to

pursue their university education, whilst projecting a revised authentic model of Egyptian womanhood. In Iran, secular women donned the veil as a temporary bargain with the opposition, as an anti-Pahlavi symbol of revolution, and did not necessarily promote the act of veiling as authentic outside this context. This was illustrated in March 1979, when thousands of women took to the streets to protest Khomeini's enforced veiling law.

Throughout the following chapters, this thesis will explore how notions of cultural authenticity shifted as they intersected with revised definitions of womanhood and changing patriarchal bargains. It seeks to investigate how these complex processes, which are continuously in motion, ensure the non-static nature of historical figures and events, which can be revised, re-modelled, and re-drawn upon at later times to authenticate new discourses and ideas. New and revised definitions of women's activism, work, social, and political rights will be assessed in line with these changes to understand better the tensions and overlapping factors at the heart of these processes, and how they affected the development of women's rights in these countries.

Chapter 1

Founding Mothers and Fathers (1800s-1900s)

The development of feminist discourse in Egypt and Iran can be traced back to early modernist and anti-imperialist debates, which raised and placed the woman's question within emergent notions of nationalism and national identity. Nations and national identities like other constructed notions are not static, but changing¹, hybrids of identity², formed of multiple, multi-layered, often conflicting cultural, linguistic, ethnic, gender, class, religious, and political identities.³ Moreover, scholars have pointed to the role myths and historical memories play in defining the nation and national identity, and how culture or cultural rituals are used to sustain such constructions to maintain national unity.⁴ Late 19th and early 20th century intellectual debates in Egypt and Iran, and changes to their political and ruling structures led to socio-economic and ideological developments, which affected women of different classes in different ways. In Egypt, the early modernising policies of Muhammad Ali coupled with Islamic modernist debates encouraged discussions about women's rights, education, and public roles. In Iran, the inter-play between religious anti-Qajar movements and cultural imperialism led to transgression of gender norms in some exceptional cases, and limited debates about women's status prior to the Constitutional Revolution of 1906.

¹ Otto Bauer, 'The Nation' in Tamar Mayer, p.1.

² Ruth Wodak, p.11.

³ Anthony D. Smith, p.4; Tamar Mayer, pp. 4-5.

⁴ Anthony D. Smith, p.11; Tamar Mayer, p.9; Najmabadi, *Hikayat*, , pp, 2, 7.

This chapter is split into three sections and relies on the published and unpublished writing, memoirs, and tracts of early women's rights activists, the writings of modernist thinkers, European traveller narratives, and incorporates some relevant press and newspaper sources of the period. The first section analyzes imperialism's role in influencing notions of cultural authenticity, and how this affected and limited modernist, nationalist, and women's rights discourses and activists of the period. In the first instance, building on the arguments of scholars like Edward Said⁵, Uma Narayan⁶, and Chandra Mohanty⁷ it is argued that European traveller accounts of Egyptian and Iranian women validated imperialist notions of cultural superiority, making imperialist interference seem more justifiable by rendering notions of European tutelage interchangeable with imperialist intervention and control.

In the second section, the case of Qurrat al-'Ayn and Babism in Iran is used to illustrate how imperialist interference confused and compromised the contribution of certain revolutionary figures and expressions of modernism. This chapter argues secondly, that while Qurrat al-'Ayn was a revolutionary figure who challenged gender relations and certain definitions of Iranian womanhood, by doing so as an explicit rejection of orthodox *Shi'a* Islam, and by garnering imperialist sympathy and admiration, she became a controversial figure that her immediate successors chose to repudiate in order not to be similarly cast out as 'un-Iranian'. Moreover, her public preaching to male audiences and abandonment of her familial duties to pursue her religio-political activism, pushed patriarchal limits within Iranian society, including amongst

⁵ E. Said, *Orientalism; Culture and Imperialism*.

⁶ Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures*.

⁷ Talpade Mohanty, *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*.

most Babis, too far. Consequently, to avoid the same fate, later reformers, argued for gradual change to gender roles and relations, stressing continuity and authenticity through Islamic examples. However, it is additionally argued that as definitions of authenticity and Iranian womanhood changed over time, this allowed some Iranian feminists in the late 20th century to reinterpret Qurrat al-'Ayn's legend and define her independent actions and religious rebellion as an early form of Iranian feminism. This case provides a significant example of how myths and legends are revised and reinterpreted as 'authentic history' to validate new nationalist and feminist discourses. It highlights how notions of authenticity are often formed from a combination of both facts and imagined ideas, and how this selective process changes over time, so that what was once deemed inauthentic, is later argued to be authentic.

In the second section recurrent themes such as the use of women's bodies as representations of national purity, boundary markers of the 'true' community, and women as cultural carriers⁸ are used to assess the way that modernists and those who opposed their ideas articulated their positions. It is argued that in both countries male and female reformers manoeuvred around competing patriarchal forces of imperialism, the state, and the conservative religious establishment in order to advance their ideas; the terms of their bargains were influenced by tensions resulting from their multiple identities and specific situations. It is argued that these tensions created many contradictions and limitations in the arguments of modernist men like Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh in Iran, and Rifa'ah Rafi' al-Tahtawi and Qasim Amin in Egypt. Women in

⁸ Peterson, p. 47; Tamar Mayer, pp. 7, 10, 18, Chatterjee; p. 243, Floya Anthias, Jo Campling, Nira Yuval-Davis, pp. 85, 143, 155; Kandiyoti, Identity and its Discontents, pp. 49, 51; Yuval Davis, Gender and Nation, (London: Sage, 1997), p. 45-46.

particular were engaged in a combined strategy of negotiating their demands around these competing patriarchal forces as well as the patriarchal limits of modernist men, at the same time as challenging those very limits.

Qurrat al-'Ayn's choice to pursue revolutionary activism over her domestic duties proved too transgressive in 1850s Iran, highlighting the patriarchal limits on women's activity at the time. In contrast, during the 1890s, Bibi Khanum's inclusion of domestic subjects alongside scientific education for girls supported modernist arguments that female education would produce better mothers, while Taj al-Saltaneh's definition of female education as nationalist activity in the 1900s supported ideas of the budding constitutional movement. It is argued that Bibi Khanum's 'gradual change' approach and Taj al-Saltaneh's actions were active attempts to strike common ground with dominant and changing patriarchal discourses of the period, in order to advance their own women's rights discourses without being socially outcast. Similarly, in Egypt, Malak Hifni Nasif, May Ziyadah, and Nabawiya Musa's vocal support for women's education, overt criticism of polygamy, and gradual change approach to unveiling, mirrored the arguments of modernist men like Tahtawi and Amin. At the same time, their calls for women's own agency within the reform movement and questioning of modernist men's motives and leadership, challenged the latter's patriarchal limits and authority.

Finally, it is argued that the Qajar state's lack of support for women's education and the persistent power of the Iranian clergy reduced the bargaining power of women in Iran compared to Egypt. In contrast, the introduction of scientific education and establishment of the first girls schools by the

modernising Egyptian state under Mohammad Ali challenged the Egyptian *ulama* as educational leaders, motivating reformers to revise gender bargains and increasing women's bargaining power in this context. This helps explain the more extensive and expansive nature of women's rights debates in Egypt, compared to Iran at this stage.

Section 1: Imperialist Narratives and Indigenous Realities

This section looks at the writing and traveller diaries of European visitors to Egypt and Iran in order to explore how orientalist or imperialist views shaped notions of cultural authenticity and modernist, nationalist, and women's rights discourses in these countries. Extending the arguments of scholars like Edward Said⁹, Uma Narayan¹⁰, and Chandra Mohanty¹¹ it is argued that European accounts of Egyptian and Iranian women validated imperialist notions of cultural superiority, making European interference seem more justifiable by rendering notions of European tutelage interchangeable with imperialist intervention and control.

1.1 Orientalism in Egypt

Egypt's birth as a modern state began during the early 19th century, with the introduction of secularisation and technological advancements as part of Muhammad Ali's modernisation program. These included education reforms, with some small steps taken to initiate and encourage female education. However, women's education was still largely limited to royal families or the

⁹ E. Said, *Orientalism; Culture and Imperialism*.

¹⁰ Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures*.

¹¹ Mohanty, *Third World Women*.

elite, urban, land-owning classes, who could afford to employ private educators. Thus, the majority of elite women, mainly belonging to the Turko-Circassian or Coptic upper classes, began following the example of royal households by employing European governesses to privately educate their daughters within their strict harems.¹² Muhammad Kamal Yahya and Buthayna Sha'ban have both pointed to the distorted views of harem life promulgated by Europeans and orientalist writers.¹³ Yahya argues that most European men 'never heard the word harem without their imagination going to dancing, singing, and pools of pure water surrounded by virgins and girls swimming...even though nothing of this sort of imagined idea existed within Egyptian harems'.¹⁴ European women who visited the harems painted a far more depressing and harsh picture of harem life, but often indulged in similar simplifications and generalisations.

Sophia Poole, sister of famous orientalist ethnographer Edward William Lane¹⁵, visited Egyptian *harems* between 1842 and 1846, describing strict and depressing surroundings and noting that 'upper class' women were guarded even more strictly than their 'middle-class' counterparts.¹⁶ She wrote that the majority of harem women could neither read nor write: 'It is very grievous that the women in general are merely instructed in handiwork...few of the ladies can read and write even their own language. I know however, some exceptions'.¹⁷ On the other hand, she also wrote that women were not ignorant of political events.

¹² *The Egyptian Gazette*, 1 March 1893; *The Egyptian Daily Post*, 4 May 1904.

¹³ Sha'ban, p. 102.

¹⁴ Kamal Yahya, p. 31.

¹⁵ Reina Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel and the Ottoman Harem*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), p.18.

¹⁶ Sophia Poole, *The Englishwoman in Egypt*, (London: Eurospan, 2003), p. 116.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 120.

I was surprised, during my second visit to the hareem of Habeeb Effendi, to find the ladies...immersed in politics, and painfully anxious on account of the difference of opinion, which has arisen between the Emperor of Russia and their cousin the Sultan.¹⁸

The harem system in Egypt was related to class status rather than religion.

Poole described the customs practiced in a Christian harem in Egypt in a letter written in 1845,¹⁹ as did Lucie Duff Gordon much later in 1902, writing that 'the Copts have but one wife, but they shut her up much closer than the Arabs'.²⁰ Ellen Chennells, English governess to Khedive Ismail Pasha's daughter several decades later, validated the 'strict' and 'depressing' picture painted by other European women like Poole when she wrote 'There was to me inexpressible melancholy in these harems; there was a want of air and light, of recreation and of intellectual employment'.²¹

The memoirs of Huda Sha'rawi, although covering a later period from 1879-1924, provide a rare, indigenous account of harem life among the Turko-Circassian Egyptian elites. Although Sha'rawi writes of the anguish and depression she felt at being denied the same level of education as her brother, her account challenges those of Chennells and Poole by highlighting the education and 'intellectual employment' she received within the harem.

My passion increased all the more because of the itinerant poet, Sayyida Khadija al-Maghribiyya...observing Sayyida Khadija convinced me that, with learning, women could be the equals of men if not surpass them.²²

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 126.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 197.

²⁰ Lady Lucie Duff Gordon, *Letters from Egypt: Lady Duff Gordon's Letters from Egypt*, (London: R. Brimley Johnson, 1902), p. 30.

²¹ Ellen Chennells, *Recollections of an Egyptian Princess by her English Governess*, (London: William Blackwood, 1893), p. 125.

²² Huda Sha'rawi, *Mudhakkirati, Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist (1879-1924)*, ed. Margot Badran, (London: Virago, 1986), p. 40-42.

While both Poole and Chennells pointed to several institutions set up for the education of young girls during this period, they emphasised the majority were missionary schools.

Muhammad Ali had given orders as early as 1820 to introduce foreign languages to government schools in an effort to modernise the curriculum. Moreover, the first medical and private schools were founded in 1828, and by 1831 the government had chosen a handful of girls to study midwifery.²³ Sawsan Naji has argued that Egyptian women's emergence into the work force was specifically associated with this establishment of the Sina School of Midwifery, in the 1830s.²⁴ Thus, the modernisation policies of Muhammad Ali helped revise the terms of existing patriarchal bargains on women's roles, particularly with regards to female education and 'appropriate' forms of 'women-related' work, like midwifery. In 1845, Poole visited a Coptic school that had been in operation since 1835, which had twenty-five pupils, 'three-hundred girls have left since the year [1835], able to read and write...these girls are of different religions, like the boys'.²⁵ Chennells, writing later between 1871 and 1876, argued that 'the Khedive, to do him justice, was anxious to raise the position of women'.²⁶ She described a school he had set up, 'they were children from all classes, but put on a perfect equality...and on subsequent visits I saw the girls examined in reading, writing, geography, and arithmetic'.²⁷ This was one of the first state schools for

²³ 'Education in Egypt', *The Egyptian Mail*, 22 February 1917.

²⁴ Sawsan Naji, *al-Mar'ah fi al-mir'ah: dirasah naqdiyah lil-riwayah al-nisa'iyah fi Misr* (1888-1985), (Cairo: al-'Arabi lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzi, 1989), p. 86.

²⁵ Poole, p. 201.

²⁶ Chennells, p. 6.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 255.

girls, which had opened under the patronage of Khedive Ismail's third wife, Tchesme Afit Hanim in 1873.²⁸

Throughout her writings, Chennells stressed that such schools were initiated by the government and not by public demand. 'The expense of such an establishment is of course great, and it all falls on his Highness...there is as yet no public spirit in the country.'²⁹ Yet, the Egyptian modernist movement, the *nahda* (awakening/ renaissance), had already begun by this point, with the work and intellectual writings of pioneering Islamic reformer, Rifa'ah al-Tahtawi. The first of his books, *Takhlis al-ibriz ila talkhis Baris (A Profile/Summary of Paris)*, based on his experiences in Paris and education in modern sciences and enlightenment thought, was in print by the mid 1830s.³⁰ Indeed, the establishment of the girl's school mentioned above coincided with the publication of Tahtawi's book, *al-Murshid al-Amin lil-Banat wa-al-Banin* in 1873 (The Honest Guide for Girls and Boys), which encouraged female education on the basis of Islamic principles.³¹ By the late 1890s the Abbas Primary School in Cairo had opened a girl's section, and the Saniyah Teacher Training School for women was in operation. While Tahtawi was also an employee of the state, the reality of this budding reform movement and the birth of a women's press by the 1890s³² challenge European generalisations about Egyptian intellectual society, the absence of 'public spirit', and women's lives in general. While their accounts provide valuable pictures of how Europeans interpreted women's status, they also illustrate how such interpretations were very much governed and clouded by their own belief

²⁸ Sha'rawi, *Mudhakkirati*, p. 14.

²⁹ Chennells, pp. 255-256.

³⁰ Rifa'ah Rafi' al-Tahtawi, *Takhlis al-ibriz ila talkhis Baris*, (Bulaq: 1849).

³¹ Rifa'ah Rafi' al-Tahtawi, *al-Murshid al-Amin lil-Banat wa-al-Banin*, (Cairo: Majlis al-A'la lil-Thaqafah, 2002), p. 66.

³² Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt*, p. 16.

systems and prejudices. Thus, sweeping generalisations and historical omissions point to how western women often applied a colonial or imperialist lens to the subjects they studied.

1.2 Exoticism in Persia

In 19th century Iran, the Qajar ruling system, based on a long-standing tribal leadership, faced increasing political and economic losses leading up to the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. The 1828 Torkamanchay Treaty signed between Russia and Iran annexed its northern ports and resulted in extensive political and commercial concessions to Russia. Similar political and commercial treaties with other western powers negatively affected the majority of Iranian classes economically while putting a small minority into contact with 'western' ideas. Increasing commercial travels to Europe exposed some Iranian merchants and state officials to western life and thought, while western travellers, diplomats, and missionaries in Iran spread their ideas throughout the country.³³

In *Persia and the Persian Question*, British statesman George Nathaniel Curzon, who was Viceroy and Governor-General of India during the late 19th/early 20th century, provided a list of travellers to Persia, showing the increasing numbers of European visitors, envoys, and missionaries in the 19th Century.³⁴ The writing of British female travellers to Persia during the 1890s, such as Ella Sykes, Isabella Bird, and Gertrude Bell, provide strong examples of how imperialist and colonialist narratives drove their descriptions and interpretations of the customs and lifestyles within Persian society. All three

³³ Paidar, pp. 27, pp. 42; Camron Michael Amin, *The Making of the Modern Iranian Woman*, (Florida: University Press Florida, 2002), p. 17.

³⁴ George Nathaniel Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, Vol. 1, (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1892), pp. 18-20.

women repeatedly expressed their disapproval of Persian women's dress and comportment, viewing them as testament of their 'frivolity'³⁵, 'inferiority' and 'ignorance'.³⁶ Expressing their disapproval at their use of cosmetics, Bird wrote, 'Persian ladies paint, or rather smear'³⁷, while Bell described the practice as a form of 'barbarism'.³⁸ Scholars and theorists of orientalism and exoticism have pointed to how exotic descriptions, and the labelling of native customs as 'barbaric', as seen in Bird and Bell's writing, helped to construct the imperialist divide of the West and the Orient, and the narrative of 'civilised versus uncivilised' to represent the self/other.³⁹ The portrait drawn here of the misery of Persian women's inferiority and seclusion was emphasised with little exception, and their personages essentialised as unhappy victims, frivolous, ignorant, and child-like, in need of guidance or 'Christian disinfecting'.⁴⁰

Yet, education levels of Persian women were not consistent across the country, and harem experiences were not the same for all women. In an attempt to continue challenging orientalist narratives, Haleh Afshar narrates the story of Sonbol, a black slave within a royal Qajar harem, who later became her nanny. She argues that for Sonbol, the harem was a positive space compared to the outside world, a place where 'she was special' and appreciated as a companion.⁴¹

³⁵ Isabella Bird, *Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan: Including a Summer in the Upper Karun Region and a Visit to the Nestorian Rayahs*, (London: John Murray, 1891), Vol. 1: pp. 217; Vol. 2: pp.353-354.

³⁶ Ella Sykes, *Persia and its People*, (New York: The Mcmillan Company, 1910), pp. 196, 199.
³⁷ Bird, Vol.1, pp. 217.

³⁸ Gertrude Bell, *Persian Pictures*, (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1928), p. 80.

³⁹ Wan Roselezam, Wan Yahya, Farah Ghaderi & Kamaruzaman Jusoff, The Exotic Portrayal of Women in Isabella Bird Bishop's Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan, *Iranian Studies*, 45:6, 2012, pp. 779-793.

⁴⁰ Sykes, p. 208; Bird, Vol. 1, pp.354; Vol. 2, pp. 53; 161, 179.

⁴¹ Haleh Afshar, Age, Gender and Slavery in and out of the Persian harem: A different story, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 23: 5, 2000, pp. 905-916.

Writing on Persian women's education, Sykes declared it was a rare thing to find a Persian woman who could read and write, there being 'no such thing as a girl's school in the whole country'.⁴² In 1907, the pioneering female educator, Bibi Khanum Astarabadi established Dabestan Doshizghan, The School for Girls in Tehran, and advertised for pupils in the newspaper *Majlis*.⁴³ Although Sykes had travelled to Iran during the 1890s, The School for Girls would have been in operation for three years before Sykes' book was published. Bird who had travelled and published her accounts by 1891, acknowledged higher levels of education amongst women in Tehran.⁴⁴ The writings of Bird and Sykes exemplify the type of orientalist writing that Edward Said argued was void of any real understanding of the lives of the subjects they were writing about.⁴⁵ If female education did not look like western female education, then it did not exist, or was superficial at best.

Even before the creation of the first girl's school, royal and elite Qajari women were engaged in the reading and writing of complex poetry. Pari Shaykh al-Islami's historical study on female journalism and women's activism in Iran argued that many members of the Qajari royal family were excellent poetesses, pointing to the example of Fath Ali Shah's wives and daughters.⁴⁶ Most recent scholarship has argued that these female poets and their elite female patrons should be viewed as 'evidence of a female-centred literary tradition, one that was

⁴² Sykes, p197.

⁴³ Afzal Vaziri, *Bibi Khanum Astarabadi va Khanum Afzal Vaziri: madar va dukhtari az pishgaman-i ma 'arif va huquq-i zanan*, ed. Afsaneh Najmabadi, Narjis Mihrangiz Mallah, Muhammad Tavakkuli Tarqi, (Chicago: Nigarish va Nigarish-i Zan, 1996), p. 59; *The Education of Women & The Vices of Men: Two Qajar Tracts*, trans. Hasan Javadi and Willem Floor, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2010), p. 23.

⁴⁴ Isabella Bird, Vol.1, pp.215.

⁴⁵ E. Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 22, 55,130.

⁴⁶ Shaykh al-Islami, *Zan dar Iran*.

in dialogue with (and often intersected) the dominant male tradition, empowering the women within it'.⁴⁷ The writing of Lady Leonora Sheil, wife of Irish/British diplomat Justin Sheil, provides a more detailed account of educated elite and royal women. Writing several decades earlier, Sheil highlighted that the harem system in Persia was not based on religion or ethnicity, and pointed to the situation of Armenian women, whose state of seclusion she described as 'much more severe than that imposed on Persian females'.⁴⁸ Of the elite women she met, she wrote:

I found the few Persian women I was acquainted with in general lively and clever...and may be said to manage their husbands' and sons' affairs...Women of the higher classes frequently acquire a knowledge of reading and writing, and of the choice poetical works in their native language.⁴⁹

Similarly to Bird, Sheil pointed to the 'cruelty' and injustices of the harem, writing that 'power in the *anderoon* is nearly despotic'.⁵⁰

Both Bird and Sheil emphasised the dictatorial power of the mother-in law within the harem hierarchy. Describing the royal harem, Sheil emphasised that it was the Shah's mother who held 'the chief place at court—the royal wives count as nothing'.⁵¹ She described the Shah's mother as 'handsome...very clever, and as someone who 'is supposed to take a large share in the affairs of the government'.⁵² Bird, on the other hand, drew much harsher pictures of the mother/duenna figures she met in the harems of various provincial rulers. She gave an almost identical description of the mothers of Fath Allah Khan in the

⁴⁷ Dominic Parviz Brookshaw, Women in Praise of Women: Female Poets and Female Patrons in Qajar Iran, *Iranian Studies*, 46:1, 2013, pp.17-48.

⁴⁸ Lady Mary Leonora Woulfe Sheil, *Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia*, (London: John Murray, 1856), p. 235.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 134, 146.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 147.

⁵¹ Sheil, p. 130.

⁵² *Ibid.* pp. 131.

Ardal Valley, and Aslam Khan in Khuzestan, as 'tyrants', who often slapped their sons' young wives if they misbehaved.⁵³ Similarly, visiting the Khan of Bijar's household, Bird described his mother as a fiendish-looking middle-aged woman' who mocked those around her.⁵⁴ Roselzam, Yahya, Ghaderi and Jusoff argue that Bird, unlike most male travel writers, blamed polygamy on Persian women's 'lack of true womanliness and domestic accomplishment'.⁵⁵ However, depictions of the duenna/mother as the dictatorial ruler of harem wives, particularly Bird's descriptions of her as an old, fiendish, shrieking tyrant, who slaps and abuses her son's wives, links these older Persian women with the despotic male head of the household in using the harem system to victimise 'innocent, young women' in need of 'rescue' from this older generation of 'backward' Persians.

The dissimilar descriptions of the harem duenna/mother in Bird and Sheil's accounts, while they could point to differences between the writers personal perspectives, by comparing them to accounts of others like Sykes and Bell, highlight how customs, manners, and education levels amongst women, differed according to social-class, racial, and ethnic differences. Fatiallah Khan was a tribal leader in the Ardal County, Aslam Khan a Zalaki tribal leader in Khuzestan, Bijar Khan a tribal leader in Kurdistan, while Sheil was describing the Shah's royal harem in Tehran. Yet, the majority of traveller narratives did not stress such differences. Rather, specific stories were used to paint general characterisations of Persian women, such as Bird's visit to a Bakhtiari Khan's house (an Ilkhani tribal leader), where she wrote that as soon as the topic turned

⁵³ Bird, Vol.1, p. 353, Vol 2., p. 62.

⁵⁴ Ibid, Vol.2, p.181

⁵⁵ Roselezam, Yahya, Ghaderi, Jusoff, pp. 779-793.

to politics and 'important subjects', the Khan's 'wives relapsed into complete indifference, and stared into vacancy'.⁵⁶ The nomadic Bakhtiari lifestyle and her own description of the family's poverty⁵⁷ don't appear to offer Bird any explanation as to why Taimur Khan's wives may have had different concerns to her, or different needs to urban women in the capital, who she credited with higher levels of education. Bird's descriptions of Tehran focus on the extent of western commercial infiltration, modernisation of roads, and the increasing number of Europeans.⁵⁸ From her accounts it does not appear that Bird ever visited the harem or *andarun* of the urban elites in Tehran, or even the less wealthy classes of the city.⁵⁹ While this could explain the many generalisations in her writing, it is important to note that such generalisations, along with accusations of 'savagery' helped validate the idea of British women's cultural and intellectual superiority, a notion all four women illustrated in their writing.

Many scholars have pointed to how the 'grand narratives' of European orientalist writing were driven by notions of imperialist cultural superiority and thus failed to correctly interpret the lives and subjects they studied.⁶⁰ Joan DelPlato has argued that imperialist views of women's seclusion in the harem provided 'one more justification for meddling in Eastern affairs'.⁶¹ Roselezam, Yahya, Ghaderi and Jussof build on this argument to posit that portrayals of Persian women by writers like Bird 'could be interpreted as lending implicit

⁵⁶ Bird, Vol.2, pp.53.

⁵⁷ Ibid, Vol. 2, pp. 53-54.

⁵⁸ Ibid, Vol.1 187-190

⁵⁹ Ibid, Vol.1, pp. 209.

⁶⁰ E. Said, *Orientalism*, Judy Mabro, 'Veiled Half-Truths: Western Travellers' Perceptions of Middle Eastern Women', in ed. Haideh Moghissi, *Women and Islam: Critical Concepts in Sociology*, (New York: Routledge, 2005); Leila Ahmed, Western ethnocentrism and Perceptions of the Harem, *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1982, pp. 521-534; Carl Thompson, *Travel writing: The New Critical Idiom*, (London: Routledge, 2011), pp.136-137.

⁶¹ Joan DelPlato, *Multiple Wives, Multiple Pleasures: Representing the Harem, 1800-1875*, (Massachusetts: Rosemont Publishing and Printing Corp, 2002), p. 20.

support to Britain's colonial intervention and imposition on Persia'.⁶² In all the examples discussed above for Egypt and Iran, notions of European women's cultural and intellectual superiority are consistently pointed to as givens, and used as markers for ideal 'civilised' behaviour. Poole, Chennells, and Gordon pointed to the ignorance of Egyptian women and promoted the idea that any advance in education was purely the result of certain 'western-enlightened' (western-educated) leaders, such as Khedieve Ismail. While Sheil acknowledged higher levels of education amongst elite Qajari women in Iran, she joined others in painting the harem as a 'cruel', 'despotic' space, 'where even murder can be committed without atonement'.⁶³ Sykes and Bird described Persian women's 'savage' and 'uncivilised' manners and appearance to paint them as ignorant victims of Islam, in need of saving by the Christian, or modern, West. This chapter argues that notions of European cultural superiority encouraged the idea of western men and women as teacher-parent type figures who could 'save' or liberate Iranian and Egyptian women from patriarchal tyrants (male and female) and their social traditions, drawing strong connections between notions of European tutelage and Imperialist intervention and control.

Section 2: Imperialist Construction and Destruction of 'Feminist' Legacies

In this section the case of Qurrat al-'Ayn in Iran is used to illustrate how imperialist interference and sympathy for Babism complicated her legacy. More specifically, this section's second argument is that while Qurrat al-'Ayn challenged gender relations and certain definitions of Iranian womanhood, because she did so as she also rejected orthodox *Shi'a* Islam, she became a

⁶² Roselezam, Yahya, Ghaderi, Jusoff, pp.779-793.

⁶³ Sheil, p. 147.

controversial figure that her contemporaries and immediate successors had to repudiate in order not to be similarly outcast as inauthentic. Male and female Babis were targeted because of their vocal critique of orthodox Shi‘ism, the clergy, and the Qajari state. However, Qurrat al-‘Ayn’s activities also transgressed the terms of existing patriarchal bargains in her society, which included most Babi men. Abbas Effendi’s account of the protestation of male Babis against Qurrat al-‘Ayn’s activities, particularly her public preaching, indicated patriarchal limits within the community made women’s public preaching, and their prioritisation of independent, religious, and/or political activism over familial duties unacceptable at the time.

2.1 Imperialist and indigenous narratives in the case of Qurrat al-‘Ayn

Within orientalist narratives certain historical figures were glorified or vilified, and facts distorted, to promote wider imperialist agendas. This is seen with the controversial female figure of Qurrat Al-‘Ayn (Fatemeh Tahirih Zarrin Taj Baraghani), in the context of the Iranian Babi movement, the forerunner of the Baha’i faith, which surfaced and expanded during the mid-19th Century. Despite her orthodox *Shi‘a* background and exceptional standard of religious education, Qurrat Al-‘Ayn (solace of the eye) became one of the earliest adherents of Babism encouraging the religion’s full break from Twelver Shi‘ism, casting off her veil in defiance of orthodox beliefs.⁶⁴ According to Abbas Effendi, the eldest son of Baha’ullah, (founder of the Baha’i faith), many male Babis objected to her activities.

Some of these even wrote to the Bab asking whether it was seemly for a woman to preach publicly to men. In reply the Bab not only sanctioned

⁶⁴ Amin Banani, *Tahirih: A Portrait in Poetry*, (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 2004), pp. 4-7.

her preaching and applauded her zeal, but bestowed on her the title of Jenab-i-Tahira ('her Excellency the Pure').⁶⁵

The Bab never met Qurrat, but according to Nabil Zarandi, a Baha'i historian of the period, he exalted her in his writing: 'As to those whose supreme privilege it was to be enrolled by the Bab in the Book of His Revelation as His chosen Letters of the Living...Tahirih is one-only woman'.⁶⁶ In 1850, the Bab was publicly executed. Two years later, three Babis attempted, unsuccessfully, to assassinate Nasser-al-Din Shah. Zarandi claimed that during her lifetime Qurrat al-'Ayn achieved a certain level of popularity amongst women in Tehran; 'Her stay in Tihran [sic] was marked by many proofs of the warm affection and high esteem in which she was held by the leading women of the capital'.⁶⁷ Yet, it is hard to know to what extent this was the case given Zarandi's bias as a Babi himself, and given that 'the leading women of the capital' were women of the Qajar elite, who would have been hard pressed to show any support for an anti-establishment figure. It is also hard to assess what sort of influence, if any, Qurrat al-'Ayn had on women of her time. Turning to a 'leading woman' of the late 19th century, Taj al-Saltaneh, daughter of Nasser-al-Din Shah, it is worth noting that while her memoirs are full of passionate calls for the improvement of women's status, they make no reference to the story of Qurrat al-'Ayn. In fact, other than Lady Sheil, there appear to be no other female contemporaries who wrote about her. Many Qajari male writers, like Muhammad Sipihr, wrote slanderous accounts, using her unveiling and activism to accuse her of promiscuity, prostitution, and

⁶⁵ Abbas Effendi, Abd al-baha ibn Baha Allah, *A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate The Episode of the Bab*, ed. and trans. Edward G. Browne, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891), p. 311.

⁶⁶ Nabil Zarandi, *The Dawn-Breakers (1844-1888): Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Baha'i Revelation*, trans. Shoghi Effendi, (London: Baha'i Public Trust, 1953), p. 55.

⁶⁷ Ibid, pp. 457-458.

polyandry.⁶⁸ A more positive account by the Iranian constitutionalist historian Ahmad Kasravi (published in the 1940s) labelled her 'Shir-Zan'/lion-woman, (a term that is still used to describe extraordinarily brave nationalist or revolutionary women in Iran), yet, he too ultimately portrayed her as unstable and insane.⁶⁹ The accounts of Abbas Effendi show that while the Bab himself encouraged Qurrat al-'Ayn's activities, he was the exception, as her unveiling, public preaching, and her choice to leave behind her family in order to do so, transgressed patriarchal limits of the time, which not only upset Qajari men like Siphir, but many male Babis as well.

Writing within the same period, Lady Sheil referred to the Babi movement as a socialist/communist revolution 'under the guise of a new revelation', which could have 'overturned the throne and Islamism in Persia'.⁷⁰ In the penultimate chapter of her book she briefly mentioned Qurrat al-'Ayn, as another Babi victim, a 'prophetess', and called her execution a 'useless deed'.⁷¹ The orientalist writer, Edward Granville Browne, writing over thirty years later, recounted the story of 'the beautiful Kurrat'ul-Ayn', the innocent victim who was wrongly accused and executed,⁷² who he referred to as an 'immortal prodigy', and a 'miracle'.⁷³ What is interesting is how European/orientalist depictions of Qurrat al-'Ayn developed over the next decades from innocent victim to legendary heroine. Lord Curzon wrote of the Babi disciple; 'the heroism of the

⁶⁸ Muhammad Taqi Kashani Sipihr, *Nasikh al-tavarikh: Sala'tin-I Qajar*, Vol.3, p. 239, Farzaneh Milani: *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1992), p. 79.

⁶⁹ Ahmad Kasravi *Baha'igari, Shi'igari, Sufigari*, 1956 (Saarbrucken: Nawid, 1989); Farideh Milani, p. 79.

⁷⁰ Sheil, p. 176-177.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 281.

⁷² Sir Edward Granville Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians: Impressions as to the Life, Character and Thought of the People of Persia Received in the Years 1887-1888*, (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1893), p. 101,

⁷³ E. G Browne in Abbas Effendi, *Abd al-baha ibn Baha Allah, A Traveller's Narrative*, p. 309.

lovely but ill-fated poetess of Qazvin...who, throwing off the veil, carried the missionary torch far and wide, is one of the most affecting episodes in modern history'.⁷⁴ By the early 1900s, the imperialist journalist Valentine Chirol was declaring, 'no memory is more deeply venerated or kindles greater enthusiasm than hers, and the influence which she wielded in her lifetime still inures to her sex'.⁷⁵ Yet, what influence, if any, did Qurrat al-'Ayn have during her lifetime, and what sort of legacy did she leave behind?

Amin Banani writes that the majority of writing about Qurrat al-'Ayn is split between portraying her either as 'a saintly martyr', or a 'fiery feminist'.⁷⁶ He argues that such one-dimensional illustrations distort the reality behind her motives, which are impossible to separate from her promotion of the Babi religion.⁷⁷ In the poem 'From those locks' she rejected the orthodox *Shi'a* Islam of the Iranian *ulama* and introduced ideas of religious equality, 'When the fire of your love flamed up, it burned away from me both heathen and Muslim...there is no difference between Kaaba and church'.⁷⁸ Early Baha'i accounts, such as Zarandi's, do not portray her activities as 'feminist' or frame it within a struggle for gender-equality; rather they emphasise her 'martyrdom' as a religious and patriotic act.

She was thirty-six years of age when she suffered martyrdom in Tihran...May future historians perceive the full measure of her influence, and record the unique services this great woman has rendered to her land and its people.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, Vol.1, p. 497.

⁷⁵ Valentine Chirol, *The Middle Eastern Question, or Some Political Problems of Indian Defence*, (London: John Murray, 1903), p. 124.

⁷⁶ Banani, p. 4.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p.19.

⁷⁸ Banani, pp. 114, 142.

⁷⁹ Zarandi, p. 459.

On the other hand, depictions of Qurrat al-'Ayn as a 'fiery feminist' are more readily found amongst European writers. Referring to Curzon and Browne's accounts, Sykes wrote in 1910,

The beautiful poetess Kurra'ul-Ayn spread her doctrines far and wide, until her tragic death at Tehran; and it seemed as if the status of women would be raised, for they were to be considered equal with men, were to throw off their veils, and polygamy and divorce were to be abolished.⁸⁰

The facts about Qurrat al-'Ayn are clouded by the many myths surrounding her story, myths that were promoted by different types of writers.

Ronald Vroon has pointed to how Gobineau's erroneous account of Qurrat al-'Ayn's execution as 'burning at the stake' linked her death directly to the image of Joan of Arc's martyrdom.⁸¹ He argues that such myths influenced writers, such as Russian playwright Velemir Chlebnikov, whose early 20th century works contributed to Qurrat al-'Ayn's legend, this time as both a Magdalene-like figure and a symbol of Iranian resistance against British colonialism.⁸² Moreover, European observers often portrayed Babism as a counter-force, or solution, to the 'backwardness' of Islam.

If the Bab had escaped, in all probability, Persia would have been converted to his doctrines en bloc, and would have emerged from the petrifying influence of Islam into a liberal atmosphere where progress was possible.⁸³

It is not difficult to see how notions of 'popular liberal movements' suppressed by the Islamic orthodoxy, or the execution of a brave and persecuted female figure, would have fit well into imperialist narratives of colonised people in need of European 'saving'.

⁸⁰ Sykes, p.142.

⁸¹ Ronald Vroon, Qurrat al-'Ayn and the Image of Asia in Velimir Chelbnikov's Post-Revolutionary Oeuvre, *Russian Literature*, 50: 2001, pp.335-362.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Sykes, p. 142.

2.2 History or Legacy of Qurrat al-'Ayn?

Western myths and orientalist accounts influenced Iranian thought, helping to delegitimize Qurrat al-'Ayn as an authentic Iranian model, as Babism became associated with imperialist narratives, and thus anti-nationalist/anti-Iranian rhetoric. In future decades, even in contemporary Iran, opponents of women's rights would accuse feminists of being Babi in an attempt to delegitimize them. The historical precedent for this is seen in Taj al-Saltaneh's memoirs (1884-1914).

As I progressed in my studies day by day, my irreligiosity grew, until I was a complete naturalist myself...As I would begin to talk, however, my mother would curse at me: You have turned Babi!⁸⁴

Contemporary scholars have argued that Iranian 'feminists' today regard Qurrat al-'Ayn 'as the first Iranian feminist'.⁸⁵ Mahnaz Afkhami has described her as 'arguably the most interesting woman in Iran's history',⁸⁶ while Nayereh Tohidi has linked her to Iran's contemporary 'Islamic feminists' by counting her amongst early 'Muslim woman thinkers and writers' who 'by the turn of the 20th century had 'gradually begun framing their gender-conscious and women-friendly writings within the Islamic ethics'.⁸⁷ However, Qurrat al-'Ayn's activities and poetry indicated her struggle was very much against the orthodox *Shi'a* establishment and the Iranian government that supported it, driven by her belief in Babism. She was not advocating a renewed or feminist interpretation of Islamic principles, but a clear break from them, which challenges Tohidi's

⁸⁴ Taj Al-Saltanah, *Crowning Anguish-Memoirs of a Persian Princess From the Harem to Modernity 1884-1914*, ed. Abbas Amanat, (Washington: DC: Mage, 1993), p.309.

⁸⁵ Lois Beck and Guity Nashat, *Women in Iran: From 1800 to the Islamic Republic*, (Illinois: Illinois Press, 2004), p. 15; Milani: *Veils and Words*, pp. 94.

⁸⁶ Mahnaz Afkhami, *In the Eye of the Storm: Women in Post-Revolutionary Iran*, ed. Mahnaz Afkhami and Erika Friedl (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994), p.191.

⁸⁷ Tohidi, p.141.

definition of her as someone framing their gender-consciousness within Islamic ethics.

On the other hand, although Qurrat al-'Ayn did not consciously or explicitly advocate women's rights reforms, as a female religious reformer she nevertheless challenged patriarchal structures within both the religious establishment and Iranian society. Men, even those within the Babi movement, were threatened by her independence and unveiling, drawing attention to how female bodies were used as boundary markers of purity, and the 'true' community or nation.⁸⁸ Thus, by resisting the dominant patriarchal religious discourse of the period, transgressing social boundaries by unveiling, challenging religious texts, and preaching publicly to men, Qurrat al-'Ayn challenged many gender norms of the time. Yet, it is crucial to highlight that she was not held up as a 'feminist' or 'Iranian' role model for most of the 20th century, because those challenges, particularly her overt rejection of the *Shi'a* clerical establishment, pushed patriarchal limits beyond levels of acceptability not only during her lifetime, but for a long period after.

For nearly a century after it was founded, Babism/Baha'ism was viewed by the majority of Iranians as anti-Islamic/anti-*Shi'a*, and as such was not incorporated as part of Iranian identity.⁸⁹ Moreover, positive, sympathetic European accounts of Babism and Qurrat al-'Ayn, tainted their legacy with the brush of imperialism, further delegitimizing them as authentic Iranian models. Thus, this section argues that while Qurrat al-'Ayn was a revolutionary woman

⁸⁸ Peterson, p.47; Tamar Mayer, pp. 7, 10, 18; Chatterjee; p. 243; Anthias, Campling, Yuval-Davis, pp. 85, 143, 155; Kandiyoti, Identity and its Discontents, pp. 49, 51; Yuval-Davis, p. 45-46.

⁸⁹ Afsaneh Najmabadi (2005) cited in *The Baha'is of Iran: Socio-historical Studies*, ed. Dominic Parviz Brookshaw, Seena B. Fazel, (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 195.

who fought for certain kinds of changes to gender definitions and relations, by doing so as an explicit rejection of (orthodox *Shi'a*) Islam she became a controversial figure that her immediate successors had to repudiate in order not to be similarly cast out as anti-*Shi'a*/Islamic and un-Iranian. Consequently, later modernists and reformers pressed for gradual rather than revolutionary change to gender roles and definitions, stressing continuity and authenticity through Islamic examples. However, this chapter additionally argues, that as Iranian definitions of authenticity and womanhood changed over the next century, to incorporate more educated, independent, revolutionary characteristics, it allowed some Iranian feminists in the late 20th century to revisit Qurrat al-'Ayn's 'legend' and define her independent, revolutionary act of religious rebellion as an example of early Iranian feminism. This highlights how old myths, models, and legends were/are used to prove the 'authenticity' of new feminist discourses and feminist movements.

Section 2: Modernist Thought and Women's Rights discourses

This section looks at the strategies and contents of patriarchal bargains between modernists and reformists in Egypt and Iran. It is argued that tensions caused by the multiple identities of male and female reformers, and the need to manoeuvre around competing patriarchal forces, from imperialist influence or authority, the modernising state, to conservative religious or community leaders, created many ideological contradictions and limitations in the arguments of men like Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh in Iran and Rifa'ah al-Tahtawi or Qasim Amin in Egypt.

Women faced the additional challenge of manoeuvring between all these patriarchal forces and the limits of reformist discourses.

Thus, it is additionally argued that women were engaged in a combined strategy of negotiating their demands around the patriarchal limits of both conservative and modernist men, at the same time as challenging those limits in order to advance their goals. In Iran, Bibi Khanum's inclusion of domestic subjects alongside scientific education for girls, and Taj al-Saltaneh's support for the budding constitutional movement were attempts to strike common ground with dominant patriarchal forces of the period. Similarly, in Egypt, Malak Hifni Nasif, May Ziyadah, and Nabawiya Musa's 'gradual change' approach to women's rights is juxtaposed against their calls for women's own agency in the reform movement and their questioning of men's motives and leadership of that movement.

2.1 Iran's Male Modernists

Modernist thought about the status of women came about from different ideological directions in Egypt and Iran. Unlike the Islamic modernists in Egypt, the *renewalist* writers Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh and Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani both argued for reforms and women's emancipation outside the tenants of Islam, and in fact, as a rejection of them. Mirza Agha Khan Kermani, a Babi, argued Persian women's inferior status was the result of the Arab Islamic invasion. He blamed polygamy, female seclusion, and veiling for preventing women from getting an education and participating in society, noting 'we Iranians have not counted women as people or as part of humanity'⁹⁰. While 'Arabs' had not

⁹⁰ Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani, *Seh Maktub/Sad Khetabeh*, (Iran: Alborz-Verl, 2005), p. 132.

introduced the idea of female seclusion or the *harem* to Persia, by arguing such social practices were the result of a foreign invasion, Kermani was attempting to make an argument about the ‘authentic’ state of Iranian women, prior to the Arab/Islamic invasion. By pointing to pre-Islamic Iran, Kermani was challenging existing gender ideas by constructing the notion of Persian women as more empowered before the Arab Muslim invasion. Akhundzadeh published *Maktubat-i Kamal al-Dowlah* (*Letters of Kamal al-Dowlah*) sometime in the 1860s, using the fictional correspondence between Kamal, an Indian Prince, and Jala al-Dowleh, a Persian Prince, to attack the Qajars and Islam for the corruption of society and for the situation of women.⁹¹ He criticised Islam as inherently oppressive to women, attacked polygamy, and accused the clergy of corruption and self-serving politics.⁹² Akhundzadeh also used his dramatic plays to challenge traditional customs and gender relationships, and to reify the binary opposition of the ‘scientific, modern’ West against the ‘irrational Islamic’ East.⁹³ In the story of ‘The Botanist Monsieur Jourdan and the Sorcerer-dervish Mast Ali Shah’ he pointed to the patriarchal Muslim family as a chief source of gender inequality, and social ignorance.⁹⁴ The Botanist represented the rational European, while Mast Ali Shah (Drunk Ali Shah) represented the ignorant, corrupt Muslim. Akhundzadeh advocated marriage based on love and freedom of choice for both parties.

⁹¹ Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh, *Maktubat*, (*Maktubat-e-Kamal Al-Dowleh*) (Tehran: Intisarat-i-Mard-i-Imruz, 1985).

⁹² *Ibid*, p.179.

⁹³ Mehrdad Kia, Women, Islam and Modernity in Akhundzadeh’s Plays and Unpublished Writings, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 1998, pp.1-33.

⁹⁴ Akhundzadeh, *The Botanist Monsieur Jourdan* (1889), *The Story of the Vizier of the Khan Sarab* (1851) The Adventures of the Vizier of the Khan of Lankaran, *The Story of the Bear that Caught the Robber*-(1852) in Three Persian Plays trans. A Rogers, (London: Neptune Press, 1890).

In many of his plays, women were ‘cultural carriers’, who both maintained and suffered from upholding traditional customs and ideas.⁹⁵ He also used his plays to portray Russia as the enlightened western moderniser and educator, under whose guidance, or even rule, Persian women could be liberated. In this way, Kia convincingly argues, that Akhundzadeh used women as a debating ground for competing ideas of traditional Islam and European modernity.⁹⁶ In *The Story of the Attorneys at Law* (1855), Akhundzadeh illustrated how existing patriarchal bargains held back social progress. In the play, Aunt Zubayda financially attempts to blackmail her niece Sakina into a loveless marriage, even though she has come to realise her suitor was only after money, because she feels it would damage their reputation and honour. Thus, she prefers to maintain her side of this traditional patriarchal bargain (the promise of her niece’s hand in marriage), even if it holds back women’s emancipation and hurts her own niece. As a defender of existing cultural customs, her generation of women stood to lose the most (their reputation, without gaining independence), if Sakina’s generation transgressed such customs/bargains. In this way, Akhundzadeh highlighted the possible tensions that such conflicting and complex gender bargains could create between the old and new generation of Persians facing ‘modernity’.

Writers like Haideh Moghissi have argued that the expressions of men like Akhundzadeh and Kermani should be viewed as feminist.⁹⁷ Kia argues that Akhundzadeh’s views were largely pragmatic choices; he avoided direct attacks

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Mehrdad Kia, *Women, Islam and Modernity in Akhundzadeh’s Plays and Unpublished Writings*.

⁹⁷ Haideh Moghissi, *Feminism and Islamic Feminism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis*, (London: Zed Books, 1999), p. 127.

on Islam in order to avoid charges of heresy from the Iranian establishment, and venerated Russian modernisation and leadership to maintain his governmental post in the Caucasus.⁹⁸ This section argues that the arguments of modernists like Kermani and Akhundzadeh were products of their time and place, resulting from complex bargains negotiated around the multiple discourses they identified with, and the realities and limits of their situations. Akhundzadeh's rejection of Islam and the ulama, support for women's rights and Iranian constitutionalism, and admiration for western modernisation, incorporated competing ideological discourses. He primarily viewed women as domestic figures, but called for greater freedom within this context, promoting love and freedom of choice as the basis for any marriage. However, by advocating Russian tutelage or leadership, he was consciously or subconsciously calling for the replacement of existing Persian patriarchy with Russian imperialist patriarchy. By avoiding direct attacks on Islam in his plays and promoting the idea of Russian tutelage, Akhundzadeh was striking and maintaining necessary patriarchal bargains with both the Iranian and Russian establishments in order to advance his views.

2.2 Iran's Female Modernists

Pioneering Iranian modernists during this period included a few exceptional women. In 1894-1895 Bibi Khanum Astarabadi wrote an essay entitled *Maayeb ol-Rejal* (*The Vices of Men or The Failings of Men*) in response to a Qajar tract, titled *Tadib ol-Nesvan* (*The Education of Women/ The Chastisement of Women*), which had been published in Tehran by an anonymous author almost 10 years earlier. The *Education of Women*, which was published around 1886/1887,

⁹⁸ Kia.

called for women's total obedience and submission to their husbands as religious duty and defined their roles as 'extensions of their husbands' pleasure in all respects'.⁹⁹ While the pamphlet was addressed to all women, its main targets were upper-class urban women, who were more educated and displayed more independent thinking than other classes of women at the time.¹⁰⁰ It was naturally assumed the writer was male, but his identity was never proven, with some suggesting he may have been a satirical inciter mocking early efforts to advocate women's rights, or a genuine conservative voicing his objection to developing trends.¹⁰¹ Javadi argues that whatever the case, he was likely wedded to an Iranian princess and thus hid his identity in fear of her possible retaliation, but adds the author's phraseology suggests he was Azeri-Turkish not Persian. Whatever the case, it is possible to add that the author's choice for anonymity implies that by this point such misogynistic views were likely to cause some controversy amongst the upper classes in Tehran. Bibi Khanum's essay retaliated by arguing that such derogatory tracts were engineered to maintain men's superiority, and pointed to men's flaws, which she blamed for all the backwardness and corruption of society.¹⁰² Astarabadi's father was a Mazandarani chief and the commander of the Asatarabad cavalry, and her mother the teacher of Nasser al-Din Shah's principal wife. She grew up in the royal harem and received her education there.¹⁰³ Consequently, it was partly this privileged situation that provided her with the education and means to act on her reformist desires. She called for a defence of women's rights (*huquq-i-*

⁹⁹ Astarabadi, *The Education of Women & The Vices of Men*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 9.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 11.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p.83-106, 130, 133, Afzal Vaziri, *Bibi Khanum Astarabadi va Khanum Afzal Vaziri*.

¹⁰³ Astarabadi, *The Education of Women & The Vices of Men*, p.18.

zanan defah) and women's 'vital rights of livelihood' (*huquq-i-ma'ashi va hayati-i nesvan*).¹⁰⁴ As mentioned earlier, Bibi Khanum set up the first girls' school for pupils between the ages of 7 and 12 from her own home in 1907. She and her elder daughters were part of the five female staff, along with one old male *gapoochi* (an old Qajar word for gatekeeper), who it was advertised would teach subjects ranging from reading, writing, arithmetic, law and religion to cookery, embroidery, knitting, and sewing.¹⁰⁵ Bibi Khanum attempted to re-define existing gender norms by promoting women's scientific education, whilst offering domestic subjects alongside it to illustrate that female education complemented family life and improved women's existing roles by producing better mothers who would better educate the next generation of Iranians.

During the same period a few elite women began to link their demands for female emancipation to nationalist progress and independence. Taj al-Saltaneh, the daughter of Nasser al-Din Shah, argued that all of Iran's moral backwardness and corruption could be attributed to the veiling of women and the absence of female education, and criticised her father and brother's mismanagement of the country.¹⁰⁶ Her memoirs show great admiration for western women, and a longing for similar women's rights advancements in Persia. She argued that unveiling, education, and increased rights would allow women to exercise their patriotism and contribute to their nation's progress.¹⁰⁷ Taj linked notions of women's rights progress with revolution and nationalism.

When the day comes that I see my sex emancipated and my country on the path to progress, I will sacrifice myself in the battlefield of liberty, and

¹⁰⁴ Afzal Vaziri, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 59, Astarabadi, *The Education of Women & The Vices of Men*, p. 23.

¹⁰⁶ Taj al-Saltanah, pp. 292,110, 266.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, pp. 284-285. 288.

freely shed my blood under the feet of my freedom-loving cohorts seeking their rights.¹⁰⁸

The growth of such sentiments are seen in the lead up to the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911, which saw educated women from elite harems like Taj al-Saltaneh and Bibi Khanum, as well as educated women of the upper-clerical classes, like Sedigheh Dowlatabadi, participate in a nationalist revolution for the first time. Female educators like Bibi Khanum and female nationalists like Taj al-Saltaneh were working out of an environment that was largely hostile to the idea of female education and independence. The Qajar state was interested in the appearance of modernisation but did not initiate any educational reforms for women. Thus, women's bargaining power was limited, given the asymmetric power of an unsupportive state and an explicitly hostile clerical establishment. In this context, the inclusion of 'domestic arts' in Bibi Khanum's school, and Taj al-Saltaneh's linking of her feminist views to the budding nationalist movement, can be viewed as a form of patriarchal bargaining. That is not to say they were not genuinely nationalist, or that the inclusion of domestic subjects was done purely to appease men, but that these compromises were genuine attempts at striking a common ground with the patriarchal forces around them to advance their modernist, nationalist, and feminist positions.

2.3 Male Voices for Reform in Egypt

The late 19th century Islamic modernist and Egyptian nationalist movement led to intellectual debates regarding the women's question, which focused on female education, polygamy, and veiling. Earlier arguments made by scholars like Muhammad Kamal Yahya, Ahmad Taha Muhammad, and Soha Abdel Kader that

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 294.

such debates were initiated by elite men, have more recently been challenged by others like Baron and Badran, who argued that during the same period many 'middle-class' and 'upper-class' women contributed towards a growing feminist-consciousness with their own writing, in the women's journals they founded, and the poetry, novels, and tracts they wrote.¹⁰⁹

Standing at the forefront of the Islamic reform movement in Egypt was Rifā'ah al-Tahtawi, who argued that Islam encouraged female education, and that society would improve once the female population was educated. Just before his death in 1873, he wrote it would 'make them stronger...help them to communicate better...prevent them from gossiping and wasting time or sitting around procrastinating'.¹¹⁰ He brought up Islamic examples of women during the time of the Prophet, who could read and write, such as his wives Aisha and Hafsa, and pointed to *hadiths* that promoted the education of women.¹¹¹ His writing, particularly the references to historic Islamic female figures, drew attention to the ways in which old gender models were used and reinterpreted by reformists to validate modern behaviour as authentic and nationalist. Marilyn Booth has argued that during this period other male writers like Ali Jalal, Habib Effendi al-Zayyat al-Dimashqi, and Shaykh Hamza Fathallah used their works to argue 'for historical authenticity of attitudes and practices' in an effort to 'modify, but not

¹⁰⁹ Kamal Yahya, p. 5; Ahmad Taha Muhammad, *al-Marah al-Misriyah bayna al-madi wa-al-hadir* (Cairo: S.n, 1979), p.47; Soha Abdel Kader, *Egyptian Women in a Changing Society, 1899-1986*, (London: Lynne Rienner, 1987), p. 50; Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt*; pp. 188-189, Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, p. 61.

¹¹⁰ al-Tahtawi, *al-Murshid al-Amin lil-Banat wa-al-Banin*, p. 66.

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 68.

fundamentally alter, local patriarchal structures of family, community and state'.¹¹²

The famous modernist judge Mohammad Abduh, who in 1899 was appointed Grand Mufti of Egypt, also argued for the advancement of women in his work *al-Islam wa-al-mar'ah* (Islam and the Woman).¹¹³ However, it was the later works of Muslim lawyer Qasim Amin, which created the greatest controversy. Amin's two books, *Tahrir al-Mar'ah* (the Liberation of the Woman, 1899) and *Al-Mar'ah al-Jadida* (The New/Modern Woman, 1900), were unprecedented in their forceful calls for change to women's status, attacking institutions like polygamy and divorce.¹¹⁴ He defended most of his arguments using *Shari'a* principles arguing that the Islamic legal system itself had 'stipulated the equality of women and men before any other legal system'.¹¹⁵ He wrote that face-veiling had no basis in Islamic law, and only increased temptation and prevented women from participating in society, referring to polygamy as 'nothing short of a legal trick to satisfy an animal-like desire'.¹¹⁶ He praised the contribution of western women towards their societies, arguing they had 'contributed significantly to the foundation of civilisation'.¹¹⁷ He thus linked women's progress to nationalism by justifying it as a way to advance the nation:

¹¹² Marilyn Booth, The long 1890s in Egypt: Colonial Quiescence Subterranean Resistance, ed. Marilyn Booth and Anthony Gorman, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 366.

¹¹³ Muhammad Abduh, *Al-Islam wa-al-Marah fī Ray al-Imam Muhammad Abduh*, (Cairo: al-Qahirah lil-Thaqafah al-Arabiyah, 1975).

¹¹⁴ Qasim Amin, *The liberation of Women; The New Woman: Two Documents in The History of Egyptian Feminism*, trans. Samiha Sidhom Peterson, (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2000).

¹¹⁵ Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women*, p. 7.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 43, 40, 85.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 16, 73.

'In order to improve the condition of the nation, it is imperative we improve the condition of women'.¹¹⁸

His views created an intense backlash from conservatives like Muhammad Farid Wajdi who attempted to discredit Amin's arguments in his book, *al-Marat-Al-Muslimah (The Muslim Woman)*.

The author of the *New Woman* states: 'is justice different with regards to men and women, and are there two set of rights, one for the man, and one for the woman?' ...We say that this talk is not beneficial...because the rules of the universe and life and humanity have proved that there is no equality except through the equivalence of strength/power.¹¹⁹

On the other hand, Amin's supporters like Mansur Fahmi wrote in 1913, 'I bow before the memory of the Egyptian writer Qasim Amin, who gave everything to the woman's cause'.¹²⁰ Fahmi argued that the Egyptian woman would emancipate herself not by following the same model as western women, but through 'her own history and genius of her race'.¹²¹ By stressing 'her own history' and 'race', Fahmi was claiming authenticity for a budding feminist movement by encouraging its links to a modern, more secular Egyptian culture and nation. While Amin accused Egyptian men of neglecting women's 'proper education', he did not advocate equal education with men, but defined this 'proper education' as 'the possibility for boys and girls to have a comparable educational experience throughout the primary stage'.¹²² Furthermore, while he argued female seclusion was harmful to society and had no basis in Islamic *Shari'a*, he did not recommend an immediate end to it, explaining that 'such a

¹¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 102, 75.

¹¹⁹ Muhammad Farid Wajdi, *al-Mar'at al-Muslimah*, 1901, pp. 116-117.

¹²⁰ Mansur Fahmi, *La Condition de la Femme dans l'Islam*, (Paris: Editions Allia, 1990), p. 159.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women*, p. 28.

sudden revolution could lead to an increase in the behaviour that we consider corrupt.'¹²³

Why did Amin advocate women's education but then limit it only to primary level? Why argue that female seclusion was harmful to society, and then warn against an immediate end to it? Moreover, considering that earlier reformers like Tahtawi and Abduh had already introduced ideas of female education and changes to polygamy and divorce, why did his books generate more controversy? What stands out in Amin's works compared to earlier reformers is his focus on unveiling. Writers like Kader label Amin 'the first Egyptian and Arab feminist' by arguing that his books turned the debate about the woman's question into a full-fledged movement.¹²⁴ On the other hand, Leila Ahmed argues that rather than being the father of Egyptian feminism Amin was actually a child of colonialism ('son of Cromer').¹²⁵ Ahmed argues that Amin internalised orientalist views on Egyptian culture, and on veiling as a symbol of inferiority. Thus, by replicating imperialist attacks on Egyptian customs (veiling), Amin's calls for 'women's liberation' were actually calls to replace Islamic-Egyptian patriarchy with western/imperialist patriarchy.¹²⁶ Highlighting that "woman' signified more than gender relations' in such contexts, and that Amin 'faced two audiences: a local, mostly male intelligentsia and scholar-bureaucrats of Europe', Marilyn Booth has recently asked 'recognising this dual

¹²³ Ibid, pp. 45, 60.

¹²⁴ Abdel Kader, p. 8.

¹²⁵ Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, pp. 155-157.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p.162-166, 167.

(and overtly male) audience, might we recast the late 20th century debate over whether Qasim Amin was a Lord Cromer crony?¹²⁷

This chapter contends that labels such as colonialist supporter, Islamic reformer, modernist or feminist, should not be viewed as one-dimensional or static identities outside the context of their time. Amin was no doubt aware of the kind of conservative backlash his ideas would create. To some extent, this could explain his suggestion of limiting female education to primary level, in the same way Tahtawi suggested, or his call for a gradual rather than an immediate end to seclusion. These calls for gradual change could be seen as a form of patriarchal bargaining with both conservative forces exemplified by men like Wajdi and modernist reformers like Abduh and Tahtawi. Similarly, Amin can be seen striking patriarchal bargains with imperialist forces by focusing on veiling/unveiling to advance his views on women's liberation.

John Livingston has argued that Tahtawi's dilemma as the employee of a state that was actively promoting scientific education over religious education explains the many contradictions in his views.¹²⁸ Tahtawi's multiple identities as Islamic Shaykh, reformer, and employee of a modernising Egyptian state (among other identities), meant he had to negotiate his own views in complex ways, and enter into similar patriarchal bargains with the state, colonialists, and conservative Islamists, or risk becoming obsolete as traditional religious education was replaced by modern scientific education. Thus, this chapter argues that contradictions and limits in the works of reformers like Tahtawi, Abduh, and Amin were the result of tensions between their multiple identities,

¹²⁷ Booth, The long 1890s in Egypt, p. 391.

¹²⁸ John W. Livingston, Western Science and Educational Reform in the Thought of Shaykh Rifaa al-Tahtawi, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 1996, pp. 545, 547.

which encouraged them to strike bargains with competing patriarchal forces, namely the modernising Egyptian state, colonialist forces, and conservative religious leaders, in order to advance their own positions.

2.4 Female Voices in Egyptian Modernist discourse

The overlap between an Islamic modernist movement and a modernising state in Egypt helps explain why many calls for women's rights came from Islamic scholars and leaders, whereas in Iran, much of the clergy remained staunch opponents of similar ideas. However, how did Egyptian women's contributions to these debates and their bargaining power differ from their contemporaries in Iran, and what factors were responsible for such differences? Did women's calls for change mirror men's ideas and limits for reform? Were men mirroring women's calls for reform? Were they articulated in a similar language, and were bargains motivated by similar factors?

The tradition of the women's press in Egypt began in 1892, when Hind Nawfal, a Syrian Christian, founded the first women's journal in Egypt- *Al-Fatat* (The Young Woman). Her mother, Maryam al-Nahhas, had come to Egypt from Lebanon and had completed a biographical dictionary of women in 1879.¹²⁹ Buthayna Sha'ban has argued that as Egypt was relatively autonomous from Ottoman authority, unlike Syria and Lebanon, many thinkers and writers from these countries went to Cairo and Alexandria to pursue their activities alongside Egyptian writers.¹³⁰ The Egyptian Aisha al-Taymurriyyah, who was raised in a harem, lamented and challenged women's seclusion in multiple publications

¹²⁹ Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt*, pp. 14, 16.

¹³⁰ Sha'ban, p. 11.

between 1885-1892.¹³¹ Another pioneering female writer was the *Shi'a* Lebanese Zaynab Fawwaz who published a large biographical work on Eastern and Western women in 1894 titled *al-Durr almanthur fi tabaqat rabbat al-khudur* (Scattered pearls on the generations of the mistresses of seclusion).¹³² Throughout the book there are biographical descriptions of mythological women, biblical female characters, and notable women from all over the world, such as Balqis, Queen of Sheba, Isabella II Queen of Spain, Qurrat Al-'Ayn, and Maryam al-Nahhas.¹³³ She also described many Islamic heroines, such as Khadeeja, the Prophet's first wife, his daughter Fatima, his youngest wife Aisha, who could read and interpret the *Qur'an*, and Zaynab, the granddaughter of the prophet, who Fawwaz praised as a female role model.¹³⁴ Buthayana Sha'ban credits Fawwaz with the production of the first modern Arabic novel. She argues that contrary to existing historiography Husein Heykal's *Zeinab* was not the first of such novels, as Fawwaz had already published her novels 15 years earlier in 1899.¹³⁵ Underlining Marilyn Booth's arguments, Badran writes that women like Fawwaz and Taimuriyyah 'stood at the beginning of the feminist tradition in Egypt'.¹³⁶ Amal al-Subki's has argued that one of the effects of Qasim Amin's writing and work was the emergence of later women's rights advocates like Bahithat al-Badiya (Malak Hifni Nasif) and May Ziyadah.¹³⁷ However, it is also clear that by viewing earlier women like al-Taymurriyyah and Fawwaz as inspirational pioneers, and describing them as such in their written work,

¹³¹ Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, p.15, 65.

¹³² Zaynab Fawwaz, *al-Durr al-Manthur fi Tabaqat Rabbat al-Khudur*, (*Scattered Pearls on the Generations of the Mistresses of Seclusion*), (Kuwait: Maktabat Ibn Qutaybah, 19--).

¹³³ Ibid, pp. 38, 96, 75, 132, 133, 249, 482, 515.

¹³⁴ Ibid, pp. 180, 233, 280.

¹³⁵ Sha'ban, p. 10.

¹³⁶ Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, p.16.

¹³⁷ al-Subki, pp. 15-16.

women like May Ziyadah and Malak Hifni Nasif, who came from very different social backgrounds, were validating a 'feminist' continuity between these earlier women and themselves, on the basis of a shared struggle for women's emancipation.

Ziyadah, a Lebanese-Palestinian Christian, was a well-known poet, writer, translator. She wrote biographical works on Aisha al-Taymurriyah¹³⁸ and Malak Hifni Nasif¹³⁹, and ran one of the most famous literary salons in Cairo. In a letter to 'the young Egyptian woman' Ziyadah combined the notion of female activism, work, and nationalism by asking the Egyptian girl to choose her path in life between a 'slave' through laziness or a 'queen' through independent thought and work; 'if you live [like] a slave you would be a heavy burden on your relations...but if you live [like] a queen you would be beloved and celebrated by your family and nation'.¹⁴⁰ In a letter to the Muslim writer Malak Hifni Nasif in 1902, Ziyadah asked for direction and leadership in the woman's struggle:

Help in the emancipation of the woman by teaching her her responsibilities and duties...we do not mind if you hide your delicate hands behind walls or if you hide your eastern features behind your veil, as long as we continue to hear the sound of your pen at work, so that we may know from you what the higher self is.¹⁴¹

The letter shows how women of different backgrounds encouraged each other in pursuing their mutual struggle for greater freedom and rights. In 1910, Nasif published, *al-Nisa'iyyat* (Women's Affairs), described by Badran as a 'key text in Egyptian feminist history'¹⁴², which looked at several issues from marriage, to polygamy, to education and work. Nasif argued against arranged marriages

¹³⁸ May Ziyadah, *Aisha Taymur: Shariat al-Talia*, (Beirut: Muassasat Nawfal, 1975/1924).

¹³⁹ Ziyadah, *Bahithat al-Badiyah*, (S.l: S.n, 1920).

¹⁴⁰ Ziyadah, *Rasa'il Mayy: Safahat wa 'Ibarat min Adab Mayy al-Khalid*, (Beirut: Dar Beirut, 1951), p. 60.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 14.

¹⁴² Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, p. 54.

saying 'if love is not the foundation for two people coming together, then there is no meaning to their union', and wrote that the marriage age for girls had to be raised to at least sixteen years of age.¹⁴³ She was vehemently opposed to polygamy arguing that 'polygamy corrupts men... and corrupts the hearts of women'¹⁴⁴. Her views on veiling were more ambiguous. On the one hand she argued that 'our religion does not restrict us in this matter', and on the other stated that 'my opinion is that it is not yet time for the removal of the veil, for women must first be given a true education, and taught proper behaviour...then leave her to choose what is most beneficial to her and her nation'.¹⁴⁵

Nasif's writing overlapped with the arguments of earlier Islamic modernists on polygamy and female education, and incorporated Amin's 'gradual change' argument on veiling. Yet, she was also subtly challenging the authority of such reformists, when she wrote 'our religion does not restrict us in this matter', validating women as interpreters of their own religion, and stressing women's individual agency in the choices they made as modern women and nationalists. In 1912, Nasif and Ziyadah challenged male reformers' motives and leadership in letters to each other 'If the man commanded us to veil, we veiled, and if he asked us to unveil, we unveiled, and if he asked us to learn, we learned, but were there always good intentions behind his demands for us?'¹⁴⁶ May responded, 'Man wants the woman to feel his tyranny, because tyranny is control... the more she rebelled, the more his authoritarianism increased'.¹⁴⁷ These letters help illustrate that women like Nasif and Ziyadah were engaged in

¹⁴³ Malak Hifni Nasif, *al-Nisa'iyyat: Majmu'at Maqalat Nushirat fi al-Jaridah fi Mawd'u al-Mar'ah al-Misriyah* (Cairo: Multaqa al-Mar'ah wa-al-Dhakirah, 1998), pp. 57, 82.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 78.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 61, 64.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 20.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 25.

a combined strategy of negotiating their views and desires around and between the patriarchal limits set by modernist and conservative men, at the same time as challenging and pushing those very limits.

Another famous contemporary of the period was the Muslim female educator Nabawiyah Musa, who came from a more modest social background. Her father, an army captain, had died on a mission when she was a child, leaving her mother to raise the family on his military pension.¹⁴⁸ Musa entered the Saniyah Teacher's Training school and narrated in her autobiography, *Tarikhi bi Qalami* (My History with My Pen), how she appealed to the Ministry of Education for permission to sit the state baccalaureate exam and receive equal pay to male teachers.¹⁴⁹ The American writer Elizabeth Cooper describes the British educator, Mr Dunlope, as 'wise' and 'impartial'.¹⁵⁰ Musa's opposing account sheds light on how British colonial attitudes were applied differently in reality, particularly to women from more modest backgrounds like hers.

Mr Dunlope surprised me when he came in holding my application in his hand... 'remove this request...unless you promise me you will be successful'. I said: And have any of the other candidates promised you success before sitting the exam?...he said: then know that if you fail, my opinion of you will fall. I said: I am, thank God, above the serving classes, and neither you nor any one else can make me a servant.¹⁵¹

She wrote of her success:

I passed coming out forty-third among two hundred candidates. This was in the year 1907 ...no other Egyptian woman would pass the baccalaureate exam until 1928. For this reason my success was big news, and newspapers carried titles such as 'the first female Egyptian to pass the baccalaureate'.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, pp. 38-39.

¹⁴⁹ Nabawiyah Musa, *Tarikhi bi-Qalami*, (Cairo: Multaqa al-Mar'ah wa-al-Dhakirah, 1999), pp. 47-48.

¹⁵⁰ Elizabeth Cooper, *The Women of Egypt*, (New York: F.A. Stokes, 1914), p.166.

¹⁵¹ Musa, *Tarikhi*, p. 83.

¹⁵² Ibid, p. 85.

Muhammad al-Jawwadi has argued that as a pioneering female educator Musa's first battle was actually against the British Colonialists, exemplified by Mr Dunlope, adding that had it not been for the solid stance of Sa'ad Zaghlul (Minister of Education at the time), Musa's 'first revolution would have ended up a storm in a teacup'.¹⁵³ The case highlights the double patriarchal challenge to women like Musa, who had to manoeuvre around the patriarchal limits of the British colonialist authorities and Egyptian society at the time. Al-Jawwadi can be seen here pointing to her fight against colonialism as a way of validating her authenticity.

While Musa overtly championed female education she also strongly critiqued marriage, writing 'I hate marriage and see it as dirt, and I decided never to soil myself with this dirt'.¹⁵⁴ She explained how her decision to unveil was partly motivated by a desire to set an example in order to change traditions, 'I wanted to unveil, although I did not write about it but read Qasim Amin's book and liked it, though I believe traditions cannot be changed with words'.¹⁵⁵ This statement shows that while she defended Amin against conservatives,¹⁵⁶ like her female contemporaries she subtly challenged male reformers with the implication that debates and ideas were not enough, but had to be converted to action by women themselves. Musa clashed with both the colonial authorities and Egyptian men of her time. The British authorities made Musa an exception to the rule by making her the first female to receive an equal salary to male

¹⁵³ al-Jawwadi, p. 27.

¹⁵⁴ Musa, *Tarikhi*, p. 87.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

teachers.¹⁵⁷ Musa wrote ‘they called me the wrecker of men’s homes and the severer of their livelihoods’,¹⁵⁸ and described the resentment the other male teachers and the British principal had for her.

At that time I used to write for a daily journal called ‘*The Young Woman’s Egypt*’...The other Arabic teachers went to the principal and brought her various clips from the journal and said I was criticising English politics in these articles...and by doing that they managed to turn her against me.¹⁵⁹

The incident above highlights how her success as an educator threatened both Egyptian and British colonial patriarchy. Musa went on to become the first Egyptian woman principal at a girls’ school in Fayyum.¹⁶⁰ She was made principal of the Mansurah teaching school, and in 1924 became inspector of girls’ schools.¹⁶¹

By the early 1900s women like Musa, Nasif, Ziyadah, and Sha’rawi were forming and participating in female clubs, literary groups and salons, lecturing and debating feminist and nationalist ideas.¹⁶² They also began organising and attending academic lectures at the university. Sha’rawi was one of the first women to organise an academic lecture series at the Egyptian university

The talk met with such enthusiasm that I invited Mlle Clemet to return to give a whole series of lectures for women. His highness, Prince Ahmad Fuad supported the women’s lectures and ordered a hall to be reserved at the university on Fridays. Soon Egyptian women began to speak. The best known was Malak Hifni Nasif.¹⁶³

The *Egyptian Daily Post* reported on some of the academic programs set up for women at the ‘Université Egyptienne’, which included English, French, and

¹⁵⁷ Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, p. 44.

¹⁵⁸ Musa, *Tarikhi*, p. 93.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 94.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 114.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p. 142.

¹⁶² Sha’rawi, p. 93-94, 98-100; Elizabeth Cooper, p.239.

¹⁶³ Ibid, pp. 93-94.

Arabic literature, advanced mathematics, political economy and science.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, women's philanthropic experiences were also pushing them into public paces, making them more socially and politically aware. In 1910, *The Egyptian Gazette* reported on the activities of the *Mubarat Muhammad Ali*, a philanthropic organisation founded in 1909 by Sha'rawi and other Egyptian women under the patronage of the Khedive and his family.¹⁶⁵ Women were also receiving increasing support from male reformers. For instance, the academic Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayed praised the example of Nasif as a pioneer and leader of Egyptian women, and corresponded with other female intellectuals such as Ziyadah.¹⁶⁶

Conclusion

The writings of women like Fawwaz, Taymurriyah, and the editors of the women's press in Egypt, laid the seeds for a budding women's rights movement, which was fertilised by women like Nasif and Ziyadah. While Fawwaz is counted among the first female writers to argue that gender roles were socially constructed,¹⁶⁷ she was also engaged in proving authenticity by recalling historic female models, in a similar way to male reformers. Finding historical precedent, and pointing to early Islamic models, was one way of negotiating authenticity with patriarchal forces. The intellectual debates between female and male reformers in Egypt can be viewed as a trading platform where gender ideas were

¹⁶⁴ *The Egyptian Daily Post*, 6 November 1909.

¹⁶⁵ *The Egyptian Gazette*, 6 April 1910.

¹⁶⁶ Nasif, pp. 43-44, Ziyadah, *Rasail Mayy*, p. 32.

¹⁶⁷ Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, p. 66.

exchanged; where discursive bargains were negotiated and challenged by men and women.

The Egyptian state under Muhammad Ali began challenging definitions of women's social roles by establishing the Sina School of Midwifery in the 1830s. By the 1870s and 1890s the first state schools for girls were established, the Saniyah Teacher Training College was in operation, Fawwaz and al-Taymuriyah had initiated a new literary tradition, and a new women's press was growing. These measures opened spaces for some classes of Egyptian women in education and journalism, as well as appropriate workspaces for some women as midwives and teachers. By the 1900s, Malak Hifni Nasif had published *al-Nisa'iyyat*, May Ziyadah was writing and hosting mixed literary salons, and Nabawiya Musa was challenging colonial and Egyptian authorities in the Ministry of Education to go on to build her career in education. Her actions, like those of her contemporaries, constituted a turning point in Egyptian women's history.

Unlike Egypt, the Iranian state was not challenging the clergy's authority through scientific education as state policy. The narrower debates on the woman's question at this stage in Iran were the combined result of limited and superficial state modernisation under Qajar rule, which did not support educational reform for women, coupled with the persistent power of an explicitly hostile clerical establishment. Thus, women's bargaining power, and indeed the bargaining power of modernist men, was more limited in Iran compared to Egypt at this time. As such, elite women like Bibi Khanum and Taj al-Saltaneh used their privileged positions to pursue a more subtle strategy of compromise with modernist/constitutionalist men around ideas of educated motherhood, and education as nationalist activity. Thus, the terms and contents

of Iranian and Egyptian women's bargains were different, and were negotiated differently as a result of their specific bargaining powers at this stage.

Chapter 2

Feminism and Nationalism (1890's-1920's)

In the first chapter it was shown how women's rights discourses in Egypt and Iran developed as part of early modernist and nationalist debates. This chapter looks at the relationship between early nationalist movements and women's rights discourses in Egypt and Iran. It relies on Foreign Office documents from the UK National Archives pertaining to the activities of Egyptian female nationalists of the period. These are used in conjunction with the memoirs and writings of key Egyptian women's rights activists. Documents from the Sedigheh Dowlatabadi collection held at the Archives of the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam are used along with the writings of Morgan Shuster, the writings of other pioneering Iranian women's rights activists, constitutionalists, and foreign observers of the period. Relevant newspaper and press sources pertaining to this period are additionally used for both country cases.

Analyzing the relationship between feminism and nationalism in post-colonial societies, Mohanty, Narayan and Chatterjee have pointed to how the dichotomy of nationalism and imperialism in such societies led to a 'cultural competition' around Eastern/Western constructions of womanhood.¹ In many cases, British colonial attacks centred on notions of the family, which often resulted in resistance to imperialism and modern nationalism being expressed

¹ Mohanty; Narayan; Chatterjee.

or articulated through the familial framework.² In her comparative study, 'Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World', Jayawardena credited late 19th/early 20th century nationalism for pushing women into political life. However, she argued that by making the 'monogamous bourgeois nuclear family the core of capitalist modernisation', feminist consciousness was not able to develop far enough to question traditional patriarchal structures, and thus women's movements in these countries 'failed to make any impression on women's subordination within patriarchal structures of family and society'.³ Other scholars like Mayer and Peterson have argued that the connection between gender and sexuality makes nationalism the vehicle through which 'masculine prowess is expressed and strategically exercised'⁴, and 'women's agency in service to heterosexist nationalisms' pulls women towards 'masculinist strategies'.⁵

In contrast, this chapter will argue that nationalism was not purely a vehicle through which masculine prowess was expressed, but that women in Egypt and Iran used nationalist language to exercise their own agency by challenging existing patriarchal standards, negotiating new roles for themselves, and attempting to strike new patriarchal bargains with male nationalists to uphold these new roles. In both countries men enthusiastically encouraged female participation against foreign interference and imperialism, but appeared less accommodating in allowing women the same voice when it came to domestic policies. Women could lead and organise protests and riots against

² Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonising, and Liberating Egypt*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Lisa Pollard, The family politics of colonizing and liberating Egypt 1805-1923, *Social Politics*, Vol.7, Issue 1, 2001.

³ Jayawardena, p. 24.

⁴ Tamar Mayer, p. 1/i.

⁵ Peterson.

foreign intervention, and voice their opposition publicly, but when it came to female suffrage or ideas of women's progress, gradual change as opposed to revolutionary action became more acceptable terms for new patriarchal bargains.

In Egypt, nationalist men like Lutfi al-Sayyid supported modernist notions of female education, and bringing an end to women's domestic seclusion. On the other hand, conservative nationalists like Mustafa Kamil objected to them as imperialist ploys designed to weaken the Egyptian nation. Egyptian women were able to challenge patriarchal practices such as polygamy and domestic seclusion by contributing to the idea of the new monogamous 'modern bourgeois family', and the 'educated mother', as part of the solution for Egyptian independence against British occupation. However, while this new family model allowed women to challenge existing patriarchal limits, it introduced new and revised patriarchal controls at the time. Therefore, while women supported the nationalist movement, hoping to forge new spaces for themselves in the political process, they were repeatedly excluded from political decision-making processes, as the new Electoral laws restricted voting to men. While modernist nationalists supported female education and an end to domestic seclusion, these measures were intended to produce better mothers for modern Egyptian children, and partners for modern Egyptian men. As such women's activity in the political sphere appeared to conflict with these domestic responsibilities and with male nationalist definitions of modern Egyptian womanhood. However, these political exclusions encouraged some female nationalists to challenge these limits on women's political activity, by taking more independent action in pursuit of their nationalist and feminist goals.

Iranian women challenged patriarchal structures and control in a less obtrusive manner, particularly when overt activism was not possible. At the start of the Constitutional Revolution (1906) women conducted their political activity covertly through secret societies, using these experiences to subtly challenge patriarchal limits on their public activity. By 1910, they were able to conduct their activity more visibly, participating in mass riots, challenging men in the *Majlis* (Parliament/National Assembly), launching the first women's journals, and reaching out to international feminist groups, namely the British Suffragettes. However, women did not enjoy the same support or tolerance for their journalistic and educational activities as they did when protesting foreign or imperialist intervention during the Constitutional period. Women operated girls' schools from their homes, against the voices of conservatives in the *Majlis* and the hostile *ulama*. However, they persisted in their journalistic and educational activities, and began to win greater support and acceptance for some of their ideas. Viewing nationalism, feminism, patriarchal bargains, and notions of womanhood as products of their time, this chapter argues in contrast to Jayawardena, that women in Egypt and Iran did in fact question 'traditional patriarchal structures', particularly within the family, but that the terms of their questions, the way they framed them, and the strategies they employed were not the same, but shaped and limited by their social backgrounds and specific historic contexts.

These challenges to existing gender definitions and patriarchal limits were repeatedly constrained by persistent notions of women as symbols of 'cultural authenticity' in both countries. Many writers have argued that women's importance in nationalist movements is based on their crucial role as

biological and symbolic reproducers of the nation. Writers like Chatterjee, Kandiyoti, Mayer, Yuval-Davis and Anthias, have all stressed women's definitions as 'boundary markers of their communities', 'cultural carriers', and 'representatives of purity' in nationalist contexts, which they argue has compromised their development as equal citizens within modern nation-states.⁶ Mayer reiterates these arguments to posit that the intersection of nation, gender, and sexuality becomes a 'discourse about moral code', as women's bodies and 'modesty' are used to 'represent the 'purity' of the nation', which requires them to be protected by nationalist men.⁷

Early Egyptian and Iranian nationalism illustrated that notions of women's purity and modesty were tied to new definitions of womanhood, around which competing nationalist discourses offered conflicting definitions of authenticity to assert dominance. However, this chapter will argue that definitions of purity and modesty were not the same in Egypt and Iran, and that such notions often manifested differently across different social groups and classes within the same country. In Iran, the 'Story of the Daughters of Quchan' and the Iranian washerwoman were woven into nationalist narratives, creating a sense of national collectivity and protectiveness around themes of class and female oppression, and the loss and/or repression of 'pure', 'modest', 'loyal' and 'self-sacrificing' peasant/working class women. In Egypt, notions of modern Egyptian 'motherhood' and the monogamous nuclear family were used to illustrate Egypt's readiness for independence. The 'House of the Nation' (the residence of the Wafd leader Sa'ad Zaghlul and his wife Saffiya Zaghlul) provided

⁶ Kandiyoti, Identity and its Discontents; pp. 49, 51; Tamar Mayer, pp. 7, 10; 18, Yuval Davis, p. 45-46; Chatterjee, p. 243; Anthias, Yuval-Davis, Campling; pp. 85, 143, 155.

⁷ Tamar Mayer, p.9.

Egyptians with a symbolic and physical centre for their nationalist campaign, which along with Sa'ad Zaghlul and Saffiya Zaghlul's roles as 'Father and Mother of the nation' gave the nationalist movement a sense of unity, authenticity, and structure.

Section 1: Iranian Nationalism and the Women's Rights Movement

Looking at women's activity during the Constitutional Revolution this section argues, in contrast to Janet Afary⁸, that women did significantly challenge their society's gender-relations' while advocating for greater rights, but altered their strategies to do so in less revolutionary ways at moments when more overt activism would have pushed bargains too far. At the start of the constitutional period, Morgan Shuster referred to numerous secret women's societies, and their covert activities in defence of the constitutionalist movement. Royal women like Taj al-Saltaneh, and women from elite religious families like Sedigheh Dowlatabadi founded The Women's Freedom Society in 1906. After the establishment of the first and second *Majlis*, and the developing women's rights debates within them, these women's activities became a lot more visible within the new National Ladies' Society founded in 1910. This society not only organised and participated in mass riots in 1911, challenging male *Majlis* members head on, but contacted British suffragettes, linking their nationalist activity to a broader/international women's rights struggle.

It is important to note that the National Ladies Society was reaching out to British suffragettes at the same time clerical leaders in the *Majlis* were claiming women's suffrage was anti-Islamic. Women combined their

⁸ Afary, p. 206.

revolutionary-nationalist activity against foreign intervention, with subtler forms of patriarchal resistance, through their educational, philanthropic, and journalistic activities. Pari Shaykh al-Islami lists the many early women's journals of the period, starting with Danesh in 1910, emphasising the role these pioneering journals played in initiating 'bidari-i zan/zanan' (women's awakening/renaissance).⁹ Bamdad similarly points to these early female journalists and educators as pioneers in the *bidari-i zanan* movement, describing their activities as '*noorpachi*' (illumination, spreading of light/enlightenment).¹⁰ However, women faced severe clerical hostility and male objection, with pioneering educators and their schools receiving regular harassment or having to hide their activities from male family members. These examples indicate that women did challenge existing gender-relations through a combined strategy of covert and overt nationalist/public activity depending on the level of male hostility and patriarchal attitudes to those activities at the time.

Muhammad Panah has argued that 'educated, freethinking women', who were mostly from the 'elite upper classes' and who had come into contact with western ideas lead the Iranian women's movement.¹¹ However, this section will show that while elite women like Bibi Khanum, Mohtaram Eskandari, and Sedigheh Dowlatabadi did pioneer women's public activism, journalism, and educational activities, differences in their social and family backgrounds often influenced the various paths they took within the *bidari-i zanan* movement. For instance, Mohtarama Eskandari's Patriotic Women's League was ideologically linked to her husband, Solayman Eskandari's Socialist Party, while Sedigheh

⁹ al-Islami, *Zan dar Iran*.

¹⁰ Badr-ol-Moluk Bamdad, *Zan-e-Irani az Inqilab-e-Mashrutiyat ta Inqilab-e-Sefid*, (Tehran, Intesharat-e-Ibn Sina, 1968), pp. 34, 49.

¹¹ Panah, p. 7-8.

Dowlatabadi's activities lead to her estrangement from her clerical family. As such it is additionally argued that women often sought the role of 'cultural carriers' and protectors of the nation, but did so in different ways according to their different social backgrounds. Women's support for the *ulama* also varied according to their different backgrounds. The story of the Iranian washerwoman indicates the ways in which modest, working-class women were venerated as loyal, self-sacrificing nationalist models. However, by founding their own women's organisations and leading women in nationalist protests, educated elite women were positioning themselves as both protectors of Iran's national culture, and leaders of a budding women's rights movement.

1.1 The Tobacco Protests of 1890-1892

The final decades of the 19th century saw the deterioration of Qajari rule and the rise of Iranian Constitutionalism. Western encroachment negatively affected many sectors such as the *bazaaris* (merchant classes), who suffered economically under the state's imposition of taxation and commercial concessions to western countries. This compromised donations to the clerical classes who had traditional ties with the *bazaar*, increasing political grievances amongst this group.¹² The Iranian state's legitimacy under Nasser al-Din Shah was continuously attacked as a result of several enormous concessions, such as the Shah's 1889 concession to Baron Julius de Reuter to establish the 'Imperial Bank of Persia' as Iran's state bank, allowing it to monopolise the Iranian financial sector for the next 60 years.¹³ E. Granville Browne wrote that the following year the Shah granted the British a tobacco concession, guaranteeing

¹² Paidar, p. 43.

¹³ E.G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), p. 31.

the concessionaries 75% of annual profits, with the Persians expected to cover all working expenses.¹⁴

Unlike earlier concessions, the tobacco concessions concerned a product that huge numbers of Iranians from various social backgrounds depended on: from landowners to big and small merchants, to the peasants who cultivated it.¹⁵ In the absence of an independent press, the Armenian-Iranian modernist Malkom Khan began to publish his criticisms from London, distributing a newspaper entitled *Qanun* in February 1890.¹⁶ According to Browne, these publications made the Persian people aware of the nature of the concessions, and as a result they began to revolt and organise boycotts in protest.¹⁷ Thus, the Tobacco Protests of 1890-1892 were a turning point in Iranian politics as they led to heavy criticism of the government by Iranian papers published abroad, and to mass protests and riots led by the *Shi'a* clergy and Tehran merchants. The American Morgan Shuster, who was appointed Treasurer-general of Persia in 1911 by the Iranian *Majlis*, explained that in December 1891 as a result of a religious decree' all the tobacco-shops closed their doors...and in a marvellously short time the use of tobacco practically ceased.'¹⁸ The protests and boycotts eventually forced the Shah to cancel the Tobacco Concession in 1892. Browne referred to the clergy as the 'champions of popular causes', and argued that it was 'the support and guidance of the *mullahs* and *mujtahids*, the spiritual heads

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 33-47.

¹⁵ Hooshang Amarahmadi, *The Political Economy of Iran Under the Qajars: Society, Politics and Foreign Relations, 1799 to 1921*, (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012), p. 163.

¹⁶ E.G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, p. 35.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Morgan Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia* (New York: Greenwood, 1968; 1912), p. 19.

of the nation, which made organised and effective protest possible'.¹⁹ However, native perceptions of the clergy's behaviour were quite mixed; Iranian scholar and politician of the period, Mohammad Taqi Bahar acknowledged the contribution of some important *ulama*, while Iranian constitutionalist and reformer Kasravi wrote that with the exception of some 'enlightened' *mullahs* like Behbahani and Tabatabai, most *mullahs* only hoped to promulgate the *Shari'a* and advance their own power.²⁰

Ricks argues that the Tobacco protests became the first of the national movements culminating in the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911.²¹ Moaddel argues that the protests 'transformed the merchant-British conflict into a confrontation between the Muslims and infidels'.²² However, the accounts given by foreign observers like Browne and Shuster, and native accounts by men like Bahar and Kasravi highlight that the struggle was not purely targeted at the 'British infidels', but rather at the Iranian state, as an illegitimate and corrupt imperialist agent. Ever since *Shi'ism* was adopted as Iran's official religion in the 16th century, the state was viewed by the *ulama* as an illegitimate entity. The replacement of the Safavids with the Qajars aggravated the situation, as unlike their predecessors, the Qajars could not claim descent from the same line of *Shi'a* Imams, and so the *ulama*'s alienation from the state intensified. The relationship between the state and the *ulama* remained contentious, oscillating between

¹⁹ Edward Granville Browne, *A Brief Narrative of Recent Events in Persia* (London: Luzac and Co., 1909), p. 7.

²⁰ Mohammad Taqi Bahar, *Tarikh-i Mukhtasar-i Ahzab-i Siyāsi Iran* (Tehran, 1944-1984), p. 2; Ahmad Kasravi, *History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, trans. Evan Siegel (California: Mazda Publishers, 2006), p. 296.

²¹ Thomas Ricks, 'Background to the Iranian Revolution: Imperialism, Dictatorship, and Nationalism, 1872-1979', in *Iran: Essays on a Revolution in the Making*, eds. Ahmad Jabbari and Robert Olson (Kentucky: Mazda Publishers, 1981), p. 22.

²² Mansoor Moaddel, *Shi'i Political Discourse and Class Mobilisation in the Tobacco Movement of 1890-1892*, *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 7, No.3, 1992.

periods of temporary calm and reconciliation, such as the early 19th century, which saw Fath Ali Shah favour and expand clerical influence over the court, to periods of increased conflict and hostility under his successors Muhammad Shah and Nasir al-Din Shah.²³ Algar argues that this resulted in the *ulama* not only acting as community leaders but as ‘national’ leaders, against the state, so that resistance to imperialism or foreign intervention was ‘voiced in Islamic rather than in nationalistic terms’.²⁴

Thus, from the 16th century onwards the Iranian *ulama* can be seen as patriarchal rivals to the state, questioning its legitimacy and competing as independent agents for economic privilege and socio-political domination. Moreover, by the end of the 19th century the *ulama*’s gender definitions were beginning to conflict with those of the state. The *ulama* defined gender relations and womanhood according to patriarchal interpretations of *Shi'a* Islamic doctrine, which particularly influenced women of the lower working classes. Women of the Qajari elite and extended royal classes were influenced by the patriarchal Qajari state and Qajari harem systems, where notions of female education and independent thought were becoming more commonplace than amongst the *bazaar* and lower working classes. As community-‘national’ leaders, the *ulama* encouraged women of the lower classes to riot as part of their Islamic duty. As such women observed the tobacco boycotts as strictly as men and many even led the food riots that followed²⁵. The intersection of class, ideology, and gender in this context is key to understanding women’s

²³ Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period*, (Berkeley: University of California, 1969), pp.103, 132.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 24.

²⁵ Paidar, p. 51; Hamideh Sedghi, *Women and Politics in Iran: Veiling, Unveiling, and Re-veiling*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 41.

participation in these protests. The women who participated in the Tobacco Protest were of the lower *bazaar* and lower working classes, and thus did so as part of their religious duty as they had done before (bread riots), under the direct calls and leadership of the *ulama*. Moaddel argues that during the Tobacco protests, *Shi'ism* constituted a common language across class divides for confronting British domination and mobilising the masses against it.²⁶ The participation of women as religious duty shows that *Shi'a* discourse not only transcended class divides, but also gender divides within certain classes as well. Women in this context, particularly those of the lower working classes, were validating one form of patriarchy over the other by following the leadership of the *ulama* against the state. For these women, upholding their end of existing patriarchal bargains with the *ulama*, against the state, offered them more security than challenging such bargains. Even women from educated religious backgrounds who challenged religious patriarchy became social outcasts and were perceived as immodest, heretics, and thus anti-nationalist/anti-Iranian, as illustrated by the case of Qurrat al-'Ayn in chapter 1.

1.2 Women and the Constitutional Revolution 1906-1911

Economic dependence on foreign powers continued to be the primary source of unrest leading up to the revolution. The Shah's successor Mozaffar al-Din Shah took out several major loans from Russia and Britain to support his extravagant lifestyle, including a loan for 22 million rubles from the Russians to finance a royal tour of Europe.²⁷ In 1905, protests erupted over the collection of Iranian tariffs to pay back this Russian loan. The idea of constitutionalism, first

²⁶ Moaddel, *Shi'i Political Discourse and Class Mobilisation*.

²⁷ Sandra Mackey, *The Iranians: Persia, Islam and the Soul of a Nation* (New York: Dutton, 1996), pp. 55-150.

mentioned by Malkom Khan in his publication *Qanun*, began to gain wider acceptance across Iranian society, including amongst many clerics and merchants who believed it would increase their political and commercial powers.²⁸ Mohammad Taqi Bahar wrote that some *ulama* were in agreement with the idea of constitutionalism, and that British politics at the time secretly supported it. This, he wrote, combined with Mozaffar al-Din Shah's political inadequacies, led to the minority class of 'educated and open-minded' constitutionalists taking over in 1906.²⁹ Kasravi described how ideas of constitutionalism varied between the ministers, courtiers, clerics and the *bazaaris*, concluding that the 'people of Iran are afflicted with disparate beliefs. One cannot find ten people who have chosen the same way and mode of thought amongst themselves.'³⁰ Between the summer of 1905 and 1906 a series of public protests, particularly over the economic situation, sugar shortages, and trade concessions to Belgium, took place.³¹

It is within this context, that Afsaneh Najmabadi's study on *hikayat-i-dukhtaran-i Quchan* (the story of the daughters of Quchan, which took place around 1905) provides a strong example of how women were used as symbols of cultural purity and national authenticity against the Qajari state. During a period of severe economic difficulty, exacerbated by a severe locust attack in 1905, the imposition of heavy taxation by the governor of Khurasan, and the local governor of its main county Quchan, forced peasant families to sell their daughters to Turkomans and Armenians in order to pay their debts. Najmabadi argues that while the selling of young girls was not extraordinary at the time, increasing

²⁸ Paidar, p. 52.

²⁹ Taqi Bahar, p. 2.

³⁰ Kasravi, *History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, p. 3.

³¹ Paidar, p. 53

dissatisfaction with the state turned the story into one of national grief, creating 'a sense of national collectivity'.³² As Najmabadi explains, the daughters of Quchan became the daughters of the nation, the daughters of Iran, and representations of 'Iranianess'.³³ As such, the selling of these young virgin girls to Ashkabadi Armenians, viewed as Christian outsiders, was interpreted as an attack on Iran/Iranian men's national honour and on the country's dominant religion of Islam.³⁴ Recurrent themes of 'female purity' and 'female oppression' in the story, which were linked to notions of male honour and unjust rule, were used to symbolise national authenticity against the autocratic Qajari state.

The increasing public protests forced the Shah to approve a new constitution, based on the Belgian model, on 30 December 1906. He died within the week and was succeeded by his son Mohammad Ali Mirza on 19 January 1907.³⁵ Whilst the constitution achieved one of the revolution's main political aims of limiting the monarchy's power and giving the first *Majlis* (first National Assembly) power to act as representative of the Iranian nation, it did not deliver changes to women's political rights. Article 3 of the Electoral Law of September 1906 read 'the persons who are entirely deprived of electoral rights are as follows: women, persons not within years of discretion...murderers, thieves, criminals'.³⁶ Article 5 re-emphasised the above by positioning women at the top of the list of those 'absolutely disqualified from electoral functions', alongside the 'criminal' and the 'insane'.³⁷ Some women wrote letters to editors of Persian

³² Najmabadi, *Hikayat*, p. 4.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid, pp. 6-8.

³⁵ 'Death of the Shah', *The Times London*, Issue 38226, 10 January 1907; 'Coronation of the Shah', *The Times London*, Issue 38235, 21 January 1907, Times Digital Archives.

³⁶ E. G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, p. 355.

³⁷ Ibid.

papers asking them to explain why women had been denied political rights, challenging the *Majlis* to allow women a trial period to run the country.³⁸ Moreover, the constitution continued to be undermined by new foreign concessions and agreements. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, followed the formation of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company in 1906, and partitioned Iran according to spheres of influence with 'Russia in the north and England in the south-eastern corner of the Persian Empire'.³⁹

It was known from the start of his reign that Muhammad Ali Shah was against the constitution, and on 23 June 1908, with Russian help and British silence, he bombarded the *Majlis*, exiling many ministers and assassinating or arresting many journalists.⁴⁰ Bahar writes that the Russian and British governments reacted to these actions separately according to their interests; Russia offered loans to the Qajar government, while the British held that until the constitution was stabilised no lending to the Shah should take place.⁴¹ Despite some women's disappointments with the *Majlis*, they continued to support their nationalist goals; using secret societies they established to spread political messages, and taking part in demonstrations and protests. Women's groups stepped to restore order to the *Majlis*, sending international telegrams calling for help. From London, *The Times* published a reply by Sir Edward Grey to the president of 'a Committee of Persian Women in Constantinople' to inform them that Britain in conjunction with Russia was already taking steps 'to restore order in Persia'.⁴²

³⁸ Paidar, p. 55.

³⁹ Shuster, p. 227.

⁴⁰ Taqi Bahar, p. 3.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² 'The Persian Troubles', *The Times*, Issue 38752, 15 September 1908, The Times Digital Archive.

Iranian writer Badr ol-Moluk Bamdad, whose father was an active constitutionalist, and who herself would become a pioneering female educator, described how women offered their jewellery to raise capital in support of the movement, particularly the formation of a national bank, and told the story of a washerwoman/laundress who came to offer her one *toman* (a single unit of Iranian currency) of savings towards the cause.⁴³ Kasravi, too, described the same story, 'women raised the subject of selling their earrings and necklaces. One day a woman stood up...‘why does the government of Iran get loans from abroad? Are we dead? I am a washerwoman and I give as my share one *toman*'.⁴⁴ The story illustrates how notions of female loyalty and self-sacrifice were venerated as ideal constructs of Iranian womanhood. In this story, a lower-class washerwoman makes the sacrifice of offering her entire savings of one *toman* to defend Iran against foreign domination. The woman's social background and the amount she is offering are not irrelevant; her contribution would not have supported the formation of a national bank, but the story served to inspire people, by highlighting the loyalty of the Iranian working-class masses, particularly of vulnerable women within these lower classes, who although economically the greatest victims of foreign interference and state corruption, were still willing to defend and sacrifice themselves and their livelihoods for the Iranian nation. These notions of womanhood would be recalled and regenerated during the 1979 Iranian Revolution, to inspire women towards more radical revolutionary activism.

⁴³ Badr ol-Moluk Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light: Women's Emancipation in Iran* (New York: Exposition Press, 1977), pp. 28-29.

⁴⁴ Kasravi, *History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, p. 210.

The Constitutional Revolution was unique in the unprecedented participation of educated, urban women, from upper class or elite Qajari families and leading religious families, who formed and ran their own secret societies and political *anjomans* (clubs/societies). Shuster wrote that during the constitutional period it was well known that in Tehran there existed 'dozens of more or less secret societies among the Persian women, with a central organisation by which they were controlled'.⁴⁵

To this day I know neither the names nor the faces of the leaders of this group, but in a hundred different ways I learned from time to time that I was being aided and supported by the patriotic fervour of thousands of the weaker sex.⁴⁶

Bamdad identified the organisation as the Women's Freedom Society, formed in 1906, explaining that no single men or women were allowed to attend its meetings.⁴⁷ Among the most prominent ladies in the society were the pioneering women's rights activists Sedigheh Dowlatabadi and Taj Al-Saltaneh.⁴⁸ In 1910, The National Ladies' Society was founded in Tehran with Sedigheh Dowlatabadi as secretary, which promoted the boycott of foreign goods and engaged in philanthropic activities to improve the situation of Iranians.⁴⁹ The society expressed its opposition to foreign loans and the imposition of foreign goods by promoting the sale and use of domestic fabrics, and established an orphanage with funds it raised from a charity garden party.⁵⁰ Thus, female activists were able to challenge the state's foreign policy and engage in nationalist activity via more subtle methods, such as philanthropic activity.

⁴⁵ Morgan Shuster, p. 184-185.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, p. 30.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 31.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 34.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 35.

Many of the pioneering members of the National Ladies Society went on to become leading women's rights activists, such as Dowlatabadi and Mohtaram Eskandari. Dowlatabadi, who was a member of both the 'Women's Freedom Society' and the National Ladies Society, was also a pioneering educator and journalist who became estranged from her family as a result of her activities.⁵¹ Born to a family of *ulama* in Isfahan in 1882, she was educated in both Persian and Arabic. She went on to complete her education abroad and receive her BA from the Sorbonne University.⁵² In 1919 she published *Zaban-i Zanan* (Women's Voice) periodical to express her criticisms of the veil, and advocate education for women against fierce opposition from religious circles.⁵³ Eskandari, a Qajar Princess, was also active during the Constitutional Revolution and later founded the socialist *Jamiat-i-Nesvan-i-Vantankhah* (Patriotic Women's League) in 1922. The leadership of the Patriotic Women's League was formed of four female members, including Mehrangiz Eskandari.⁵⁴ By 1923 the League was publishing its periodical, *Nesvan-i-vatankhah* (Patriotic Women), and holding education classes for women.⁵⁵ Female education constituted another key bargaining strategy for women's rights activists, who formed private schools, and founded journals to assert themselves, and challenge patriarchal standards during and directly after the constitutional period.

1.3 Education and Nationalist Protests as Patriarchal Bargains

⁵¹ Mary Winsor, American Suffragist, 23 October 1926, 'The Blossoming of a Persian Feminist', *Equal Rights Magazine*.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ 'Permission letter from the Iranian Ministry of Culture to Dowlatabadi to publish *Zaban-i Zanan Magazine*', Dowlatabadi Collection, International Institute of Social History Archives (IISHA).

⁵⁴ Badr ol-Moluk Bamdad, *Zan-i-Irani az Inqilab-e-Mashrutiyat ta Inqilab-e-Sefid*, (Tehran, Intesharat-e-Ibn Sina, 1968), p. 53.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 46, Bamdad, *From Darkness Into Light*, pp. 62-64.

Sedghi argues that Iranian women played a unique role in transforming the 'political revolution of 1906 into the beginnings of a social revolution'.⁵⁶ Afary argues that pioneering female activists in Iran were able to advocate for women's rights without significantly challenging their societies' gender relations, by founding girls schools and women's journals.⁵⁷ This section argues that it was not that women advocated rights without significantly challenging their society's gender relations, but rather that they found novel and less obtrusive ways to do so when overt activity would have been too costly a bargain at the time. The examples in this section show that women did significantly challenge existing gender-relations through a combined strategy of covert and overt nationalist activity, depending on levels of male hostility, combined with social activism through education, journalism, and philanthropic initiatives.

Although state-sponsored compulsory education was enshrined within Article 19 of the Supplementary Fundamental Law of 1907, and reaffirmed in 1910 by the second *Majlis*, no state schools were officially established until after World War I.⁵⁸ According to *The Times*, The American School in Tehran (set up by the American Presbyterian Society decades earlier) had started receiving increasing numbers of female Muslim students by the 1900s, as suspicious attitudes toward female education began to change.⁵⁹ It reported in 1910 on the existence of more than 50 girls' schools in Tehran, declaring that female education looked to 'play an important part in the future evolution of Persia'.⁶⁰ Bamdad credited these changing attitudes to a 'grassroots campaign for women's

⁵⁶ Sedghi, *Women and Politics in Iran*, p. 43.

⁵⁷ Afary, p. 206.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 42.

⁵⁹ Javadi & Floor, Astarabadi, 'The Education of Women in Persia', *The Times*, Issue 39350, 13 August 1910, Times Digital Archives.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

education' led by several exceptional Iranian women.⁶¹ Female activists and nationalists founded the first girls' schools and women's journals in an attempt to change public attitudes and challenge patriarchal bargains.

Many of these pioneering educators came from religious backgrounds. Tuba Azmudeh, founder of Namus School in 1908, believed women's education was enshrined in Islam and demonstrated this with the teaching of Islamic texts.⁶² Dorrat al-Mali Khanum founded the Dorrat-i-Madares Girls School in 1909.⁶³ Many of these pioneering educators were married to religious men, both liberal and conservative. Safiyeh Yazdi, founder of the Effatiyeh School for girls in 1910, and Mah-Soltan Amir-i-Sehi, member of the National Ladies' Society and founder of the Tarbiat Girls School, were both married to liberal *mujtahids*.⁶⁴ Safiyeh's husband was one of the five high-ranking *mujtahids* chosen to sit in the *Majlis* to ensure legislation did not conflict with Islamic teachings.⁶⁵ On the other hand, Mah-Rokh Gowarshenas, who founded the Taraqi Girls School in 1911, initially had to hide her activities from her conservative husband.⁶⁶

At the same time, ideological struggles continued within the *Majlis*, with women's suffrage resurfacing as a topic of debate by 1911. *The Times* published an article in August 1911 reporting on the level of male hostility and clerical opposition towards the idea of women's emancipation, particularly female suffrage. It mentioned the exception of Vakil al-Ra'aya, whose statements had been so upsetting to the rest of the male audience, that the President of the *Majlis*

⁶¹ Bamdad, From Darkness into light, p. 182.

⁶² Ibid, pp. 42-44

⁶³ Ibid, p. 49.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 44, 47-48.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p.44.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 46.

had asked reporters not to mention the incident in the journals of the House.⁶⁷ The *mujtahid* in this account, and his many supporters, were rejecting women's rights ideas by arguing that such reforms went against Islamic principles, while a few exceptions like Vakil al Ra'ya were contesting these interpretations.

Hadji Vakil el Rooy...who on August 3 astonished the House by an impassioned defence of women's rights...and declared roundly that women possessed souls and rights, and should possess votes. The orator called upon the Ulema to support him, but support failed him. The Mujtehid, whom he invoked by name, rose in his place, and solemnly declared that he had never in a life of misfortune had his ears assailed by such an impious utterance...and declared that such doctrine would mean the downfall of Islam.⁶⁸

The Times maintained that these ideas, though outrageous to many, were beginning to place doubts in the minds of some Iranians.⁶⁹

In spite of conservative and clerical opposition to women's political rights, female activists persisted with their nationalist activity. Morgan Shuster was employed by the second *Majlis* to reorganise the country's finances. Worried about increasing American influence, the Russians issued an ultimatum that the *Majlis* either dismiss Shuster and refrain from employing more Americans, or face Russian occupation.⁷⁰ In November 1911, Shuster received a threat from the Oriental Secretary of the Russian Legation claiming that 'if [Russian] demands were not complied with within 48 hours, diplomatic relations between the two countries would be broken off'.⁷¹ Shuster wrote that once rumours began to circulate that the Iranian *Majlis* intended to yield to Russian demands, hundreds of women marched towards the *Majlis*.

⁶⁷ 'Women's Right in Persia: Appeal for the Suffrage in the Mejliss', *The Times*, Issue 39670, 22 August 1911, The Times Digital Archive.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Paidar, p.58.

⁷¹ Shuster, p.160.

Out from their walled courtyards and harems marched three hundred of that weak sex...demanded of the President that he admit them all...these cloistered Persian mothers, wives and daughters exhibited threateningly their revolvers, tore aside their veils, and confessed their decision to kill their own husbands and sons, and leave behind their own dead bodies if the Deputies wavered in their duty to uphold the liberty and dignity of the Persian people and nation.⁷²

Some reports claim that a group of women chose this moment to combine their pro-constitutionalist protests with demands for an end to veiling. However, they were rejected by the majority of female constitutionalists, who referred to them as a 'bunch of prostitutes', maintaining their focus on nationalist activities.⁷³

This indicates that the majority of educated female nationalists preferred gradual change and reform, or viewed it as a more effective bargaining strategy than revolutionary calls for 'unveiling', which they may have feared as too socially transgressive. This explains their disassociation from the group of female 'unveilers' and their branding of them as 'prostitutes' to validate their own actions and calls for nationalist activity, philanthropy, and women's education, as socially moral.

Bamdad explained that the Russian ultimatum had prompted the National Ladies' Society to organise a large public meeting on 1 December 1911, outside the Baharestan palace where the *Majlis* was in session. 'Thousands of cloaked and veiled women appeared on the scene...and made fervent speeches in defence of the constitutional regime.⁷⁴ *The Times* similarly reported, 'the patriotic demonstrations continue. A curious feature is the prominent part taken in them by women...they were particularly strenuous in insisting on a Russian boycott'.⁷⁵

⁷² Ibid, p. 188.

⁷³ Paidar, p.59.

⁷⁴ Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, p. 35.

⁷⁵ 'The Crisis in Persia: Patriotic Demonstrations by Women', *The London Times*, 5 December 1911, Times Digital Archives.

Iranian women sent telegrams to British suffragettes asking for help during the crisis pleading, 'the Russian Government by an ultimatum demands us to surrender to her our independence; the ears of the men of Europe are deaf to our cries; could you women not come to our help?'⁷⁶ The British Women's Social and Political Union replied,

Unhappily we cannot move British Government to give political freedom even to us, their own countrywomen...our hearts deeply moved by sympathy with Persian sisters and admiration for their militant patriotic deeds.⁷⁷

These women's attempts to reach out to British suffragettes shows no clear dichotomy between western feminism and Iranian women's activism was drawn at this stage. Thus, they saw no contradiction in challenging British colonialism whilst reaching out to create links with British suffragettes. Indeed, by viewing the suffragette's struggle as one against the British government, they created a sense of commonality in their different movements, by viewing them both as struggles against the same opponent.

Shuster argued that without the support of Iranian women, who he wrote had become 'teachers, newspaper writers, and founders of women's clubs almost overnight', the revolutionary movement 'however well conducted by the Persian men, would have early paled into a mere disorganised protest'.⁷⁸ While Bamdad argued that women's rights had not been the key issue during these demonstrations, she nevertheless pointed to it as a significant event in Iranian women's history, where women 'gave notice of their own existence and showed

⁷⁶ 'Appeal from the Women: Telegram dated 5 December 1911', *The Times*, 7 December 1911, Times Digital Archives.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Shuster, p. 184.

how important their cooperation could be'.⁷⁹ The 1911 Russian protest also points to women's role as cultural and spiritual symbols of the nation. In Shuster's account, the men of the *Majlis* are described as wavering in the face of Russian threats, and thus in their responsibility to uphold the independence of the Persian nation. Given the level of male hostility towards women's political rights and emancipation, the independent actions described in this incident, highlight that many women felt it their responsibility to uphold and defend the Persian nation, not only against imperialist attacks, but against Persian men who they felt had been corrupted away from the 'authentic/true' Persian nation. Women in this context can be seen seeking the role of 'cultural carriers' or 'symbols of the spiritual nation',⁸⁰ reminding men that the 'true' Persian nation must remain independent, and must not yield to imperialist threats. Yet, which classes of Iranian women led this revolution, and did they all have the same roles?

Female participation during the Constitutional Revolution was very different to women's participation during the Tobacco Concession as it incorporated varied classes of Iranian women, who were not all motivated by, or simply following the religious calls of the *ulama*. As seen earlier, the clergy were politically divided, for and against the constitutionalists. Paidar writes that after the civil war that followed the first *Majlis*, many lower class female supporters of the royalist or anti-constitutionalist clergy turned on affluent women who tended to side with the constitutionalists and their clerical supporters, hurling

⁷⁹ Bamdad, From Darkness into light, p. 39.

⁸⁰ Chatterjee, p. 243.

abuse and insults at them in one recorded incident.⁸¹ She argues that 'lower and middle class women's' support for clergy of all political affiliations tended to be more genuine, while 'upper-class' women who concentrated on educational activities and wrote speeches in defence of constitutionalism and women's rights, supported the clergy for tactical reasons and on multiple occasions spoke out against oppressive clerical practices towards women.⁸²

While it is hard to assess how 'genuine' or purely expedient female support for the clergy was using existing sources, educated Iranian women from the elite urban classes like Taj al-Saltaneh, Muhtaram Eskandari, and women from affluent religious families like Sedigheh Dowlatabadi did act more independently of the ulama, by enacting their nationalist activity very differently to lower class women. The story of the Iranian washerwoman indicates how lower class women were venerated as modest, loyal, and self-sacrificing nationalist models, by both upper class female nationalists and male constitutionalists like Kasravi. However, by founding their own nationalist organisations and leading female riots and protests, women of the wealthier classes were positioning themselves as leaders of a female nationalist and social revolution. They recommended themselves as tutors and guides to less wealthy and educated classes of Iranian women by offering them access to education through their private schools, journals, and philanthropic activities.

⁸¹ Paidar, p. 74.

⁸² Ibid, p. 73.

Section 2: Women and the 1919 Nationalist Revolution in Egypt

Chapter 1 showed how prior to the 1919 revolution intellectual women's associations brought together women of different social and class backgrounds, like Sharawi, Ziyada, Nasif, and Musa, resulting in different women's rights and nationalist discourses, and different nationalist-feminist identities.

Writers like Amal al-Subki, Latifa Muhammad Salim, Buthayna Sha'ban, and Muhammad al-Jawwadi are among many scholars who link the importance of the 1919 Revolution to the emergence of an Egyptian women's rights movement.⁸³

This section will illustrate that while larger numbers and classes of women were galvanised towards greater political activity as a result of the 1919 revolution, they did not all have the same roles and did not all define their nationalist activity in the same way.

As a result this section argues that while women of the Wafdist Women's Central Committee (WWCC) (*Lajnat al-Wafd al-Markaziyah lil-Sayyidat*), many of whom hailed from elite, land-owning families, defined their nationalism through public protests, speeches, and political activity in an effort to negotiate greater political roles for themselves, women like Musa and Labiba Ahmed defined and expressed their nationalism and gender roles differently, stressing female education and educated motherhood above other activities. While Ahmed's stress on educated motherhood complimented Wafdist/WWCC notions of womanhood, Ahmed emphasised her Islamic identity and the Islamic identity of this nationalist mother as a way of distinguishing herself from the WWCC and EFU.

⁸³ L. M. Salim, p. 45; al-Subki, pp. 15, 181-184; Sha'ban, pp. 73-75; al-Jawwadi, p. 27.

Amal al-Subki has argued that women of the aristocratic classes, middle classes, and intellectual middle classes, participated in the political and social events, which characterised this period, pointing to the examples of Huda Sha'rawi, Labiba Ahmed, and Tafida Alim.⁸⁴ Writers like Muhammad Kamal Yahya have argued that when it came to the woman's question, women of the 'upper classes' took a different path to women of the 'middle and lower middle classes'.⁸⁵ However, this section additionally argues that women of similar social and class backgrounds did not necessarily follow the same paths or patriarchal bargaining strategies as each other. For instance, looking at women from the wealthier, elite, land-owning classes, Esther Fahmi Wissa remained in the WWCC, preferring to negotiate from within the Wafd's patriarchal framework, while Huda Sha'rawi chose to challenge the Wafd's patriarchal limits through independent activity, founding the Egyptian Feminist Union. Similarly, looking at women from more modest, conservative backgrounds, Labiba Ahmed affiliated herself with, and chose to work from within the Islamist movement, while, Nabawiyah Musa independently challenged patriarchal limits through her definition of female nationalism as 'female education' and work, rather than 'educated motherhood'.

2.1 Wafdist Elites, Motherhood, and Female Nationalism 1919-1923

Unlike Iran's Constitutional Revolution, women's roles in Egypt's Nationalist Revolution over a decade later were far more defined and apparent. By 1919, almost two decades of serious debate had already taken place on the subject of women's rights. From 1881-1882, army colonel Ahmad Urabi led the first revolt

⁸⁴ al-Subki, p. 183.

⁸⁵ Kamal Yahya, p. 6.

articulated in Islamic language against British colonialism and the establishment of a constitutional regime.⁸⁶ As a result of British policies during World War I, new economic burdens were placed on most social classes in Egypt from the peasants and urban masses, to the landed elite. Peasants were recruited to serve as the British wartime labour corps, keeping cotton prices artificially low to cheaply supply British factories. This angered the landed gentry and motivated elite support for the independence movement, whilst the increasing number of British bureaucrats bred even greater resentment amongst middle-class Egyptians.⁸⁷ Similarly to Iran, Egyptian women of the lower classes had historically participated in riots and demonstrations.⁸⁸ However, like Iran's Constitutional Revolution, the 1919 Egyptian Revolution was the first time elite women of the landowning classes and educated upper middle classes were physically involved. The revolution provided women of those wealthier upper and upper middle-classes, who had formed the vanguard of Egypt's 'women's awakening' (*al-nahda al-nisa'iya*), with an important outlet through which to turn their words and writing into action.

Within the various nationalist camps, varying ideas on women's emancipation took form. Liberal nationalists like Lutfi al-Sayyid endorsed women's emancipation according to Qasim Amin's model,⁸⁹ supporting the idea of female education and an end to domestic seclusion, while men in the conservative camp like Mustafa Kamil, rejected them claiming they were an

⁸⁶ Thomas Mayer, *The Changing Past: Egyptian Historiography of the Urabi Revolt, 1882-1983* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1998), p. 11,13.

⁸⁷ Ziad Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation Through Popular Culture* (California: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 135.

⁸⁸ Abdel Kader, p. 63.

⁸⁹ Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid in Nasif, *al-Nisa'iyat*, pp. 43-44.

attempt to weaken the Egyptian nation.⁹⁰ The Wafd (delegation) Party was formed on 13 November 1918, and with the aid of Lutfi al-Sayyid its leading delegates Sa'ad Zaghlul, Abd al-Aziz Fahmi, and Huda Sha'rawi 's husband Ali Sha'rawi, planned and presented their request/demarche for independence to the British Government. In 1919 these demands, along with the request to participate at a peace conference in Paris, were denied. On the 8th of March 1919 British authorities arrested and deported Wafd leader Sa'ad Zaghlul, and some of his associates to Malta.⁹¹ This proved the trigger for a nation-wide uprising that launched the revolution. The Wafd Party, with its more liberal and reformist leanings, offered educated Egyptian women of the upper land owning and upper middle classes the opportunity for political activity. The earlier activities of women like Sha'rawi, who joined others like Ziyadah as founding members of the 'Intellectual Association of Egyptian Women' in 1914, and initiated philanthropic activities through organisations like the *Mubarrat Muhammad Ali*, encouraged an extension into the political arena. Sha'rawi's memoirs illustrate how these earlier experiences fuelled her nationalist and feminist ideas, and how the nationalist movement drew her attention from her philanthropic, intellectual activities and her 'private life' to 'serving [her] country'.⁹²

Huda Sha'rawi and other Wafdist women organised some of the first women's demonstrations on the 16th and 20th of March 1919 to protest the arrest of Wafdist leaders. Hundreds of women charged into the streets and marched towards the foreign legations of France, Italy, and America to leave

⁹⁰ Mustafa Kamil, *Rasail tarikhayah min Mustafa Kamil il· Fuad Salim al-Hijazi*, (Cairo, 1969), *Safahat matwiyah min tarkh al-zaim Mustafa kamil : rasail jadidah li-Mustafa Kamil min 8 Yuniyu 1895 ila 19 Fabrayir 1896*, (Cairo: Dar al-Nahdat al-'Arabiyyah, 1962).

⁹¹Thomas Mayer, pp. 136, 138; Donald Malcom Reid, *Cairo University and the Making of Modern Egypt*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), P. 72.

⁹² Sha'rawi, *Mudhakkirati*, pp. 96-111.

written protests, carrying banners with French and Arabic protest phrases⁹³, before marching on to the home of arrested leader Sa'ad Zaghlul.⁹⁴ Huda Sha'rawi recalled,

British troops surrounded us...We stood still for three hours while the sun blazed down on us...I did not care if I suffered sunstroke-the blame would fall upon the tyrannical British authority.⁹⁵

Thomas Russell Pasha, Chief of Cairo police, described the incident in a letter to his father.

I let them get a little way and then blocked them in with police supported by troops and there the dear things had to remain for an hour and a half in the hot sun with nothing to sit on except the curb stone.⁹⁶

He wrote that the Egyptian conscript police were given firm warning not to use violence against the women, although 'considerable license was given them by their officers to practice their ready peasant wit on the smart ladies who confronted them'.⁹⁷ On 12 January 1920, in the presence of one thousand women, Sha'rawi held a meeting at St Mark's Cathedral in Cairo, where the Wafdist Women's Central Committee (WWCC) was officially formed with Sha'rawi as president.⁹⁸ Wafdist men fully supported the new female faction, especially as it meant women could keep the movement alive in their absence. Sha'rawi explained 'My husband kept me informed of events so that I could fill the vacuum if he were imprisoned or exiled'.⁹⁹ When Wafd leaders were jailed or exiled the women took charge, organising boycotts of British goods and banks, handling finances, and maintaining communication with the British authorities

⁹³ L.M. Salim, p. 27

⁹⁴ Sha'rawi, pp.98-100.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 112-114.

⁹⁶ Sir Thomas Wentworth Russell Pasha, *Egyptian Service, 1902-1946* (London: John Murray, 1949), p. 207-209

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 208.

⁹⁸ Sha'rawi, pp. 121-122.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 116.

and Wafdist men.¹⁰⁰ Sha'rawi recalled how in an effort to finance a strike of government workers, 'women took off their jewellery and offered it to government workers with the plea 'If you want money take this but do not hinder our cause by going back to work under British threat".¹⁰¹

However, within the WWCC's first year a crisis surfaced among the male and female Wafdist with regards to the Curzon Plan; a proposal for Egyptian independence was drafted by Wafdist leaders in London and presented in October 1920, without any consultation with the WWCC.¹⁰² The WWCC did not sit on the matter, criticising the terms of the Curzon Plan as 'inadequate' and published their own views in the Egyptian press, and sent forceful letters to the Wafdist leaders; 'We criticised the delegates from the Wafdist for disregarding our rights and our very existence by neglecting to solicit our views.'¹⁰³ Sha'rawi personally wrote to Zaghlul on 12 December 1920 expressing her condemnation.

We are surprised and shocked by the way we have been treated...You supported us when we created our Committee...What makes us all the more indignant is that by disregarding us the Wafdist has caused foreigners to disparage the renaissance of women. They claim that our participation in the nationalist movement was merely a ploy to dupe civilised nations into believing in the advancement of Egypt.¹⁰⁴

Zaghlul responded with an apology, stating that a society could not progress without the contribution of its women.¹⁰⁵ These strong letters from the WWCC demonstrated that although female Wafdist fundamentally supported the nationalist movement and its male leaders, they did so hoping to improve their own socio-political rights. They expected to be consulted and to be treated as

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p.120.

¹⁰² Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, p. 81.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 122

¹⁰⁴ Sha'rawi, p. 122.

¹⁰⁵ Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, p. 82.

equal political partners as part of new public roles they were negotiating for themselves, and were not afraid to voice their criticism and challenge male leaders when they appeared to falter in supporting the new constructs female nationalists had been putting forward and hoping for.

Zaghlul was arrested again by the British in 1921, and deported first to Aden, then the Seychelles, and finally Gibraltar. Sha'rawi wrote how the WWCC put aside their disagreement with Zaghlul and came together to protest his arrest and deportation in a letter to the British High Commissioner: 'You cannot silence the voice of the nation by stifling the voice of the person who speaks for the nation'.¹⁰⁶ During this crucial time the WWCC again took control of the chaos and launched themselves into various activities to keep the movement alive. In February 1922, Britain issued a unilateral declaration of independence, conditional upon the Four Reserve points, which limited Egyptian sovereignty by allowing for a continuous presence of British troops to protect their foreign interests in Egypt, and enforced Egypt's separation from the Sudan. The Wafd and the WWCC both objected to the conditions. The WWCC called a meeting on February 3rd and reiterated their objections to the terms of the Curzon Plan as inadequate in satisfying the demands of Egyptian nationalists.¹⁰⁷ Members of the WWCC accused the government of violating the national pact, with Sha'rawi declaring, government leader Tharwat Pasha 'now boasts about the independence the imperialists hail as a magnanimous gift. It is no more than a

¹⁰⁶ Sha'rawi, p. 125.

¹⁰⁷ 'Decision of the Women's Central Committee of the Delegation', Cairo February 1922, signed by Ihsan al-Qusi, FO141 Box 511, File 14083, United Kingdom National Archives (UKNA).

right only partially restored to its owners. We women consider it merely a move to paralyze our national movement'.¹⁰⁸

By July 1922, the British made another fresh round of arrests of Wafdist leaders. The WWCC once again jumped into action. WWCC vice president Esther Fahmi Wissa demonstrated their resolve in a letter to British official Lord Allenby.

You will see how unjust and unbased the accusation that has been levelled at the members of the Delegation, who are standing up for the rights of the people.¹⁰⁹

During the revolution, female activists held leverage as nationalists; the Wafd needed the WWCC to maintain its campaign in its absence, so apologies were made, and praises offered by male leaders in an attempt to appease its female members. However, when Zaghlul was finally released in May 1923, women's services to the nation and the Wafd's praises did not translate into improved political rights. While the Egyptian Constitution of 1923, proclaimed all Egyptians equal before the law, an electoral law restricted voting to Egyptian men only. The restriction was based on the reasoning that participation in political life would take away from a woman's affairs in the home, her children, and would become a cause of conflict with her husband.¹¹⁰ Wafdist women were bitterly disappointed, however, their rejection as political equals, became the 'threat point' of their patriarchal bargain with nationalist men, triggering greater independent action.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 127.

¹⁰⁹ Letter to Allenby from Esther Fahmi Wissa, July 1922, FO141/511/5, UKNA.

¹¹⁰ Salim, p. 43.

2.2 Growing Conflict between the Wafd and the Egyptian Feminist Union

On 16 March 1923, four years after the inception of the WWCC, Sha'rawi called a meeting with her fellow members to form an independent feminist organisation. It was here that the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) was born.¹¹¹ However, it would be another year before Sha'rawi relinquished her role as president of the WWCC. The situation came to a head over the question of Sudan's separation from Egypt and the murder in Cairo of Sir Lee Stack, British Sirdar of the Egyptian Army and Governor-General of the Sudan. When the British gave the Egyptian government a harsh seven-point ultimatum, the 'Women's Boycott Committee' telegraphed Zaghlul demanding the ultimatum be rejected.¹¹² Egypt and Sudan's complete independence from British rule was listed as the very first point on the political section of the EFU's organisational program.¹¹³ As such, it was over this issue that the already shaky relationship between Zaghlul and Sha'rawi broke down irreparably, with Sha'rawi condemning Zaghlul's actions, calling for his resignation, and resigning herself as president of the WWCC.

Since you have failed while in public office to fulfil your mandate by positive action, I ask you not to be an obstacle in your country's struggle for liberation...I ask you to step down.¹¹⁴

Sha'rawi continued her nationalist and feminist activity within the framework of the EFU, arguing

In moments of danger, when women emerge by their side, men utter no protest. Yet women's great acts and endless sacrifices do not change men's views of women. Through their arrogance, men refuse to see the capabilities of women...women rose up to demand their liberation...their

¹¹¹ Sha'rawi, p. 86

¹¹² Ibid, p. 131.

¹¹³ Text of the Egyptian Women's Union/ EFU Program, barnamaj al-Itihad al-Nisa'i in al-Subki, p. 198.

¹¹⁴ Sha'rawi, p. 131.

leap forward was greeted with ridicule and blame, but that did not weaken their will.¹¹⁵

The rupture forced female activists to take sides. The disappointment felt by some female nationalists inspired them to join Sha'rawi in challenging patriarchal nationalist definitions of womanhood and women's rights independently, through the EFU. However, others remained in the WWCC, preferring to take a different strategy based on their own political views, which encouraged them to maintain their original patriarchal bargain with Wafdist men. These women reconstituted themselves as *al-Lajnah al-Sa'diyah Lil Sayyidat* (Committee of Sa'adist Women/Ladies),¹¹⁶ with women like Sharifah Riyad and Esther Fahmi Wissa emerging as new leading figures.

Wissa's Coptic-Christian background and fluency in English made her particularly suited to represent the WWCC during this period of anti-colonial resistance. She often invited British official Lord Allenby to tea or dinner, and their letters demonstrate cordial exchanges even during strained times, with Wissa appearing to view Allenby as an exception to colonial rule.¹¹⁷ Wissa went on to expand her philanthropic and feminist activities beyond Cairo, to Alexandria and abroad, representing Egypt in international feminist conferences, similarly to Sha'rawi.¹¹⁸ She emphasised improving conditions within the domestic sphere, education, and argued that suffrage was not the sole goal of feminism and that independence had to come first.¹¹⁹ However, she too eventually became disappointed with the Wafd leadership, with Prime Ministers

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ L.M. Salim, p.34.

¹¹⁷ Wissa to Allenby, 24 November 1924, FO141/511/5, Allenby to Wissa, 3 June 1925, FO141/511/5, UKNA.

¹¹⁸ Wissa, *Assiout: The Saga of an Egyptian Family*, p. 423; 'The Women's Movement in Egypt, Manchester Guardian', 30 June 1926 in Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

Nahhas and Sidqi's lack of support for women's suffrage, particularly Sidqi's attacks on gender mixing and women's presence at universities. However, after leaving the WWCC she did not really join forces with other feminists in pursuit of political rights but chose to focus on social welfare activities. Wissa's political and feminist approach differed from Sha'rawi's. Their different choices were shaped by their particular situations, which affected their bargaining power within the Wafd. Unlike Wissa, Sha'rawi's husband's relationship with Sa'ad Zaghlul deteriorated in 1921. Their disagreement made the situation awkward for Huda, who demonstrated her diplomatic skills, welcoming Zaghlul back on his return in April 1921, while remaining loyal to her husband.¹²⁰ Yet, in her memoirs she described how uncomfortable the situation made her.¹²¹ As a result, when Zaghlul disappointed the WWCC, it no longer made sense for her to maintain their political relationship, particularly when her personal situation made the bargain more costly. Thus, while the risks of bargaining with Wafdist men as head of the WWCC outweighed the potential benefits for Sha'rawi, the opposite could be said for Wissa. As such, Wissa preferred to maintain family loyalty and negotiate patriarchal bargains from within the Wafd, rather than join Sha'rawi in attempting to change the terms of the bargain through independent activity.

2.3 The Nation as 'Family'

A crucial concept of Egyptian nationalism and modern womanhood that was nevertheless shared by the EFU and the Wafd/WWCC was the importance of 'family' and 'motherhood' to the success of the new nation. Lisa Pollard has

¹²⁰ Sha'rawi, pp.123-124.

¹²¹ Ibid.

argued that in Egypt, as in other British colonies, the family was used as 'a yardstick by which Egyptian backwardness (or, by contrast, progress) was measured', and thus was used by Egyptian nationalists to demonstrate their readiness for independence.¹²² This was done through the construction of the bourgeois, monogamous, nuclear family, as the new Egyptian ideal. At the head of this family the leading male and female figure of the Wafd, Sa'ad Zaghlul and his wife Saffiya Zaghlul, came to represent the 'father' and 'mother' of this new Egyptian familial nation. Pollard has highlighted that central to this political family framework were 'good mothers of both sexes', emphasising that 'imagery of the domestic realm was not borrowed from Egyptian women by Egyptian men', as masculinity in Egypt under British occupation also meant 'displaying a kind of maternalism'.¹²³ Modern Egyptian 'motherhood' became a crucial notion that was used to illustrate Egypt's modernity or readiness for independence.

Sa'ad Zaghlul's wife, Saffiya Fahmy, who hailed from the old Turkish aristocracy, played a key role in supporting and realising her husband's goals along with other members of the WWCC. A telegram from the Edinburgh Egyptian Society to Saffiya acknowledged her importance as a female figure and celebrated her nationalist role as 'mother of the Egyptian people': 'We greet in your noble person the heroic representative of Egyptian womanhood and the devoted mother of the Egyptian people assuring you of the full support of your loyal sons'.¹²⁴ A note from the High Commissioner's Office stated that Saffiya had received other similar messages from Egyptian societies in England.¹²⁵ Her

¹²² Pollard, The family politics of colonizing and liberating Egypt.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ High Commissioner of Egypt, 2 January 1922, 'Telegram from Edinburgh Egyptian Society to Madame Zaghlul', FO141/511/6, UKNA.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

power as a nationalist symbol was not lost on British officials who were wary of her activities. A document from the Ministry of the Interior, dated December 1921, addressed to the Commandant of Cairo City police, specifically instructed that 'Mme Zaghlul' be carefully watched.¹²⁶ By continuing to hold meetings at her house in her husband's absence she maintained his central position in the Wafd, turning their home into '*Bayt al-umma*' (The House of The Nation), which served to reaffirm the revolution within this family framework.¹²⁷

The 'House of the Nation' provided Egyptians with a symbolic and physical centre for their nationalist campaign, which along with the Zaghluls' roles as 'Mother and Father of the nation' gave the nationalist movement a sense of unity and structure. The support base Saffiya enjoyed as 'mother of the Egyptians' was evident during her 'send-offs' to visit Zaghlul in exile, where huge crowds would gather to express solidarity and support. These events were referred to in letters and telegrams between British Officials, revealing their anxiety over them, and the level of influence Saffiya enjoyed.¹²⁸ This was also well highlighted after Sa'ad Zaghlul's death, in a letter between Mr Henderson and Sir Austen Chamberlain discussing the issue of his possible successors.

Mme Zaghlul is showing activity, and has issued a manifesto to the people...The idea which is more widely held, of making Mme Zaghlul honorary president of the Wafd, is another proposal.¹²⁹

The letter demonstrates that the role of 'motherhood' was so key to the notion of Egyptian nationalism and independence, that the Wafd's male leaders considered portraying the party as Egypt's 'mother' through Saffiya, 'mother of

¹²⁶ Telegram from CF Ryder on behalf of Director General of Ministry of the Interior Cairo to Commandant of Cairo City Police, 25 December 1921, UKNA, FO141/511/6.

¹²⁷ Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt*, p. 138.

¹²⁸ The Appeal Letter of the leader's wife, 4 February 1922, FO141/511/6, UKNA.

¹²⁹ Telegram Mr Henderson to Sir Austen Chamberlain, 12 September 1927, FO141/511/6, UKNA.

the Egyptians', as their honorary president. While this supports Pollard's argument that the role of 'mother' was sometimes embodied by women and other times by men, it illustrates how 'women's privileged role as 'spiritual carriers of national culture' meant that women were used by men and women to validate political 'maternalism' during the revolution. Moreover, notions of 'motherhood' and the new monogamous bourgeois family were not only gendered constructs, but influenced by class associations as well, which helps explain why women of different classes produced different nationalist and women's rights discourses.

2.4 Class Differences Within The 'Family'

Looking at the activities of the Wafd and the WWCC it appears that different nationalist roles were associated with different classes of Egyptians, with Wafdist viewing themselves as the leaders and 'parent-figures' of other Egyptians. Pollard has argued that Wafdist elites targeted the middle-classes with cultural ideas of the reformed bourgeois family, and the modern educated mother in order 'to create a parental link' between the Wafd and the Egyptians'.¹³⁰ The Wafd party attempted to represent social diversity in Egypt by co-opting both Muslims and other religious denominations such as the Christian Copts. However, many Wafdist came from large landowning families, including leading Coptic women, Esther Fahmi Wissa and Regina Khayatt. Writers like Badran have argued that during the revolution 'class differences between women as feminists and nationalists were of little importance' as women from various backgrounds united in a common struggle for Egyptian

¹³⁰ Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation*, p. 168.

independence.¹³¹ Sha'rawi herself stressed that the nationalist movement was one that transcended class, age, gender, and religion, writing 'even personal hardship did not prevent more acts of revolt and strikes on the part of all classes'.¹³²

The British claimed our national movement was a revolt of the Muslim majority against religious minorities. This slander aroused the anger of the Copts and other religious groups. Egyptians showed their solidarity by meeting together in mosques, churches, and synagogues.¹³³

Yet, while Sha'rawi's memoirs support the notion that religious differences were irrelevant for women of similar upper class, land owning, Turko-Circassian or Coptic backgrounds, her account of the 1919 March demonstrations illustrates that roles and perceptions differed according to social/class backgrounds. The WWCC saw themselves as leaders and 'mother figures' of other nationalists, particularly men and women of the lower classes. Women like Sha'rawi and Wissa took a leadership role over other classes of women, by organising and leading such protests, and presenting themselves as the official voice of Egyptian women. On the 12 December 1919, these upper-class women drafted a letter to Lord Milner's Commission, on behalf of 'The Women of Egypt', declaring that if Britain did not give Egypt its independence, they would 'fight armless; our blood shall soak the soil of our fathers, and we shall die happy'.¹³⁴ Yet, whilst colonial authorities did not physically target elite women, they did often target women of the lower classes; Sha'rawi recalled how during the 1919 nationalist demonstrations 'the death of Shafiqah bint Muhammad, the first woman killed by

¹³¹ Badran, 'Competing Agenda: Feminists, Islam and the State in nineteenth-and twentieth-century Egypt', in *Global Feminisms since 1945: Rewriting Histories*, ed. Bonnie G. Smith, (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 22.

¹³² Sha'rawi, p.120.

¹³³ *Ibid*, p. 119.

¹³⁴ Hanna Fahmy Wissa, *Assiout: The Saga of an Egyptian Family* (Lewes, 1994), p. 420.

a British bullet, caused widespread grief...it became the focus of intense national mourning'.¹³⁵ Sha'rawi and her colleagues also began compiling records of the dead and wounded, among which five women were listed, 'Shafiqa bint Muhammad, Aisha bint Umar, Fahima Riyad, Hamida bint Khalil, and Najiyya Said Ismail', all from the lower working classes.¹³⁶ Upper class women's leadership and the different treatment women received at the hands of colonial authorities point to how both British officials and Egyptians maintained some existing class distinctions throughout the revolution.

Moreover, looking at the different centres and types of activity within the revolution, it becomes clear that class and gender positions affected both the roles, places, and activities male and female nationalists were associated with. For instance, Fahmy argues that during the revolution coffee shops and bars served as revolutionary centres where impromptu speeches and nationalistic songs were delivered and illicit circulars were distributed.¹³⁷ Mosques and churches played similar roles as centres of revolutionary activity, however, unlike cafes and bars, which were predominantly male spaces, they offered women, particularly those from more elite backgrounds, acceptable spaces to participate.¹³⁸ Thus, class and gender rules were not fully revised during the revolution, as certain spaces remained inappropriate for certain classes of Egyptian women, threatening their definitions of 'modesty'.

Furthermore, women's definitions of nationalism varied across different social and class backgrounds as well. Such variations were responsible for the development and articulation of multiple and different women's rights

¹³⁵ Sha'rawi, p. 118.

¹³⁶ Ibid, p.118.

¹³⁷ Ziad Fahmy, p. 145.

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 147.

discourses. For instance, women from lower, more religious, class backgrounds like Labiba Ahmed, and those from less westernised, often more Arabic-speaking, middle-class backgrounds like Nabawiya Musa, defined their nationalisms differently. While Ahmed participated in the WWCC March 1919 demonstrations, showing a convergence over nationalist goals, her social goals and women's rights discourse differed from the WWCC and EFU, as she emphasised a more Islamic model, preferring to ally her activities with Islamic groups like the Muslim Brotherhood.¹³⁹ Thus, while Ahmed supported Zaghlul and the Wafd, she never joined the WWCC but formed her own Islamic social welfare society instead, by the name of The Society of Egyptian Ladies' Awakening (*Jam'iyyat Nahdat al-Sayyidat al-Misriyyat*), also starting a journal by the name of *The Women's Awakening (al-Nahda al-Nisa'iyyah)*.¹⁴⁰

Some women's rights activists like Musa refused to participate in nationalist demonstrations altogether, arguing that education had a longer-term nationalist impact than public protest and agitation. Musa, who as discussed in chapter 1 was raised by her mother on her late father's military pension, was headmistress of the Wardiyan Women's Teacher's Training School in Alexandria at this time, and restrained the teachers and students in her school from participating in nationalist demonstrations.¹⁴¹ Musa's book 'Woman and Work', published in 1920, defended women's intellectual capabilities, their right to an education and a profession, reinforcing her definition of female education as the

¹³⁹ Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*, pp. 194, 198, 202-204.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 172, 190

¹⁴¹ Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, p. 38, 78-79.

highest form of nationalism.¹⁴² Ahmed, like Musa, focused on women's education, but did so along more conservative lines, arguing that a girl's ultimate duty was to be a mother, raise her children better by being better educated, especially with regards to religion, and running a household effectively.¹⁴³

As shown in the previous chapter, intellectual women's associations and literary salons, which preceded the revolution, incorporated women of different social, class, and religious backgrounds, like Sha'rawi, Ziyadah, Nasif and Musa. Consequently, women's rights discourses incorporated multiple ideas, roots, and differences, developing in response to changing dominant patriarchal discourses. Building on this, this section argues that while WWCC women organised public protests, boycotts, and riots to demonstrate their nationalism and bargain for improved political rights, educated women from non-elite, more modest middle or lower class backgrounds like Musa and Ahmed, defined and expressed their nationalism and gender-consciousness differently, stressing female education and work, and 'educated motherhood', respectively. While Ahmed's stress on 'educated motherhood' overlapped with Wafdist nationalist definitions, her emphasis on a central Islamic character/identity differentiated her and women like her from the WWCC and EFU. Women like Musa and Ahmed may have felt misrepresented by the largely French-speaking, land-owning elite Wafdist women, with their increasingly Europeanised manners, developing different nationalist identities and different women's rights discourses in response.

¹⁴² Nabawiyah Musa 'The Difference between Men and Women and their Capacities to Work in Woman and Work-1920', in Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke, *Opening the Gates: An Anthology of Arab Feminist Writing* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp. 263-269.

¹⁴³ Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*, p. 201.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that women in Egypt and Iran linked the earlier arguments of 19th century modernists (discussed in chapter 1), with growing nationalist discourse in the 20th century to challenge patriarchal limits on women's political and public activity. In both countries men supported female participation within anti-colonial contexts, but were more restrictive in allowing women political space when it came to drafting internal policies and domestic politics. Men's support for women in anti-colonial struggles centred around notions of women as cultural carriers and symbols of national/cultural purity. Egyptian women were able to use nationalist discourse and these ideas of educated motherhood to challenge patriarchal practices such as polygamy and domestic seclusion. However, they faced greater challenges in negotiating political spaces for themselves as women's political activity conflicted with Wafdist definitions of Egyptian womanhood as educated mothers, whose primary responsibilities were to their children and husbands. These patriarchal challenges encouraged women like Sha'rawi and members of the EFU to take more independent action. Iranian women were able to stress similar notions of modern motherhood through their growing women's journals, their philanthropic activity, and their establishment of private girls schools to slowly challenge patriarchal limits on female education and public activity, often against serious clerical backlash. Women of similar social backgrounds did not necessarily follow the same patriarchal bargaining strategies as each other. As such, while women often sought and upheld their roles as 'cultural carriers' and protectors of the 'spiritual nation', they did so in different ways according to their different social backgrounds and ideological differences.

Chapter 3

Changing Bargains: From Nationalism to Internationalism in Egypt, and Independent Activity to State feminism in Iran (1920s-1940s)

The previous chapter showed how modern nationalism catalysed women's rights activism, but that the unwillingness of male nationalists to incorporate women in national decision-making processes prompted some women to pursue independent, organised activity. This chapter looks at the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) and women's rights activism in Iran between the 1920s and 1940s and is divided into 3 sections. It relies on documents from the personal collection of leading women in Iran and Egypt, namely Dowlatabadi and Sha'rawi, held at the International Institute of Social History Archives in Amsterdam, and the American University in Cairo Archives, respectively. These documents are used in conjunction with historical reports of the IAW conferences, held at The Women's Library Archives in London, along with memoirs of key political actors, and feminist journal publications of the period.

Following the Constitutional Revolution, women in Iran continued to focus on female education and journalism, often facing extreme opposition from religious conservatives. They began to advocate broader equal rights as well as initiate discussions and critique of the veil through these publications. Women in Egypt re-grouped more strongly under the banner of the EFU, and pushed on more independently with their campaigns. In both cases the need to reach out to international feminist organisations became important. The mid 1930s became a key period for women in both countries, with Reza Shah launching his Woman's Awakening Project and his controversial veiling ban in 1936, and the

EFU adopting the cause of Palestinian women's organisations following the 1936 Arab Revolt in Mandatory Palestine, which saw them emerge as regional feminist leaders.

Writers like Eliz Sanasarian and Mansoureh Ettehadieh have argued that the rise of Reza Shah in 1925 spelled the end of an 'independent' or 'spontaneous' Iranian women's movement, and that state co-optation of the movement meant that from that point onwards, women's rights changes were 'ordered from above'.¹ Building on Geraldine Heng's theory that feminism under state control adapts to persist in different or less visible ways², this chapter argues, in contrast to Sanasarian and Ettehadieh, that co-optation was a two-way process between men and women, and thus a form of patriarchal bargaining where Iranian women's rights activists asserted their own agency by choosing to adapt their 'gradual change approach' for what they viewed had become the better patriarchal bargain; more revolutionary change as part of Reza Shah's Women's Awakening Project.

Similarly to their Iranian counterparts, the EFU stressed areas of collaboration and overlap, particularly over notions of educated motherhood, in order to co-opt the support of leading male modernists and nationalists to improve their bargaining leverage. At the same time they continued to push patriarchal limits on women's education by promoting women's higher education and travel abroad.

In the second section it is argued that both Iranian and Egyptian women's rights activists improved their bargaining leverage by taking part in feminist

¹ Mansoureh Ettehadieh, 'The Origins and Development of the Women's Movement in Iran', in *Women in Iran from 1800 to the Islamic Republic*, ed. Lois Beck and Guity Nashat (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2004), p. 95; Sanasarian, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran*, p. 68.

² Heng, 'A Great Way to Fly', p. 30.

activities abroad. By representing their countries at international feminist and women's conferences, they expanded their network and support base, and demonstrated to male leaders their potential as contributors to international relations. The EFU in particular, by presenting itself as a forum for cultural exchange between 'East and West' and defining itself as a national and social necessity, indicated its potential as a player in both Egyptian foreign and domestic policy.

The final section of this chapter looks at the EFU's activities and changing strategies in response to the growing Palestinian-Zionist conflict, and the breakdown of its relationship with the IAW. Mariscotti argues that during Palestinian-Zionist upheavals, ruling-class women diverted their attention away from internal political conflicts in Egypt and moved toward a broader alliance with women in the Arab world.³ Badran argues that regional Arab feminism was institutionalised from 'coalescence in solidarity around a nationalist cause, the Palestinian cause', and that 'Arab feminism was also partly born out of the limitations of international feminism'.⁴ The EFU's sense of unity with Palestinian female activists was based on a sense of shared gender and regional identity as Arab and Muslim women. This promoted the articulation of the Palestinian struggle as one of 'Islam' and 'Arab nationhood' against British Imperialism. This chapter once again posits that female participation in anti-imperialist movements offered men a visible way to assert the nation's cultural identity against imperialist-western domination, which explains their active support for the EFU's political contributions in the context of the Palestinian-Zionist conflict.

³ Cathlyn Mariscotti, *Gender and Class in the Egyptian Women's Movement 1925-1939: Changing Perspectives* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008), p. 80.

⁴ Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, p. 238.

The chapter argues that as Arab-nationalist sentiment rose in response to an anti-colonial, anti-Zionist resistance, a dichotomy was drawn between 'Eastern and Western' feminism over changing notions of cultural authenticity and national identity, which positioned western feminism in opposition to 'Eastern feminism'. As such, the EFU's move towards a regional-Arab alliance over an international or perceived 'western' alliance became the better-perceived bargain at this point in time.

The content of these bargains reinforced women's domestic roles as educated mothers, national mothers, and as protectors or symbols of national culture, roles women themselves sought and expanded during this political crisis to concern the wider Arab region, and 'Arab culture'. This chapter shows how women themselves emphasised their domestic-maternal roles as educated national mothers, their role as protectors of the spiritual nation, and their capabilities as independent political players, indicating to nationalist men they saw no contradiction in these multiple roles.

Section 1: Bargains of Co-optation

This section argues, that both men and women used co-optation strategies in an attempt to get their goals realised. Some writers have argued that the enforced state co-optation of the Iranian women's movement put an end to the 'independent women's movement'.⁵ In contrast, this chapter argues that while women's groups who did not cooperate with the regime were effectively stamped out, co-opted female rights activists chose to change their independent

⁵ Ettehediah, p. 95; Sanasarian, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran*, p. 68.

gradual change approach for what they viewed as a better patriarchal bargain at that point in time; working with modernist statesmen like Reza Shah to initiate greater change and to fulfil personal/professional goals. As such they stressed areas of overlap, such as definitions of educated motherhood. Similarly in Egypt, the independent EFU emphasised areas of cooperation, reaffirming Wafdist definitions of modern Egyptian womanhood, as educated wives and mothers, capable of rearing a stronger generation of Egyptian nationalists, whilst simultaneously pushing patriarchal limits on women's education by promoting women's higher education and travel abroad.

1.1 Women's 'Emancipation' and State Co-optation in Iran

The period directly following the 1906-1911 Iranian Constitutional Revolution and the 1919-1922 Egyptian Revolution saw Iranian and Egyptian women pushing forward with independent feminist activity. Women's rights activities in Iran at this point were taking place without governmental support, and were restricted to a narrow spectrum of educated female constitutionalists, philanthropists, journalists, and female educators who had begun schools for girls during this period. The 1917 October Revolution in Russia promoted the rise of liberation movements in the northern provinces in Iran, and ultimately the formation of The Communist Party of Iran in 1920. It also encouraged the formation of more Iranian women's groups and women's publications.⁶ By 1918, the Iranian government was starting to show some interest in women's education, helping to fund the establishment of ten primary schools for girls, The Women's Teacher Training College, and a Department of Public Instruction for

⁶ Farah Azari, *Women of Iran: The Conflict with Fundamentalist Islam* (London: Ithaca, 1983), p. 95.

Women.⁷ By 1924, the Ministry of Education was showing greater interest in The Women's Teacher Training College, employing Mme Helene Hess as its next head to introduce the teaching of domestic science, child psychology, and better teaching methods.⁸ Badr ol-Moluk Bamdad, was one of the first group of students admitted to the Women's Teacher Training College in 1918, and was by this point working there as a supervisor and translator. She translated Mme Hess's notes to put together the very first Persian book on domestic science.⁹ She was unable to get the book printed, however, until Reza Shah/Reza Khan Sardar-i-Sepah, who was Prime Minister and War Minister at the time, approved the book 's publication via the Army press in 1925.¹⁰

Bamdad combined her educational work and teaching with journalism, writing articles for various periodical and liberal papers such as *Iranshar*, *Ferangestan* and *Gole Zard*.¹¹ She argued that the publication of early female journals such as Sedigheh Dowlatabadi's *Zaban-i-Zanan*, Mohataram Eskandari's Patriotic Women's League periodical *Nesvan-i-Vantakhah*, and *Zan-i-Emruz*, for which she worked as editor,¹² all constituted the essential efforts of a small group of pioneers who 'gradually prepared the future upsurge of Iran's women-ready to step forward and quickly occupy worthy positions in society'.¹³ The Patriotic Women's League had been established as an organisation by 1922 in

⁷ Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, p.58.

⁸ Ibid, p.60.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid, Preface.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid, p. 66.

¹³ Ibid, p. 68.

Tehran and had voluntarily undertaken the teaching of hygiene, childcare and household management to women.¹⁴

Dowlatabadi similarly focused on education and journalism, slowly becoming known to international feminists abroad. In 1919, Dowlatabadi's magazine *Zaban-i-Zanan* was making strong political statements, for which she was soon attacked. She published her opinions on the parliamentary elections, the question of the Northern oil agreement and the 1919 Anglo-Iranian agreement, which she condemned as a 'sell-out' and a total compromise of the country's national and economic independence.¹⁵ In 1921, she gave a speech about the purchase of government stocks, which was incorporated into one of her magazine's many articles, and resulted in an angry mob of men gathering in protest, an incident she accused the British Consular General of Isfahan of helping to organise.¹⁶

Women like Bamdad and Dowlatabadi, were following the line of earlier educators and writers like Bibi Astarabadi, defining 'emancipation' as education, and combining strategies of compromise and resistance towards dominant patriarchal discourses of the period. The case of Bamdad's book on domestic science shows how state co-optation was a two-way process, which incorporated mutual cooperation and compromise between female activists and state actors like Reza Shah to strike new patriarchal bargains in an effort to create mutually beneficial results. Bamdad was able to print her book as a result of state support, which made it accessible to a wider number of Iranian women, which in turn promoted the modernisation agenda of Reza Shah. The stress on domestic

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 56-58.

¹⁵ 'Speech Given by Dowlatabadi on the Purchase of Stocks and Shares Issued by the Government', 1921, Dowlatabadi Collection, IISHA.

¹⁶ Ibid.

science and educated motherhood complemented the ideas of male modernists and leaders like Reza Shah, who supported the idea of educated women who would then biologically and culturally reproduce a new generation of modern, Iranian nationalists. Yet, some women were simultaneously challenging patriarchal limits by raising their political voices in their educational and journalistic spaces, to test and push these patriarchal definitions in an effort to negotiate greater rights and roles for themselves.

1.2 Reza Shah's Women's Awakening Project

Reza Shah was officially brought to power after overthrowing the Qajar dynasty through a coup d'état in 1925. Ashraf Pahlavi discussed her father's admiration for the reformist Turkish leader Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, and explained that watching 'a military man like himself...create a new nation out of a ruined country', inspired many of his own modernisation ideas.¹⁷ Reza Shah followed Ataturk's strategy of suppressing independent social and cultural organisations that had survived from the earlier constitutional era.¹⁸ As a result, a new period of repression resulted in the stamping out of most independent women's groups. Between 1927-1929 Reza Shah launched many major legislative reforms, such as census registration, conscription, the reorganisation of the judicial system along secular lines, the beginning of the trans-Iranian railway, and the passing of the Uniform Dress law.¹⁹ Similarly to Ataturk, he put into place new policies and legal changes affecting women in an attempt to modernise them as part of his broader national modernisation campaign.

¹⁷ Ashraf Pahlavi, *Faces in a Mirror: Memoirs from Exile* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1980), pp. 8, 23.

¹⁸ Stephanie Cronin, *Soldiers, Shahs and Subalterns in Iran: Opposition, Protest and Revolt, 1921-1941* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 22.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 161.

Female education was one of his main areas of focus, illustrated by the upsurge of girls' schools, and the *Majlis* approved laws of 1934 for the establishment of teacher training colleges.²⁰ This allowed some women to conduct their educational and journalistic activities more freely, particularly when they complemented the policies of the regime. Therefore, while some women like Bibi Astarabadi's niece, Afzal Vaziri, struggled to print articles in newspapers of the day²¹, others like Fakhr Afagh Parsa, who had been a member of the Patriotic Women's League but whose magazine had been closed down by the Qajari government censor, was able to return from exile and to launch a new magazine, *Alam-i-Nesavan* (Women's World) supporting similar ideas of female education and modernisation.²²

Another area that saw important change was marriage law. While Reza Shah did not abolish polygamy he did make small reforms in marriage and divorce laws; replacing religious courts with civil courts, demanding that marriage contracts be registered with the Ministry of Justice, and making it possible for women to insert extra conditions into their marriage contracts, such as the right to divorce their husbands if they were to marry another woman.²³ The Iranian state under Reza Shah sought to co-opt the budding women's rights movement as the latter's core education campaign complemented and reinforced the regime's modernisation agenda based on Ataturk's model in Turkey. However, this section argues that women equally took advantage of new opportunities to better achieve their socio-political goals.

²⁰ Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, pp. 56-58.

²¹ Letters between Afzal Vaziri and *Shafaq Sorkh* editor, in Afzal Vaziri, p. 92.

²² Bamdad, *Zan-i-Irani*, p. 58.

²³ Sanasarian, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran*, p. 61.

Responding to the increasing repression, and restrictions on independent activity, they altered their independent, 'gradual change' activism, for more radical change, launched and supported by the state. For example, in 1932 the Patriotic Women's League of Iran hosted the Oriental Women's Congress in Tehran (Second Congress of Eastern Women), chaired by Sedigheh Dowlatabadi.²⁴ They reached out to regional women's rights activists from Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, and India among other nations. Rosalie Slaughter Morton's account of the Congress highlighted the role of the Shah's eldest daughter, Shams Pahlavi, as president of the Congress.²⁵ She wrote that the list of progressive decisions that the participants put together was a 'testament to their vision and common sense'.²⁶ Among the resolutions adopted at the Congress were the right to vote and, once qualified, be elected to office, compulsory education, equal pay for equal work, educational training for adult women, government funded kindergartens, playgrounds and educational cinemas...improving the morals of men...the outlawing of polygamy, the prohibition of alcohol and narcotics, and the organising of a feminine police force to examine public health and sanitary conditions.²⁷

In 1935, a number of women came together under the orders of Reza Shah to form the organisation *Kanoun Banovan* (Ladies' Centre).²⁸ As a founding member, Bamdad recorded the occasion as a 'historic event', which took place at the Women's Teacher Training College.²⁹ She explained that the centre was

²⁴ Bamdad, *Zan-i-Irani*, p. 60.

²⁵ Rosalie Slaughter Morton, *A Doctor's Holiday in Iran* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1940), p. 311.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Bamdad, *Zan-i-Irani*, p. 89.

²⁹ Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, p. 93.

instituted under the honorary presidency of Princess Shams Pahlavi and the patronage and supervision of the Ministry of Education. The statues and objectives of the organisation centred on women's intellectual and domestic education.³⁰

To provide adult women with mental and moral education, and with instruction in housekeeping and child rearing on a scientific basis, by means of lectures, publications, adult classes...to promote physical training through appropriate sports...to create charitable institutions for the support of indigent mothers and children.³¹

The statues also stressed the promotion of Iranian production and use of Iranian consumer goods.³² The organisation's emphasis on modern and domestic education complemented the efforts of earlier 'gradual change' activists like Astarabadi, and pioneering female educators of the constitutional period who had negotiated greater educational rights on the basis of improving their mothering and teaching abilities in service to the nation.

However, Reza Shah's visit to Turkey in 1934 catalysed the enforcement of more controversial laws such as the 1936 Unveiling Decree or *Kashf-i-Hejab*, part of Reza Shah's state feminism project *Nazhat-i-Banovan* (Woman's Awakening). Early 19th century reformists such as Kermani had argued that the veil 'deafened and blinded' Iranian women,³³ and some discussion of women's unveiling and its advantages had taken place in press articles, particularly women's journals, such as Dowlatabadi's, prior to Reza Shah's accession to the throne in 1925. However, it was Reza Shah's ban on veiling, which caused the greatest controversy and outrage across the majority of Iran's population. Unlike female activists' gradual change approach to unveiling (see chapter 2),

³⁰ Bamdad, *Zan-i-Irani*, p. 89.

³¹ Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, p. 93.

³² Bamdad, *Zan-i-Irani*, p. 89.

³³ Paidar, p. 47.

Reza Shah's ban on veiling pushed existing patriarchal bargains with conservative men too far, which resulted in an immediate religious backlash following his forced abdication.

As an executive member of the *Kanoun Banovan*, Bamdad stressed the organisation's key role in both initiating and promoting abandonment of the veil.³⁴ She explained how eight months after the organisation's formation, a big education function was held in the Shah's presence with the express command that all women teachers in the capital attend without veils.³⁵ Bamdad recalled 'the looks of astonished disbelief on the faces of the men in the streets and the crowds lining the royal route when they saw some schoolmistresses walking by unveiled'.³⁶ The Shah chose the graduation ceremony of the Teacher's College to officially declare his unveiling policy on the 8th of January 1936, with his wife and daughter in attendance, and both completely unveiled for the first time. Bamdad described the reaction:

some of the elderly ladies among them, however, were visibly so upset by the loss of facial cover that they stood almost the whole time, looking at the wall and perspiring with embarrassment.³⁷

The Shah's daughter, Ashraf Pahlavi, also gave an account of the event in her memoirs, arguing,

My father knew that he could build schools and create employment opportunities for women but he also knew that these measures would be useless unless women were pushed out of their cloistered environment.³⁸

She wrote that the decree was another example of the paradox that was her father; that he would be willing to present his wife and daughters to the public

³⁴ Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, p. 94-95.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 95.

³⁶ *Ibid*.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 96.

³⁸ Ashraf Pahlavi, p. 25.

unveiled, yet was unwilling to relax strict control over them at home.³⁹ Ashraf viewed this as proof that he was willing to put his own feelings aside for the sake of modernisation. The contradiction she exposed suggests that Reza Shah's need for Iran to achieve modernity, or the appearance of it, allowed him to justify controversial changes to himself, such as women's unveiling.⁴⁰ In her writing Bamdad described Reza Shah's unveiling policy as 'The Great Decree'⁴¹ and credited him with laying 'the foundation of women's rights and freedom in Iran' with the reforms he initiated in the 1930s.⁴²

Bamdad and Dowlatabadi were amongst many prominent Iranian feminists who were successfully co-opted by the state, and rewarded in return. Dowlatabadi's papers reaffirmed that *Kanoun Banovan* meetings always took place in the presence of Reza Shah's daughters, and were thus strictly monitored.⁴³ Therefore, while women like Bamdad and Dowlatabadi played key roles in the *Kanoun Banovan*, they were aware that the centre's main purpose was to support and reinforce the regime's policies on women, such as the 1936 Unveiling Decree, in line with the regime's broader modernisation agenda. However, Reza Shah's state feminism project, *Nazhat-i-Banovan* (Woman's Awakening/Movement), offered employment opportunities and education for women in exchange for the abandonment of their veils in public.⁴⁴ Bamdad for instance, in 1936 became one of the first group of women admitted to Tehran University, and by 1940 was appointed principal of the Women's Teacher

³⁹ Ibid, p. 23.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 25

⁴¹ Bamdad, *Zan-i-Irani*, 94.

⁴² Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, p. 55.

⁴³ Statutes of organisation *Kanoun Banovan* 1935, Dowlatabadi Collection, IISHA.

⁴⁴ Camron Michael Amin, *The Making of the Modern Iranian Woman: Gender, State Policy, and Popular Culture, 1865-1946* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), p. 1.

Training College.⁴⁵ However, she also mentions the poetess Parvin Etesami's departure from the organisation, but gives no reason for this other than 'her sensitive nature'.⁴⁶ The statutes of the organisation, which were published in 1935 as 'educational, cultural, and social work', complemented the earlier campaigns of pioneering female activists and women's rights advocates of the constitutional era.⁴⁷

This chapter argues, that while some women like Parvin Etesami chose not to remain in the *Kanoun Banovan*, state co-optation of the Iranian women's movement should be viewed as a form of patriarchal bargaining, and an active decision on the part of some Iranian women to alter their independent 'gradual change' approach for what they saw as a more effective strategy of working with a modernising state to initiate more revolutionary changes, for greater short term gain and professional reward. In the next chapter, the effects of Reza Shah's policies on different classes of Iranian women will be assessed to shed light on changing definitions of cultural authenticity amidst growing anti-westernisation sentiment.

1.3 The Egyptian Feminist Union and Women's Higher Education

After Britain's recognition of Egyptian independence in 1922, some female nationalists and activists attempted to break away from the patriarchal limits and framework of the Wafd by leaving the WWCC to form the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) in 1923. Describing the double standards and disappointments felt at the hands of male-nationalists, founding EFU member Ceza Nabarawi wrote in

⁴⁵ Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, p. 55

⁴⁶ Bamdad, *Zan-i-Irani*, p. 54.

⁴⁷ Statutes of organisation *Kanoun Banovan* 1935, Dowlatabadi Collection, IISHA.

1925: 'A Double Standard!' This will always exist as long as men rule!'⁴⁸

Women's rights activists were becoming increasingly aware of the limits of male nationalist definitions of modern Egyptian womanhood, particularly with regards to influence over domestic policy, and were seeking new ways to negotiate around these definitions and assert their own.

At the same time, they were careful not to alienate male nationalists, emphasising cooperation over overlapping ideas, such as notions of educated motherhood, in an attempt improve their bargaining positions by co-opting the support of male modernists and elite men. For instance, the February 1929 issue of the EFU's journal, *L'Egyptienne*, celebrated its 4th anniversary with a message from EFU president Sha'rawi, reiterating the importance of 'collaboration' with men.

The realisation of two of the EFU'S great vows...First the formation of a close collaboration between men and women by adding to our panel a committee of eminent men...Experience has shown that collaborating with men with regards to general questions has never prevented women from fulfilling their duties in the home, but rather helps them better understand their responsibilities as wives and mothers.⁴⁹

The statement above reaffirmed women's nationalist roles in line with Wafdist constructs of womanhood and the modern nuclear family, as educated wives and mothers, capable of rearing a better, more modern, and educated generation of Egyptian nationalists.

Yet, EFU feminists also attempted to push patriarchal limits on women's education by challenging conservative attitudes on women's higher education, co-education, and veiling. Women's political activity also continued with protests against the repressive regime of Ismail Sidqi between 1930 and 1933.

⁴⁸ Saiza Nabarawi, 'Double Standard', written in 1925, in *Opening the Gates*, p. 280.

⁴⁹ *L'Egyptienne*, February 1929 issue, p. 3, 19, Sha'rawi Collection, American University of Cairo Archives (AUCA).

The 1923 Constitution was suspended and only reinstated in 1935⁵⁰ after mass demonstrations against the Sidqi regime, which Egyptians viewed as a corrupt government propped up by the British.⁵¹ Latifa Salim writes that pictures of women's protests and their encounters with police during these demonstrations were released to enthuse the population. Most of the young women were students who sent telegrams to the press announcing their protests as expressions of their nationalist feelings, and describing their treatment at the hands of police.⁵² In 1932, Nabarawi, editor of *l'Egyptienne*, wrote,

Based on the atmosphere of regression that reigns within official circles we have been reading for some time in the press the most absurd articles regarding the use of the veil, the dangers of superior education and co-education...⁵³

In the same October 1932 issue of *l'Egyptienne*, Nabarawi wrote an article about young female students who had studied abroad, citing the examples of future women's rights activist Doria Shafiq, and future deputy Minister of Education Karima al-Said, to illustrate the benefits of higher education and education abroad for women.

Some of the female students sent on missions in Europe are back with a halo of successes, equipped with higher degrees and full of faith for the future. I met two of them on the beach at Stanley Bay, Miss Doria Shafiq, who passed so brilliantly her degree of education at the Sorbonne, and Miss Karime El Said, who obtained a diploma with honours in History from the University of Westfield.⁵⁴

The words of these two young women so impressed Nabarawi that she declared,

I wanted the detractors of women's emancipation to be present during this conversation, to see how higher education far from diverting a

⁵⁰ al-Subki, p. 57-58.

⁵¹ Katerina Dalacoura, *Islam, Liberalism and Human rights*, (London: I.B. Tauris & Co, 2007), p. 100; Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *A Short History of Modern Egypt*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 88.

⁵² L.M. Salim, pp. 38- 42.

⁵³ Nabarawi, *l'Egyptienne*, October 1932 issue, p. 6; Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

woman away from her natural duties, widens the horizon of her knowledge...is this not for our beloved country the prelude of a new era? Educators and mothers of the future, it is to our young girls/daughters that the responsibility of the mission is given to instil in our children a love of freedom, independence, which alone makes nations strong and individuals worthy of respect.⁵⁵

In this passage, Nabarawi can be seen using modern notions of educated motherhood, and male nationalist definitions of women's domestic and nationalist responsibilities as educators, to extend the acceptable terms of this patriarchal bargain to include 'higher university education' and education abroad.

Section 2: Expanding Networks and Bargains: International Feminism

This section argues that both Egyptian and Iranian women reached out to international feminists, particularly the IAW, in an effort to strengthen their own negotiating positions vis-à-vis men, by showing them that they could influence international spaces and positively contribute to foreign and domestic policies at home. The EFU in particular, by presenting itself and its journal *l'Egyptienne* as a cultural exchange forum, representing 'eastern' ideas and interests abroad while promoting the most 'noble' 'western' ideas at home, and defining itself as a national and social necessity, highlighted its potential as a contributor to both Egyptian foreign and domestic policy

2.1 Egypt and The International Alliance of Women during the 1920s.

From its inception, the EFU sought to expand its support network by joining the International Woman Suffrage Alliance Congress in Rome (later known as the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal citizenship, or IAW). The

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Egyptian delegates listed that year were Huda Sha'rawi, Nabawiya Musa and Ceza Nabarawi.⁵⁶ Musa was selected to present the subject of women's emancipation in Egypt during the conference, where she declared 'there exists no law in Egypt, either secular or religious to check the complete emancipation of the Egyptian woman'.⁵⁷ She went on to discuss the effects of foreign interference in Egypt as well as the beginnings of modernisation under the 'Great Mohammad Ali', highlighting the names of Egypt's first female thinkers such as Aisha al-Taymurriyah, Zaynab Fawwaz, and the Saniyah School For Girls. She stated that although their numbers were originally limited, pioneering women had taken key steps towards 'emancipation', and that they had taken part in nationalist demonstrations.⁵⁸ She argued that nationalist activities went hand in hand with the need for female education and the development of a feminist press.⁵⁹ Defining 'education' as the path to emancipation and greater liberation, she added,

The Egyptian woman must unceasingly work in view of obtaining her admission in the superior schools of Egypt, the same as a man...If the Egyptian woman prevails in this great aim, she will be able to claim other advantages, still more precious, such as universal suffrage.⁶⁰

By the time of the next IAW conference in 1926 the EFU had already launched its journal *l'Egyptienne*. While the French-language publication restricted its readership in Egypt to the French-speaking classes, it facilitated networking and communicating with international feminists and activists. The February 1926 issue of *L'Egyptienne* celebrated their international network and

⁵⁶ Report of the 9th IAW Congress in Rome, 1923, IAW Collection, Women's Library Archives (WLA).

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 169.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 171.

⁶⁰ Ibid, pp. 170-171.

the many correspondences they had received, closing with a pledge to courageously continue on the path for emancipation, and reiterating *l'Egyptienne's* confidence in the future.⁶¹

Sha'rawi, Nabarawi and Fekria Hosni, the director of the Abbas School for Girls in Cairo, were the official delegates at the October 1926 conference.⁶² As president of the EFU Sha'rawi delivered a speech in French during the proceedings, discussing their efforts and obstacles in pursuing suffrage, campaigning for changes to family law, and improving their professional rights.⁶³ She explained that progressive changes were being made with regard to family law and marriage legislation, with the minimum marriage age being raised to 16 for women and 18 for men.⁶⁴ She went on to explain that the EFU was focused on claiming child custody rights for mothers in the interest of children after a divorce, and engaged in generally improving women's divorce rights in the country. She ended her speech by discussing the professional gains Egyptian women were making, declaring that the Egyptian government had sent numerous female students for study overseas that very year, and that in public offices, women were receiving the same treatment as male employees.⁶⁵

A similar progress report on Egypt was also given by the EFU at the 11th IAW congress in Berlin in 1929, which included eight Egyptian delegates.⁶⁶ The EFU at this point proudly pointed to their expanding support base, which included many of Egypt's male intellectual and political elite, such as Professor Taha Hussein of Cairo University, who in 1950 became Minister of Education,

⁶¹ *L'Egyptienne*, Feb 1926 Issue, p.2, Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

⁶² List of Delegates-Report of the 10th IAW Congress in Paris, 1926, IAW Collection, WLA.

⁶³ *Ibid*, Rapport de la Presidente de l'Union Feministe Egyptienne, p. 211.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 211-212.

⁶⁶ 'Report of the 11th IAW Congress in Berlin', 1929, IAW Collection, WLA.

and government ministers who covered areas from hygiene and medicine to civil law.⁶⁷ At this point the EFU's executive committee was made up of twenty members, and its membership had risen to 250. The report highlighted 'new' and 'important' advances that had been made since 1926, and that the previous April, a law had been promulgated wherein a man could not repudiate his wife as easily, and where women could in certain cases demand a divorce as well.⁶⁸

Thus while the EFU co-operated with men at home to influence internal changes, it also attempted to increase its own international influence by presenting itself as an ambassador of the 'orient' and a 'propagandist' of western ideas at home. On the fourth anniversary of *l'Egyptienne*, Sha'rawi wrote,

Founded in 1925, two years after the formation of the EFU and the official collaboration between women of the East and West, it responded to an urgent necessity, as much national as social...Has she not become for Europe the faithful messenger of the Oriental soul, and for us 'Orientals', the dedicated propagandist of the West's most noble ideas.⁶⁹

IAW reports from 1923-1929 shed light on the EFU's bargaining strategies, and how women's approach to domestic policy had changed after their separation from the Wafd/WWCC. The EFU's focus on female education explains their choice of the pioneering female educator, Nabawiya Musa, as their speaker at the 1923 conference. Her message of 'education first' and equal educational opportunities with men, reinforced the EFU's attempts to both complement modernist notions of female education at the same time as challenge existing patriarchal limits or conservative views on Egyptian women's education. The 1926 report showed that EFU members were actively challenging and negotiating men's guardianship of domestic policy, to push for changes in family

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 387.

⁶⁸ Ibid, pp. 388-389.

⁶⁹ *L'Egyptienne*, February 1929 issue, p. 2, Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

law and gain government support for further education initiatives, such as study abroad. They applied a combined strategy of challenging conservative patriarchal views and improving their bargaining position by representing the Egyptian nation at international feminist conferences, whilst co-opting the support of modernist men over complimentary notions of modern Egyptian womanhood. The EFU thus promoted itself as a national and social necessity by presenting itself and its journal as a forum for cultural exchange between 'East and West'. By highlighting its ability to represent Egypt internationally, it made a case for itself as a contributor/player to both foreign and domestic policy at home.

2.2 Iran and The International Alliance of Women 1926, 1929

The 1926 IAW Paris conference saw the introduction of Iranian delegates for the first time. The Iranian entry listed the Union of Patriotic Women (Mohtaram Eskandari's Patriotic Women's League mentioned in the previous chapter), represented by Sedigheh Dowlatabadi, 'the leading Iranian feminist and editor of *Zaban-i-Zanan* women's magazine'.⁷⁰ Dowlatabadi's leading position amongst Iranian women's rights activists and her command of the French language resulting from her studies at the Sorbonne in 1922, made her a strong choice for the Paris conference.⁷¹ Two letters from the Patriotic Women's League requested Dowlatabadi to speak on their behalf in Paris, but to avoid bringing up any political issues.⁷² It appears that the strategy of Iranian women's rights activists at the time was to expand their network and thus improve their

⁷⁰ 'Report of the 10th IAW Congress in Paris', 1926, IAW Collection, WLA; Bammad, *From Darkness into Light*, pp. 77-80.

⁷¹ Bammad, *From Darkness into Light*, p. 80.

⁷² 'Two letters from 'Jamiyat-e-Nesvan Watankhah to Dowlatabadi', 28 Dec 1923 and 20 Jan 1924, Dowlatabadi Collection, IISHA.

bargaining position, but to do so subtly, without transgressing existing patriarchal boundaries set by male modernists and Reza Shah by being overtly political. The active participation of multiple Egyptian delegates at the conference in comparison to the relatively passive and singular Iranian presence was partly the result of the patriarchal context out of which female activists were operating at home, and their different negotiating positions.

Unlike their Egyptian counterparts, Iranian women's activities were largely disparate and decentralised. Moreover, Reza Shah's policy of suppressing independent activity and co-opting the women's movement meant that women's rights activists had to be careful not to act too independently and to uphold the patriarchal state's definitions of female behaviour, which limited their political activity. As a result, Iranian women made their presence known at international conferences without making blatant political statements.

By doing so, they subtly attracted the attention of international feminists during the IAW conference, such as American suffragist Mary Winsor, who wrote an article about Dowlatabadi in the magazine *Equal Rights*. *Equal Rights* informed its readers that the Persian government intended to make Dowlatabadi the inspector of girl's schools in Tehran, and was at the same time paying for her to complete her education in France.⁷³ Winsor expressed her satisfaction at Dowlatabadi becoming a Persian representative on their International Advisory Council and organising a Persian committee to keep international feminists informed about the progress of women in Iran.⁷⁴ Dowlatabadi went on after the

⁷³ Mary Winsor, The Blossoming of a Persian Feminist, *Equal Rights Magazine*, 23 October 1926, Dowlatabadi Collection, IISHA.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

IAW Paris conference to give another conference at 'Le Collège Féminin in July 1927 about Franco-Persian relations and the life of women in Persia.⁷⁵

The absence of an Iranian representative at the Berlin conference in 1929 was most likely linked to political developments in Iran. As mentioned earlier, Reza Shah initiated a serious crackdown on independent groups, and socialist parties in particular, when he came to power. Eskandari's Patriotic Women's League was associated with Iran's Socialist Party⁷⁶, which explains both its cautious political approach at the IAW in 1926, and its absence in 1929, when the crackdown was more seriously under way. By 1931 Reza Shah had declared all leftist and oppositionist parties illegal, disbanding Solayman Eskandari's (Mohtaram Eskandari's husband's) Socialist Party and banning The Communist Party.⁷⁷

Following on from hosting the Oriental Women's Congress in Tehran in 1932, Iranian women participated more actively at the 1935 IAW conference. This time the IAW congress report included information on the advances Iranian women had recently made, such as 'Article 12 of the Law of 7 September 1929', which provided that a Persian woman who married an alien/foreigner did not lose her nationality unless she chose to acquire her husband's instead'.⁷⁸ However, Iran's presence at the IAW conferences remained inconsistent until the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah. This reflected the difference in foreign policy between Reza Shah and his son. Reza Shah's attempts to diminish western interference in Iran compared to his son's active engagement with western

⁷⁵ 'Invitation from the Directors of Le Collège Féminin in Paris for Dowlatabadi to give a Speech on Franco-Persian Relations and the Life of Women in Persia', 20 July 1927, Dowlatabadi Collection, IISHA.

⁷⁶ Paidar, p. 95.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 101.

⁷⁸ 'Report of the 12th IAW Congress in Istanbul', 1935, p. 150, IAW Collection, WLA.

countries, helps explain the change in pattern; specifically the increased and more consistent presence of Iranian feminists at these conferences during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah compared to the period of his father's rule, as later chapters will illustrate.

Section 3: Alternative Bargains: EFU, Regional Feminism, and the IAW

It was argued in chapter 2 that men supported women's contribution to foreign affairs, specifically in the context of anti-imperialist movements, far more than their participation in domestic affairs and policy. As symbols of national culture or the 'spiritual quality of national culture',⁷⁹ this section contends that women's contribution to anti-imperialist movements offered men an effective way of asserting the nation's cultural identity against imperialist cultural hegemony. As a result, joining forces with other Arab feminists offered Egyptian women a better-perceived patriarchal bargain than their ongoing relationship with the IAW, which was beginning to threaten their position as a result of political developments in Palestine. As such, this chapter argues that this caused an important change of position for the EFU, where a more defined line was drawn between 'Eastern' and 'Western' feminism at this point over changing notions of cultural authenticity and national identity, which positioned 'Western feminism' in opposition to 'Eastern feminism' as a result of this wider anti-colonial struggle.

3.1 The EFU and the 'Arab Feminist Conference' of 1938

The EFU also solidified its regional network during this period. The May 1930 issue of *l'Egyptienne* included a three-page article covering 'The Feminist Congress in Beirut'.

⁷⁹ Chatterjee, p. 243.

A large convention was held last month in Beirut. Uniting women from the Arab world...it allowed hope for greater united participation in the future...Various important issues were discussed and put up to the vote such as: women's access to art schools, the abolition of licensed brothels...the question of universal peace was also raised.⁸⁰

The article explained that for the first time an official government representative and the Minister of Public instruction had inaugurated the congress, with many journalists in attendance.⁸¹ It also summarised that after a welcome address from the president of the congress, women representing Lebanon, Palestine and Egypt, gave speeches, receiving much applause.⁸² Ehsan Ahmed Al-Koussi, speaking on behalf of the EFU, declared that Egyptian women deeply appreciated and admired the success achieved by their colleagues despite the obstacles they were facing.⁸³ Egyptian feminists took the opportunity to stress the importance of regional affiliations in fighting male prejudice towards female, and thus national progress.

With the affiliation of Syria and Egypt to the International Alliance For Women's Suffrage it is probable that one of the international congresses of this organisation may one day be held in an Eastern country...on this subject I will say that the admission of Syria and Lebanon at the last IAW congress in Berlin was received with sympathy by all the delegates, especially the Eastern delegates.⁸⁴

The 1935 IAW conference in Istanbul saw the addition of more Arab feminists representing more nations, including a large 24-member delegation from Syria.⁸⁵ Sha'rawi used the opportunity to send Egyptian Prime Minister Tawfiq Nasim Pasha a letter on behalf of the EFU updating him on the resolutions agreed upon

⁸⁰ *L'Egyptienne*, 'Le Congrès Féministe de Beyrouth', May 1930 issue, p. 17, Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 18.

⁸² *Ibid*.

⁸³ *Ibid*.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 18-19.

⁸⁵ 'Report of the 12th IAW Congress in Istanbul', 1935, IAW Collection, WLA.

at the IAW Conference in Istanbul that April.⁸⁶ Show-casing her increasing clout in the international arena, Sha'rawi brought up the question of polygamy as well as equal political rights, writing: 'please, allow us to draw the attention of your Excellency especially to the resolutions related to the status of polygamy and the political rights of the woman'.⁸⁷ She framed her arguments in the context of foreign policy, arguing that polygamy spoiled the 'moral reputation' of Egypt in the international arena, and reiterated the EFU's 1926 request for its prohibition, excluding exceptional cases such as infertility, using religious arguments.

It contradicts with the law of life and the traditions of the age, and our religion is innocent in this issue, as the Holy Koran does not permit the same, except under conditions, which are now impossible to achieve.⁸⁸

On the question of equal political rights Sha'rawi continued, 'we assume the same quantity of duties and obligations assumed by men and surrender the same laws and provisions, so we must have, like men, the rights of representation and prosecution'.⁸⁹ While earlier female and male thinkers such as Malak Hifni Nasif and Qasim Amin had challenged social and religious justification for polygamy in a similar way, Sha'rawi added to this by challenging it on the grounds of Egypt's international relations. The EFU's confidence was increasing partly as a result of its international activities and its expanding regional/international network, which allowed it to extend earlier discourses on polygamy and veiling, to include greater political rights and roles for women, and to do so with a more powerful voice.

However, from 1936 onwards, serious strains began to develop between the IAW and their Arab affiliates over the growing Zionist-Palestinian conflict.

⁸⁶ 'Letter to Prime Minister Tawfiq Nasim Pasha', Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA, 1935.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Arab protests against increasing Jewish immigration came to a head with the Arab Revolt of 1936, making the EFU and its Arab counterparts question their relationship with the IAW, as they felt the latter were taking sides and demonstrating imperialist attitudes. Matiel Mogannam, a leader of the Palestinian woman's movement, wrote that on 26 October 1929 the Arab Women's Congress of Palestine was held for the first time, with two hundred Muslim and Christian delegates in attendance, in order to discuss the political unrest in the country.⁹⁰ These women had also started to reach out to international feminists. In April 1935 a delegation of Palestinian women was sent to the IAW conference in Istanbul, and by June 1936 Palestinian women had contacted Sha'rawi asking for help in their national struggle.⁹¹ In 1937 Matiel Mogannam wrote that Egypt could 'boast of many women writers and reformers who have won for themselves a worldwide reputation. Even in the political field these ladies have proved to be an invaluable asset to their country.'⁹² She argued that Sha'rawi had done a great deal for the Egyptian women's movement, and highlighted her election as vice president to the Board of the IAW at the 12th congress in Istanbul in 1935.⁹³

In 1936, Sha'rawi received 'an emotional letter from the Arab Ladies Committee of Jerusalem explaining the deteriorating situation of the Palestinians, and calling on Egyptian women to support them.'⁹⁴ Sha'rawi presented the appeal to the EFU who welcomed it and decided to convene a meeting to discuss the issue, where the following decisions were made:

⁹⁰ Matiel E.T. Mogannam, *The Arab Woman and the Palestine Problem* (London: Herbert Joseph, 1937), p. 70.

⁹¹ 'Report of the 12th IAW Congress in Istanbul', 1935, IAW Collection, WLA.

⁹² Mogannam, pp. 50-51.

⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 51.

⁹⁴ 'Eastern Women's Conference Summary Report', (1930-), Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

- 1-A committee of assembly members would be constituted to collect donations.
- 2-Protests would be executed against the Balfour Declaration
- 3-Letters of protest would be sent to the British Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Colonies of Britain, and the Speaker of the House of Commons.
- 4-International feminists and League of Nations would be urged to support the women of Palestine in their national struggle.⁹⁵

Sha'rawi sent a telegraph to the British Ministry of Foreign affairs and speaker of the House of Commons on 17 June 1936.

The Egyptian women express their ardent emotions towards their Palestinian friends and brothers during their time of fear and severe distress as a consequence of their current situation, which has made all the children of the Arab East lose trust in the British people.⁹⁶

In early 1937 a telegraph was sent to the EFU from the Acre Ladies Committee,

Oh neighbours of the sacred land, have you not heard the news of the catastrophe that has befallen our land; this catastrophe will remove a nation from existence...Oh Allah make Egypt get up from its long slumber to see the catastrophe.⁹⁷

Sha'rawi's response reiterated a sense of unity over the struggle, 'we are with you...we hope Britain will give up this policy which will put it in a position of enmity with Muslims and Islam'.⁹⁸

These correspondences illustrated how the EFU's sense of unity with Palestinian female activists was not only based on a sense of shared gender and national identity as Arab women, but also the sense of common Muslim identities. This helped articulate the Palestinian struggle as one of Islam and Arab nationhood against British imperialism, with Sha'rawi sending telegraphs to British officials, such Ambassador of Egypt Sir Miles Lampson, on behalf of

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid, Letter to British Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17 June 1936, within 'Eastern Women's Conference' Papers, Sha'rawi Collection, AUC Archives.

⁹⁷ 'Telegraph to Sha'rawi from Anissa al-Khadraa, President of the Acre Ladies Committee', 1937, Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA

⁹⁸ 'Telegraph to the Acre Ladies Committee from Sha'rawi and EFU', 1937, Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

Palestinian and Arab women.⁹⁹ The increasing tension with British officials and Europeans over the question of Palestine made interaction with the IAW increasingly difficult, especially as Arab feminists continued to encourage the EFU president to speak on their behalf.

The EFU's increasing influence as the representative voice of Arab, and specifically Palestinian, women over the political crisis allowed it to assert itself in Egypt more strongly. On 14 July 1937, Sha'rawi sent the two telegraphs with a letter to Mustafa Al Nahas Pasha, Head of the Egyptian Government, requesting him to take a position on the issue.

As Egypt can never be less than the other Arab nations in its feeling towards its neighbours, indeed when it is considered the leader of Arab countries...will you keep silent and neutral towards this flagrant act which hurts four hundred thousand Muslims in Palestine?¹⁰⁰

Sha'rawi also sent the Minister of Foreign Affairs Wasif Ghali Pasha a letter congratulating him on his defence of Palestine at the League of Nations, and received in response a letter from him expressing his deep gratitude and respect.¹⁰¹ The EFU thus used its growing political voice to both challenge male leaders' response to the crisis and cooperate with them to defend Palestinian interests.

By July 1937 Sha'rawi had received even more letters from Arab feminist organisations asking her to defend the Palestinian issue in their name before international audiences. She made the decision to host an 'Eastern Women's

⁹⁹ 'Letter to British Ambassador of Egypt Sir Miles Lampson from Sha'rawi', 1937; 'Letter from Acting Eastern Secretary Hamilton of the British Embassy to Sha'rawi', 17 July 1937, Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

¹⁰⁰ 'Letter to Prime Minister Mustafa Al Nahas Pasha from Sha'rawi', 1937, Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

¹⁰¹ 'Letter to and from Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wasif Ghali Pasha', (undated), Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

Conference for the Defence of Palestine' at the EFU headquarters in Cairo in October 1938.

We have decided to hold an Arab Feminist Conference to consider the painful situation which Palestine is suffering...in the name of humanity and justice, we urge all feminist societies and other societies to support us...and sending representatives to participate with us in this conference which we have decided to hold in Cairo from 15 October 1938.¹⁰²

The EFU explained that the goal of the conference was to explore the crucial issue of the Palestinian problem, specifically the Balfour Declaration, which the document stated was 'a breaking of the British promise made to the Arabs to protect its lands, by promising the Jews a national homeland in Palestine'.¹⁰³

The document went on to explain the position of Arab woman on the issue.

She thus began to act and participate with her men-folk in order to protect her homeland and the future of her children...and as a consequence women in different Arab countries formed secondary committees to defend the Palestinians, who stand in the face of the injustice created by the British and the Jews.¹⁰⁴

The stress on women as protectors, mothers, and nurturers of the nation shows how women often sought or reinforced these roles themselves, particularly during times of crisis, to demonstrate national strength and cultural unity. The EFU also used the conference to promote themselves with international press coverage, which included a Time Magazine article printed on the 18th of October 1938, 'describing how far Eastern women have come in terms of their political intelligence and social liberation'.¹⁰⁵ Sha'rawi also sent telegrams to Mr. Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, encouraging Britain to change its position, and support the Arabs, and sent copies of this telegraph to the British

¹⁰² 'Appeal written by Sha'rawi and EFU Calling on Women to Attend First Eastern (Arab) Feminist Conference', 4 September 1938, Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

¹⁰³ 'Eastern Women's Conference Summary Report', 1938, Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Embassy in Cairo.¹⁰⁶ Although a letter of response was sent back by the Eastern Secretary Mr. W.A. Smart, it did not engage in discussing, or even acknowledging the Palestinian situation.¹⁰⁷

Sha'rawi took the opportunity of the Eastern Conference to position and present the EFU as leaders of a broader regional/Arab women's movement. On 12 October 1938, Sha'rawi circulated the following message to members of the EFU and other female activists, in anticipation of the arrival of the conference participants.

They departed from their countries, left their children, husbands and work, and bore the hardship of travel...to participate with their Egyptian sisters in the Eastern Women's Conference to be held at the house of the Egyptian Feminist Union in Cairo, on the 15th of October to discuss the issue of Palestine...I hope that each Egyptian woman, who hears our call to attend the conference, considers such a call as an invitation for her.¹⁰⁸

The circular reaffirmed women's roles as wives and mothers, and the sacrifices they had made leaving their households as part of their nationalist/regional duty towards Palestine as Arabs, Muslims, and women. The circular emphasised women's domestic roles, their role as protectors of the cultural/spiritual nation, and their capabilities as active political players, indicating to nationalist men they saw no contradiction in these multiple roles.

3.2 Bargains of Authenticity: The Breakdown of EFU-IAW Ties

Rising tensions over British/European attitudes towards the question of Palestine catalysed a breakdown in the EFU's relationship with the IAW. The attitude of the IAW regarding the Arab Revolt of 1936 and the intensifying conflict highlighted, in the view of Arab female activists, an unjust intolerance

¹⁰⁶ 'Telegram sent to Mr Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister from Sha'rawi', 1938, Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

¹⁰⁷ 'Letter sent by Eastern Secretary Mr W.A. Smart to Sha'rawi', 30 September 1938, Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

¹⁰⁸ 'EFU circular', 12 October 1938, Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

and double standard in upholding its 'democratic principles' when it came to its 'Eastern sisters'. IAW leaders came to be viewed as extensions of their imperialist governments in the context of the Palestinian-Zionist struggle, which made the EFU's on-going relationship with them a growing threat-point to patriarchal bargains with nationalist men and notions of cultural authenticity.

In January 1939, the EFU had drafted a fiery letter addressed to The World Association of National Newspapers in Copenhagen, appealing on behalf of the Arabs of Palestine to all newspapers, periodicals, news agencies and organisations. They used religious references to frame the struggle as one of 'Judaism' against 'Christendom and Islam'.¹⁰⁹ Some still hoped the EFU would be able to enlist the support of the IAW on the basis of the 16-year relationship it had built with the organisation. The Arab Women's Union of Haifa sent a message to Sha'rawi in February 1939, informing her about the deaths of women and children in their town, and asking her to enlist the help of IAW president Margaret Corbett Ashby and British women on their behalf.¹¹⁰ Yet no resolutions over the issue could be agreed upon at the conference, and the presence of the Jewish Women's Equal Rights Association from Palestine only served to exacerbate tensions.¹¹¹

Sha'rawi responded by threatening to leave the IAW, which resulted in IAW president, Margery Corbett Ashby, sending her a letter on 8 July 1939, the first day of the 13th IAW Congress, pleading with her not to abandon the organisation and their long-standing friendship.

¹⁰⁹ 'Letter Drafted by the EFU Addressed to the World Association of Newspapers in Copenhagen', pp. 1-2, Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

¹¹⁰ Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, p. 231.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 235.

We plead with great emotion that you do not take such a fast decision. We have too many common memories; we have worked together for too many years, to resign ourselves to such a cruel departure.¹¹²

Ashby sent another conciliatory letter on the final day of the congress.

All our colleagues of the Board are aware of your letter and feel deep sympathy. They feel in complete agreement with you in their desire to maintain the bonds of sisterhood that unite us if not our political differences...in doing so, you will help the women of the East and the West despite the many difficulties in understanding each other better.¹¹³

The EFU's breakdown with the IAW encouraged the need for stronger regional alliances and helped catalyse the unification of Arab women groups under the banner of the Arab Feminist Union (AFU) in 1944.

The idea of political and cultural unification around the notion of a common Arab identity grew stronger in response to perceived 'colonialist-Zionist' threats. The heightening of Arab-nationalist sentiment, in the context of an anti-colonial and anti-Zionist struggle, altered the terms of the EFU's patriarchal bargains, directing them and other Arab women's groups towards consolidation of a regional Arab feminism. The EFU with its two decades of experience played a leading role in establishing a pan-Arab federation, with Sha'rawi and fellow EFU members Hawa Idris and Amina al-Said visiting women's groups in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan in order to test the idea in the summer of 1944.¹¹⁴ The tour led to the organisation of an Arab Feminist Congress in Cairo in December 1944, with open support from the state, in an attempt to shape a new pan-Arab Feminist institution and to reiterate their commitment to the Palestinian cause.

¹¹² 'Letter from Margret Corbett Ashby to Sha'rawi and EFU', 8 July 1939, Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

¹¹³ 'Letter from Margret Corbett Ashby to Sha'rawi and EFU', 15 July 1939, Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

¹¹⁴ Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, pp. 238, 239, 245.

The Egyptian government was said to have donated one thousand pounds towards the conference and Education Minister Mohammad Haykal gave the introductory speech.¹¹⁵ While Sha'rawi spoke of equal social and political rights, which included the demand for women's suffrage, reform of personal status laws through modern interpretations of the *Shari'a*, women's right to work and equal pay, Haykal glorified their special cultural and maternal roles.¹¹⁶ It was decided that an Arab Feminist Union (AFU) would be formed with its headquarters in Cairo, under the administrative leadership of the EFU. Sha'rawi was nominated as president, and Amina al-Said as secretary and editor of the AFU's journal *al-Marah al-Arabiya* (The Arab Woman).¹¹⁷ Men's support for the conference illustrated their promotion of women's participation in foreign policy against western imperialism, which highlighted women as symbols of a wider Arab national culture.

IAW conferences were largely interrupted over World War II; however, by the summer of 1946 it had resumed its next congress at Interlaken. Sha'rawi led a delegation composed of four women to the Interlaken Congress: Ceza Nabarawi, Asmat Assem, Munirah Harb and Mme Maha, and was herself still listed as a vice president of the IAW Board.¹¹⁸ 1946 was also the year that Margaret Corbett Ashby resigned as IAW president.¹¹⁹ The congress report highlighted a speech by Ashby, expressing on behalf of herself and the IAW, her horror 'at the atrocities perpetrated against the Jewish people by the Hitler regime' and drew attention to the fact that hundreds of thousands of Jewish

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid pp. 240-243.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 244.

¹¹⁸ 'List of Board Members and Delegates- Report of the 14th IAW Congress in Interlaken', 1946, IAW Collection, WLA.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 12.

refugees were still being detained.¹²⁰ She subsequently demanded that the UN take necessary steps to secure the liberation of these refugees.¹²¹

The Arab delegations did not directly confront the Palestinian situation at this conference, but they highlighted their unified commitment towards defending the political rights of their fellow Arabs in general. The 1946 congress booklet included progress reports from the Egyptian and Lebanese delegations, both of which took the opportunity to highlight the establishment of the AFU. The EFU reported that at the Egyptian University the number of female students had increased from 373 in 1939 to 637 by 1946, and that women had begun to gain access to more significant state and academic posts, although their right to suffrage had still not been granted.¹²² However, it stressed the alliance of Arab women from Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Transjordan, and Egypt under one unified bloc, as its greatest victory throughout the past seven years of WWII.¹²³ The Lebanese Arab Women Federation reiterated the same feelings in their report stating that after the Arab Women's Congress in Dec 1944 in Cairo, the decision had been made

To unite in one big federation, namely, the 'pan-Arab Women Federation' with headquarters in Cairo, and Mrs Sharaoui as president...Our aim in taking this step was to unify our efforts in the social and political fields and to work hand in hand with the Arab League in safeguarding the political rights and interests of the Arab world in general.¹²⁴

The Congress thus reiterated cooperation with regional male nationalists in both reinforcing a new unified Arab identity, and pursuing greater rights for women on the basis of their shared cultural/national identities.

¹²⁰ Ibid, pp. 13, 19-20.

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 120.

¹²² Ibid, pp. 51-52.

¹²³ Ibid, p. 53.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p. 62.

The Interlaken congress was to be Sha'rawi's last IAW Congress, as she passed away the following year. Following her death, her daughter Bathna became president, but Nabarawi, as vice president of the EFU, became its new active leader.¹²⁵ IAW congress reports in the years that followed showed Arab feminists continuing to attend as separate national delegations rather than under the banner of the unified AFU. However, a more defined line had been drawn between western and Middle Eastern feminism, around the Palestinian-Zionist conflict, which complicated various women's discourses in Egypt going forward. The next chapter will look at how women's different national identities were compounded by their different political leanings, which lead to greater diversification of the Egyptian women's rights movement in the decades that followed.

Conclusion

In chapter 2 it was shown how women challenged patriarchal limits on education and domestic seclusion by emphasising nationalist ideas of 'educated motherhood', but struggled to shift limits on women's political behaviour. This chapter has shown that Iranian and Egyptian women's rights activists attempted to strike common ground with male leaders whilst simultaneously increasing their bargaining leverage as political players by organising, leading, and participating in regional and international women's conferences. With Reza Shah's rise to power, some women's rights activists like Bamdad and Dowlatabadi chose to accept the state's revolutionary approach over their independent 'gradual change' approach. State co-optation of the women's

¹²⁵ Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, p. 248.

movement and state support for women's reforms in Iran contributed to a decrease in women's international activity once the *Kanoun Banovan* was established. The opposite was seen in Egypt; the EFU attempted to demonstrate its value as a forum for cultural exchange by expanding its international network and positioning itself as a regional, Arab, feminist leader, as a way of increasing its bargaining leverage against the unsupportive and repressive government of Ismail Sidqi.

Women's roles as symbols of national/cultural authenticity, particularly within anti-colonial contexts and times of political crisis, was used to explain men's active support for the EFU's political activity during the Palestinian-Zionist conflict. Their leadership of regional women's groups helped draw an oppositional line between western and Middle-Eastern feminism over political differences and changing notions of cultural and national authenticity. Women thus defined themselves as educated mothers of the nation, protectors of the Egyptian and wider Arab nation, highlighting their abilities as regional and international political players in order to signal to Egyptian and Arab nationalists they saw no contradiction in these multiple roles. While women still struggled to win equal political rights at home, these experiences helped them mobilise and develop their organisational and negotiation skills, domestically, regionally, and internationally.

New Chapter 4:

Feminisms, Class and Political Diversification (1940s-1950s)

In the previous chapter, the EFU's response to the Palestinian-Zionist conflict illustrated how politicised notions of cultural authenticity prompted a breakdown with the IAW and a move towards regional alliances. This chapter focuses on developments over the next decade, assessing the ideological diversification of the women's movement in both countries. It illustrates the growing competition amongst female activists over leadership of the women's movement in their countries, and how this led to competing patriarchal bargains.

This chapter relies on the memoirs and tracts of female activists and important actors in Iran and Egypt, including leading members of the *Kanoun Banovan* and Saffiyeh Firuz in Iran, and Doria Shafiq, Ceza Nabarawi, Inji Aflatun, Zaynab al-Ghazali, and the recently published autobiography of Fatima Abdel-Hadi in Egypt, press and newspaper sources from the period, and documents from the IAW collection held at the Women's Library Archives. It also refers to journal publications and un-published material from the Doria Shafiq and Huda Sha'rawi Collections at the American University in Cairo Archives, and state documents from the British and US National Archives. The chapter is divided into 2 sections, with the main arguments for each country case highlighted in section introductions. Section 1 looks at class limitations of the women's movement in Iran and Egypt. Section 2 focuses on how women's rights discourses diversified, influenced by and contributing to the growth of oppositional political movements, which promoted competition and rivalry between female activists.

The first comparative chapter argument is that elite Iranian and Egyptian women drew class and ideological lines around their leadership of the women's movement, encouraging a new generation of women to challenge their leadership from political, cultural, and class perspectives. In Iran, patriarchal bargaining between Iranian women's rights advocates and the state was based on the needs of only certain classes of Iranian women, namely the more educated, elite, westernised classes. As such, it is argued that Reza Shah's Women's Awakening project encouraged the notion of women's rights activism as a western class privilege, reinforcing class-based patriarchy and hierarchy of elite, urban women, over lower Bazaar, working class, and provincial Iranian women. It is argued further that by enforcing unveiling as state policy, Reza Shah turned veiling into a political act of defiance against the Pahlavi state, its westernisation policies, and its bourgeois, westernised followers, by opening the act of unveiling up to allegations of inauthenticity. In the Egyptian case, women like Labiba Ahmed and Zaynab al-Ghazali disassociated themselves from the EFU as a result of its perceived western and secular character. Moreover, it is argued that women like Ruz al-Yusuf and Munira Thabit challenged the elitist feminism of the early EFU by launching their own journals and promoting journalism as a professional vocation for women from more modest middle, or working class backgrounds.

The second section will show how ideologically diverse women put forward different definitions of women's rights and roles; early Islamist women like Labiba Ahmad defined women's public activity as education and social work, while Islamist Zaynab al-Ghazali participated in political and nationalist demonstrations, and women like Fatma Ni'mat Rashid, Ceza Nabarawi, Inji

Aflatun, and Doria Shafiq campaigned for women's right to political suffrage and political representation. The second comparative chapter argument is that ideologically disparate women were willing to join forces over common nationalist and feminist goals, when it constituted the better bargain at the time, specifically when female suffrage, political representation for women, and a common anti-colonial stance, provided strong areas of overlap within their different definitions of women's rights and nationalism. As such, diverse female activists were able to unify during the 1951 suffrage march in Egypt, the 1951 battles in the Canal Zone, and the 1952 suffrage petition in Iran. However, they were equally willing to attack each other if their actions appeared to threaten existing patriarchal and nationalist bargains, as illustrated by the female backlash to Shafiq's actions at the ICW conference in April 1951.

Moreover, it is argued that limits on women's nationalist and feminist activity were negotiated and defined by women themselves, often around actions that proved too independent, or socially and politically transgressive at the time. For instance, the backlash from leading Egyptian female activists over Doria Shafiq's 1951 ICW activity and her 1954 hunger strike demonstrated that support for Shafiq became too risky a bargain for most women, creating a greater consensus that her activities went to far, transgressing limits upheld by most female nationalists on women's political activity. As such, it was not so much that women in Egypt unified more easily over 'nationalist' issues than over their own 'political rights', as argued by writers like Margot Badran,¹ but that the majority of activists viewed female suffrage as contingent on Egyptian political sovereignty and so did not support Shafiq's actions. Women, therefore, united

¹ Badran, *Feminists, Islam and Nation*, p. 217

temporarily over both nationalist and women's rights goals where their definitions overlapped with each other and their ideological differences did not threaten revised or potential patriarchal bargains. The political instability, revolutionary environment, and renewed anti-colonial battles that characterised this period in both countries rendered unification over nationalism the better patriarchal bargain for most female activists at the time.

Section 1: Class Limits of Iranian State Feminism and The EFU

In the previous chapter it was shown how many pioneering female activists like Sedigheh Dowlatabadi and Badr ol-Moluk Bamdad worked with the state-supported *Kanoun Banovan* to promote Reza Shah's Women's Awakening reforms. Writers like Paidar and Sanasarian have argued that Reza Shah's 'Women's Awakening Project' was essentially a window-dressing policy or 'opportunity for the Pahlavi state to build its power at the expense of true social progress by co-opting the independent women's movement and confirming the patriarchal consensus'.² Ettehadieh similarly argues that the major obstacle to the development of the women's movement was that the woman's question was politicised and subsumed as government policy.³ Amin argues that the guardians of the Women's Awakening project emphasised motherhood and women's domestic roles, thus making the modern Iranian woman at once 'capable of many things and yet restricted to one societal role'.⁴

In contrast, this section shows that Reza Shah's Women's Awakening project did not purely impose the patriarchal state's modernisation ideas on

² Sanasarian, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran*, p. 68, Paidar, pp. 111-112, 116, Camron Michael Amin, p. 4.

³ Ettehadieh, 'The Origins and Development of the Women's Movement in Iran', p. 101.

⁴ Camron Michael Amin, pp. 202-204.

Iranian women, but incorporated and adopted many of the campaign issues of women's rights activists of the time, the majority of whom hailed from the educated, wealthier, upper-urban classes. Thus, it is argued that by focusing on education, unveiling, teaching, and 'educated motherhood', the state emphasised the campaign issues put forward by these women themselves, which laid emphasis on women's domestic roles. However, the state also reinforced class-based patriarchy by promoting elite women's superiority over lower class women, through the former's association with, and management of, the state's Women's Awakening projects. As such, it is additionally argued that the state's Unveiling Decree helped draw class lines around the practice of veiling, linking unveiling to notions of a new bourgeois, westernised class of inauthentic Iranians. This in turn helped turn veiling or re-veiling into a political act of rebellion against the Pahlavi state and its westernising reforms, as the final chapter of this thesis will demonstrate.

Looking at class-based feminism in Egypt, Cathlyn Mariscotti argues that lower-class women both consented to and challenged the constructs of elite women, by being the 'first generation of Egyptian women' to engage in journalism as a profession rather than as 'an extension' of their philanthropic activity.⁵ In contrast this section argues that the work of pioneering journalists and activists from more modest, middle class backgrounds in the late 19th century and early 20th century, like Malak Hifni Nasif and Nabawiya Musa, created the space for women like Thabit to pursue writing and journalism as a career. More specifically, this section argues that appreciating the greater bargaining power of the EFU, women like Thabit and al-Yusuf chose to

⁵ Mariscotti, pp.93-94.

strategically align with them in order to promote their own activism. These bargains constituted a type of patriarchal-class bargaining, which while maintaining elite definitions of Egyptian womanhood, and the patriarchal limits associated with those constructs, still allowed the lower classes to challenge class-based definitions and limitations of 'feminism' and 'female political activism' through their own work.

1.1 The legacy of Reza Shah's Women's Awakening Project

In the last chapter it was argued that Reza Shah and the Iranian women's movement mutually co-opted each other to initiate and reinforce the reforms of the state's Women's Awakening program. Nevertheless the degree of acceptance for state reforms, particularly the controversial Unveiling Decree of 1936, was mixed and influenced by class differences. Mahnaz Afkhami, secretary general of the Women's Organisation of Iran in 1970, argued that the 1936 policy of unveiling, although resented by 'traditional' Iranians was 'nevertheless the single most important step toward ending the segregation of women in society'.⁶ She wrote that it gave many educated women the confidence to remain unveiled even after Reza Shah's forced abdication in 1941.⁷ However, the return to veiling, and backlash over the issue from more religious and conservative sectors of Iranian society following the Shah's abdication, indicated that this had not been the case for all Iranian women. According to Bamdad, the 'upper classes' and younger population had generally welcomed the law, while the majority 'suffered' not knowing what to wear or how to act, and many even secluded

⁶ Mahnaz Afkhami, 'The Women's Organisation Of Iran: Evolutionary Politics and Revolutionary Change', in Lois Beck and Guity Nashat (eds), *Women in Iran from 1800 to the Islamic Republic* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2004), p. 112.

⁷ Ibid.

themselves in their homes.⁸ Bamdad wrote that women found their new predicament 'strange' and 'startling', and that the situation reached 'such a pitch that unveileds would set out with veils till they got to the upper part of the city, and then put them on again when they went home'.⁹ Sattareh Farmanfarmaian, founder of the first school of social work in Tehran in the late 1950s, recalled how following Reza Shah's abdication, women 'who had felt humiliated by the dress code put on black *chadors* and flaunted them in the streets, revelling in the freedom to wear what they wished once he was gone'.¹⁰

However, the 'Unveiling Decree' had not been a total imposition by the state, nor a simple imitation of Ataturk's westernisation programs. The decree formed part of negotiations and bargains struck with pioneering Iranian women's rights activists from educated, wealthy, urban class backgrounds, including women from wealthy religious circles, many of whom had already begun challenging seclusion and veiling through their own activism, like Dowlatabadi. Thus, the state and some early women's rights activists shared 'unveiling' as a common goal, although their motives for such goals were not always the same in that women's arguments for unveiling were based on fighting seclusion and the ignorance associated with it, while the modernising state's aim was to enforce the image of 'modern women' based on Ataturk's westernisation model.

Moreover, while the reactions to and the effects of Reza Shah's reforms differed across social and class backgrounds, differences existed within similar social groups, and often depended on individual family attitudes to state reforms.

⁸ Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, p. 98-100.

⁹ Ibid, pp. 95-96.

¹⁰ Sattareh Farmanfarmaian, *Daughter of Persia: A Woman's Journey from her Father's Harem through the Islamic Revolution* (London: Bantam press, 1992), p. 12.

For instance, the Iranian State also encouraged Girl Scout programs and offered a new martial image of modern Iranian womanhood through its celebration of female pilots.¹¹ While many Iranians, including the parents of women's rights activist Saffiyeh Firuz did not approve of such programs, Farmanfarmaian recalled scouting as a positive experience; part of 'an encouraging and liberal atmosphere' brought about by the Women's Awakening project.¹² State policy was not necessarily taken advantage of by all elite or educated upper-class urban women, as many like Farmanfarmaian still had to negotiate around patriarchal limits within the family, which often obstructed the application of the state's policies. Farmanfarmaian wrote that her father's response to sending her abroad for study was that, 'it would be a waste of money...a woman will be nothing'.¹³ She wrote that this made her want to sink through the floor with shame. 'That he would refuse because he thought me stupid and not worth spending money on was something I had never imagined for an instant.'¹⁴

Similarly Reza Shah, despite his reforms on female education, placed limits on women's education, particularly when it came to his own daughters. Ashraf Pahlavi recounted that after visiting her brother while he was at Le Rosey in Switzerland, she sent her father a telegram asking if she might study in a European school too. Reza Shah's answer was a 'short, harsh cable: "stop this nonsense and come home at once"'.¹⁵ She wrote it was then that she realised 'no matter how much education my father might allow at home, I would always be

¹¹ Camron Michael Amin, pp. 200-201.

¹² Ibid; Farmanfarmaian, p.95.

¹³ Farmanfarmaian, p. 90.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ashraf Pahalavi, p. 23.

denied the opportunities he gave my brothers'.¹⁶ Thus, educated women from land-owning, royal, or elite households like Farmanfarmaian and Ashraf Pahlavi were not only constrained by the limits of Reza Shah's modernisation definitions, but also patriarchal resistance to such definitions within their familial frameworks. Referring to his policy of unveiling Pahlavi wrote,

Here again was an example of the paradox that was my father. Though I never felt he was willing to relax his strict control over us at home, he did make the historic decision to present the Queen, my sister Shams, and me unveiled.¹⁷

Farmanfarmaian would question the intention of Reza Shah's reforms much later, writing:

As he did not give women the right to vote, run for political office, divorce their husbands, have custody of their own children, or even get a passport without their husband's permission...these improvements, while significant, were less meaningful...Reza Shah was anxious to emancipate women—or rather, to create the appearance of emancipation.¹⁸

She added that his ideas went only as far as thinking women capable of learning to be good wives and mothers, like most of his contemporaries.¹⁹ Yet, this was also an idea shared by many pioneering women's rights activists and educators like Astarabadi and Bamdad. Reza Shah's policies, while they were modelled on Ataturk's reform ideas, were also influenced by the demands made by some leading women at that time, as illustrated in chapter 2, which looked at female activism in the aftermath of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution. The reforms were intended to appeal to and co-opt pioneers like Dowlatabadi and Bamdad, who preceded Farmanfarmaian's generation, and for whom education, veiling,

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ashraf Pahlavi, p. 24.

¹⁸ Farmanfarmaian, p. 95.

¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 83-95.

teaching, and 'educated motherhood' had been the greater focus rather than political enfranchisement,

Feminists who chose to work within the limits set for them by the government, managed to achieve some of their original goals such as greater educational opportunities for women, and for some of them, abandonment of the veil, making it appear at least on the surface, that the Pahlavi regime was a supporter of women's rights. However, although Reza Shah admired and desired modernisation for Iran, his approach to it was largely superficial in that it was more about material change than intellectual and grassroots change. No serious education campaign was launched to help promote the state's controversial reforms, and so ultimately the lack of an education campaign to support the Women's Awakening campaign, particularly its Unveiling Decree, limited its affects to a minority of women from the educated, wealthier, upper-classes. This helped draw class lines around veiling, linking unveiling to notions of a new westernised, bourgeoisie and opening up the opportunity for the reforms and those who supported them to be challenged using the language of cultural authenticity. Reza Shah's state reforms, by targeting women of the wealthier, educated, urban classes, helped reinforce this class-based patriarchy, by maintaining elite women's power over lower class women, through their relationship with the state's Women's Awakening project.

Moreover, by enforcing unveiling as state policy, Reza Shah helped politicise the veil, resulting in re-veiling and conservative backlashes after his abdication in 1941. Ayatollah Khomeini's 1943 publication, *Kashf al-Asrar* (The Revelation of Secrets), which he wrote following the abdication of Reza Shah,

ridiculed the Unveiling Decree and European dress code, and equated them with notions of immorality and national decay.

We have nothing to say to those whose powers of perception are so limited that they regard the wearing of European hats, the cast-offs of the wild beasts of Europe, as a sign of national progress...with a European hat on your head, you would parade around the streets enjoying the naked girls, taking pride in this 'achievement'.²⁰

He equated Reza Shah's Women's Awakening project with female prostitution.

They regard the civilisation and advancement of the country as dependent upon women going naked in the streets, or to quote their own idiotic words, turning half the population into workers by unveiling them (we know only too well what kind of work is involved here).²¹

As such, this section argues that by enforcing unveiling as an expression of modern Iranian nationalism, Reza Shah inadvertently compromised its perception as an independent, authentic Iranian act. As such, the ban on veiling, or Unveiling Decree helped turn veiling into a political act of defiance against the western Pahlavi state and its elitist, upper-class followers, promoting a religious backlash following his abdication. Towards the end of the century the veil would once again be used as a political symbol in the lead up to the 1979 Revolution, as the final chapter of this thesis will illustrate. Moreover, many women of Farmanfarmaian's generation came to view Pahlavi women's reforms as state grants, and organisations like the *Kanoun Banovan* and the later Women's Organisation of Iran as state instruments, as later chapters will also demonstrate.

1.2 Class limitation of the EFU's Definitions of Egyptian Feminism.

The EFU's international activities during the 1920s and 1930s, particularly its role within the IAW, and its regular references to western ideas and western feminism in its journals, tied it more directly to Western/European feminist

²⁰ Ruhollah Khomeini, Extract from Kasjf al-Asrar (1943) in *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), p. 172.

²¹ Ibid, p. 171.

organisations. Moreover its French-language journal *L'Egyptienne*²² restricted the EFU's reach and appeal to wealthier, elite, French-speaking women until its Arabic-language paper, *al-Misriya*, was launched in 1937. The elite background of key EFU figures affected female activists from the lower-middle and working classes, such as Ruz al-Yusuf and Munira Thabit. Al-Yusuf had started her professional career as an actress, but quit the acting stage in 1925 to start a weekly magazine named after herself.²³ Thabit had written for many national journals such as *al-Ahram* and *al-Balagh* before starting her own daily and weekly journals in 1925, arguing that she was one of the first in her social class to demand women be granted the right to vote and be elected.²⁴ Thabit mentioned attending international conferences on journalism and wrote of her 'reputation' as the greatest female journalist of the period.²⁵

When al-Yusuf began her weekly journal publication *Ruz al-Yusuf* in 1926, she reached out to both Huda Sha'rawi and Saffiya Zaghlul for help. However, she only received a response from Sha'rawi.

When the magazine was an artistic publication, I sent messages to the Mother of the Egyptians and Huda Sha'rawi asking them for support, and Mother of the Egyptians did not reply and this disregard hurt me deeply. When the magazine became political, Mother of the Egyptians seized the opportunity to write to me on some of the political issues encouraging and congratulating me. But I too committed myself to silence...and the opposite was Huda Sha'rawi, who quickly replied to me and did not falter in encouraging and supporting me.²⁶

Offended by the experience, al-Yusuf wrote how her theatrical background made it very difficult for people to take her journal seriously as 'it was still strange for

²² *L'Egyptienne*, February 1926 Issue, Huda Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

²³ Cathlyn Mariscotti, p.95.

²⁴ Munirah Thabit, *Thawrah fi al-Burj al-'Ali: Mudhakkirati fi 'Ishrin 'Aman Marakat Huquq al-Mar'ah al-Siyasiyah* (Egypt: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1946) pp. 113-114.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ruz al-Yusuf, *Dhikrayat*, vol. II 'Ayam al-Sahafa' (Cairo: Mu'assasat Ruz al-Yusuf, 2010), p. 107.

a political magazine to carry the name of a woman...and an artist/actress'.²⁷ Yet, her memoirs show that she understood the need to build some sort of tie with male and female Wafdist, as well as other elite women in order to access their power networks to legitimise her own work and efforts. Similarly, when Thabit first voiced her views on women's political equality the EFU argued her demands were premature, and patronised her as 'an amusing infant'.²⁸ It was only after she received a degree in French law in 1933 that the EFU reached out, inviting her to travel to Copenhagen with them for the 1939 conference of the International Alliance of Women (IAW).²⁹

Mariscotti argues that by seeking the acceptance of the elites, lower-class women attempted to consent to their construct of woman, but also put forward their own, as their magazines 'were not an extension of their philanthropic activity as was the case with ruling-women'.³⁰ In contrast, this chapter argues that the EFU's journals were not mere extensions of their political and social work, but a powerful tool they used to support their agendas because of the precedent set by early pioneering female writers and journalists like Nawful, Fawwaz, and Taymurriyah. Moreover, the writing and work of activists from more modest, middle class backgrounds like Musa paved the way for women like Thabit to pursue university degrees and careers as professional writers and journalists. As such, this chapter argues that appreciating the greater bargaining power of the EFU and elite feminists, women like Thabit and al-Yusuf cooperated with them in an effort to legitimise and gain support for their own activism. These bargains between women of different classes constituted a different type

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*, p. 179.

²⁹ Thabit, p. 66.

³⁰ Mariscotti, p. 94.

of patriarchal bargaining, which maintained the social hierarchy of wealthier upper class women, whilst still allowing the latter to challenge those constructs and class limitations by putting forward their own definitions of womanhood and women's roles through their own work/journalism. Furthermore, class differences with the EFU did not prevent women like Thabit and al-Yusuf from competing with each other for leadership as journalists. The competition between Thabit and al-Yusuf during the mid 1920s resulted in hostile statements over things like who best deserved the title of 'the first Egyptian woman journalist'.³¹

1.3 Perceptions of westernisation and Islamist women's discourses

The perceived western character of leading women's groups like the WWCC and the EFU influenced early divergences between female activists, encouraging women like Labiba Ahmad and Zainab al-Ghazali to initiate their own groups and Islamic women's discourses. Ahmed, who had been an active during the 1919-1922 independence struggle, became very active in the women's wing of the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwan al-Muslimin*). The wing was focused on social work projects, like health clinics, orphanages, and schools for children built on the principles of the Brotherhood.³² To do this, a special program was launched in 1935, with the first women's committee formed in the city of Ismailia and a second in Cairo under the same name, until 50 committees or so were in operation by 1948.³³

³¹ al-Yusuf, p. 104.

³² al-Subki, p. 117-118.

³³ Ibid, p. 118.

Fatima Abdel-Hadi, who joined the Muslim Sisterhood in 1942, claimed that although a women's group had existed earlier under Labiba Ahmed, it had not officially been a 'direct follower' of the Brotherhood organisation, but had worked in close cooperation with it.³⁴ The statement was made to emphasise Abdel-Hadi as a founding member of the Sisterhood when it became 'a direct and official follower of the Muslim Brotherhood with 'Mahmood al-Jawhari acting as the official responsible, who communicated and mediated on their behalf directly with Hassan al-Banna'.³⁵ Abdel-Hadi emphasised similar social work activities after 1942, the expansion of their educational activities, which saw them relocate their headquarters (only after the proposal was given to Mahmood al-Jawhari to present to al-Banna for approval) where they established the 'The Islamic Education House for Girls', and were able to care for a greater number of orphans.³⁶ She added that the Muslim Sisterhood would travel to expand its *da'wa* (proselytising) operations by establishing committees in different parts of the country, including Port Said, Asyut, and Mina.³⁷ She explained that their programs were pre-organised by the Ikhwan leaders before they travelled, and that every two sisters would travel with a *mahram* (Islamic permitted male relative).³⁸

While women focused on social, educational, and religious activities, the political side was reserved only for men. Al-Subki argues that these decisions were made on the premise that women were intended for the home, and that if they were to leave it should only be for education, religious/preaching and to

³⁴ Fatima Abdel-Hadi, *Rihlati ma'a al-Ikhwat al-Muslimat*, (Cairo: Dar al-Shorouk, 2011), p. 22.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 27.

³⁸ Ibid.

attract a greater number of women to the cause.³⁹ The case of Labiba Ahmed and the writings of Fatima Abdel-Hadi on the Muslim Sisterhood, therefore, point to large divergences amongst female nationalists and activists over definitions of women's rights and roles. Ahmed, Abdel-Hadi and the Muslim sisterhood defined their womanhood on the basis of their domestic and maternal responsibilities and their public roles as social work, educational, and *da'wa*. Their definitions of women's rights did not include the vote, political representation, or political participation, in line with the Ikhwan's limitations on women's roles.

Zaynab al-Ghazali's experiences were rather different. After joining the EFU, al-Ghazali left the organisation to form her own Muslim Ladies Group/Society in 1936/1937, during a period of growing conservative attitudes amongst Egypt's lower middle classes. Although many university faculties had opened their doors to women during the 1930s, towards the end of the decade socially conservative attitudes were growing amongst these classes, attacking co-education and calling for gender segregation.⁴⁰ The influence of the Muslim Brotherhood was growing amongst this particular segment of the population, and according to al-Ghazali, she was called to meet with their leader Hassan al-Banna at the *Ikhwan's* headquarters. Al-Ghazali wrote that although al-Banna asked her to merge her society with the Muslim Sisterhood, her group decided to remain independent at the time, preferring close cooperation with the Muslim Sisterhood instead.⁴¹

³⁹ al-Subki, p. 119

⁴⁰ Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nationa*, p. 163.

⁴¹ Zaynab al-Ghazali, *Return of the Pharaoh: Memoir in Nasir's Prison*, trans. Mokrane Guezzou, (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 2006), p. 25.

Abdel-Hadi also recounted how al-Banna would encourage them to attend al-Ghazali's lectures, to get to know the Muslim Ladies Group and invite them to the Sisterhood, but added that Amina al-Jawhari and herself used to stand outside the lecture spaces, as there were often men present at many of al-Ghazali's lectures.⁴² She also recalled asking al-Banna 'why there was a split in the Da'wa movement...why doesn't sister Zaynab al-Ghazali join us?' to which al-Banna is said to have replied:

Truly sister Fatima, we offered, and offered her leadership of the Sisterhood, but she stipulated that we call them the Muslim Ladies Group, but we said we are the Muslim Brotherhood, and the group will remain as it is and there will be a women's wing and you will lead it, but she refused.

The quote, and the way that Abdel-Hadi recalls the story is interesting, especially her choice of wording of a 'split' in the *da'wa* movement, indicating she may have viewed al-Ghazali more as a divisive figure than a cooperative or conformist one. Al-Ghazali later took an active part in the EFU's Arab women's congress, presenting a more political role for herself and her organisation than the women she cooperated with in the Muslim Sisterhood. Although al-Ghazali would formally join the Brotherhood/Sisterhood much later, the choice of the Muslim Ladies Group to remain independent indicated that not all Islamist women at the time were happy to conform to the Brotherhood's definitions and control of their social and religious activity.

This section has shown that at this point in time, feminism/women's rights and westernisation in both Egypt and Iran were largely associated with elite, upper class women. In the Iranian case, the state itself upheld this generalised notion, and reinforced it through its Women's Awakening program.

⁴² Abdel Hadi, p. 29.

In Egypt, the EFU's leadership and French-language magazine, coupled with its attitude towards women like Thabit and al-Yusuf, encouraged an exclusionary, elite, model of Egyptian feminism, which by the 1930s was being questioned and challenged by women of different social backgrounds. Its perceived western and secular character encouraged female nationalists and activists like Labiba Ahmed and Zaynab al-Ghazali to establish their own groups in line with their different ideological/religious views. Hostile competition between Egyptian and Iranian feminists intensified in the 1940s and 1950s over political divergences and competing definitions of womanhood, female nationalism, and different notions of cultural authenticity associated with these definitions.

Section 2: Political Diversification of Women's Rights Discourses

Writers like Bahar and Sanasarian have argued that although Iranian women's groups increased during this period, they did so largely as affiliates of male-led political associations, who controlled and limited their activity.⁴³ Sanasarian has further argued that female members gave priority to their male colleagues and attacked each other according to party lines. Amin similarly posits that affiliation to male-led political parties compromised women's rights gains, as the fall of political parties resulted in the fall of their women's factions.⁴⁴ Comparatively, Nelson and Badran have argued that Egyptian feminists and women's rights groups struggled to unify over common goals, and that when

⁴³ Sima Bahar, 'A Historical Background to the Women's Movement in Iran' in *Women of Iran: The Conflict with Fundamentalist Islam*, ed. Farah Azari, (London: Ithaca Press, 1983), 181; Eliz Sanasarian, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran*, p. 71.

⁴⁴ Camron Michael Amin, p. 238.

they did, it was generally over 'nationalist struggles' rather than their 'own political rights'.⁴⁵

This section argues that any unity between women's groups was an active choice taken based on what constituted the better bargain for their groups or individual goals. Given that what constituted the 'better bargain' changed over time and according to the political context, female activists oscillated between moments of convergence and divergence. Thus, in contrast to writers like Bahar and Sanasarian, it is additionally argued that women's political attacks on each other were not necessarily motivated by giving 'priority to their male colleagues'⁴⁶, but rather that women competed for leadership of the women's rights movement, criticising each other according to their political affiliations to validate their various ideological positions. In Iran, the abdication of Reza Shah, and the clerical backlash that ensued over his Women's Awakening policies, made state-feminism the weaker bargain at that point in time. As such, some women like Saffiyah Firuz founded their own organisations, but also looked for opportunities to unify with other women's groups to improve their power position, which saw several leading women's groups 'federate under a coordinating committee in 1943'.⁴⁷ Others, like Mariam Firouz, viewed cooptation and affiliation with dominant opposition parties as the better bargain. Moreover, in contrast to the arguments of Amin, this section shows that the fall of political groups and the fall of their women's factions did not necessarily spell the end of the activism of its female members, but resulted in new strategic approaches. For instance, after the Tudeh Party was banned in 1949, its female

⁴⁵ Cynthia Nelson, *Doria Shafik Egyptian Feminist, A Woman Apart* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), p. 176; Badran, *Feminists, Islam and Nation*, p.217.

⁴⁶ Sanasarian, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran*, p. 71.

⁴⁷ Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, p. 106-107.

faction continued its activities underground and was renamed the 'Democratic Organisation of Women'.⁴⁸

Moreover, limits on women's activity were negotiated and defined by women themselves, often around actions that proved too 'radical' or transgressive. By campaigning for suffrage in 1951 while Egypt was embroiled in another anti-colonial battle, many of Doria Shafiq's peers felt she had pushed existing limits on women's political activity too far. The mixed and critical reaction from other leading female activists demonstrated that support for Shafiq became too risky a bargain for most women at the time, and thus promoted rivalry between them over definitions and limits of nationalist and feminist activity. Thus, it was not so much that women in Egypt unified more easily over 'nationalist' issues than over their own 'political rights'⁴⁹, but that at the time the majority of activists viewed Egyptian independence as a priority and necessary step in achieving greater women's rights, because of the political instability of the period.

2.1 The Growth of Oppositional Politics and Female Factions in Iran

The last years of Reza Shah's reign, 1939-1941, saw worsening economic, political and social conditions, with social unrest and bread riots breaking out in Tehran in 1940 and 1941.⁵⁰ Britain was worried about Nazi Germany's high import trade with Iran and the large number of German technicians or 'agents' in the country. Consequently, although Iran had formally declared its neutrality in World War II, on 25 August 1941, British and Soviet forces invaded Iran from the

⁴⁸ Sima Bahar, p. 180.

⁴⁹ Nelson, *Doria Shafiq Egyptian Feminist*, p.176; Badran, *Feminists, Islam and Nation*, p.217.

⁵⁰ Mohammad Gholi Majd, *Great Britain & Reza Shah: The Plunder of Iran, 1921-1941* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), pp. 365, 367.

west and the north.⁵¹ Reza Shah was forced to abdicate and leave Iran in order to ensure that his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, succeeded the throne.⁵² On 29 January 1942 a Tripartite Alliance was signed between Iran, Great Britain and the Soviet Union, with the US becoming a formal signatory to the Tripartite Treaty by the end of the year.⁵³ All these changes occurred without the involvement of the Iranian military, or the support of the Iranian people.⁵⁴

Following the abdication and exile of Reza Shah in 1941, a short period of relative democracy ensued, characterised by parliamentary politics and the flourishing of political parties and women's groups, which helped offset the religious backlash that followed his abdication.⁵⁵ Allied support for oppositional parties with shared interests,⁵⁶ and the replacement of Reza Shah by his young, politically inexperienced son created a political vacuum. This led to the strengthening of leftist and nationalist movements, optimised by the rise of the communist Tudeh Party, which was formed by a group of young Marxists in Tehran following the Anglo-Soviet invasion.⁵⁷ Although the British and Americans withdrew from Iran at the conclusion of the war, Soviet forces only withdrew under US pressure in March 1946.⁵⁸ However, Manouchehr Ganji, former Iranian Minister of Education between 1976-1978, explained that the end of Soviet military presence in Iran did not spell the end of its political presence.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 377.

⁵² Ibid, pp. 376, 380-381

⁵³ Marvin Zonis, *Majestic Failure: The Fall of the Shah* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p.191.

⁵⁴ T. Ricks, p. 33.

⁵⁵ Paidar, p. 120; Guity Nashat, *Women and Revolution in Iran* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), pp. 28-29.

⁵⁶ Paidar, p. 120

⁵⁷ Ervand Abrahamian, 'Communism and Communalism in Iran: The Tudeh and the Firqah-I Dimmukrat', *International Journal of Middle East Studies I*, 1970, p. 291; Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 119.

⁵⁸ Manouchehr Ganji, *Defying the Iranian Revolution: From a Minister to the Shah to a Leader of Resistance* (Westport Connecticut: Praeger, 2002), p. 16.

By 1946 the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad, and the Turkish Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan centred in Tabriz, were announced. At the same time the Tudeh Party in Tehran was organising large urban demonstrations demanding workers rights.⁵⁹

Women's organisations also flourished following the abdication of Reza Shah. However, amongst leftist groups, the Tudeh party's *Tashkilat-e-Zanan Iran* (The Organisation of Iranian Women) was the most successful, attracting larger numbers of female students, teachers, and educated women.⁶⁰ Established in 1943, its program was aimed at political, social and economic liberation of women.⁶¹ A US Central Intelligence Agency report on the Tudeh party reported that the women's faction was not 'particularly conspicuous for its activity', but that it had 'agitated for political rights and economic freedom for women'.⁶² One of the founding members of the Tudeh's women's faction was Maryam Firouz. Born into an aristocratic family, Firouz was educated at a French Lycee, (Ecole Jean d'Arc), joining the Tudeh Party in the early 1940s. She went on to become a member of the party's central committee in 1945 and was later dubbed 'The Red Princess'.⁶³

Other women persisted with independent social and political activity, such as Princess Saffiyeh Firuz, founder of The Women's Party (*Hezb-i Zanan*) in 1942, later known as the Council of Women in Iran.⁶⁴ Bamdad wrote that Firuz, who had travelled across Europe, Asia and Africa, and spoke many languages,

⁵⁹ Thomas Ricks, pp. 36-37.

⁶⁰ Nashat, *Women and Revolution in Iran*, p. 29.

⁶¹ US Central Intelligence Agency Confidential Report, 'The Tudeh Party: Vehicle of Communism in Iran', 18 July 1949, ORE23-49, United States National Archives (USNA).

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Haleh Afshar, 'Maryam Firouz, Iranian Feminist: She was a Key Member of the Communist Tudeh Party and Went to Jail', *The Guardian*, 31 March 2008.

⁶⁴ Adelaide Kerr, AP News Features Writer, 'Princess Assists Iran Women to Seek the Vote', *Cairns Post*, 2 March 1946; Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, p. 108.

had always been a very active social worker.⁶⁵ However, by the 1940s she had become more politically active, leading a march for women's suffrage on the Iranian Parliament.⁶⁶ In her interview with *Cairns Post* in 1946, Firuz explained that her Women's Party relied on many committees to conduct social work alongside its suffrage campaign. This included a committee of health, which conducted a clinic and dispensed treatment, medicines, and clothing to people in need, a committee for education which held adult classes to teach women to read and write, and a committee of arts and crafts which taught women sewing among other skills.⁶⁷ She explained that the organisation's original membership of 200 had more than doubled by 1946 and that it had no official president, but was governed instead by a committee of 19 women elected once a year, of which Firuz was one such member.⁶⁸ Firuz illustrated how women's rights advocates in Iran were increasingly focusing on suffrage and equal employment as part of their campaigns:

In a country where women were freed of the veil only ten years ago it is natural that many men should oppose giving women the vote...it is only a matter of time until Persian women will manifest faculties and practical capacity in carrying on the work, which is still largely done by men...To that end I am travelling in America in order to meet and know American women and to study the methods, which they employ in organisation.⁶⁹

Firuz's statements illustrated the importance she placed on building international alliances and support in order to improve Iranian women's influence abroad, and as a consequence their political influence back home, particularly over controversial issues such as the vote. As such, during her visit to the US she attended and held conferences with leading American Suffragettes,

⁶⁵ Bamdad, *Zan-i-Irani*, p. 77.

⁶⁶ 'Iranian Princess, Early Fighter For Women's Rights Dies', *Associated Press*, 22 March, 1990.

⁶⁷ Adelaide Kerr, *Cairns Post*, 2 March 1946.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

and represented Iran throughout this period at various international women's events.⁷⁰

During this period, state co-opted feminists such as Dowlatabadi and members of the *Kanoun Banovan* remained largely pro-establishment. Dowlatabadi's *Zaban-i-Zanan* magazine, which had started off voicing controversial political ideas, was by the 1940s focusing on domestic science, 'a mother's role in her children's education', housekeeping, and the lifestyle of European women, in line with Reza Shah's model for women.⁷¹ Moreover, women like Dr Qudsiyah Hijazi and Shams al-Molouk Javahir Kalam, who was a member of the *Kanoun Banovan* executive committee, wrote positive articles and books on women's rights in Islam, showing a desire among women and state feminists to use religious justification as a way of proving the authenticity of their campaigns and striking bargains with Iranian religious leaders at the time.⁷² Moreover, while the *Kanoun Banovan* praised the Pahlavis, the relatively free period also encouraged them to gently push Pahlavi limits on women's roles, in response to changing political forces.

For instance, in 1942, Bamdad founded the Iranian Women's League (*Jamiyat-i-Zanan-i-Iran*), and described how women's groups increasingly felt the need to unify their efforts because of the conservative backlash that had followed the abdication of Reza Shah.⁷³

After September 1941, when the women's movement unexpectedly lost the support of the great royal patron...reactionary elements on every side seized the opportunity to start agitating and causing trouble...Women's associations saw the need to join forces in a combined stand against their

⁷⁰ Bamdad, *Zan-i-Irani*, p. 78.

⁷¹ *Zaban-i-Zanan Magazine*, August 1944, issue no.4, July 1945; issue no.1, March 1945, Dowlatabadi Collection, IISHA.

⁷² Bamdad, *Zan-i-Irani*, pp. 81, 84.

⁷³ Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, p. 106.

opponents and in 1943 agreed to federate under a coordinating committee'.⁷⁴

She described how Firuz's Council of Iranian Women came together with her organisation and another leading women's organisation of the period.

The Council worked in conjunction with two other bodies, which had been set up for the same purpose, namely the Women's League (which in 1956 became the Women's League of Supporters of the Declaration of Human Rights) and the New Path Society (organised by Mehrangiz Dowlatshahi).⁷⁵

However, Firuz became disillusioned by the experience of trying to form a single independent women's organisation, complaining that 'nobody stays to work with another person', and that only a year after the Women's Party's first meeting in 1944, many of the original participants had split off to form as many as 35 new societies.⁷⁶ Sanasarian argues that female members of political parties gave priority to their male colleagues and went beyond this to attack each other according to party lines. She writes that the Women's Party/*Hezb-i Zanan*, which included ex-members of *Kanoun Banovan*, accused the latter of preventing women's progress during the dictatorship of Reza Shah, with *Kanoun Banovan* retorting that the Women's Party was no more than a tool of party politics.⁷⁷ Firuz and her organisation were increasingly representing Iranian women at international feminist conferences abroad. Thus, the competition between *Kanoun Banovan* and *Hezb-i- Zanan* rather than illustrate affiliation and prioritisation of male-led parties and politics⁷⁸, illustrated that women competed

⁷⁴ Ibid, pp. 106-107.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 108.

⁷⁶ Reminiscences of Saffiyeh Firuz, in the Oral History of Iran Collection of the Foundation for Iranian Studies, in Camron Michael Amin, p. 238.

⁷⁷ Sanasarian, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran*, p. 73.

⁷⁸ Sima Bahar, p. 181; Sanasarian, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran*, p. 71; Camron Michael Amin, p. 238.

for leadership of the women's rights movement, and criticised each other according to their political views.

By February 1944, the Tudeh party was officially calling for women's political enfranchisement with its women's committee at the forefront of the campaign. However, by endorsing Soviet oil Concessions as part of a resolution to the 1946 Azerbaijan crisis, the Tudeh ended up on the wrong side of Iranian politics.⁷⁹ On 4 February 1949, the first failed assassination attempt was made against the Shah during his visit to Tehran University. Ashraf Pahlavi wrote that the police uncovered evidence that the shooter had been a member of the Communist Tudeh party.⁸⁰ The Tudeh Party was officially blamed and the group banned in 1949.⁸¹ Writers like Bahar and Sanasarian have argued that although women's groups increased during this period, the fact that they did so largely as affiliates of male-led political associations limited their activity.⁸² Specifically, Bahar argues that men in the central committee of the Tudeh Party controlled the activities of their 'middle-class' female members, while Amin argues that the fall of Prime Minister Qavam's Democrat Party resulted in the dissolution of Mehrangiz Dowlatshahi's New Path Society similarly to the Tudeh Party and its Women's Committee under Maryam Firouz.⁸³

Yet, women's rights campaigns did not end with the fall of these parties, nor did the activities of the women who formed their female membership. For instance, after the Tudeh was officially banned in 1949, it continued its activities underground, organising the members of both its main party and female faction

⁷⁹ Camron Michael Amin, pp. 225-226.

⁸⁰ Ashraf Pahlavi, pp. 112-113.

⁸¹ Hammed Shahidian, *Women in Iran: Gender Politics in the Islamic Republic*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), p. 127.

⁸² Sima Bahar, p. 181; Sanasarian, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran*, p. 71.

⁸³ Sima Bahar, p. 180; Camron Michael Amin, p. 226.

under a different name, 'Democratic Organisation of Women'.⁸⁴ After Qavam's death Mehrangiz Dowlatshahi continued to work with various women's organisations from 1956 onwards, attending many international women's conferences, until she was appointed deputy director of the International Council of Women (ICW).⁸⁵ In the 1960s she joined the *Iran-i- Novin* Party (New Iran Party),⁸⁶ founded by then Prime Minister Hassan Ali Mansur. Saffiye Firuz similarly persisted with her domestic and international activities; Firuz's organisation 'The Women's Council of Iran' representing Iran at the 1949 IAW congress.⁸⁷

Moreover, pioneering lawyer Mehrangiz Manuchehriyan, who graduated from Tehran University in 1949, challenged patriarchal limits with the publication of her thesis in the same year, entitled '*Integad-i Gavanin-i Assasi va Madani va Kayfari-yi-Iran az Nazareh Huquq-i-Zanan*' (Criticism of Iran's Constitutional, Civil, and Criminal laws from the Perspective of Women's Rights). Khorasani and Ardalan argue that Manuchehriyan had great difficulty getting her thesis published, as it was considered 'very radical on family law' for the time.⁸⁸ She approached small printing and publishing offices, but many refused to print parts that were '*mukhalefeh mazhab*' (against religion).⁸⁹ She was eventually able to print a few copies, transfer them into storage, before distributing them personally to the professors of law and literature at Tehran University and to

⁸⁴ Sima Bahar, p. 180.

⁸⁵ Bamdad, *Zan-i- Irani*, p. 80.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Report of 15th IAW Congress in Amsterdam, 18-24 July 1949, p. 65, IAW Collection, WLA.

⁸⁸ Nushin Ahmadi Khorasani, Parvin Ardalan, *Sinatur: Fa'aliyat'ha-yi Mehrangiz Manuchehriyan bar Bastar-i-Mubarazat-i-Huquq-i-Zanan dar Iran*, (Tehran: Nashr-I Tawsiah, 2003), p. 237.

⁸⁹ Ibid, pp. 237-238.

various places, including Khorasan, Qom, Iraq, Egypt, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia.⁹⁰ Khorasani and Ardalan argue that Manuchehriyan's book was a 'bomb that shook everyone', however, it would eventually be republished in 1963 by *Ettehadieh Zanan-i-Huguddan-i-Iran*⁹¹ (Women's Union of Female Lawyers in Iran, of which Maunchehrian was a founding member), as some women continued to challenge existing patriarchal limits on their political and legal rights.

Therefore, this section contrastingly argues that the fall or outlawing of political groups did not necessarily spell the 'fall' or 'end' of the activism of its female members, but instead lead to re-organisation, new strategic approaches, and new patriarchal bargains. Women's strategies and approaches changed, particularly their short-term goals, in an effort to maintain the struggle in novel and less obvious ways.⁹² While political parties like the Tudeh and Democrat Party looked to bolster their influence with female support, their campaigns were primarily designed to co-opt the women's rights movement, by incorporating their ongoing campaign issues, such as the vote. Women willingly joined such groups because of ideological beliefs, as well as pragmatic choices to strike better bargains in response to the changing political context in Iran. The forced abdication of Reza Shah compromised the political bargaining power of state feminists and the *Kanoun Banonvan*. The immediate conservative and clerical backlash over Reza Shah's Women's Awakening policies, and increasing anti-Pahlavi sentiment, made state-feminism the weaker bargain at this point in time. As such, some women chose to pursue independent activity in pursuit of women's rights, while for others affiliation to dominant oppositional parties and

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 239.

⁹¹ Ibid, pp. 239, 242.

⁹² Heng, 'A Great Way to Fly', p. 30.

mutual cooperation appeared to offer greater leverage and reward. However, as the political climate changed with the rise and fall of Mohammad Mossadegh, women had to once again alter their strategies to maintain their ongoing struggles.

2.2 Mossadegh's Nationalisation of Iranian Oil and Women's Suffrage

In 1949, Iranian constitutionalist and lawyer, Dr Mohammad Mossadegh, who had participated in the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, formed the National Front of Iran from a coalition of the middle class and Bazaar merchants, together with a group of social-democratic and liberal politicians.⁹³ In October of that year Mossadegh and his supporters argued the results of the 16th *Majlis* elections had been tampered with. Mossadegh's nephew Farhad Diba explained that the main issue at these elections had been the question of oil and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) agreement.⁹⁴ Diba recalled that when it came to this particular issue, 'Mossadegh enjoyed almost universal support, from religious reactionaries, to the far right, to the Tudeh Members of the far left'.⁹⁵ However, the Tudeh's communist ideology meant that any support for the National Front was withdrawn whenever Russia attacked Mossadegh.⁹⁶ Mossadegh officially came to power in April 1951, cancelling the AIOC's oil concession less than a month later. Britain and the United States called for a worldwide boycott of Iranian oil in response, with Britain lodging complaints to the United Nations Security Council that Iran's actions were endangering world-peace.⁹⁷ A telegram

⁹³ Farhad Diba, *Mossadegh: A Political Biography* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1986), p. 96.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 95.

⁹⁵ Ibid, pp. 96, 111.

⁹⁶ Farhad Diba, pp. 99-100.

⁹⁷ Report Submitted By Prime Minister Mossadegh to the *Majlis* Upon his Return from the United States of America and Egypt, 25 November 1951, p.1, FO371/98609, UKNA; Keddie, *Modern Iran*, pp. 126-127.

from Tehran to the British Foreign Office reported that although the loss of oil revenue and standstill with Britain and the US was putting Iran under serious economic strain, Mossadegh was limited by the defiant nationalist stance he had taken.⁹⁸

Musaddiq [sic] has unleashed forces of which he is no longer the master....today he finds himself face to face with the Communists who are trying to eliminate him completely from the West.⁹⁹

Eisenhower's Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, viewed Mossadegh's takeover as a looming loss of Middle Eastern oil to nationalist-communist forces.¹⁰⁰ As early as February 1952, British reports were underlining the notion that 'Musaddiq [sic] will not fall unless he is pushed', but that the Shah was too undecided and weak to do the job.¹⁰¹ Thus, the US conspired with Britain to overthrow Mossadegh and reinstate Mohammad Reza Shah through a coup d'état operation code-named Ajax in 1953.¹⁰²

Diba writes that most women supported oil nationalisation and Mossadegh's leadership between 1951-1953.¹⁰³ However, in 1950 the Tudeh Party Women's Organisation supported the Russians in their Peace Movement, rather than focusing on oil nationalisation.¹⁰⁴ Bahar argues this action was mobilised by the Tudeh's male-leadership, however, the Tudeh women's contribution to the 1952 suffrage petition, suggests that women acted more

⁹⁸ Telegram no.189-George Middleton to the Foreign office, 23 February 1952, p.3; Supplementary Note, 25 February 1952, FO371/98707, UKNA.

⁹⁹ Telegram no. 252-From Berne to Foreign Office, 3 November 1952, FO371/98610, UKNA.

¹⁰⁰ Records of the Central Intelligence Agency, 'Probable Soviet Bloc Courses of Action Through Mid-1953', 11 December 1952, pp. 4, 6, 511, NIE64, USNA.

¹⁰¹ Secret Document-Internal Situation and an Oil Settlement, 16 July 1952, FO371/98707, British National Archives; George Middleton To the Foreign office, Telegram no.189, 23 February 1952, p.3; Additional note 25 February 1952, FO371/98707, UKNA.

¹⁰² Michael B. Oren, *Power, Faith and Fantasy: America in the Middle East 1776 to the Present* (New York, London: W.W. Norton and Company 2007), p. 511.

¹⁰³ Farhad Diba, p. 115.

¹⁰⁴ Sima Bahar, p. 181.

independently, choosing which actions would better serve their interests at that point in time. In 1952 a petition was organised with various other women's groups, including the Tudeh's women's affiliation, demanding suffrage from the new government.¹⁰⁵ Although the women were able to collect 10,000 signatures, the petition ultimately failed as Mossadegh withdrew the bill under pressure from leading clerics.¹⁰⁶ Mossadegh prioritised nationalisation above everything else, which placed the question of women's political rights on the backburner.¹⁰⁷ While the clergy objected to women's suffrage on the grounds that it would detract from their domestic duties at home, Mossadegh avoided controversial issues that may have created more instability during such a politically volatile period. This pushed female suffrage outside the limits of acceptable patriarchal bargains at the time.

This section argues that independent feminists and those belonging to oppositional parties like the Tudeh, continuously assessed and re-assessed which actions constituted the better bargain for their goals at different points in time. This explains moments of support for the calls of their parties' male-leadership, and moments when they preferred to unify with the wider women's rights movement over common goals, such as the vote. The political instability that characterised the rise and fall of Mossadegh ultimately obstructed women's rights campaigns, however, the return of a more dictatorial Mohammad Reza Shah created new obstacles for independent female activism.

¹⁰⁵ Guity Nashat, *Women and Revolution in Iran* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), p. 29.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid; Sanasarian, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran*, p. 75.

¹⁰⁷ Dr Mohammad Musaddiq, *Musaddiq's Memoirs*, ed. Homa Katouzian, trans. SH Amin and H Katouzian (London: JEBHE National Movement of Iran, 1988).

2.3 Minority Parties and Different Egyptian 'Feminisms'

In Egypt, the political spectrum had started broadening shortly after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1922. Minority parties formed out of the Wafd's ranks during the period of Zaghlul's leadership and his successor Mustafa el-Nahhas: the Liberal Constitutional party was founded in 1922, the Sa'adist party in 1938, and the Independent Wafdist Bloc in 1942.¹⁰⁸ Young Egypt was founded in 1933 by two young law graduates and modelled on fascist youth movements in Europe, attracting many students. By the 1940s the Muslim Brotherhood had expanded their network and operations, founding clinics and schools and recruiting in the military and police.¹⁰⁹ By the late 1940s, three generations were competing for power within the Wafd party, from the first generation Wafdist who had been active with Zaghlul, and their second-generation heirs, to the young professional and student generation of Wafdist who wanted more radical changes.¹¹⁰

After Sha'rawi's death in 1947, Egyptian feminists lost their position as leaders of the AFU, whose headquarters moved to Beirut when the Lebanese Ibtihaj Qaddurah assumed the presidency. It only reverted back to Cairo in 1966 when Suhair Al-Qalamawi became its next president in 1966.¹¹¹ Nabarawi continued to represent the EFU internationally, being elected vice president and member of the IAW executive board at their 15th congress in Amsterdam.¹¹² It was also during this period that several of the EFU protégées began branching off to form their own groups, appealing to wider classes of Egyptian women.

¹⁰⁸ Joel S. Gordon, *Nasser's Blessed Movement: Egypt's Free Officers and the July Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 18.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 23-24.

¹¹¹ Report of 15th IAW Congress, 18-24 July 1949, pp. 28, IAW Collection, WLA.

¹¹² Report of 15th IAW Congress in Amsterdam, 18-24 July 1949, p. 5, IAW Collection, WLA.

Among these was Fatma Ni'mat Rashid, a former EFU member who formed the political party *Hizb al-Nisa'i al-Misri* (The Egyptian Women's Party), in the early 1940s.¹¹³ The statutes of the party was formed of 4 key points, the first three being

1. Woman's equality with men, and her moral, intellectual, and social advancement,
2. The party seeks all legitimate means to gain Egyptian women's full national, political, and social rights, which include the vote and parliamentary representation so she may enjoy her rights as an Egyptian national.
3. Closer ties between women in Egypt and Eastern countries.¹¹⁴

The fourth point called for 'the acceptance of women in all professions in the country (provided she had the necessary qualifications), equal rights as workers, participation in unions, and child care for working mothers'.¹¹⁵ Rashid's emphasis on greater unity between Egyptian and Eastern/Middle Eastern women mirrored the EFU's shift over the late 1930s/early 1940s from western/international to regional and Arab alliances (discussed in chapter 3), however, by stressing 'eastern' unity Rashid was also differentiating her party away from the EFU's legacy as a forum for 'collaboration between women of the East and West'.¹¹⁶

Rashid's party was subjected to criticism from the EFU who accused it of creating divisions amongst the ranks of the women's movement.¹¹⁷ Rashid argued the EFU's activity had already begun to languish, focusing more on charitable and social work, and that she could not be accused of creating divisions as she had never been an official member of the EFU, but had

¹¹³ al-Subki, p. 120-121; Badran, p. 217.

¹¹⁴ Program of al-Hizab al-Nisa'i al-Misri, 1942, in al-Subki, pp. 120-121.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Huda Sha'rawi, *L'Egyptienne*, February 1929 issue, p. 2, Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

¹¹⁷ al-Subki, p. 121.

cooperated with them generally through her journalism.¹¹⁸ The case highlights the growing competition and rivalry between women over leadership of the women's movement, and the introduction of new and different definitions of women's rights as more 'Eastern' and political, through groups like Rashid's Women's Party.

Another example was Doria Shafiq, who with Sha'rawi's support went to the Sorbonne to earn a doctorate, and contributed articles to the EFU's French journal.¹¹⁹ In the December 1929 issue of *L'Egyptienne*, Shafiq wrote an article titled *L'enfant du Nil*, which included a tribute to her mentor and supporter Sha'rawi.¹²⁰ In 1945, Shafiq founded her own magazine, *Majallat Bint al-Nil* (Daughter of the Nile Magazine). She also launched a magazine for children called *Katkut* (Chick) from 1946 to 1948.¹²¹ In 1948 Shafiq launched her own organisation, *Ittihad Bint al-Nil* (Daughter of the Nile Union) focusing on female literacy and women's political rights, with branches in a number of provincial cities'.¹²² The main points of her organisation's program, issued in 1949, were declared as 'raising the intellectual, social, and cultural level of the Egyptian family, gaining women's right to vote and to national/political representation in order to defend her rights, and to fight for reforms in divorce and marriage laws'.¹²³

According to Nelson, Shafiq's choice of title 'Daughter of the Nile' was an attempt to appeal to 'middle class women' and break away from any association

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ *L'Egyptienne*, October 1932 issue, p. 7, Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

¹²⁰ *L'Egyptienne*, December 1929 issue, p. 3, Sha'rawi Collection, AUCA.

¹²¹ *Bint al Nil Magazine*, 1949-1953, Doria Shafiq Collection, ACUA; Badran and Cooke, *Opening the Gates*, p. 352.

¹²² Doria Shafiq, 'Islam and the Constitutional Rights of Woman', in Badran and Cooke, *Opening the Gates*, p. 352.

¹²³ Program of *Ittihad Bint al-Nil*, 1949, in al-Subki, pp. 122-123.

with the Turko-Circassian elite.¹²⁴ Yet, early issues of her magazine, with their focus on nutrition, domestic science, and the latest Parisian Fashions, would have appealed particularly to women from the wealthier, educated, 'westernised' classes.¹²⁵ What is more clear is the way different women like Shafiq and Rashid were attempting to differentiate themselves from the EFU, redefining their feminism or struggle as more 'Eastern', 'middle class', and with female suffrage and political representation becoming a more central component of potential bargains with the state and nationalist men.

This period also gave rise to women's rights activists from the political left, such as Inji Aflatun and Latifa Zayyat. Born in 1924 to an aristocratic family in Cairo, and educated at the French Lycee, Aflatun joined the Communist group *Al-Sharara* (Iskra) in 1942.¹²⁶ In 1945 she went to Paris as a member of the Egyptian delegation to the World Congress of Women on behalf of the Democratic Federation Of Women. In the same year she helped establish the University and Institutes Youth League (*Rabitat Fatayat al-gami'a a wal-ma'ahid al'misriya*), which Latifa Zayyat, a student leader, also joined.¹²⁷ Aflatun took a strong stance on education, but according to al-Jawwadi refrained from travelling abroad for further studies as she felt it would take away from her leftist activity.¹²⁸

Zayyat, a native of Damietta, who had received her BA in 1946 from Cairo University, was elected general secretary of the Committee Of Students and

¹²⁴ Cynthia Nelson, 'On Interpreting Doria Shafik', in Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron, *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, (New Haven: Indiana University Press, 2004, 1992) pp. 319, 322

¹²⁵ *Bint al Nil Magazine*, Doria Shafiq Collection, 1949-1953, AUCA.

¹²⁶ Inji Aflatun, 'We Egyptian Women', in Badran and Cooke, *Opening the Gates*, p. 343.

¹²⁷ Margot Badran, *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* (Oxford: One world Publications, 2009, p. 30).

¹²⁸ al-Jawwadi, p. 26.

Workers. She went on to get her PhD in Arabic literature in 1957. Reflecting on the political activism of her youth, she wrote 'from my youth I have been preoccupied with national liberation...I have suffered all kinds of moral oppression that befall persons who are female. Sometimes I confronted oppression. Sometimes I did not'.¹²⁹ The statement illustrates how female activists had to choose certain battles and strategies over others in response to particular political situations.

For instance, in 1946 the Egyptian government under the Premiership of Ismail Sidqi Pasha launched a crackdown on leftist groups in an effort to curb communist activity; Aflatun recalled how the government closed down all 'progressive and Leftist organisations' including her own Youth League, while allowing other organisations like the EFU and Shafiq's *Bint al-Nil* Union to continue operating.¹³⁰ In an effort to maintain her activism despite the crackdown, Aflatun attempted to join Shafiq's *Bint al-Nil Union*, only to find that they would not tolerate her communist background and views.¹³¹ Aflatun went on with other leftists to become a member of the National Executive Of Workers And Students, and the National Women's Committee (*Jamiyat Al-Nisai'yya al-Wataniya al Mu'aqata*). In 1948 she wrote *Thamanun Maliyun Maana* (Eighty Million Women With Us) in condemnation of imperialism, and in 1949 she published *Nahnu al-Nisa al-Misriyyat* (We Egyptian Women), which looked at both national and female oppression.¹³² She dedicated it to 'the women of Egypt'

¹²⁹ Latifa al-Zayyat, 'Testimonial of a Creative Woman-1996', in Badran and Cooke, *Opening the Gates*, pp. 411-412.

¹³⁰ Nelson, 'Interview with Aflatun and Nelson, 21 November 1986) in Doria Shafik, *Egyptian Feminist*, pp. 154-155.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Inji Aflatun, 'We Egyptian Women (1949)' in Badran and Cooke, *Opening the Gates*, pp. 343, 345-351.

and ‘to the true militants of the Egyptian feminist cause, not the amateurs and sycophants giving themselves airs and looking for personal profit, or those crawling far behind’.¹³³ The statement highlighted growing rivalry between female activists for leadership of the women’s rights movement through the validation of their competing positions and ideas. The account of Aflatun’s attempt to join *Bint al-Nil* demonstrated that women’s different political identities shaped their different women’s rights approaches and alliances

In 1948 Prime Minister Nuqraishi’s government began arresting people from across the political spectrum who were deemed to be extremists, including suspected members of leftist and communist groups such as Zayyat, who was arrested in 1949.¹³⁴ Manoeuvring around increasing state repression, leftist women had to find novel and less visible or obvious ways of maintaining their activity. As such many joined a local non-political committee known as *Harakat Ansar al-Salaam* (Movement of the Friends of Peace), whose general aim was to work for world peace and expel colonialism from Egypt. Aflatun joined the movement in 1950, and later joined the youth group of the EFU, *Lajnat Al Shabbaat*, founded by Nabarawi in the same year to attract a new generation of young female activists to the fold.¹³⁵

Where gender issues overlapped, women joined forces at certain moments when unification offered greater bargaining leverage and potential reward than independent or disparate activity. For example, on 19 February 1951 Shafiq led a mass rally and stormed the Egyptian parliament laying out her demands for women’s rights:

¹³³ Ibid, p. 345.

¹³⁴ Latifa al-Zayyat, ‘Testimonial of a Creative Woman-1996’, in *Opening the Gates*, pp. 411-412.

¹³⁵ Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, p. 248.

Firstly, the immediate action on equalising the law so that the Egyptian women can achieve all her political rights as guaranteed by the Constitution. Secondly, immediate action to pass the necessary legislation for the protection of mothers and wives...especially those related to easy divorce and polygamy. Thirdly, full equality between men and women with regards to freedom of employment and responsibilities, especially with regards to equal pay.¹³⁶

With 1,500 women by their sides, Nabarawi and Shafiq forced their way through the parliament gates, orchestrating demonstrations, until the Egyptian government promised to give the petition for women's rights serious consideration.¹³⁷ Only three of the women entered parliament to speak with the Head of the House.

Ceza Nabarawi, Zeinab Labib and myself...I asked to speak to the head of the Senate...and told him: I am speaking to you from your office...where 1000 women marched on the parliament and are refusing to leave without a categorical promise that explicitly recognises their political and voting rights like all other citizens.¹³⁸

The government ultimately went back on its promise to approve the petition for women's rights. Despite the outcome, Shafiq argued that by uniting politically diverse female activists, the event had nevertheless been a victory.

The first positive action participated by all the bodies, which represent Egypt's women with all their different inclinations and opinions. And the next day, Egypt's newspapers, indeed the world's newspapers, were telling the whole story.¹³⁹

However, immediately following the event, Shafiq's political choices began to increasingly alienate her from her contemporaries.

Upon her return from a Congress of the ICW in Athens, Nabarawi and Aflatun launched a barrage of attacks in the press criticising Shafiq for voting for a resolution that approved the maintenance of British troops on the Suez Canal

¹³⁶ Doria Shafiq, *Rihlati Hawla al-'Alam (My Trip Around The World)* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Sharqiyya, 1955), pp. 204-205.

¹³⁷Ibid, pp. 201-208.

¹³⁸ Shafiq, *Rihlati*, p. 207.

¹³⁹ Ibid, p 208.

under the pretext of defence. Shafiq responded that she simply supported a motion that upheld the right of every country to have its own system of defence.¹⁴⁰ The reaction of Shafiq's contemporaries indicated she had crossed a line on existing definitions of women's nationalist activity upheld by women like Nabarawi and Aflatun. For Nabarawi and Aflatun, women's political activity did not include any action that could 'serve the colonial oppressor', as explicitly stated in the statutes of their organisation *al-Lajna, al-Nissa'iyyah lil-Muqawama al-Sha'abiyah*.¹⁴¹ In fact, the organisation, whose membership incorporated ideologically disparate women like Zaynab al-Ghazali alongside Nabarawi, Zayyat, and Aflatun,¹⁴² was centred on fighting colonialism and unifying women's nationalist efforts. It declared the Egyptian woman could not give up on her national duty and had to stand side by side with her nationalist male colleagues, 'as a fighter, a martyr, willing to sacrifice her life, children, family and wealth'.¹⁴³ The statutes of the organisation, with their focus on fighting colonial intervention, and their definition of women as self-sacrificing martyrs in the anti-colonial struggle, explain how Shafiq's actions at the ICW went too far in the eyes of her contemporaries, opening her up to attacks of inauthenticity and anti-nationalism.

In the fall of 1951 Mustafa al-Nahhas unilaterally abrogated the 1936 treaty, and fighting broke out in the Canal Zone between Egyptian guerrilla squads and the British army. Many of Egypt's leading women's rights and political activists joined together to provide a joint nationalist force when the

¹⁴⁰ Nelson, *Doria Shafik, Egyptian Feminist*, p. 174.

¹⁴¹ Statutes of *al-Lajna, al-Nissa'iyyah lil-Muqawama al-Sha'abiyah*, 14 November 1951, Appendix 4, in al-Subki, p. 208.

¹⁴² Badran, Feminists, Islam, and Nation, p. 248; Nelson, *Doria Shafik, Egyptian Feminist*, p. 176.

¹⁴³ Statutes of *al-Lajna, al-Nissa'iyyah lil-Muqawama al-Sha'abiyah*, 14 November 1951, Appendix 4, in al-Subki, p. 208.

violence erupted. Shafiq was among those who called for women's participation in the struggle.

We call for fair equality, based on equality in all duties as well...so why do we not also contribute towards the defence of our land and nation? What prevents us for composing phalanges to rise to their national duty in the guerrilla war that is raging in the Suez Canal Zone?¹⁴⁴

Bint al-Nil Union organised a pioneering female military unit from 200 volunteers to fight alongside the men, train field nurses, and show 'that the honour of struggle and the pride of martyrdom were not things unique to men.¹⁴⁵ Shafiq's message was that by sharing equal duties, even in armed struggle, the Egyptian woman proved herself worthy of political and parliamentary equality.

Al-Lajna, al-Nissa'iyah also jumped into action, lead by Nabarawi. The organisation's 'execution strategy' emphasised 'unification and the joining together of all women's groups', 'unification with their Sudanese sisters, women across the world, especially women in the Middle East' to rally greater numbers of women to the cause, as well as the training of women in nursing, in order to provide medical care and assistance for those fighting.¹⁴⁶ In November 1951, Shafiq and members of *Bint al-Nil* Union joined tens of thousands of Egyptians, marching alongside feminist rivals Nabarawi and Aflatun, and other members of *al-Lajna, al-Nissa'iyah*, protesting against British attacks in the Canal Zone.¹⁴⁷

Nelson argues that this was to be the last time feminist organisations in Egypt would rise above their differences to join forces in the fight toward a

¹⁴⁴ Shafiq, *Rihlati*, p. 217.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 218.

¹⁴⁶ Statutes of *al-Lajna, an-Nissa'iyah lil-muqawama al-Sha'abiyah*, 14 November 1951, Appendix 4, in al-Subki, p. 209.

¹⁴⁷ Shafiq, *Rihlati*, pp. 221-223.

common goal.¹⁴⁸ Badran argues that while women ‘could form a broad coalition in nationalist struggles against colonialism and internal suppression of democracy’, they were ‘unable to achieve the same unity in a struggle for their own political rights’, as class and associational allegiances made it difficult for female leaders to unite, pointing to the failed unification of Shafiq’s *Bint al-Nil* and Fatma Rashid’s party in 1949 as an example.¹⁴⁹

This section argues that women were not just ‘rising above their differences’ to fight anti-colonial, nationalist battles, but making a strategic choice to join forces over common nationalist goals to improve their political leverage. Moreover, while ideologically disparate feminists were willing to unify at certain points in time, when it provided the better trade-off for the achievement of common nationalist and/or feminists goals, they were equally willing to confront and attack the actions that appeared to threaten existing patriarchal bargains, as illustrated by the reaction to Shafiq’ actions at the ICW conference. Leading and diverse female activists like Nabarawi, al-Ghazali, and Aflatun were able to come together and form *al-Lajna, al-Nissa’iyah lil-muqawama al-Sha’abiyah* on the basis of their common emphasis on the nationalist struggle as an anti-colonial. Moreover, many women viewed national independence and sovereignty as necessary to the achievement of greater rights.

2.5 The Free Officer’s Coup of 1952, and Shafiq’s 1954 Hunger Strike

The violence in the Canal Zone was compounded by additional national problems, from rampant corruption and political fragmentation, to ineffective economic and foreign policies. The situation intensified on 25 January 1952,

¹⁴⁸ Nelson, *Doria Shafik*, p. 176.

¹⁴⁹ Badran, *Feminists, Islam and Nation*, p. 217.

when Egyptian police in Ismailia resisted British demands to surrender, and riots broke out the following day on what became known as 'Black Saturday'.¹⁵⁰ To understand how the Free Officers capitalised on the political climate it is important to remember that at this point neither the Muslim Brotherhood nor the Socialists were organised enough to take advantage of the political unrest or secure leadership.¹⁵¹ The Free Officers, who took power on 23 July 1952, were a politically diverse group led by Gamal Abdel Nasser. The movement had formed out of the military, and represented various opposition trends in Egypt such as the Communists, Muslim Brotherhood, and Wafdist.¹⁵² The Free Officers maintained independence from other political forces in order to minimise divisions over conflicting political loyalties, but ultimately carried out the coup with the help of other groups, from members of the Muslim Brotherhood to members of the communist Democratic Movement for National Liberation (*al-Harakah al-Dimuqratiyah lil-Tahrir al-Watani*).¹⁵³ By 3 am on 23 July 1952 the officers had secured Cairo and sent Muhammad Naguib to headquarters, and by 7 am the same morning, Anwar Sadat gave their first broadcast to the nation.¹⁵⁴

Having initially chosen Ali Maher as Prime Minister, the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) was set up to help govern after the revolution with Naguib as chairman and Nasser as vice-chairman.¹⁵⁵ Mohammad Naguib recalled how quickly numerous parties began propping up,

Within a month no fewer than twenty-two parties, new and old, had duly registered with the Minister of Interior...There were five Moslem parties,

¹⁵⁰ Joel S. Gordon, pp. 26-27.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, pp. 29-30.

¹⁵² Selma Botman, 'Egyptian Communists and the Free Officers: 1950-54', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 22, no. 3, July 1986, p. 350.

¹⁵³ Joel S. Gordon, pp. 47, 53.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, p.52.

¹⁵⁵ Botman, p. 354.

including the Muslim Brothers, three feminist parties, including the Daughters of the Nile...¹⁵⁶

Within this encouraging political atmosphere Shafiq decided to found a monthly political supplement to her *Bint Al Nil* journal, titled *Bint al-Nil al-Siyassiya* (Political Daughter of the Nile), which illustrated the radicalisation of her feminist views from earlier issues of the magazine, with greater focus on suffrage and women's political enfranchisement.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, Shafiq responded to both secular and religious opposition to women's 'constitutional rights', particularly an article published by the Grand Mufti, Shaykh Hasanain Muhammad Makhluf, in *Akhir Lahza*, which stated that 'Islam...forbids the participation of Egyptian women in all aspects of public life'.¹⁵⁸ Shafiq responded to the declarations using her knowledge of *Shari'a* to challenge their interpretations and argue they were not 'in keeping with the generous tenets of Islam regarding women'.¹⁵⁹ She followed this with a second article in *al-Misri*, on 14 May 1952 entitled 'Whom shall we follow, the present Mufti or the previous Mufti?', where she advocated following the earlier Mufti who had declared 'Islam looks at the woman as it looks at the man with respect to humanity, rights, and personality'.¹⁶⁰

While Shafiq was calling for women's right to political participation and the vote, and reporting on women at the United Nations in the February 1953

¹⁵⁶ Mohammad Naguib, *Egypt's Destiny: A Personal Statement by Mohammad Naguib* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1984), p. 151.

¹⁵⁷ *Bint al Nil Magazine*, Jan 1947, Feb 1953, Jan 1954, Jan 1955, Oct 1956, Jan 1957, Sep 1957 issues, Doria Shafiq Collection, AUCA.

¹⁵⁸ Shafiq, 'Islam and the Constitutional Rights of Woman', 7 May 1952, *al-Misri* under the title 'Confidence', in Badran and Cooke, *Opening the Gates*, p. 353.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 353-354.

¹⁶⁰ Shafiq, 'Islam and the Constitutional Rights of Woman', pp. 355-356.

issue of her magazine,¹⁶¹ the Free Officers were clamping down on all dissidents, particularly members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Next to the Wafd, the most powerful political organisation in Egypt before the Revolution was the Moslem Brotherhood...in the end we had to arrest a lot of their leaders in order to purge the Rally of their subversive influence.¹⁶²

On 18 June 1953, Naguib became President and Prime Minister of the new Egyptian Republic, with Gamal Abdel Nasser as his Vice-Prime Minister.¹⁶³

Yet the Muslim Brotherhood was not the only threat to the early regime; the Free Officers also suffered from divisions within the RCC, which were largely based on conflicts between Naguib and Nasser. A telegram to the British Foreign Office highlighted the suppression of the Wafd and Muslim Brotherhood, and the continuance of the Revolutionary Tribunal, as the two key points over which Naguib and the RCC had fallen out.¹⁶⁴ The conflict peaked on 24 Feb 1954, when Naguib openly criticised the regime for its repressive measures after Nasser outlawed the Muslim Brotherhood, and subsequently announced his resignation.¹⁶⁵ Nasser was proclaimed Chairman of the Council and Prime Minister, while the Presidency of the Republic remained vacant.¹⁶⁶ The British Foreign Office received reports from Reuters on 27 February 1954 that forty cavalry officers, led by Khalid Muhi-al-Din, had revolted against the new regime of Colonel Abdel Nasser and were calling for Naguib's return to power.¹⁶⁷ Naguib was reinstated as president on 8 March 1954, however, it would only take

¹⁶¹ Shafiq, 'Women in the United Nations', *Bint al-Nil Al-Siyassiya*, February 1953, Doria Shafiq Collection, AUCA.

¹⁶² Mohammad Naguib, p.163.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* p.176.

¹⁶⁴ Sir R. Stevenson-Telegram no. 284, 26 February 1954, FO371/108327, UKNA.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Botman, p. 361.

¹⁶⁷ Reuters Report, 27 February 1954, FO371/108315, UKNA.

Nasser another month to isolate Naguib, weakening his leadership, and strengthening his own.¹⁶⁸

Many Egyptian women's rights activists believed that the coup heralded a new era of freedom for the country.¹⁶⁹ Despite the unrest, volatility, and political ambiguity of the transitional period, or perhaps deliberately because of it, Shafiq decided to stage a hunger strike to protest against women's continued state of political inequality. Talhami argues Shafiq's timing had been promising since the Free Officers had only just annulled the 1923 constitution and appointed a legislative commission to write a new document.¹⁷⁰ In her memoirs she explained her decision.

So nothing remained to be done, but a hunger strike...and so I saw in a moment of emotion that I must start this strike myself...and right away!...I did not want my strike to become propaganda for *Bint al-Nil* Union at a time when I was presenting my sacrifice on behalf of Egypt's women and their cause collectively.¹⁷¹

Shafiq chose 12 March 1954 as the day of her strike, though almost no one knew of her plans. With the aid of the *Bint al-Nil* Union secretary she had written statements that were to be distributed to the newspapers and news agencies at the same moment she would begin her hunger strike.¹⁷² She travelled to the Press Syndicate and asked the couriers to let her into the Chief's office, where she called him to announce her 'hunger strike until Egyptian women demand their rights, or I until am martyred on this path'.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ Sir Ralph Stevenson-Telegram no. 62, 11 March 1954; Confidential Report-African Department of Foreign Office, 11 March 1954, FO371/108315, UKNA; Selma Botman, 'Egyptian Communists and the Free Officers', p. 363.

¹⁶⁹ Nelson, *Doria Shafik*, p. 185.

¹⁷⁰ Ghada Hashem Talhami, *The Mobilization of Muslim Women in Egypt* (Gainesville: University Press Florida, 1996), p. 18.

¹⁷¹ Shafiq, *Rihlati*, pp. 204-205, 256.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 257.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

She wrote that eight other colleagues joined her in the sit-in including leading Egyptian journalist Munirah Thabit.¹⁷⁴ Shafiq recalled that on the second day of the strike, the former Prime Minister Ali Maher visited her, and asked her to stop, 'I told him...what we want this time is not a promise of action, but action indeed'.¹⁷⁵

And finally on the 8th day of our strike, our efforts succeeded in championing the issue of women's rights in this historic promise sent to us by the officials that Egypt's new Constitution will deliver full and uncompromised political rights for women.¹⁷⁶

Shafiq claimed the strike received a lot of international support from feminist organisations and prominent individuals in Europe, the United States, Africa, the wider Arab world and the UN.¹⁷⁷ She wrote that the event succeeded in garnering public opinion and support for the issue of women's rights more so than any other time, arguing that it attracted the support of leading thinkers and writers like Dr Mohammad Hussein Haykal.¹⁷⁸

Yet, there were reactions on both ends of the scale; religious opposition was high, and in fact many women's groups criticised the hunger strike as useless, with women like Fatma Ni'mat Rashid and Samia Tewfik, vice president of the League of Arab and Eastern Women, attacking Shafiq for putting women's rights above the interests of the country.¹⁷⁹ Egyptian critics challenged this supposed victory, arguing that the whole thing had been nothing more than a publicity stunt that had resulted in no real gains for women.¹⁸⁰ Within a week of the strike ending, martial law had been renewed, accompanied by the dissolution

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 257.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 259.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, pp. 262-263.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 258.

¹⁷⁹ Nelson, *Doria Shafik*, p. 200.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 206.

of all political parties, renewed censorship and a postponement of elections until the end of the ‘transitional period’ in January 1956.¹⁸¹

Whether Shafiq’s hunger strike was a refusal to put feminist goals aside at a time of instability, or a deliberate decision to take advantage of the instability, is hard to confirm. What is more evident was the growing hostility towards Shafiq’s choices from other women’s rights activists like Rashid and Tewfiq. Thus, limitations on women’s independent political activity were being negotiated and placed by women and men around controversial examples like Shafiq. Women like Shafiq were challenging existing bargains and acceptable limits on women’s political behaviour. By campaigning for suffrage at a time when Egypt saw itself in another anti-colonial battle against British forces, Shafiq appeared to be placing ‘women’s rights’ above the ‘nation’s rights’. As previous chapters argued, men encouraged women’s activism in anti-colonial contexts as a way of asserting ‘national culture’ against Western intervention; in other words female participation in anti-colonial struggles was a well-established part of patriarchal bargains with nationalist men. Their action in this context proved their nationalism, their patriotism, and their authenticity. Shafiq’s actions on the other hand were causing her to transgress acceptable definitions of women’s nationalist behaviour, allowing others to brand her as unpatriotic, and thus inauthentic. The negative reaction to Shafiq’s actions at the ICW conference in 1951 had already signalled she was crossing a line. Challenging patriarchal limits on female suffrage during an anti-colonial struggle over the Canal Zone, pushed limits too far, and became a far riskier bargain than most female activists were willing to take.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, p. 207.

Conclusion

In chapter 3 it was shown that Iranian and Egyptian women's rights activists encouraged a cultural exchange between 'Eastern and Western' feminists. This chapter has shown how the perceived western character of these movements, led to divergences in women's discourses, particularly for Islamist women like Labiba Ahmad and al-Ghazali in Egypt. In Iran, Reza Shah's Women's Awakening project encouraged the notion of women's rights as class privilege, and reinforced elite, urban women's leadership of the movement. Furthermore, Reza Shah's Unveiling Decree opened the act of unveiling up to allegations of inauthenticity. In Egypt, women like Ruz al-Yusuf and Munira Thabit challenged the EFU's elitist constructs by defining their activism as journalism and promoting it as a female profession.

It was also shown that although the women's movement diversified and became competitive, women were able to join forces when overlapping ideas on female suffrage, women's political representation, and anti-colonialism, provided what was perceived as the better bargain at the time. In Iran, some state feminists were able to join in the growing campaign for female suffrage, as independent feminists and sympathetic political parties like the Tudeh and Qavam's Democratic Party offered them greater leverage in challenging the state's limitations on their political activity. Similarly in Egypt Islamist women like al-Ghazali and leftist women like Nabarawi and Aflatun were able to come together in 1951 over their common definitions of nationalism.

The backlash over Doria Shafiq's 1954 hunger strike demonstrated that the majority of female activists viewed female suffrage as contingent on Egyptian

political sovereignty and thus condemned Shafiq's actions as anti-nationalist. The political instability, revolutionary environment, and renewed anti-colonial battles encouraged women to view unification over nationalist activity as the priority and the better patriarchal bargain at this point in time. Once again, during periods of national crisis women often sought the role of cultural carriers. This was seen during the 1951 Canal Battles, where women's roles as protectors of national and cultural authenticity were once again revised to see members of the *al-Lajna, al-Nissa'iyah*, define themselves as martyrs, fighters, nurses, willing to sacrifice their 'life, children, family and wealth' for the nation.¹⁸²

¹⁸² Statutes of *al-Lajna, al-Nissa'iyah lil-muqawama al-Sha'abiyah*, in al-Subki, p. 208.

Chapter 5

Nationalisation and Cooptation: Mohammad Reza Shah and Gamal Abdel

Nasser (1950s-1970s)

This chapter looks at the effect of Mossadegh's and Nasser's nationalisation policies on their respective populations and how they affected notions of nationalism and cultural authenticity. It additionally looks at the Shah and Nasser's approaches to the Iranian and Egyptian women's rights movements, respectively, and assesses the effects of their policies on female activists and definitions of womanhood. The chapter relies on Foreign Office documents from the British National Archives on Mossadegh, the Egyptian Free Officers and Nasser, as well as press interviews, and memoirs of Mossadegh, Ashraf Pahlavi, Badr ol-Moluk Bamdad, Mahnaz Afkhami, Azar Nafisi, Shirin Ebadi, Mohammad Reza Shah, Mohammad Naguib, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Doria Shafiq, Inji Aflatun, Zaynab al-Ghazali and other key players and observers of the period.

This chapter is divided into 3 sections. The first section argues that Nationalisation policies in both countries promoted anti-westernisation feelings, but that definitions of westernisation and anti-westernisation developed differently in Egypt and Iran in response to their particular political contexts and foreign policies. The overthrow of Mossadegh's regime and reinstatement of Mohammad Reza Shah through American intervention extended or redefined notions of westernisation as 'American', and thus authenticity as anti-American and anti-Pahlavi. Egyptian Nationalisation of the Suez Canal and the Suez Crisis that followed strengthened notions of authenticity around anti-western-European culture and politics, as Nasser increasingly aligned himself with the

Soviet Union, putting forward a more socialist, pan-Arab, and anti-capitalist model of Egyptian nationalism.

Sections 2 and 3 look at women's rights and state feminism under the Shah and Nasser. The sub-arguments, which are summarised at the start of each section, are used to make 3 overall comparative arguments. The first comparative argument is that while the Shah and Nasser's different motives in granting women greater political and social rights resulted in different definitions of modern womanhood, they both ultimately promoted women's political activity as secondary to that of men. Wanting to be viewed as a modern emancipator of women, the Shah granted women suffrage and greater professional rights, but primarily defined them as wives and mothers, extending women's 'natural' maternal skills to the welfare of the wider nation by promoting social work as a woman's civic duty. Nasser stressed women's duties in 'work, the factory, technical education', and as teachers of the next generation, in accordance with socialist constructs of womanhood, yet similarly limited their political and military activity, emphasising 'different' duties for men and women in this regard.

The second argument is that while the Shah and Nasser sought to co-opt and control women's organisations, female activists adapted around this reconfigured patriarchal context to put forward their own initiatives in line with the regime's goals. In Iran, women struck new bargains around the Shah's desire to appear modern and enlightened by enlisting the support of Ashraf Pahlavi to consolidate the High Council of Women's Organisations of Iran, gaining the vote and the right to be elected to parliament. Reorganised as the Women's Organisation of Iran (WOI), state feminists continued to challenge limits on

women's rights against growing opposition to Pahlavi reforms promoted by works like Jalal Al-i-Ahmed's *'Gharbzadeghi*, applying a dual strategy of reassuring conservative leaders whilst campaigning for controversial initiatives like the 1967 Family Planning Act. In Egypt, women like al-Said and al-Shati', who engaged in very different women's discourses, were able to capitalise on areas of overlap with the regime to promote their own notions of womanhood. Al-Said's stress on equal education opportunities directly complemented Nasser's reforms, while al-Shati's description of ideal Muslim women as politically supportive, rather than independent, and as maternal nurturers, coincided with Nasser's own definitions of the Egyptian family in the 1956 Constitution.

Finally, while the majority of state feminists at the time chose a balancing strategy of tactically campaigning for reforms whilst simultaneously reassuring conservative leaders, Nezhat Nafisi's outspoken criticism against the 1967 Family Planning Act, and Amina al-Said's exceptional criticism of some state policies, show that the same patriarchal bargaining strategy was not necessarily acceptable to all state feminists at all the times. It is argued, thirdly, that this type of limited or exceptional criticism was tolerated where it did not break, or push too far patriarchal bargains made with the regime over notions of acceptable female behaviour. As such, women who transgressed bargains made with the state, by openly questioning the state's legitimacy, such as Shafiq and al-Ghazali in Egypt, or members of the revolutionary opposition in Iran, were summarily outlawed and suppressed.

Section 1: Nationalisation and Changing Notions of Authenticity

The nationalisation of the Suez Canal cemented Nasser as a nationalist icon within Egyptian-Arab history in the same way that nationalisation of Iranian oil cemented Mossadegh as one within Iranian history. Both leaders were seen as defenders of their country against foreign, specifically western, interference.

This section argues that these nationalisation policies altered existing definitions of westernisation, nationalism and what constituted authentic behaviour in their countries, but did so in different ways in response to their particular socio-political contexts and foreign policies. The short-lived nature of Mossadegh's oil nationalisation as a result of American intervention saw lines of authenticity redrawn against new definitions of westernisation as 'American', and thus authenticity as 'un-American'. Egyptian Nationalisation of the Suez Canal reinforced anti-British and anti-French feeling, defining what was inauthentic around western-European culture and politics, as Nasser increasingly aligned himself with the Soviet Union against notions of western bourgeois capitalism. Egyptian nationalism thus had to take on a more, socialist, Arab and anti-capitalist character as part of Nasser's pan-Arabism/Arab socialism.

1.1 Effects of the 1953 Coup on the Iranian Population

While Mossadegh's regime had been short-lived, his policy of oil nationalisation turned him into a champion of Iranian independence. His defence of Iran's political and economic sovereignty against Britain's complaints at the United Nations in 1951 turned him into a nationalist hero.¹ Farmanfarmaian recalled

¹ 'Report Submitted By Prime Minister Mossadegh to the *Majlis* Upon his Return from the United States of America and Egypt', 25 November 1951, p.1, FO371/98609, UKNA.

how Mossadegh 'had shown the world that a small, much-bullied people could stand up for their rights to one of the greatest nations on earth'.² Mossadegh's anti-imperialist stance inspired many in the region. Stopping in Egypt on his way back from the UN in 1951, he reported, 'not a moment passed without the people and government of Egypt extending their special kindness and applause to us'.³ Nobel Prize winning lawyer and pioneering female judge, Shirin Ebadi argued that nationalisation of Iran's oil industry turned Mossadegh into a 'Gandhi-like figure', as a definitive defender against Western/British imperialism.⁴ The famous writer Azar Nafisi described the effect of these events in her memoirs.

His aborted premiership came to embody Iran's as-yet-unrealised democratic aspirations. He carried with him the corrosive charm of unfulfilled dreams.⁵

While the 1953 coup d'état could not have succeeded without internal disaffection, it would not have occurred without foreign aid.⁶ The covert roles of Britain and the US in overthrowing Mossadegh's democratically elected regime exacerbated anti-western feelings.

Although the US had initially been viewed as the better foreign power compared to Britain, the CIA's operation Ajax fundamentally altered Iranian perceptions.⁷ Sattareh Farmanfarmaian summarised these feelings in her memoirs.

² Farmanfarmaian, p. 176.

³ 'Report Submitted By Prime Minister Mossadegh to the *Majlis*', 25 November 1951', p. 6, UKNA.

⁴ Shirin Ebadi, *Iran Awakening, From Prison to Peace Prize: One Woman's Struggle at the Crossroads of History* (London: Random House, 2006), p.4.

⁵ Azar Nafisi, *Things I've Been Silent About: Memories of a Prodigal Daughter* (London: Windmill books Random House, 2010), p.99.

⁶ Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 130.

⁷ Ibid, p. 131.

As always, there had been Iranians willing to sell out their country, and as always the British had arranged for the sale. But this time, the United States had been the paymaster...the way we felt about the US would never be the same again.⁸

Popular belief that US/British involvement had been fundamental to the coup's success and to the restoration of the Pahlavi throne solidified the image of the Shah as a 'US puppet'.⁹ Ebadi described the disdain felt over the reinstatement of Mohammad Reza Shah.

The venal young shah was restored to power, famously thanking Kermit Roosevelt: 'I owe my throne to God, my people, my army, and to you'. It was a profoundly humiliating moment for Iranians, who watched the US intervene in their politics as if their country were some annexed backwater.¹⁰

The Shah's policy reforms over the next two decades depended on western, specifically US, aid. He looked to the West for inspiration and relied heavily on American assistance and advice to affect his modernisation plans. The US increased its investments in Iran becoming a 40% shareholder in the oil consortium of 1954 (shared with BP, Royal Dutch Shell and Compagnie Francaises de Petroles), and Iran's main military supplier and advisor.¹¹ The Shah made clear his preference for the US over other 'western friends', declaring, 'the United States understands us better for the simple reason that it has so many interests here'.¹² Moreover the regime became increasingly repressive. The Shah's sister Ashraf wrote that following Mossadegh's overthrow, Iran's government became 'more and more the Shah's government'.¹³

⁸ Farmanfarmaian, p. 201.

⁹ Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), p. 5.

¹⁰ Ebadi, p. 5.

¹¹ Keddie, *Modern Iran*, pp. 132, 136-137.

¹² Oriana Fallaci, *Interview with History*, trans. John Shepley (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977), p. 280.

¹³ Ashraf Pahlavi, p. 150.

Between 1953 and 1958, the regime arrested over 3,000 party members, with party leaders, militant activists, and military members severely punished, tortured and executed.¹⁴ Between 1955 and 1963 the Shah purified the army, purging 300 to 400 officers who were Tudeh sympathisers and created SAVAK to gather intelligence and suppress any dissent or anti-regime activity.¹⁵ Referring to SAVAK as the 'bête noire' of her brother's regime, Ashraf argued 'it was not his wish to create, as some have said, a kind of GULAG atmosphere or a security force of yes-men'.¹⁶ Farmanfarmaian described the extent of censorship, and control under the 'renewed' Shah, and the fear the name SAVAK conjured up.

Worst of all, a dreaded new secret police called SAVAK, said to have been trained by the CIA and the Israeli MOSSAD, watched the trade unions to prevent strikes and imprisoned left-wing activists.¹⁷

SAVAK's reputation as the Shah's brutal, western-trained, secret police force substantiated the idea that the Pahlavi government primarily served the interests of its western, particularly American, patrons and was thus illegitimate.

The regime not only relied on repression tactics to silence the opposition, but also used cooptation methods, using incentives such as governmental employment, a method that was also applied to the women's movement. Farmanfarmaian recalled how the Shah 'took pains to stay on good terms with the clergy' and allowed his old opponents, even Mossadegh followers, into his fold as long as they did not criticise him.¹⁸ The Shah was attempting to negotiate greater support for himself as Iran's leader, by co-opting the clergy and members of the opposition. Throughout his writings, and even in a later interview with

¹⁴ Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (New Jersey, 1982), pp. 325-326.

¹⁵ Stempel, p. 5.

¹⁶ Ashraf Pahlavi, pp. 150-151.

¹⁷ Farmanfarmaian, p. 207.

¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 207-208.

Orianna Fallaci in 1973, the Shah referred to religious visions he had as a child, as divine affirmation of his leadership, arguing he had been chosen by God to accomplish a mission.¹⁹ Such declarations can be viewed as attempts by the Shah to prove his authenticity as an Iranian leader, by trying in vain to paint himself as a 'chosen' religious figure, tapping into notions of the return of the *Mahdi*/12th Imam. However, western, specifically US, involvement in the ousting of Iran's democratically elected leader, Mohammad Mossadegh, had already compromised the Shah's authenticity as an Iranian leader. The image of the Shah as a Western or 'American puppet' was aggravated further by his heavy reliance on American assistance and advice to affect his modernisation plans.

1.2 Nasser and Nationalisation of the Suez Canal

Unlike the 1953 Iranian coup, the 1952 Free Officers Coup enjoyed a lot of popular support, and was viewed by the majority as a genuine nationalist revolution against internal corruption, political division, and Western intervention. As mentioned in the previous chapter, within a week of Shafiq's 1954 hunger strike, Nasser was staging strikes and demonstrations under the auspices of The Liberation Rally on 25, 26, 27 March 1954 in support of his leadership.²⁰ On 29 March 1954 the RCC announced the postponement of elections until Jan 1956, Naguib was ousted from the government, and all demonstrations by the Muslim Brotherhood, the Wafd Party, and the Communists were put down.²¹

¹⁹ Oriana Fallaci, p. 268.

²⁰ Selma Botman, 'Egyptian Communists and the Free Officers', p. 363.

²¹ 'Sir R. Stevenson to Foreign Office, Telegram no. 449', 30 March 1954, FO371/108327, UKNA.

In September 1954 Nasser published his pamphlet *the Philosophy of the Revolution*.²² He described Egyptian society as being in a process of evolution, striving to catch up to other nations, and presented himself as the leader who could provide the necessary solutions.²³ The manifesto identified three spheres or circles of influence. Defining the Arab circle as the 'first circle' and the most important, Nasser argued that the Arab states shared historical and spiritual features.²⁴ Furthermore, he argued that Palestine's fate could befall any of the other Arab states if the forces of imperialism were not defeated.²⁵ Following the Arab circle, Nasser described two more circles, the Islamic and the African, highlighting the 'tremendous possibilities, which we might realise through the cooperation of all these Muslims'.²⁶ The British Foreign Office named Mohammad Hussein Heykal as the main author of the pamphlet, but argued it showed that Nasser envisaged Egypt 'playing an important role as a member of an Arab-Islamic-African bloc', and that Egypt's recent initiatives 'in the Arab and Islamic world' confirmed that he intended to pursue this ideal.²⁷ Besides making a case for Nasser's ideological leadership, the manifesto was attempting to redefine Egyptian nationalism and authenticity by incorporating wider cultural links with the three highlighted spheres. A definition was being put forward of Egypt as a political and cultural leader of pan-Arab nationalism, which would then contribute and potentially lead a wider pan-Islamic nation, or union of nations.

²² Gamal Abdul Nasser, *The Philosophy of the Revolution*, introduction Dorothy Thompson (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1955), p. 32.

²³ Nasser, *The Philosophy of the Revolution*, pp. 87-88.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 89.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 98.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 113.

²⁷ 'Confidential Report on The Philosophy of the Revolution', 14 September 1954, FO371/108317, UKNA.

On 26 October 1954, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood attempted to assassinate Nasser while he was delivering a public speech, firing eight shots at him from point blank range.²⁸ The timing of the attack, coming within a month of Nasser publishing *Philosophy of the Revolution*, was an advantageous concurrence; Nasser's popularity soared and the incident provoked the regime to ruthlessly suppress its rivals.²⁹ Hundreds were targeted, with many members of the Muslim Brotherhood arrested and several executed.³⁰ In January 1956 Nasser created a constitutional committee, and was declared President with an overwhelming vote in his favour.³¹

Returning from a tour of Cairo in May 1953, US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, publicly endorsed Nasser's demand for the complete withdrawal of British forces from Egypt, convinced that the move would result in Egypt joining the Middle East Defence Organisation (MEDO).³² In July 1954, as a result of increasing US pressure, Winston Churchill agreed to evacuate all British troops from Egypt, but Nasser did not join MEDO.³³ Tensions continued to mount, especially after Nasser refused to join the Baghdad pact of 1955, which was similarly being promoted across the Middle East by Anthony Eden as prevention against Russian-Communist incursions.³⁴ Instead, on 26 July 1956, Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal.³⁵ Britain accused Nasser of committing an aggression against the Suez Canal Company; 'that is surely aggression, in the

²⁸ Joel S. Gordon, p. 179.

²⁹ Ibid, pp. 175-176, 179.

³⁰ Nelson, *Doria Shafik*, p. 216.

³¹ Joel S. Gordon, p. 189.

³² Oren, p. 512.

³³ Ibid, p. 513.

³⁴ Nelson, *Doria Shafik*, p. 226.

³⁵ Robert McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-1967: From the Egyptian Revolution to the Six-Day War* (London: Frank Class, 2003), p. 46.

most naked form, in the political sense of the word.³⁶ British frustrations grew in response to the US's lack of support for their position.³⁷ By September, the British government was declaring 'if Colonel Nasser's illegal act is not resisted by those who stand for international order then international disorder will prevail'.³⁸

At this point the British had already joined forces with the French in a clandestine plot to arm Israel for an attack against Egypt.³⁹ As soon as Israel attacked on 29 October 1956, President Eisenhower and Dulles argued that unless the US helped halt the attack, Egypt and other newly independent countries would turn to the Soviet Union.⁴⁰ Under the threat of economic sanctions, both Britain and France obeyed Eisenhower's orders and withdrew their forces by 22 December. Sadat argued that the Suez War helped solidify the legend of Nasser; 'Egypt, a small country, was at last capable of speaking loud and clear in defiance of the biggest power on earth...From that moment on, Nasser turned into an Egyptian mythical hero'.⁴¹ The Suez Crisis turned Nasser into a an icon of anti-imperialism and of Arab nationalism, encouraging a union between Syria and Egypt, which resulted in the establishment of the United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1958.⁴²

Thus, nationalisation of the Suez Canal and nationalisation of Iranian oil were viewed by their populations as major victories in their anti-imperialist/anti-colonial struggles. Both events led to an increase in anti-

³⁶ Note Accusing Colonel Nasser of Having Taken Aggressive Action Against the Suez Canal Company, 28 August 1956, FO371/119124, UKNA.

³⁷ Telegram no. 3996: Suez, 3 September 1956, FO371/119124, UKNA.

³⁸ Extract from Speech to be Delivered by the Secretary of State at Durham Castle on 22 September 1956, FO371/119143, UKNA.

³⁹ Oren, p. 515.

⁴⁰ McNamara, pp. 56-57.

⁴¹ Anwar el-Sadat, *In Search of identity*, (London: Collins, 1978), p. 143.

⁴² McNamara, p. 116.

western feeling, however, definitions of westernisation developed differently in Egypt and Iran in response to their particular political contexts and foreign policies. America's role in the 1953 coup promoted anti-American feeling, re-drawing new definitions of westernisation as more American, and thus authenticity as un-American, as the Shah's dependency on the US increased. The Shah's modernisation reforms were thus tainted as inauthentic western imitations, as were the Iranians who promoted them, as later chapters will illustrate. In Egypt, the Suez War reinforced anti-British and anti-French feeling, as Nasser increasingly aligned himself with the Soviet Union against notions of western bourgeois capitalism. Egyptian nationalism took on more socialist, Arab, and anti-western capitalist definitions as part of Nasser's pan-Arab/Arab socialist ideology. These changing definitions affected notions of womanhood and women's roles put forward by the Egyptian state, opposition movements, and independent activists, as the next sections will demonstrate.

Section 2: Mohammad Reza Shah and State Feminism in Iran.

This section focuses on the Shah's definition of womanhood and his 1963 White Revolution, a six-point reformist program, which included women's suffrage among other domestic reforms. Bahar has argued that the Shah's main aim in granting women the vote was to win over the middle-class women of the intelligentsia.⁴³ Paidar underlined that the prerequisite for women's rights was the Shah's control over the women's movement, as he, like his father before him, saw himself as the father of the nation who had to have control over the nation's women. Reiterating Najmabadi's argument, Paidar added that while the

⁴³ Sima Bahar, p. 182.

Women's Organisation of Iran developed a 'separate identity to the state' and was not a 'mere puppet of the Shah', its activities were subjected to 'directives from above'.⁴⁴

This section makes 3 main arguments. It is argued firstly that the Shah's definitions of women's emancipation transferred notions of women's domestic and maternal skills to the welfare of the nation through social work. By defining women's primary responsibilities as familial, through their duties as wives and mothers, the Shah underlined their political position as secondary. Furthermore works like Jalal Al-i-Ahmed's *Gharbzadeghi* (westoxification), which denounced Pahlavi policies as an attack on women's roles as 'preservers of tradition',⁴⁵ encouraged many Iranians to view the Shah's 1963 White Revolution reforms, such as female suffrage, women's election to parliament, and WOI state-feminists as inauthentic extensions of the 'westoxified' regime.

However, this section argues secondly that although the WOI was subjected to 'directives from above', WOI activists adapted around this changing patriarchal context to put forward their own initiatives in line with state goals. Specifically, it is argued that women struck new bargains with the Shah's government around his desire to appear modern and enlightened by enlisting the support and leadership of the Shah's sister in consolidating the High Council of Women's Organisations of Iran, which saw them achieve the vote and be elected to Parliament for the first time in 1963. Similarly, despite the state's patriarchal constraints and increasing ideological and religious opposition to the White Revolution reforms, the WOI continued to subtly challenge limits on

⁴⁴ Paidar, p. 150.

⁴⁵ Jalal Al-i-Ahmad, *Occidentosis: A Plague from the West*, trans. R. Campbell (Berkley: Mizan Press, 1984), pp. 70-71.

women's political and social rights by reassuring conservative leaders whilst putting forward progressive initiatives like the 1967 Family Planning Act.

Furthermore, Nezhat Nafisi's outspoken criticism against the 1967 Act shows that the same patriarchal bargains were not necessarily acceptable to all state feminists. However, it is argued that the majority of WOI women (like Bamdad) preferred to negotiate around such contradictions, viewing the WOI's strategy of reassuring men whilst pushing for more changes, the better bargain at the time.

2.1 The Shah, Women, and the Women's Rights Movement.

Throughout his reign, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi cultivated a reputation for himself as a champion of women's rights. In *Mission for My Country*, published in 1961, the Shah highlighted Iran's advances under Pahlavi rule, arguing that the most impressive were in the realm of women's rights.⁴⁶ Yet the Shah's views on women and feminism were not always as enlightened as they appeared, as they were based on his desire to project a modern image to the international community. He also wrote that while he 'personally objected to the veil on aesthetic as well as other grounds', he chose to overlook his father's anti-veiling policy, preferring 'to see a natural evolution, rather than to force the pace', but added that he hoped 'the veil as well as other characterless female clothing would pass out of favour', emphasising women's 'unique feminine loveliness' and physical differences with men.⁴⁷ Referring to the women's rights movement, he argued that the crux of the problem was that terms such as 'emancipation' and

⁴⁶ Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, *Mission for My Country* (New York: McGraw- Hill, 1961), p. 227.

⁴⁷ Ibid, pp. 232, 235.

'equality' had been used 'much too loosely and in ways that damaged women's own cause.'⁴⁸ He argued that some 'misguided women' viewed emancipation 'as a sort of license to gratify their own whims and selfish desires, writing 'the blunt truth is that each new right exercised by woman imposes upon her new responsibilities'.⁴⁹

To hear some so-called feminists talk, you would think it meant freedom not to marry, freedom not to have children, freedom not to devote themselves to their children's welfare if they have any, freedom not to shoulder any civic responsibilities.⁵⁰

He thus defined women's civic responsibilities as their familial and biological 'duties' to the nation as wives, mothers, biological and cultural reproducers and nurturers. The Shah argued that throughout history women had shown themselves to be unequal to men in ability, and that he had consequently never allowed a woman to influence him at any time in his life.

Women are important in a man's life only if they're beautiful and charming and keep their femininity...this business of feminism, for instance. What do these feminists want? What do you want? You say equality. Oh! I don't want to seem rude, but...you're equal in the eyes of the law but not excuse my saying so, in ability.⁵¹

So whilst he stressed modern Iranian labour law provided 'equal pay for equal work' regardless of sex, and that more government positions were now open to women on an 'equal basis', he ultimately emphasised women's main civic roles as wives and mothers, primarily defining them as supporters and nurturers of the nation through their support and nurturing of the family.⁵²

The educated Persian woman of today...must be a good wife...as her husband's intellectual companion. Her next major task is the proper training of her children...finally she must contribute to the modernisation

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, *Mission For My Country*, p. 237.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 235.

⁵¹ Fallaci, pp. 271-272.

⁵² Ibid, p. 236.

of her country by taking part in welfare and other civic functions; she must forget prestige and social position.⁵³

Viewing social services as an extension of women's maternal and nurturing roles in the family, he encouraged and defined this line of work as nationalist activity for women.

Farmanfarmaian recollected that in the fall of 1958 the Shah had become curious about her School for Social Work, asking if her activities were really necessary when his own family oversaw a 'great deal of social service' already.⁵⁴ Farmanfarmaian explained her institution's purpose was specifically to train personnel in social services, and informed him that the current orphanages and institutions were far from satisfactory.⁵⁵

All at once the Shah jumped up impatiently...went to his telephone...he ordered the listener on the other end to see that in the future, the Tehran School Of Social Work would receive 20,000 rials a month (about 300 dollars)...I could hardly wait to begin saying smoothly to reluctant donors at dinner parties 'The Shah himself is already supporting our work'.⁵⁶

Farmanfarmian explained that she could not have taken social work to Iran without the support of the regime, as there were no private foundations to get financial aid from, and fundamentally no undertaking could succeed without the regime's support.⁵⁷ The Shah's writings indicate that he viewed himself as the nation itself, its rescuer, declaring that he had almost single-handedly 'saved the country'.

I mean, it's not fair for me to take all the credit for myself for the great things that I've done for Iran. Mind you I could. But I don't want to, because I know that there was someone else behind me. It was God.⁵⁸

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Farmanfarmaian, p. 245.

⁵⁵ Ibid, pp. 245-246.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 247.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 208.

⁵⁸ Fallaci, p. 268.

His statements and actions indicated that he believed Iran's 'modern' image would be portrayed through his own image as a 'modern' and enlightened liberator.

Early in 1961 the Shah declared that he would like to see Iranian women enjoy the same basic rights as men, but that the absence of women's suffrage should not be seen as an absence of women's rights, arguing 'the women of Switzerland still do not vote, but that is scarcely a sign that they have no rights'.⁵⁹ Such comparisons demonstrated that despite statements to the contrary, the Shah held Western Europe and the US as his ideal modernisation models.

This desire often led to exaggerated statements about the modernisation, or rather westernisation of gender-relations in Iran. For example when discussing female education in 1961 he wrote

There are now some 2,000 girls studying at the University of Tehran...all of our universities are co-educational and there you increasingly see our young men and women associating with easy informality.⁶⁰

Yet, Shirin Ebadi described her experience at law school three years later, pointing out that gender segregation or 'traditional formalities' were still upheld by students themselves.

The students at Tehran University came from middle or working-class backgrounds and didn't view their social lives as a realm for experimentation...in class women still occupied the front rows, and men the back.⁶¹

Thus, a substantial gap existed between the state/Shah's definition of gender-relations, and what gender-relations looked like on the ground amongst the majority of the population.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 235.

⁶⁰ Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, *Mission For My country*, p. 234.

⁶¹ Ebadi, p.19.

Conflating the nation with the monarchy, the Shah equated the nation's progress with the projection of his own international image as a progressive modernising monarch. Consequently, he attempted to bring all progressive movements, like the women's rights movement, into the regime's fold, co-opting independent activity so that he could present progressive reforms as benevolent state grants. The Shah's definition of women's emancipation made no room for personal or professional ambition, encouraging women to extend their 'natural' domestic skills to the welfare of the wider national community. By underlining a woman's primary responsibility as familial, the Shah underlined her political position as secondary to that of her men folk. However, women attempted to strike bargains with the Shah's government around his desire to appear modern and enlightened, whilst simultaneously challenging his patriarchal limitations and definitions of feminism and women's emancipation, as the next sections will show.

2.2 Ashraf Pahlavi and The High Council of Women's Organisation

Badr ol-Molouk Bamdad, Saffiyeh Firuz and Mehrangiz Dowlatshahi were among those women's rights activists, who despite earlier setbacks during the Mossadegh era, attempted to capitalise on the regime change, by enlisting the help of the Shah's sister, Ashraf. Bamdad recalled the re-establishment of Dowlatshahi's organisation, Rah-e-Now (The New Path) society, in 1955, which set up a welfare centre in south Tehran, providing literacy classes and teaching domestic science and childcare.⁶² She writes that in 1956 a manifesto was published by a federative body composed of the Council of Women of Iran, the Women's League of Supporters of the Declaration of Human Rights, the Women's

⁶² Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, pp. 109-110.

Relief Committee of Tehran, the New Path Society, the Women's Teachers' Association, and the Women Medical Practitioners Centre, reinstating their commitment to 'winning equality of women's rights with men'.⁶³

However, Mahnaz Afkhami, who would become secretary of the Women's Organisation of Iran (WOI), explained that women struggled to unite and coordinate their efforts, and that after several failed attempts to unify various organisations like the New Path Society and the Women's League of Supporters of the Declaration of Human Rights, women went to Ashraf Pahlavi, 'a powerful personality in her own right', to ask her to lend support to the movement.⁶⁴ She wrote that in response, the princess commissioned

A 50-member organising committee to prepare the articles of association for a new federal body called the High Council of Women's Organisations of Iran. The High Council came into being formally in 1959 with a membership of 17 organisations...It concentrated its efforts largely on gaining the franchise.⁶⁵

However, Ashraf Pahlavi gave a different account of these events, arguing that at the time she began her work for women's rights, Iran had but 'a few scattered women's organisations working at random, without any long-range goals or purpose', and that she had been the person to initiate contact with these groups, meeting with their representatives to 'create a framework for our women's movement'.⁶⁶ Her portrayal of herself as 'initiator' and leader of the movement is not surprising when put into the context of her inflated sense of self-importance and domineering character, which were partly fuelled by her political experiences up to that point.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 107

⁶⁴ Afkhami, 'The Women's Organisation of Iran', pp. 112-113.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 113.

⁶⁶ Ashraf Pahlavi, p. 154.

By this stage, Ashraf Pahlavi had already developed a controversial reputation as a covert political force behind her father and brother's regimes. Mossadegh himself argued she had conspired with the Americans to mastermind the 1953 Coup, pointing to an article in the French newspaper *Le Figaro* on 20 September 1955, that he argued proved the true identity of those who were behind his overthrow.⁶⁷

On 11 August 1953, Alan Dulles (Director of CIA) held a secret meeting at the foot of the Swiss Alps with two very important persons. One was Roy Henderson, American ambassador to Iran...the other VIP was the Shah's twin sister, Princess Ashraf.⁶⁸

Ashraf Pahlavi recounted the role she played in assisting the Americans and British in 'aiding' her brother against Mossadegh's regime.⁶⁹ According to her, while in France, she secretly met two men who turned out to be the personal representatives of John Foster Dulles and Winston Churchill.⁷⁰ She explained that her role was to deliver a message to the Shah, and that she was given an Air France flight number to Iran and instructed to be at Orly Airport just before flight time.⁷¹ When Mossadegh became aware of her presence in Iran she was ordered to leave within 24 hours. In that time she was able to pass the 'secret letter', whose contents 'she still cannot reveal', to her brother via Queen Soraya.⁷²

The pride expressed over this 'contribution' not only illustrates an imperious and dismissive attitude towards popular Iranian feeling at the time, but an uncompromising ambition in maintaining her familial dynasty. This is

⁶⁷ Dr Mohammad Musaddiq, *Musaddiq's Memoirs*, ed. Homa Katouzian, trans. SH Amin and H Katouzian (London: JEBHE National Movement of Iran, 1988), pp. 282-283.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ashraf Pahlavi, p. 134.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 135.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 136.

⁷² Ibid, pp.138, 140.

interesting when put in the context of her later role as a feminist leader. Her references to covert meetings with international leaders show that she saw herself as a serious political player. One such example was her secret meetings with Joseph Stalin in 1946, to convince him to end Russian support for the Azerbaijan Republic.⁷³ She admitted 'this involvement of mine in politics generated a well-oiled rumour machine...soon European newspapers christened me 'The Power Behind the Throne' and 'The Black Panther of Iran'.⁷⁴ She blamed the rumours on the fact that politics was 'an exclusively male domain' in Iran.⁷⁵ Denied an official political role, she negotiated around these constraints to dictate a realm she was authorised to, 'women's rights'. Her actions can be seen as an attempt to challenge male domination of politics and patriarchal limits on women's political activity through her leadership and work with the High Council of Women's Organisations (later the WOI).

2.3 The Discourse of Westoxification

While the Shah was writing about Iran's modernisation advances in his 1961 memoirs, his regime was engaged in brutal suppression of oppositional protests characterised by the riots of Tehran University students in January 1962, and the arrest of oppositional National Front leaders in December 1962.⁷⁶ 1962 was also the year that Jalal Al-i-Ahmad's infamous book *Gharbzadeghi* was first secretly published. During the 1960s Al-i-Ahmad became an intellectual leader for a new generation of Iranian thinkers.⁷⁷ *Gharbzadeghi* ('Occidentosis', 'Westoxification', or 'West-struckness') highlighted a major concern among many Iranians who

⁷³ Ibid, p. 86.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 76.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Keddie, *Modern Iran*, pp. 143, 145.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 189.

were struggling with notions of authenticity and national identity in reaction to Pahlavi modernisation reforms and the westernisation of Iranian society. Prior to the rise of Mossadegh, Al-i-Ahmad had been a member of the Communist Tudeh Party, but left the party along with a group of activists led by Khalil Mailiki, after the Tudeh insisted on defending the Soviet Union's refusal to prevent an autonomous and largely communist Azerbaijan from being toppled by the Iranian government.⁷⁸ He became politically active again when the departed group formed an alliance with *Hizb-i-Zahmat-Kashan* (Toiler's party) to support Mossadegh and his oil nationalisation campaign in the *Majlis*.⁷⁹

In his famous work, Al-i-Ahmad wrote 'I speak of 'occidentosis' as of tuberculosis'.⁸⁰ This 'disease from the West', he argued, had led to the loss of true Iranian 'culture', and authenticity, compromising Iranian identity. Al-i-Ahmad explained that Iran had resorted to *Gharbzadeh* (westoxified) actions, which he defined as the blind imitation of western models of modernity, culture, industrialisation, education, economics, social behaviour, turning it into a political and economic 'pawn' of the West. He defined the occident as Europe, Soviet Russia, and North America, and the 'occidentotic' as one without belief, character or authenticity, without direction or aim, who was neither religious nor irreligious.⁸¹ He described him as schooled, literate, perhaps educated, but effeminate, always 'sprucing himself up', obsessed with European fashion and Western industrial goods.⁸² He declared that the various European style schools in Iran showed no trace of tradition, 'no relation between yesterday and

⁷⁸ Jalal Al-i-Ahmad, p. 11.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 27.

⁸¹ Ibid, pp. 94-95.

⁸² Ibid, pp. 95-96.

tomorrow, between home and school, between East and West' and thus churned out deficient individuals.⁸³ Moreover, he accused 'westoxification' of increasing fanaticism in religious quarters, writing 'the clergy have drawn into their cocoons of fanaticism and paralysis in the face of the West's onslaught'.⁸⁴

Al-i-Ahmad's critique challenged Pahlavi gender definitions and women's reforms. In his chapter entitled 'war of contradictions' he wrote 'we now resemble an alien people, with unfamiliar customs, a culture with no roots in our land and no chance of blossoming here'. He defined the 5th contradiction of *occidentosis* as the 'emancipation of women':

We believe women cannot be judges, cannot serve as witnesses, and as for voting or serving in the *Majlis*, the whole idea is idiotic, since even men have no such right, really...Divorce, too, is the male prerogative...so we really have given women only the right to parade themselves in public.⁸⁵

The statement highlighted Pahlavi reforms such as Reza Shah's unveiling policy as superficial 'westoxified' notions that had not translated into any serious changes for women in terms of greater social or political rights.

Unless the work of men and women and their services to society are equally valued and paid, unless alongside men, women assume responsibility for administering a sector of society (other than the home, a private function shared between men and women) unless material and spiritual equality is established between the sexes, we will have succeeded only in swelling an army of consumers of powder and lipstick-the products of the West's industries-another form of *occidentosis*. I am speaking here of the cities, of the nation's leadership, from which women are excluded.⁸⁶

In this passage, he challenged the Shah's primary definition of women's responsibility as domestic and put forward a more political definition of women's roles, arguing familial responsibilities should be shared between men

⁸³ Ibid, p. 113.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 117.

⁸⁵ Ibid, pp.70-71.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

and women, and that women should be responsible for other sectors of society alongside men, including national leadership.

We have drawn women, the preservers of tradition, family, and future generations into vacuity, into the street. We have forced them into ostentation and frivolity, every day to freshen up and try on a new style and wander around.⁸⁷

By emphasising women's roles as 'preservers of tradition' his portrayal of Pahlavi womanhood as 'westoxified' and thus inauthentic, represented a wider attack on Iranian culture and nationhood as defined by the Shah. In other words, his reinterpretation and application of the age-old constructed 'East-West' dichotomy to the Pahlavi state, placed its women's reforms on the wrong side of this 'divide', and encouraged the assessment of female behaviour and sartorial practices as a way of testing/proving cultural authenticity.

2.4 The Shah's 1963 White Revolution and Female Suffrage

The Shah's 1963 White Revolution was largely responsible for his international image as a champion of women's emancipation. The White Revolution was a six-point reformist program, which included women's suffrage alongside land reform, sale of government owned factories to finance land reform, nationalisation of forests, a national literacy corps, and a plan to give workers a share of industrial profits.⁸⁸ While the White Revolution confronted the issue of women's political rights and led to the appointment of women to parliament, it nevertheless upheld many contradictions and hypocritical double standards, which some women chose to confront.

Referring to the suffrage reform the Shah argued, 'How could we claim to be progressive and liberal and at the same time imprison half our society in such

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 145.

a situation?⁸⁹ Yet, Bamdad explained that while the White Revolution did contain a six-point program, the right to vote on the referendum was not initially extended to women and was defined ‘in accordance with the existing electoral laws; ‘i.e. the right to vote would be reserved for men and denied to the other half of the nation’.⁹⁰ Bamdad wrote that women’s associations were ‘deeply angered when they learned in this all-important referendum the old notion that only men inherit human rights would still prevail’, and so on the anniversary of Reza Shah’s Unveiling Decree, on 7 January 1963, they published a cancellation notice of their annual celebration in protest.⁹¹ The Council of Iranian Women’s Organisations met instead to demand the right to vote and protest in front of the Iranian *Majlis*/senate ‘*mahrum-mandan-i-zanan az huquq-i-haq makhsusan khoddari-i-dolat az entekhabat*’ (the ongoing deprivation of women’s legitimate rights, especially the government’s refusal of their electoral rights).⁹²

This spontaneous and earnest upsurge definitely expedited the enactment of legislation to grant Iranian women full civic and political rights as part of the Charter of the White Revolution of the Shah and People.⁹³

Thus, according to Bamdad’s account, women’s rights activists challenged the patriarchal limits of the White Revolution from the outset.

Bamdad’s choice of wording illustrates that the earlier suffrage petitions of 1943 and 1952 had helped solidify the idea of female suffrage as a critical and legitimate component of patriarchal bargains going forward for activists like Bamdad, Firuz, and Dowlatshahi. Moreover, lawyer Mehrangiz Manuchehriyan founded *Ettehad-i Zanan-i Huquqdan-i Iran* (The Union of Iranian Women

⁸⁹ Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, *The White Revolution* (Tehran: Imperial Pahlavi Library, 1967), p. 92.

⁹⁰ Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, p. 116.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁹² Bamdad, *Zan-i-Irani*, pp. 107, 108.

⁹³ Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, p. 118.

Lawyers) in 1961, which republished her thesis '*Integad-i Gavanin-i Assasi va Madani va Kayfari-yi-Iran az Nazareh Huquq-i-Zanan*' (Criticism of Iran's Constitutional, Civil, and Criminal laws from the Perspective of Women's Rights) in 1963 through one of its constituents, the volunteer Organisation for the Protection of the Family.⁹⁴ Women's bargaining leverage on suffrage being stronger at this point given the Shah's desire to present himself as an advanced or modern emancipator, these women's rights activists used the opportunity to extend the regime's initial reforms, introducing and striking new patriarchal bargains with the state over this specific issue. The Shah's reflection on these reforms years later, 'thanks to the reforms, Iran was earning her place alongside the most advanced states', demonstrated these motives in granting women suffrage.⁹⁵

By the summer of 1963, fundamentalist clerics were rallying the masses, and charging the regime with attacking Islam and people's freedoms.⁹⁶ At the centre of clerical opposition to the 1963 reforms, particularly women's suffrage, was Ruhollah Khomeini. In March 1963 paratroopers and SAVAK attacked the *Faiziyeh* religious school in Qom, where Khomeini preached, and a number of students were killed.⁹⁷ On 3 June 1963, on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, Khomeini gave a scathing anti-Shah sermon, drawing parallels between him and the 'inhumane' Umayyad leader Yazid ibn Mu'awiya, who

⁹⁴ Khorasani, Ardalan, *Sinatur*, p. 242.

⁹⁵ Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *The Shah's Story*, trans. Teresa Waugh (London: Michael Joseph, 1980), p. 112.

⁹⁶ Stempel, p. 6.

⁹⁷ Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 147

waged war on the prophet's grandson Hussein, and 'defenceless women and innocent children'.⁹⁸

What business did it have with the madrasa or with its students, like the eighteen year-old *sayyid* who was killed?...they are fundamentally opposed to Islam itself and the existence of the religious class.⁹⁹

He argued the attack on *Faiziyeh* had been an Israeli plan and accused the Shah of being an Israeli puppet¹⁰⁰ Denouncing the Shah as an imperialist puppet of Israel and America, he labelled the White Revolution a deliberate 'deception' of the Iranian people'.¹⁰¹ Farmanfarmaian recalled how Khomeini's speech, and his threats against the regime led to his immediate arrest.¹⁰² News of his arrest saw traditional processions of mourning blow up into anti-regime demonstrations, spreading to other major cities.¹⁰³

Prime Minister Assadollah Alam used severe military force to crush the uprising.¹⁰⁴ It took several days to end the uprising, with a death toll numbering in the hundreds, although figures would swell into the thousands in the propaganda build-up to the 1979 Revolution.¹⁰⁵ Farmanfarmaian's school substantiated the raised death toll, authenticating the claims of over a thousand families, 'the number would have been twice that, had victims' relatives not been afraid their names would end up in SAVAK files'.¹⁰⁶ Farmanfarmaian wrote that

⁹⁸ Ruhollah Khomeini, 'The Afternoon of 'Ashura' speech, delivered on 3 June 1963 at Fayziya Madrasa in Qum, in *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. Hamid Algar (Berkley: Mizan Press, 1981), pp. 177-180.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Farmanfarmaian, p. 252

¹⁰³ Stempel, p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Farmanfarmaian, pp. 252-254.

realising the riots had been a political disaster, the cabinet and Prime Minister Alam attempted to compensate the victims by contacting her school for help.¹⁰⁷

Not believing that Iranian soldiers would shoot at them, the protesters kept marching. The army, under orders to shoot to kill, mowed them down. The riots that followed in the capital and in other cities for the next 3 days were the worst of modern times...the central city was a battle zone.¹⁰⁸

The regime's attack on its own people gave greater credibility to notions of the state as an inauthentic, as a western/American/Israeli agent, thus strengthening the arguments of oppositional thinkers like Al-i-Ahmed and Islamist clerics like Khomeini.

2.5 The WOI and The 1967 Family Protection Act

Despite the conservative backlash to the Shah's White Revolution reforms, some female activists manoeuvred their activity around the state's goals in order to garner more support for their initiatives. Bamdad argued that Iran's women's movement owed much to the support of Ashraf Pahlavi, who, she wrote, immediately called on women's associations to organise anti-illiteracy classes throughout the country in line with her brother's White Revolution literacy campaign.¹⁰⁹ Discussing the changes that came into place when Ashraf first became 'honorary president' of the 17 pre-existing women's organisations in 1959, she recalled,

In the following years the scale of activity grew so much that a new and expanded organisation was founded on 20 August 1966 by HH Princess Ashraf.¹¹⁰

According to Afkhami when the Women's Organisation of Iran (WOI) was formally created in November 1966, a 5,000-member assembly of women

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 253.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p.252

¹⁰⁹ Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, pp. 121-122.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 112.

representatives from all regions of the country was elected, and 55 existing women's associations affiliated themselves to the newly created body.¹¹¹ She added that thanks to the White Revolution a new attitude of positive caution began operating with regards to women's rights, which made it easier for women to communicate their demands.¹¹² As benefactors of the Shah's regime, it is not surprising that the writings of both Bamdad, president of the Civil Rights Committee of the High Council of Iranian Women, and Mahnaz Afkhami, secretary general of the WOI between 1970-1978, painted a positive picture of Ashraf Pahlavi's leadership and experiences with the WOI. However, there were a few women within the state system who directly challenged the regime's policies from both political and feminist perspectives.

Writer Azar Nafisi's mother, Nezhat Nafisi, was one of the first women along with Mehrangiz Manuchehriyan to enter the Senate (or upper-house of the *Majlis* in 1963 as part of the White Revolution reforms.¹¹³ In 1964 when the government brought the controversial Capitulation Law to Parliament, which gave diplomatic immunity to American military personal and placed them beyond the jurisdiction of Iranian civil and criminal courts, Nezhat Nafisi was one of the few who refused to support the bill.¹¹⁴ While Nezhat Nafisi's rejection of the Capitulation Law gained her respect from many people, her decision to oppose the Family Protection Law of 1967 confused many, and 'scandalised those who were pushing for women's rights'.¹¹⁵ Ashraf Pahlavi described the 'uphill fight' and 'hundreds of hours' of labouring behind the passage of the

¹¹¹ Mahnaz Afkhami, 'The Women's Organization Of Iran, p. 114.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Azar Nafisi, p. 149.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 153.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

Family Protection Act, which she described as one of the WOI's proudest achievements.¹¹⁶

Senator Manuchehriyan first drafted and submitted a new Family Protection Act, inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, on October 24 1966, carrying the signatures of 15 other senators.¹¹⁷ Although Manuchehriyan's campaign was not officially tied to the WOI's activities, their campaigns were not unlinked.¹¹⁸ The Novin Party, of which Mehrangiz Dowlatshahi was a member, similarly announced the opening of an Iranian Women's seminar to discuss various women's rights issues, particularly the question of Family Law. Only four out of the 14 speakers however were female, including Mehrangiz Dowlatshahi and future Minister of Education Dr Farokhro Parsa. Khorasani and Ardalān argue that these proceedings encouraged competition between the various parties and groups involved in the drafting and submission of these family laws, encouraging women to work in parallel with each other rather than unifying their efforts to gain greater support.¹¹⁹

Ashraf Pahlavi explained that in order to get male support, especially from the religious sector, women of the WOI had to make many compromises and be careful how they presented things, reassuring men at the same time as pushing for more changes.

We enlisted the cooperation of various ministers...and we sought the endorsement of Iran's more progressive mullahs, to whom we always prefaced our appeals with such remarks as; "Well, of course we understand that a woman's primary responsibility is to her husband and her children, but..."¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Ashraf Pahlavi, pp. 155-156.

¹¹⁷ Khorasani, Ardalān, Sinatur, pp.265-266.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 266.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ashraf Pahlavi, 156.

The Act was passed in 1967, and again in stronger form in 1975, with Ashraf Pahlavi arguing it gave Iranian women ‘the most sweeping civil rights in the Islamic Middle East’, as it recognised a wife as an equal partner in marriage and divorce, seriously limited polygamy by applying strict conditions to it, including a first wife’s consent, and in the event of a divorce granted her child custody and established a process through which she could collect alimony and child support.¹²¹

However, Nezhat Nafisi’s opposition to the original Act in 1967 was based on her view that it was hypocritical to pass a law claiming to protect women when they still required the notarised permission of their husbands to leave the country.¹²² Azar Nafisi wrote that she disagreed with her mother about the Family Protection Law, and felt she was too inflexible in not accepting the compromise the Act proposed.¹²³ Yet, state feminists like Bamdad also wrote that the Family Protection Law did not touch on many areas where reform was desperately needed, and that the areas it did touch upon where often difficult to implement due to a lack of educational and ‘moral’ advancement.¹²⁴

Nafisi’s outspoken criticism showed that the same patriarchal bargain was not necessarily acceptable to all state feminists at all times, and that some were willing to speak out, while others like Bamdad chose to accept the compromise and persist around the contradictions and constraints applying the WOI’s strategy of reassuring men whilst pushing for more changes. However, despite some positive gains for women, growing opposition to the White Revolution and works like Al-e-Ahmed’s *‘Gharbzadeghi’* demeaned the efforts

¹²¹ Ashraf Pahlavi, p. 155.

¹²² Azar Nafisi, p. 153.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, p. 125.

and authenticity of the WOI by portraying it as an extension of the Shah's inauthentic, 'westoxified' regime. In the lead up to the 1979 Revolution, 'patriarchal battles' between the state and the opposition would see alternative models of modern Iranian womanhood compete for authenticity as the next chapter will show.

Section 3: Egyptian feminism and Women's Rights under Nasser

Unlike the Shah, Nasser's motives in granting women the vote was not inspired by a desire to present himself as a modern emancipator by western standards, but instead by his definition and promotion of a new pan-Arab socialist ideology. Soha Abdel Kader argues that Nasser's socialist ideology incorporated a commitment to gender-equality, which led to Egyptian women being granted the vote and right to run for political office in 1956.¹²⁵ Nelson and Talhami have argued that Nasser granted women the vote in an attempt to win the support of women from different classes and co-opt the women's movement,¹²⁶ and to help him develop a new female leadership more compatible with the regime's socialist outlook.¹²⁷ State feminism, Hatem argues, thus contributed to the political legitimacy of Nasser's regime and its progressive credentials.¹²⁸

This section argues that while Nasser's socialist leanings meant a commitment to gender-equality, he still defined 'different' duties for men and women. He emphasised women's duties in 'work, the factory, technical education and military training' in accordance with socialist constructs of

¹²⁵ Abdel Kader, p. 116.

¹²⁶ Nelson, *Doria Shafik*, p. 227.

¹²⁷ Ghada Talhami, p. 19.

¹²⁸ Mervat F. Hatem, 'Economic and Political Liberation in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, May 1992, p. 231.

womanhood, defining their nationalist roles as teachers and nurturers of the next generation. Yet he also defined the family, particularly women's special role within the family, as the basis of society, limiting women's political and military activity, as his speech in November 1959 showed.

Building on Nelson and Talhami, this section argues secondly that Nasser not only wished to co-opt women of different classes but of different ideological groups as well. Thus, rather than seeking to co-opt the 'women's movement', it is argued that Nasser sought to co-opt and reward women who complemented his own views, whether they were feminists or Islamist women, with or without direct ties to the women's rights movement. As such women like al-Said and al-Shati' were both useful to the state, even though they promoted very different women's discourses. Al-Said's stress on equal education opportunities directly complemented Nasser's reforms, while al-Shati's description of ideal Muslim women as politically supportive, rather than politically independent, and as maternal nurturers, coincided with Nasser's own ideas.

Nasser's political legitimacy did not go unchallenged by both women opposed to his regime, and very occasionally, by those co-opted or working with the regime. For instance, al-Said chose certain moments to critique the regime on issues like Personal Status Law and women's new economic burdens. However, Doria Shafiq's one-woman assault on the regime, coming at a volatile period of Nasser's leadership, transgressed both existing state limits on women's political activity, and limits of women's nationalist behaviour upheld by other female activists, resulting in a double blow of state suppression, and being outcast by the wider women's movement. Al-Ghazali, on the other hand, challenged patriarchal control of the state as an 'apostate', whilst choosing to

cooperate and negotiate around the patriarchal limits of the Islamist movement in pursuit of their common goal of an Islamic state. It is argued thirdly, that Nasser tolerated criticism from state-supported feminist al-Said because it did not break bargains made with the regime over common goals, but excluded, outlawed and suppressed women like Shafiq and al-Ghazali, irrespective of their different socio-political affiliations, because their actions transgressed state limits on women's political behaviour.

3.1 Nasser's Arab Socialist Woman

Like the Shah, Nasser understood that women had to join the public and professional spheres if the country was to compete with other modern nations. From the start he had been careful to reassure people that his brand of socialism was a balanced one, reiterating to Esther Fahmi Wissa upon ascending the presidency that the regime's trend of thought was 'oriented towards a balanced Socialism, not the type of Socialism that you were afraid of. I think that such a program will lessen the possibility of political extremism'.¹²⁹ He explained his brand of socialism in a speech he gave in 1965 at the Training Camp of The Arab Socialist Union Youth Leaders at Helwan.

Our Socialism emanates from our own conditions. Socialism means the elimination of man's exploitation by his fellow men... At the same time, it means the creation of a prosperous society by any means...this, simply, is socialism.¹³⁰

Article 2 of the 1956 Constitution guaranteed voting for men and women over the age of 18, while article 61 defined women's 'contribution to public life as a

¹²⁹ Gamal Abdel Nasser, 'Translation of Letter Addressed to Mrs. Esther Fahmy Wissa, 5 August 1956', in Hanna Fahmy Wissa, *Assiout: the Saga of an Egyptian Family*, (Lewes: The Book Guild 1994), p. 414.

¹³⁰ Gamal Abdel Nasser, 'Address by President Nasser at Helwan, 18 November 1965', (Cairo: Ministry of National Guidance, Information Department, 1966), p. 28.

national duty'.¹³¹ Nasser's commitment to gender equality was underlined in the regime's 1962 Charter, which declared that women were equal to men, and guaranteed equal opportunities, including free university education and guaranteed jobs for all graduates.¹³² However, while Nasser's socialist leanings meant a commitment to gender-equality, he still referred to 'different' duties for men and women. Article 5 of the 1956 Constitution defined the family as the 'basis of society, founded on religion, morality, and nationalism' while article 19 stated the state would 'facilitate the successful reconciling/balancing of women's work in society with her duties in the family'.¹³³ Nasser argued that the Arab woman influenced society whether she wanted to or not—'and her influence is great, whether at home, where she influences the family, or at school—she influences every stage of society'.¹³⁴ Extending women's nurturing role in the family to the wider nation, he defined women's public roles through professional teaching. 'Being teachers you have the responsibility in building this society. Being teachers you have the responsibility of bringing up the new generation'.¹³⁵

While Nasser stressed women's nationalist roles as teachers and nurturers of the next generation, both in the home and at school, he also underlined their industrial employment and economic contributions to production according to more socialist ideas. In an address at the Women's Teacher's Military Training Camp in Alexandria in 1959, Nasser declared:

¹³¹ Ahmad Taha Muhammad, *al-Marah al-Misriyah Bayna al-Madi wa-al-Hadir* (S.l: Mutbi 'a Dar al-Ta'lif, 1979), p. 72.

¹³² Badran, 'Competing Agenda: Feminist, Islam, and the State in Egypt', p. 29.

¹³³ Taha Muhammad, p. 71.

¹³⁴ Gamal Abdel Nasser, 'Arab Woman's Mission, President Nasser's Address at the Women Teacher's Military Training Camp, Alexandria, 4 August 1959' in *President Nasser's Speeches and Press-interviews* (Cairo: U.A.R. Information Department, 1958-), p. 371.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

Now that the revolution has declared equality in rights and responsibilities, and now that the Arab girl can walk side by side with the Arab boy in constructing the country, whether in work, in the factory, in technical education or in military training, the Arab girl must believe and feel that she has a great role to play in the construction of this country.¹³⁶

His speech underlined women's duties in 'work, the factory, technical education and military training' in accordance with socialist constructs of womanhood.

However, there were limits to his definition of women's political and military contributions. Asked why Arab women were not recruited into the Army when they had stood side by side with men in the political, economic and social spheres since their 'emancipation', Nasser responded, 'the answer to this question is very simple. We still have plenty of men, and women have more duties ahead of them and different duties.'¹³⁷

Nasser's wife, Tahia, did not partake in any political or feminist activity, and was generally kept uninformed of political decisions and events.¹³⁸ Tahia Nasser's memoirs show that her husband viewed her political role as a secondary and supportive one, her primary role being in the family sphere, and did not encourage her to take a more politically active, or public role. Al-Jawwadi has argued that by virtue of their social, educational, and class upbringing, Nasser and most of his colleagues held more 'conservative' views on women's activity, particularly in their own homes, and as such while the regime initiated many positive reforms for women, there were still powerful obstacles hindering women's social and political participation.¹³⁹ As the next sections will illustrate, Nasser only tolerated and promoted women's discourses and activities where they complemented or strengthened his own political position, ruthlessly

¹³⁶ p. 370.

¹³⁷ Nasser, 'Address by President Nasser at Helwan, 18 November 1965', pp. 27-28.

¹³⁸ Tahia Gamal Abdel Nasser, *Zikrayat Maou* (Cairo: Dar Al-Shorouk, 2011), pp. 62, 105.

¹³⁹ al-Jawwadi, p. 28.

suppressing any form of women's activity that appeared to be doing the opposite.

3.2 Co-optation and Suppression of Egypt's Female Activists

Similarly to the Shah, Nasser cracked down on all forms of opposition and independent activity, which included political parties, the press, and women's organisations.¹⁴⁰ Nasser explained such measures partly through the definition of his brand of socialism, which he argued meant that political freedom would not be possible until all social exploitation had been removed, and that any domination by the state in the meantime was done to prevent exploitation.¹⁴¹

At the same time that Nasser's regime granted women the right to vote, it also began to crack down on all independent women's rights groups. The state attempted to co-opt feminist organisations like Shafiq's *Bint Al Nil* Union, hoping to centralise their activities through the Ministry of Social Affairs.¹⁴² Shafiq objected to Nasser's concessions on the basis that as women were required to apply in order to vote, they would have to demonstrate their literacy, a condition which was not required of men.¹⁴³ As a sign of protest, *Bint al Nil* Union members refused to register, and in response the government prevented them from submitting their candidacy for election to parliament.¹⁴⁴ Shafiq's reaction isolated her from mainstream political views, and made many of her colleagues

¹⁴⁰ Nelson, 'On Interpreting Doria Shafik', p. 325.

¹⁴¹ Gamal Abdel Nasser, 'Address by President Gamal Abdel Nasser at the Training Camp of The Arab Socialist Union Youth Leaders at Helwan', 18 November 1965 (Cairo: Ministry of National Guidance, Information Department, 1966), pp. 4-5.

¹⁴² Nelson, *Doria Shafik*, p. 227.

¹⁴³ Nelson, 'On Interpreting Doria Shafik', p. 325.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 236.

begin to view her as dangerously inflexible.¹⁴⁵ However, she continued to critique Nasser's repressive leadership in *Bint al Nil* editorials arguing,

During national crises, we found the Egyptian woman always ready to answer the nation's call, fully aware that her civil and constitutional rights could not exist except in an independent and liberal homeland.¹⁴⁶

Leftist women such as Aflatun, Nabarawi, and Islamist activists such as Zainab Al-Ghazali, while representing very different models to Shafiq were similarly worrisome to the state as a result of their independent activities, which crossed state limits on women's socio-political activity. In 1958, the Ministry of Interior banned Aflatun's leftist organisation for 'reasons associated with the country's security'.¹⁴⁷ Aflatun described these events, writing that that the government was suffering from a dangerous disease', which was 'a loss of faith in the people and a constant fear of any independent organisations or unions.'¹⁴⁸ She explained that in 1959 her house was searched and telephone lines cut, during what she described was a period of severe repression against leftist groups and communist groups in particular that lasted until 1964.¹⁴⁹ She wrote that by 1959 the government was no longer showing any difference in the treatment and repression of men and women from the Egyptian left.¹⁵⁰

Nabarawi was expelled from the EFU in 1959 under government pressure as a result of being labelled a communist.¹⁵¹ The EFU itself was also dismantled in the same year, and was only allowed to function as a social welfare society

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Doria Shafik, 'Al Mar'a Al-Misriya', *Bint Al Nil Magazine*, October 1956, AUCA.

¹⁴⁷ Aflatun, *Mudhakkirat Inji Aflatun*, p. 201.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, pp. 209, 232.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 206.

¹⁵¹ Badran, 'Competing Agenda: Feminist Islam and the State in Egypt', p. 28.

under the title 'The Huda Sha'rawi Association'.¹⁵² New organisations were blocked, such as *Ittihad al-Nisa'i al-Qawmi* (The National Feminist Union), which was shut down in 1959,¹⁵³ the same year Aflatun was sent to prison as part of Nasser's round up of communists.¹⁵⁴ The Muslim Sisterhood's primary set-up as a social welfare service prevented it from initially being seen as a political threat.¹⁵⁵ Nasser wished to co-opt all independent activism and control feminist activity, which meant that female activists who could not be co-opted, whether secular feminists or female Islamists, were excluded or repressed. Moreover, women who directly confronted the regime's limits paid the ultimate price with their freedom, as the cases of Shafiq and al-Ghazali illustrate.

3.3 Rewards and Limits of Patriarchal Bargains with the Egyptian State

There were feminists who were willing to compromise with Nasser, and some whose brand of feminism or constructs of womanhood complemented his ideas. These women were rewarded by the Egyptian State, while others continued to be suppressed. Amina Al-Said, a protégé of Huda Sha'rawi, promoted a brand of feminism that largely complemented the regime's definitions of womanhood, in that it emphasised equal education and employment for women, which coincided with the state's own gender-reform agenda.¹⁵⁶ Al-Said published her own magazine, *Hawa* (Eve), which started overshadowing Shafiq's *Bint Al Nil* by the mid-1950s.¹⁵⁷ What made her more of an exception was that she used her writing to criticise some of the regime's policies and decisions on Personal Status

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Arthur Goldschmidt, *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt* (Boulder Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), p. 17.

¹⁵⁵ Talhami, p. 48.

¹⁵⁶ Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, p. 35.

¹⁵⁷ Nelson, *Doria Shafik*, p. 248.

Law, women's economic burdens, and Nasser's decision to replace Huda Sha'rawi's house with a hotel.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, she was regularly rewarded, becoming a member of the Board of the Press Syndicate in 1965, its vice president in 1968,¹⁵⁹ and receiving the First State Recognition Award from Nasser in 1963.¹⁶⁰

It was also during this period, that women began to enter the domain of religious scholarship.¹⁶¹ Aisha Abd al-Rahman, also known by her pen name Bint al-Shati', became one such example, but stood out because the Nasserite regime viewed her particular brand of religious scholarship 'as moderate enough to be useful'.¹⁶² It exalted and decorated her in an attempt to counterbalance the effects of its repressive measures against Islamists and feminists. A professor of Islamic thought at Cairo University, her written works, *Sukayna, Bint Al-Hussain* (Sukayna, daughter of Hussain), *Gabilat Bani Hashim/Zeinab Bint al Zahra Batalat Karbalah* (Bani Hashim Tribe/Zeinab daughter of al-Zahra [Fatima], heroine of the battle of Karbala), and *Banat al Nabi* (The Prophet's Daughters), all venerated female relatives of the Prophet as ideal models for Egyptian and Muslim women. Al-Shati' celebrated Fatima's maternal and nurturing qualities, when she reinforced her descriptive title, 'her father's mother', in her writings.¹⁶³ This description of womanhood complemented Nasser's own definitions of women as mothers and nurturers. Her description of Zaynab (the prophet's

¹⁵⁸ Adel Darwish, 'Obituary: Amina al-Said', *The Independent*, 5 September 1995.

¹⁵⁹ Badran, 'Competing Agenda: Feminist Islam and the State in Egypt', p. 30.

¹⁶⁰ Adel Darwish, 'Obituary: Amina al-Said'.

¹⁶¹ Badran, 'Feminist Islam and the State in Egypt', p. 30.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Bint al-Shati, Aishah Abd al-Rahman, *Banat al-Nabi* (Cairo: Kitab al-Hilal, 1956), 178.

granddaughter) at the Battle of Karbala also reinforced the notion of women as nurturers, protectors and political supporters.¹⁶⁴

Zaynab who was not absent for a moment throughout the whole tragic scene...The heroine of Karbala, who heard the first call, and was by her brother's side as he slept and watched over him awake...and she was by the side of the sick, nursing them, and the dying consoling them, and the martyrs crying for them.¹⁶⁵

Al-Shati' thus celebrated Zaynab as a heroine, but in a politically passive, and supportive role, as loyal protector, nurse/nurturer, sister, and follower. This relatively passive political description was another aspect that overlapped with Nasser's political views on women, especially when put into context with his suppression of independent feminism. Moreover, al-Shati's religious qualifications and background complemented the 1956 Constitution's emphasis on religion and morality, alongside nationalism, as the backbone or foundation of the Egyptian family.

On the other hand, some women chose to confront Nasser head on, transgressing the limits of existing patriarchal bargains with the state. On 6 February 1957, Shafiq staged a second hunger strike following her first in 1951, this time in the name of 'human freedom' rather than 'suffrage', specifically in 'protest of the Israeli occupation of Egyptian land, and the onset of dictatorship that is leading Egypt into bankruptcy and chaos'.¹⁶⁶ She claimed she chose the Indian Embassy for her strike on the basis of its neutrality, so that she would not be accused of favouring one camp over the other, and because she saw it as a country of passive resistance and the homeland of Gandhi, her 'Master'. She released declarations to Nasser and the United Nations calling for the

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 223.

¹⁶⁵ Bint al-Shati, *Aqilat Bani Hashim: Zaynab Bint al-Zahra Batalat Karbala* (Beirut, 1972), pp. 146-147.

¹⁶⁶ Nelson, 'On interpreting Doria Shafik', pp. 325-326.

withdrawal of Israeli forces from Egyptian lands, a just solution to the problem of Arab refugees, and demanding an end to Nasser's dictatorship.¹⁶⁷ Nelson argues that Shafiq's strike was deliberately thought out to make use of the historical moment.¹⁶⁸ Yet, a large number of female activists and feminists denounced her actions as self-serving, especially because of its timing.

Aflatun and Nabarawi drafted a petition bearing signatures of numerous women's organisations and individuals condemning Shafiq's actions as self-serving and counter-revolutionary.

Egyptian women condemned Doria Shafiq's 'Declaration of Strike'...and we collected a large number of signatures from women's organisations and independent individuals...and our assessment was that Doria Shafiq's motives at this particular time was based on her view that Nasser's regime was about to collapse...and that she would come out a heroine.¹⁶⁹

Nabarawi and Aflatun's communist leanings would have made it difficult to perceive Shafiq's actions in a positive light, given Shafiq's attitude towards communism and socialism in general. In one of the final issues of *Bint al Nil* magazine Shafiq chose to warn against the dangers of communism and socialist regimes, calling on the Middle East not to accept or be 'deceived by it'.¹⁷⁰ While there were some women like Amina al-Said who refused to sign the petition, most female activists viewed Shafiq as the representation of the 'western-bourgeois' woman they opposed.¹⁷¹ Now viewed by the majority as unpatriotic and contentious, her comrades at *Bint al Nil* Union forced her resignation, with Nasser placing her under house arrest and ordering her name banned from

¹⁶⁷ Nelson, *Doria Shafik*, p. 238.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 240.

¹⁶⁹ Inji Aflatun, *Mudhakkirat*, p. 172.

¹⁷⁰ Doria Shafik, 'Al Sharq wa'l Shuyu'ia', *Bint Al Nil Magazine*, April 1957, AUCA.

¹⁷¹ Nelson, *Doria Shafik Egyptian Feminist*, p. 248.

public print.¹⁷² Within a few months her magazine was destroyed and she became a social recluse until her death in September 1975.¹⁷³

Nelson argues that Shafiq's last strike was a political rather than feminist stance. However, this dismisses the possibility that like other feminists, Shafiq's politics and her feminism were not separate elements but interconnected aspects of complex nationalist identities. By protesting against civic loss of freedom, Shafiq was also taking a feminist stance, protesting against the end of independent activism, which included feminist activism. Moreover, the petition against Shafiq can be seen as an amplification of the earlier backlash she received in 1951. Her vote in favour of an ICW resolution, which approved the maintenance of British troops on the Suez Canal, earned her serious attacks in the press from the likes of Nabarawi and Aflatun. The reaction in 1951 indicated Shafiq was dangerously close to crossing a political limit around definitions of authentic, nationalist behaviour that was respected by the majority of female nationalists at the time. This section argues that it was Shafiq's one-woman strike against the state at a time of nationalist instability that proved the more serious transgression against existing boundaries on female political behaviour as defined by both the patriarchal state, and the majority of female activists and nationalists at the time. The result was that she was not only attacked and suppressed by the state, but outcast by the wider nationalist and women's right movement.

Similarly, while al-Shati' was applauded and awarded by Nasser's regime, the Islamist Zainab al-Ghazali was tracked, repressed, arrested in 1965, tortured,

¹⁷² Nelson, 'On Interpreting Doria Shafik', p. 326.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

and only released after Nasser's death.¹⁷⁴ While the Muslim Sisterhood under Labiba Ahmad had primarily portrayed itself as a social welfare organisation,¹⁷⁵ al-Ghazali became a very different Islamic model.¹⁷⁶ Al-Ghazali's activism was more independent and political from the start. She challenged the state's patriarchal control from the basis of its Islamic illegitimacy. Al-Ghazali described the incessant attempts made by Nasser's regime to have her register with its unions and institutions.¹⁷⁷ She recounted how in 1964, while receiving treatment in hospital, she received a card showing her organisation The Muslim Ladies Group as registered with the state-sponsored Arab Socialist Union, and her membership for the year paid for, 'thereafter invitations from the Socialist Union to attend its meetings began pouring though my letterbox. I ignored them'.¹⁷⁸ She wrote that she soon received a second call from the Arab Socialist Union, requesting her organisation take banners to the airport and welcome the President home. When she did not comply, she received another warning call, and a week later was handed a letter containing a Ministerial Decree informing her of the Government's decision to ban her organisation.¹⁷⁹ The Muslim Ladies Group/Centre released a statement, asserting 'We refuse to accept the ban order on the Muslim Women Centre. The President who publicly preaches secularism has no right to rule over us'.¹⁸⁰ Al-Ghazali was arrested the following year; her failure to comply with Nasser's requests, her *da'wa* activities, and calls for an Islamic state, directly challenging and undermining his leadership.

¹⁷⁴ Zainab Al-Ghazali, *Return of the Pharaoh*, pp. 13-15.

¹⁷⁵ Talhami, p. 49.

¹⁷⁶ al-Ghazali, *Return of the Pharaoh*, p. 26.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 11.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 9.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, pp. 10-11.

¹⁸⁰ Zaynab al-Gahzali, *Ayyam min Hayati/Days From My Life*, trans. A.R.Kidawi, (Delhi: Hindustani, 1989), p. 21.

Thus, the model of womanhood put forward by al-Ghazali promoted the direct confrontation of state patriarchy and control as religious duty, because the secular state was viewed as an apostate entity, but approached patriarchal control within the Islamist movement differently. In the next chapter, it will be shown how al-Ghazali manoeuvred around the limits of the Muslim Brotherhood, and how her shared leadership of the *da'wa* movement offered a different model of Islamic womanhood than those put forward by women like Labiba Ahmad and Fatima Abdel-Hadi.

Conclusion

As the previous chapters showed, notions of westernisation were in a constant state of change and revision, so that by the 1950s/1960s in Iran, America was being viewed as the new imperialist power and 'westoxification' discourses were replacing the modernisation discourses of the constitutional period. Similarly in Egypt, Nasser's emphasis on Arab socialism, anti-capitalism, and closer ties with the Soviet Union against Western Europe and the US, shifted notions of authenticity away from previous economic and social/cultural models promoted by the Wafd Party and its leadership.

The 1952 Iranian suffrage petitions and the 1951 Egyptian suffrage marches discussed in chapter 4 illustrated that many female activists were prioritising women's suffrage as part of their campaigns. This indicated to political leaders like Gamal Abdel Nasser and Mohammad Reza Pahlavi that in order to co-opt female activists, they would need to make the vote a central part of revised patriarchal bargains between women and the state. However, their different motives in granting women the vote resulted in different definitions of

womanhood, which still promoted the notion of women's political position as secondary to that of men.

By exalting women's primary duties as educated wives and mothers, and extending this to define social work as their ultimate civic duty, the Shah underlined women's political position as secondary. However, the High Council of Women's Organisations of Iran challenged these limitations against growing religious and intellectual opposition to Pahlavi reforms, through a dual strategy of reassuring conservative leaders whilst campaigning for initiatives like the 1967 Family Planning Act. Nasser tolerated the kind of female activism, which promoted his own vision for Egypt as an Arab socialist state. Ideologically diverse women like al-Said, and al-Shati' were promoted by the regime because their goals and definitions overlapped with definitions of the educated woman worker and the Egyptian family as defined in the 1956 Constitution.

It was shown that both the Iranian and Egyptian states tolerated challenges to their policies in some instances were they did not overly-strain state bargains on women's socio-political behaviour. As such, Nafisi's outspoken criticism against the WOI 1967 Family Protection Act, and al-Said's exceptional critique of Nasserite policies, indicated that the same patriarchal bargain was not necessarily acceptable to all state feminists at all times. On the other hand, women who attacked the state's legitimacy, such as Shafiq and al-Ghazali in Egypt, transgressing the limits of existing patriarchal/state bargains, were outlawed and suppressed.

Chapter 6

The Political Opposition and Alternative Models of Womanhood

In the previous chapter, the Shah and Nasser's definitions of modern womanhood were assessed in line with their state policies on women's rights. In both cases it was shown that many female activists chose to compromise with the state around complementary goals. However, growing opposition to both regimes, and changing notions of westernisation tainted these efforts as inauthentic. This chapter looks at certain events and policies in both countries that helped radicalise the opposition towards more militant activity and increased the appeal of alternative gender constructs and definitions. It relies on British Foreign Office documents on key events and leaders of the period, ideological writings and speeches of key thinkers such as Shariati, Khomeini, Al-Banna and Qutb, as well as autobiographical writings of female Islamists and members of the Muslim Sisterhood, Zaynab al-Ghazali and Fatma Abdel-Hadi. It additionally relies on publications of the Iranian Tudeh Party, Iranian Mojahedin-i-Khalgh, Fadayan-i-Khalgh, memoirs of Iranian guerrilla fighter, Ashraf Dehgani, and the prison memoirs of Cynthia Bower Dwyer.

In section 1 it is shown that the 1967 Coronation ceremony and 1971 Persepolis celebrations in Iran, and the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and 1971 Egyptian foreign policy shift under Sadat, encouraged notions of the state's illegitimacy, inspiring the opposition in both countries towards militancy and violence. It is argued that reinterpretation of women's roles within such opposition groups helped co-opt a new generation of women looking for authentic models to identify with. Sections 2 and 3 argue that this co-optation

was a two-way process, as radicalisation of the opposition, coupled with persistent de-legitimisation of state feminism compounded women's socio-political frustrations encouraging them to strike patriarchal bargains with the opposition in order to negotiate greater spaces for themselves, that were otherwise being denied them by the state. Some women were thus able to challenge state definitions on their activity through the realisation of alternative models of womanhood promoted by the opposition. For instance, as militant activists they challenged the state's models of women as secondary military/revolutionary figures and state limits on independent female activity by participating in guerrilla activity in Iran, or physical *jihad* in Egypt.

Within the Iranian opposition, definitions of female loyalty and sacrifice were redefined as women were increasingly drawn towards arrest and martyrdom as part of new patriarchal bargains with revolutionary groups. The writing of leftist militant Ashraf Dehgani indicated that the adoption of these characteristics did not necessarily translate to a sense of revolutionary inferiority amongst Fadayan-i-Khalgh women as argued by Sanasarian.¹ It is argued that Ali Shariati's emphasis on self-sacrifice, loyalty, and endurance of hardship, linked together the models of Fatima and Zaynab despite their different revolutionary roles. Moreover, it is argued that the desire for arrest and martyrdom within the Mojahedin-i-Khalgh was a manifestation of these feminine ideals realised through Shariati's more revolutionary models of Fatima and Zaynab, which contrasted markedly with other interpretations of these figures by Islamist writers like Bint al Shati' in Egypt.

¹ Sanasarian, 'An Analysis of Fida'i and Mujahidin Positions on Women's Rights', in *Women and Revolution in Iran*, ed. Guity Nashat (Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), p. 101.

While the Muslim Brotherhood and Sisterhood in Egypt promoted personal sacrifice and endurance of hardship in pursuit of an Islamic state, they promoted very different models of authentic Islamic womanhood than groups like the Mojahedin-i-Khalgh. Moreover, the figure of al-Ghazali stands out within the Egyptian Islamist movement as more independent and politically active than her counterparts in the Muslim Sisterhood. It is argued that al-Ghazali was able to negotiate greater social and political space for herself by striking exceptional patriarchal bargains with Muslim Brotherhood leaders, based on modernist Islamic notions of religious equality between men and women in *da'wa*, as well as modern nationalist notions of educated motherhood. As an Islamist she challenged the state's patriarchal control on the basis of its Islamic illegitimacy. By maintaining her organisational independence until the state began to increase its suppression of the Brotherhood and the Muslim Ladies Group, she initially put forward a more independent and political definition of Islamic womanhood than women like Fatma Abdel-Hadi or Amal al-Ashmawi of the Muslim Sisterhood. As a pioneering *da'iya* and leader of the independent Muslim Ladies Group, she was able to challenge Islamist limits on gender mixing by giving lectures to mixed audiences, and receiving male students and religious colleagues at her home.

However, by the 1950s and 60s, she was encouraged to accept patriarchal constraints set by the Brotherhood as increasing repression against the organisation and her own Muslim Ladies Group, made unification with the Brotherhood over their common goal of an Islamic state the better bargain at that point in time. As such, she chose to abide by requests from the Brotherhood's male leadership to stop writing articles criticising Brotherhood

members who accepted government posts, and was no longer able to attend any international or women's conferences without their permission, as she had done in the late 1930s (see chapters 3). However, al-Ghazali attempted to portray herself as equal or superior to male brotherhood members in *jihad fi sabil Allah* (struggle in the way of Allah) by describing a greater endurance of torture, the occurrence of prophetic visions during her incarceration, and through the act of writing her prison memoirs.

Section 1: 'Radicalisation' of the Opposition

By the late 1960s many opposition groups in Iran and Egypt blamed the state's westernisation policies for corrupting morality in their societies, and helping western powers politically and economically dominate them. This section looks at events between 1967 and 1971 in Iran and Egypt, which helped radicalise the opposition towards militancy and violence. It argues that the 1967 coronation and 1971 Persepolis celebrations turned many people against the Iranian regime as such events were viewed by the majority of the population as culturally inauthentic and proof of the Shah's 'limited judgement'. Such unpopular state policies coupled with increasing political suppression encouraged the advent of guerrilla activity within the Iranian revolutionary movement. Similarly, Egypt's defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war weakened 'Nasserism' and Nasser's pan-Arabism as authentic nationalist ideologies, while Sadat's new foreign policy weakened his legitimacy, opening up greater political space upon which the Islamic opposition capitalised. Reinterpretation of women's roles by the Islamist opposition in Egypt, and the revolutionary movement in Iran, helped

increase the appeal of these definitions to women looking for authentic models with which to challenge the state's authenticity.

1.1 The 1967 Regency and Coronation of Queen Farah

Opponents of the Shah and intellectual works like Al-i-Ahmad's '*Gharbzadeghi*' pointed to the regime's reliance on the US and reverence for Western modernisation to delegitimize state reforms as inauthentic. Fatemeh Pakravan, wife of General Hassan Pakravan, diplomat and minister of the Pahlavi regime, wrote of the 1963 religious riots against the Shah's White Revolution, 'It was not the revolution, but the beginning of it'.² Khomeini argued the October 1964 Capitulation Bill, granting American military personnel and advisers diplomatic immunity, had turned Iran into its colony.

What is this Majlis doing? This illegal, illicit Majlis...this government has committed treason against this country. O God, this government has committed treason against the Qur'an.³

By describing the *Majlis* as a tool of the Shah's government, Khomeini portrayed all those working with or for the government as traitors of the Iranian nation. He called on all *Majlis* deputies, government employees, politicians, and military personnel to resign to prove their authenticity and nationalism.⁴ He argued that if religious leaders had influence, they would never allow Iran to be 'the slaves of Britain one day, and America the next', challenging the opposition by asking, 'Are we to keep silent while they are selling us?'⁵ Khomeini's scathing condemnation

² Fatemeh Pakravan, *Khatirat-i Fatimah Pakravan*, ed. Habib Ladjevardi (Massachusetts: Harvard University, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Iranian Oral History Project, 1998), p. 32.

³ Imam Ruhullah Khomeini, 'Granting Capitulatory Rights to the U.S', Speech given in Qum on November 4, 1964, in *Contemporary Debates in Islam: An Anthology of Modernist and Fundamentalist Thought*, ed. M. Moaddel and K. Talatof, (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 333, 334, 336, 338.

⁴ Ibid, p.337.

⁵ Ibid, pp. 334, 336.

of the October 1964 Bill saw him exiled to Turkey.⁶ However, he continued to preach and teach from Iraq after 1965, and many of his messages were brought into Iran.⁷

The Shah's ostentatious actions, exemplified by the pomp and pageantry of the 1967 Coronation Ceremony, became another source of frustration for many Iranians, opening the regime up to attacks and ridicule by the opposition. The regency and coronation of Empress Farah on 26 October 1967 reinforced the Shah's international image as women's rights champion,⁸ with Bamdad calling it a 'great victory for the Iranian woman'.⁹ However, the double standard of this appointment was made clear in his interview with Oriana Fallaci in which the Shah argued that women had produced 'nothing great, nothing!' and demanded of his interviewer, 'tell me how many women capable of governing have you met'. Fallaci highlighted the contradiction between his views and his actions by asking why he had appointed Empress Farah regent.

Yes, if my son, should become king before the required age, Queen Farah Diba would become regent. But there'd also be a council with which she'd have to consult. I on the other hand, have no obligation to consult with anyone, and I don't consult with anyone. See the difference?¹⁰

Mahnaz Afkhami admitted 'the shah himself was not a supporter of feminism', however, the WOI secretary explained that he understood that development was impossible without the integration of women and a change in their status.¹¹ Thus, as argued in previous chapters, most women's reforms, from suffrage to literacy campaigns, to changes in Family Law, were the result of a combination of

⁶ Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 148.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid, p. 125.

⁹ Bamdad, *Zan-i-Irani*, p. 27.

¹⁰ Fallaci, p. 272.

¹¹ Afkhami, 'The Women's Organisation Of Iran', p. 127.

two factors: the Shah's desire to appear modern and modernise Iran according to Western standards, coupled with the efforts of some activists to take advantage of these desires through their work with the WOI.

Bamdad wrote that the Women's Literacy Corps established in 1968 in accordance with the White Revolution, enabled women to join men in national service, which encouraged 'better understanding' between the sexes and between different classes and segments of the population.¹²

The well-educated girls serving in it enter easily into contact and understanding with women living in isolated villages or urban slums who have had no chance to get any schooling and are quite ignorant of family management and hygiene.¹³

However, it was precisely this kind of 'mixing' that the religious right pointed to as evidence of moral and social corruption. During his speech on the 1964 Capitulation Bill, Khomeini challenged the regime's White Revolution and its gender policies, declaring 'I don't know where this White revolution is that they are making so much fuss about'.¹⁴

If the religious leaders have influence, they will not permit people's innocent daughters to be under young men in school; they will not permit women to teach at boys' schools and men to teach at girls' schools, with all the resulting corruption.¹⁵

Yet, the regime continued to encourage more women to enter previously male-dominated professions. Bamdad recalled how in 1968 Dr Farakhro Parsa became the first female Minister of Education, and how more women began to enter the legal profession.¹⁶ This path was extended by the 1970s to allow

¹² Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, p.125.

¹³ Ibid, p. 126.

¹⁴ Khomeini, 'Granting Capitulatory Rights to the U.S', p. 336

¹⁵ Ibid, p.335.

¹⁶ Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light*, p. 127.

women to become judges, as the case of Shirin Ebadi illustrated.¹⁷ However, as opposition to the Pahlavi regime intensified in response to more brutal crackdowns, and the Shah persisted with unpopular state policies and ceremonial displays, more educated women, including those employed or supported by the state, like Ebadi, began to turn against the regime.

1.2 The Shah and the 1971 Persepolis Celebrations

The Shah's extravagant spending continued to be a source of frustration for many, particularly when contrasted with the poverty of most Iranians.¹⁸ The situation culminated over the decadent celebrations of the 2500th anniversary of the Persian monarchy. In her memoirs, Farah Diba described her pride at hosting the celebrations on the ancient grounds of Persepolis in October 1971.¹⁹ Almost two thousand guests made up of international monarchs and royals, global Heads of State, and diplomats were received in Iran.²⁰

The festivities began with a ceremony at the tomb of Cyrus... For the citizens of this country, it was very impressive for it recalled the policies of the greatest of our Kings...Many hundreds of soldiers had grown beards and long hair to resemble faces in our bas-reliefs.²¹

Yet, public perceptions of the same event contrasted starkly with Diba's views.

Shirin Ebadi and Azar Nafisi's recollections of the event critiqued and ridiculed the very same details the Empress proudly described. Nafisi watched the lavish celebrations on American television, recalling 'the Shah, in an address to Cyrus the great Achaemenid king, that became a joke among Iranians,

¹⁷ Ebadi, p. 23.

¹⁸ Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 167.

¹⁹ Farah, Shahbanou of Iran, *My Thousand and One Days: An Autobiography*, trans. Felice Harcourt (London: W.H. Allen 1978), p. 87.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 89.

²¹ Ibid, pp. 88, 92-93.

declaimed, 'Cyrus, sleep well, for we are awake!'²² Shirin Ebadi described how ordinary Iranians perceived the event.

The Shah displayed his vast ego and limited judgment before a rapt nation...most noticed that the Shah had spent 300 million dollars on makeshift silk tents with marble bathrooms, and on food and wine for 25,000 people, flown in from Paris. The sight I could not forget was that of the Imperial Guard, dressed in costumes of the ancient soldiers of the Achaemenid Empire, their beards grown long and curled elaborately.²³

The Shah and the Empress were not unaware of domestic and international criticism over such events. Farah Diba wrote that Denmark had put pressure on their King and Queen not to attend the ceremony, but explained, 'they came nonetheless, out of friendship.'²⁴ Yet, Pakravan argued that organising an event using millions of dollars when people were living in squalor in South Tehran only increased resentment towards the royal family.²⁵ Pakravan described how their popularity dwindled, as people accused them and blamed the Empress for organising 'all these big festivals, all these big events, that in the end, drove people mad...the coronation...the Persepolis'.²⁶ Yet, the Shah, encouraged by his own delusions of grandeur and desire to present Iran as a future superpower,²⁷ persisted nevertheless with such ostentatious displays.

The Shah's increasingly oppressive measures against the opposition had promoted the idea of armed struggle and guerrilla warfare by the late 1960s/early 1970s. The use of violence was not new to leftist opposition groups; the Tudeh had a few hundred militants in its ranks, many of which had

²² Nafisi, p. 201.

²³ Ebadi, p. 23.

²⁴ Farah, Shahbanou, p. 90, 95.

²⁵ Pakravan, pp. 59, 120-121.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 94.

²⁷ Fallaci, p. 281.

already infiltrated the officers corps.²⁸ Ruh-Allah Abbasi, a Tudeh military officer, explained that dissident members of the military had come together as early as 1944 to form a complex military wing, with a particular five-level formation.²⁹ However, the situation peaked in the 1970s, and of the many underground militant groups, the Fadayan-i-Khalgh and Mojahedin-i-Khalgh began attracting increasing numbers of women. The Persepolis celebrations allowed opposition leaders like Bizhan Jazani, a leader of the Fadayan Guerrillas, to mock the celebrations as 'a fairground for pseudo-politicians', arguing that 'the 'celebrations' became more like military and police expeditions. Hence the regime was forced to admit the reality of guerrilla presence all over the country'.³⁰

The religious opposition also used the event to attack the Shah, with Ebadi recalling Khomeini's severe condemnation from Najaf.³¹ Thus, Iranians as ideologically diverse as intellectuals Nafisi and Ebadi, leftist guerrilla leader Jazani, and fundamentalist cleric Khomeini, rejected such events as ridiculous, inauthentic displays, contesting the legitimacy of the Iranian state as the 'true' representative of the Iranian nation/people. Consequently, the 1971 Persepolis celebrations, like the 1967 Coronation ceremony, only served to further aggravate the opposition and alienate the population. This combined with the Shah's brutal suppression of the political opposition radicalised the anti-Pahlavi movement towards militancy and violence, and encouraged women to turn to

²⁸ Farhang Jahanpour, 'Iran: The Rise and Fall of the Tudeh Party', *World Today*, 1 April 1984, p. 153.

²⁹ Ruh Allah Abbasi, *Khatirat-i yak Afsar-i Tudahi 1330-1335* (Memories of a Communist Officer 1951-1956) (Montreal: Intisharat-i Farhang, 1989), pp. 123, 380.

³⁰ Bizhan Jazani, *Armed Struggle in Iran: The Road to Mobilization of the Masses*, trans. Iran Committee (London: Iran Committee, 1976), pp. 109-110.

³¹ Ebadi, p. 24.

alternative models of womanhood promoted by these revolutionary groups, as section 2 will illustrate.

1.3 The Defeat of Nasser and Arab-Nationalism in the 1967 Six-Day War

Political events in Egypt similarly catalysed radicalisation of the opposition, resulting in violent and extremist offshoots developing within the Islamist movement. Egypt's dramatic defeat during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War challenged the validity of Nasser's pan-Arab nationalism. Nasser's popularity had already begun deteriorating in the region as a result of Syria's secession from the United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1961, and Nasser's subsequent failure in the Yemen campaign.³² The Egyptian state was in no position to go to war with some of its best troops still deployed in Yemen.³³ A diplomatic report to the British Prime Minister in June 1967 made reference to a conversation between Nasser and Field-Marshal Montgomery where Nasser was advised that despite having acquired the latest Russian equipment, if Egypt were to go to war with Israel, it would lose.³⁴

Yet, Nasser's reduced popularity, and his self-declared commitment to the wider region as 'champion of Arab nationalism' and the Palestinian cause, ultimately shaped his actions in the context of bubbling Arab-Israeli tensions. Moreover, his brutal suppression of the Muslim Brotherhood had resulted in increasing attacks against him as a 'non-Muslim', and thus illegitimate leader. Zaynab al-Ghazali argued even 'al-Azhar' was a tool of the 'hypocritical

³² 'The Outlook for the United Arab Republic During the Next Two Years-Report by the Cabinet Joint Intelligence Committee', January 1966, CAB163/71, UKNA.

³³ Hisham Sharabi, 'Prelude to War: The Crisis of May-June 1967', in *The June 1967 War: Miscalculation or Conspiracy?*, ed. Elias Sam'o (Illinois: Medina University Press International, 1971), p. 6; Sam'o, 'The June 1967 War: Miscalculation or Conspiracy?', p. 157.

³⁴ 'Report to Prime Minister on Field Marshal Montgomery's Meeting with Nasser 12 May 1967', 9 June 1967.PREM13/1826, UKNA.

government', declaring from prison 'the government is opposed to Islam. You are in collusion with evil forces. You import your ideologies from either West or East'.³⁵ In early May 1967, there were several indications, which led many to believe Israel was preparing to strike Syria. The two most important elements that led to war were the removal of UNEF forces deployed in the Sinai after the Suez war, and the closing of the Gulf of Aqaba to Israel.³⁶ A British diplomatic report admitted that these actions and Nasser's 'handling of affairs prior to the outbreak of war' in 1967 raised his popularity to new heights.³⁷

Israel's attack on 5 June 1967 was shatteringly fast; the battle was over in the first 3-hour aerial attack on the UAR's air force, and Israel's advances in the next six days saw them gain more and more Arab territory before the United Nations helped conclude a cease-fire.³⁸ The defeat dealt Egypt an enormous political, economic, and psychological blow. Sadat argued Egypt's defeat in 1967 destroyed Nasser, 'those who knew Nasser realised that he did not die on September 28, 1970, but on June 5, 1967, exactly one hour after the war broke out'.³⁹

Nasser announced his 'complete and final resignation' on a televised broadcast in the aftermath of the war.⁴⁰ While Jehan Sadat described 'chanting crowds' and the screams of 'Nasser! Only Nasser!',⁴¹ for many other Egyptians the war delegitimized Arab-Nationalism as a valid political ideology, by showing

³⁵ al-Gahzali, *Ayyam min Hayati*, pp. 21, 27

³⁶ Sam'o, *The June 1967 War: Miscalculation or Conspiracy?*, p. 148.

³⁷ 'Research Department Memorandum: President Nasser's Standing in the Arab World since June 1967', 23 September 1969, FCO51/97, UKNA.

³⁸ Kamel S. Abu-Jaber, 'United States Policy toward the June Conflict', in *The Arab-Israeli Confrontation of June 1967: An Arab Perspective*, ed. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 160.

³⁹ Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, (London: Collins, 1978), pp. 179-180.

⁴⁰ Gamal Abdel Nasser, 'Speech on June 9, 1967',

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2P6NUNFENE>.

⁴¹ Jehan Sadat, *A Woman of Egypt* (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc, 1987), p. 228.

that the Arabs had failed to formulate a unified political or military strategy.⁴² A British report on Nasser's regional standing in 1969 highlighted the disillusionment felt by most Arabs and explained Nasser no longer commanded the respect he once did; 'he is no longer pre-eminent'.⁴³ Zaynab al-Ghazali recalled the defeat while in prison, writing 'super powers helped the Jews become so powerful and that is why they have usurped Arab lands...Islam, fraternity, self-respect and modesty all virtues are being stamped out'.⁴⁴ Thus, Egypt's losses in 1967 challenged 'Nasserism' and pan-Arabism as authentic nationalist ideologies, opening up an ideological space upon which the Islamic opposition could capitalise.

1.4 Sadat and 'The Year of Decision' in 1970

In his memoirs, Sadat explained that by the time of Nasser's death in 1970, Egypt's foreign policy was in a weak state, 'I found that we had no relations...with any country, except the Soviet Union'.⁴⁵ One of the first countries Sadat approached to normalise relations with was Iran, writing that it was the beginning of a solid friendship with the Shah.⁴⁶ In many ways Sadat wanted to break away from Nasser's legacy, with regards to foreign policy, and the Arab-Israeli conflict in particular. In 1971 Sadat declared that he would be prepared to recognise Israel and live in peace with it.⁴⁷ A British despatch report in 1971 explained that under President Nasser state influence had spread throughout the economy with damaging results, and that now Sadat was modifying this strategy,

⁴² Sharabi, 'Prelude to War: The Crisis of May-June 1967', pp. 13-14.

⁴³ 'Research Department Memorandum: President Nasser's Standing in the Arab World since June 1967', 23 September 1969, FC051/97, UKNA.

⁴⁴ al-Gahzali, *Ayyam min Hayati*, p. 156.

⁴⁵ Anwar Sadat, *In search of Identity*, pp. 210-211.

⁴⁶ Anwar Sadat, *Those I Have Known* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985), p. 24.

⁴⁷ Chaim Herzog, *The War of Atonement* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), p. 18.

encouraging the private sector to grow, welcoming foreign projects, and new World Bank Loans to restore economic confidence.⁴⁸ However, it also pointed out that serious foreign investment was unlikely while the threat of war with Israel remained.⁴⁹

Following the Arab Defeat in 1967 Nasser was able to quickly rebuild and reconstruct the Egyptian Army with the aid of the Soviet Union. By 1968 Egypt was conducting limited operations against Israel along the Suez Canal, culminating in the War of Attrition by 1969.⁵⁰ In an interview with the *New York Times*, Sadat declared 1971 the 'Year of Decision'.⁵¹ However, as the state of 'no peace, no war' continued, his position weakened, and Egyptians mocked him for his failure to deliver.⁵² While the state under Nasser had defined authenticity as anti-western and anti-capitalist, the state under Sadat attempted to revise these definitions in its domestic and foreign policy. For instance, despite establishing the Confederation of Arab Republics in 1971 with the Presidents of Syria and Libya,⁵³ Sadat declared he was adopting a policy of détente between the US and the USSR, re-opened the Suez Canal, began renewing ties with western countries, particularly the US, and appeared willing to sign a peace agreement with Israel.⁵⁴

The weakening of Nasser's pan-Arab socialism and Sadat's new foreign policy approach helped further polarise the Islamists against the Egyptian state

⁴⁸ 'President Sadat's New Economic Policy, Cairo Dispatch', 26 November 1971, FCO 93/661, UKNA.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Herzog, pp. 13-15.

⁵¹ Sadat, 'Interview given by President Anwar El Sadat to the *New York Times*, December 1971', in *Speeches by President Anwar El Sadat: April-December 1971* (Cairo: Ministry of Information, State Information Service, 1974), p. 530.

⁵² Herzog, p. 23.

⁵³ Sadat, Statement to the Nation: Proclaiming the Draft Agreement of the Confederation of Arab Republics, Cairo, April 17, 1971, in *Speeches by President Anwar El Sadat*,

⁵⁴ Sadat, Raphael Israeli, 'The 1974 October Paper', in *The Public Diary of President Sadat*, Part II and Part II, Part III ed. Raphael Israeli (Leiden: E.J. Brill 1978), I, p.2, III, p. 898.

as an illegitimate representative of the people. Sadat's willingness to negotiate peace with Israel became a serious point of contention for the Islamic opposition, as demonstrated by Abdul Rahman Abu al-Khayr, a member of Shukri Mustafa's Takfir wal Hijra (an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood). Al-Khayr used *Qur'anic* passages to warn his readers against the untrustworthiness of 'the Jews/Jewish tribes', linking these passages directly to Egyptian press reports on the 'great meeting' between Sadat and US President Ford in 1976, as a way of condemning the Middle-East peace talks as un-Islamic.⁵⁵ He pointed to press articles in 1976 to show that that names like *Ahl al-Kaf* (a story in the Qur'an of men who slept in a cave for over 300 years) and Takfir wal Hijra (excommunication and exile), were names journalists had chosen to describe them, acknowledging only the existence of the wider collective *Jama'at al-Muslimin*.⁵⁶ In the following section interpretations of womanhood/women's roles by Islamist ideologues in Egypt and Iran will be assessed in line with women's activity against the state in these countries.

Section 2: Redefinitions of Womanhood by the Iranian Opposition

Amongst the varied ideologues of the Iranian revolution, the writings of Ali Shariati proved the most influential on young Iranians in the lead up to the 1979 Revolution. Unlike modern ideologues like Al-i-Ahmed who denounced the Pahlavi model of womanhood but fell short of describing a strong alternative, Shariati offered a revised and revolutionary interpretation of *Shi'a* role models for 'modern' women who he argued had lost their identity. In contrast to

⁵⁵ Abd al-Rahman Abu al-Khayr, *Dhikrayati ma'a Jama'at al-Muslimin, al-Takfir wa-al-Hijrah* (Kuwait: Dar al-Buhuth al-Ilmiyah, 1980), pp. 28-29

⁵⁶ Ibid, pp.28-29, 124

writers like Erika Friedl⁵⁷ and Marcia Hermansen⁵⁸ this section argues that Ali Sharati's models of Iranian womanhood complemented rather than contradicted each other, as they tied together the different revolutionary roles of Fatima and Zaynab through common ideal characteristics of self-sacrifice, loyalty, modesty, piety and endurance against hardship. In the context of revolution, the characteristics of Zaynab as a loyal, self-sacrificing revolutionary fighter did not contradict Fatima as a loyal and self-sacrificing mother, producer, and educator of such revolutionary fighters.

Moreover, the characteristics of loyalty and self-sacrifice were emphasised amongst female members of secular leftist and guerrilla groups like the Fadian. This section argues, in contrast to Sanasarian,⁵⁹ that the writings of Ashraf Dehgani indicated not all Fadian women necessarily viewed themselves as inferior to their male comrades intellectually or in terms of revolutionary 'ability' and that desire for arrest and martyrdom amongst Mojahedin women was a manifestation of the ideals of self-sacrifice and unwavering loyalty emphasised through Shariati's models of Fatima and Zaynab.

Shariati attempted to co-opt those women who had been shaped by the changes set in motion by the earlier women's movement and the state's reforms, but who were also frustrated by the double standards of the state on women's rights, and by a loss of cultural 'authenticity'. Given men like Ayatollah Khomeini, condemned co-education and gender-mixing, the voice of the religious left, represented by Shariati and the Mojahedin-i-Khalgh, offered educated

⁵⁷ Erika Friedl, 'Ideal womanhood in post-revolutionary Iran' in *Mixed Blessings: Gender and Religious Fundamentalism Cross Culturally*, ed. Judy Brink and Joan P Mencher, (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp.149-151

⁵⁸ Marcia K. Hermansen, 'Fatimeh as a Role Model in the Works of Ali Shariati', in *Women and Revolution in Iran*, ed. Guity Nashat (Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), p. 93.

⁵⁹ Sanasarian, 'An Analysis of Fida'i and Mujahidin Positions', pp. 99-101.

women from more religious backgrounds a different bargain through the remodelling of Zaynab and Fatima, that challenged religious limits on women's behaviour set by both the Iranian clerical establishment and the Pahlavi state.

2.1 Ideologues of the Iranian Revolution: Shariati and 'Fatima is Fatima'

Although Khomeini ultimately emerged as leader of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the ideas and writings of sociologist and political activist Ali Shariati were in fact more widely circulated and better known, particularly among the younger intelligentsia. Shariati's father argued that 'the greatest service that Ali did was that he made the religion of Islam relevant to the class of the enlightened and educated'.⁶⁰ Shariati had been active in Mossadegh's National Front, until the religious faction of the National Front separated. In 1957 at the age of 23 he was arrested and tortured for his activism.⁶¹ Shariati attempted to combine *Shi'ism* with socialist and Marxist ideas. While completing his PhD in Paris, he wrote letters to Franz Fanon, arguing that 'Third World' countries could not fight imperialism without first restoring their cultural identity by finding and reviving their 'religious roots'.⁶²

At the heart of Shariati's ideas were two interlinked revolutions: a nationalist revolution to eradicate western domination, and a social revolution to eradicate capitalism and class exploitation.⁶³ His rejection of westernisation or 'blind imitation of the West' was central to both these revolutions⁶⁴ and was a view shared by very different oppositional figures, from Ayatollah Khomeini, to

⁶⁰ Laleh Bakhtiar, 'Who was Ali Shariati?' in *Shariati on Shariati and the Muslim Woman*, ed. Laleh Bakhtiar (University of Michigan: ABC International Group, 1996), p. 32.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 13.

⁶² Ervand Abrahamian, 'Ali Shari'ati: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution, *MERIP Reports*, No. 102, Islam and Politics, January 1982.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

the intellectual writer Jalal Al-i-Ahmad. Shariati argued that Islam supported the 'equity' rather than 'equality' of men and women, 'by assigning to both their natural places within society.'⁶⁵ While other revolutionary ideologues like Al-i-Ahmad had denounced the westernised Pahlavi construct of womanhood, it was Ali Shariati who attempted to define a revolutionary Islamic alternative of 'modern' Iranian womanhood. He presented these alternatives during his lecture 'Fatima is Fatima' at the Husayniyah Irshad centre in Tehran, founded in 1967 by a group of Muslim thinkers and *ulama*.⁶⁶

He attempted to reform and redefine women's roles and 'natural places' through the models of the prophet's daughter and granddaughter, Fatima and Zaynab, to encompass greater relevance to the specific context of his time. He argued Iranian women were divided into three categories.

Women who have remained in the 'traditional mould' do not face the problem of identity while women who have accepted the 'new imported mould' have adopted a foreign identity. But in the midst of these two types of 'moulded women' there are those who can neither accept their hereditary, traditional forms, nor surrender to this imposed new form. What should they do?⁶⁷

The statement ruled out both 'traditional' and 'westernised' women as inauthentic models, by arguing the former 'remained' in the past, while the latter had adopted an alien cultural identity. Shariati continued, 'they want to decide for themselves, they want to develop for themselves...they need a model', then declared 'Fatima, through her own 'being' answers these questions.'⁶⁸ He presented Fatima and Zaynab as authentic solutions to the 'problem of identity'⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Shariati, 'Fatima is Fatima', in *Shariati on Shariati*, p. 7.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xxviii.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

facing this group of Iranian women who wished to modernise without surrendering their true cultural identity.

While his choice of Fatima and Zaynab as role models was not novel, his critique of earlier interpretations of their roles, and by extension Iranian women's roles, was.⁷⁰ Unlike Islamic scholars like Bint al-Shati', Shariati denounced their image as sad mourners, and condemned Iranian women's 'traditional' association with mourning rituals like *Rowzeh*.⁷¹ Shariati celebrated Fatima's definition as a selfless, sacrificial mother, wife, and daughter. He equated her marriage to Ali, the prophet's cousin, with her commitment to the wider community, arguing she showed the highest example of companionship by 'bearing his hardships'. He venerated her role as mother to the revolutionary figures of Hassan, Husain, and Zaynab, and underlined similarly to al-Shati' how the Prophet would affectionately call her 'her father's mother' in appreciation of her caring and supportive character.⁷² He emphasised Fatima's social commitment through her unshakable patience in the hard days of economic blockade.⁷³ Thus, Fatima's maternal role, patience, endurance of hardship, quiet strength, piety, and self-sacrifice were highlighted as ideal female qualities.

When it came to Fatima's daughter Zaynab, Shariati criticised people's understanding of her as a passive, sad figure; 'they only knew Zaynab from the moment when she left the tents to go to gather the bodies of the martyrs', and

⁷⁰ Yudian Wahyudi, 'Ali Shari'ati and Bint Al-Shati on Free Will: A Comparison', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol.9, No.1, 1998, pp. 42, 45.

⁷¹ Bint al-Shati', *Banat al-Nabi* (Cairo: Kitab al-Hilal, 1956), p. 223, Shariati, 'Fatima is Fatima', p. 89, Yudian Wahyudi, 'Ali Shari'ati and Bint Al-Sahti'.

⁷² Shariati, 'Fatima is Fatima', p. 72.

⁷³ Ibid, pp. 71-72.

defined her instead as an active, tough, socially responsible, and politically independent revolutionary.⁷⁴

When Zaynab saw that the revolution had begun, she left her family, her husband and her children, and joined the revolution...she did so because of her own responsibility and commitment to her society, her religion and to God...It was Zaynab...who stood against and confronted the ruling oppressive power and who destroyed all resistance.⁷⁵

While Shariati did not explicitly encourage women to participate in violence, writing 'she expressed with words the truth that Husain expressed with blood', he nevertheless defined Zaynab as an active revolutionary.⁷⁶ He credited her with 'spreading the seeds of revolution in any land that she entered', fighting oppression and 'spreading the thoughts and ideas of Husain's school of revolution and martyrdom'.⁷⁷ Shariati therefore elevated Zaynab's role within the history of *Shi'ism* by emphasising it was Zaynab who spread the message of Husain's martyrdom against Ummayad Caliph, Yazid I. The Islamic opposition drew parallels between the Battle of Karbala and a modern revolution against the state; the narrative of Husain's martyrdom at the hands of an inauthentic ruler was used to justify revolutionary activism against the Shah's regime as the modern representation of Yazid I.

Some writers like Hermansen and Friedl have argued that Shariati's models of Fatima and Zaynab are limited by contradictions, incompatibilities, and offer no clear plan of action for women.⁷⁸ Comparing Fatima's qualities of 'modesty, self-effacement and obedience' to those of Zaynab as a 'brave revolutionary fighter', Friedl argues that Zaynab did not perform as a 'mother',

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 89.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 71.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Friedl, pp.149-151, Hermansen, p. 93.

but as a 'sister and aunt', and thus falls short as an ideal given 'unmarried, childless, adult women' were/are viewed as anomalies. In her view Zaynab's model can only be realised while 'woman is in transitional stage between childhood and marriage,' meaning 'the two ideals of Fatima and Zaynab can only be realised in sequence: first Zaynab, then Fatima'.⁷⁹ Thus, Friedl concludes, the characteristics required to follow the models of Fatima and Zaynab are 'psychologically incompatible', as they would require a transformation from 'a politically astute, assertive, aggressive, combat-oriented, physically active young woman' into 'an obedient, quiet, caring, housebound homemaker' after marriage.⁸⁰

In contrast, this section argues that the themes of self-sacrifice, piety, strength, patience and endurance against hardship, are common threads in Shariati's models of Fatima and Zaynab, which tie them together whilst allowing for diverse interpretations of these characteristics to suit different women in different socio-political contexts. In other words, Zaynab and Fatima are different manifestations of the same notion of womanhood in response to the changing needs of their society. Thus, in the context of a revolutionary movement against the Pahlavi establishment, the characteristics of Zaynab as an active and independent fighter against a tyrannical establishment, did not contradict Fatima's characteristics as mother/teacher/producer of such revolutionary warriors/martyrs to fight against the state. Indeed, Shariati argued 'the present day woman must know Fatima was a woman who was a warrior during her childhood, a woman who showed patience and tolerance in

⁷⁹ Friedl, pp. 149, 151.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p.151.

the hard days of the economic blockade, a woman who endured three years of imprisonment...and finally she was the nourisher and trainer of Hassan, Husain and Zaynab'.⁸¹

Shariati was careful to stress Zaynab's independent choice and agency as a revolutionary.

It was not for the sake of her brother Husain, who was the leader of this revolution, that she joined it. Even after the martyrdom of Husain and his companions...she shouted out against tyranny in any land.⁸²

More significantly, Shariati continued, 'a woman of any age and any century can emulate this model'.⁸³

Thus, Shariati put forward an ideal model of womanhood that combined Fatima and Zaynab's characteristics rather than offering two contradictory models or two models in sequence. He stressed Fatima's role in 'producing' Zaynab and thus defined Zaynab as being part of Fatima:

Her part in training Zaynab was even more important than Husain...Fatima trained Zaynab inside her home and in her lap. The role of Zaynab in the revolution of Karbala and its continuation and progress, resulted from Fatima's teachings and from the high spirit of Zaynab.⁸⁴

Thus, some women during the revolution interpreted their roles as sharing in violence and martyrdom based on being equal revolutionaries, while others viewed themselves as producers/nurturers of revolutionaries and martyrs depending on their particular situations. In the following section the realisation of these models will be assessed within the guerrilla groups of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, particularly the Mojahedin-i-Khalgh.

2.2 The Fadayan-i-Khalgh and the Mojahedin-i-Khalgh

⁸¹ Shariati, 'Fatima is Fatima', p. 72.

⁸² Ibid, p. 71.

⁸³ Ibid, p.71.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p.72.

The Fadayan-i-Khalgh officially came into existence in 1971, adopting a policy of armed struggle, 'largely modelled on the experience of armed struggle in Latin America'.⁸⁵ Bizhan Jazani, a founding member of the organisation, explained that the goal of the Fadayan was to weaken the regime through small-targeted attacks, as no means of political expression was possible, and to damage its domestic and international image.⁸⁶ The guerrillas executed members of the Shah's regime and opposition members that were deemed traitors, such as Abbas Shariari of the Tudeh Party. In the very first year of their operations, they suffered serious losses with 13 of their members summarily executed.⁸⁷ The regime's backlash was not only reserved for male members; female members were also subjected to detention and torture.

Like most leftist organisations, the Fadayan viewed women's oppression in class terms, arguing that once a truly socialist system was in place, women's rights issues would automatically be resolved.⁸⁸ However, Sanasarian writes that many of the Fadayan women she interviewed admitted to feeling inferior to their male counterparts in terms of knowledge and ability, and argued that the organisation reinforced these insecurities by projecting a cultural stereotype of women as second-class citizens 'under the guise of leftist rhetoric'.⁸⁹ On the other hand, Cynthia Brown Dwyer, imprisoned at Evin in 1980, wrote of the Fadayan women she met there, that they would 'read, study and argue politics

⁸⁵ The Organisation of Iranian People's Fedaian Majority, *Against Liquidation: In Defence of Principled Unity* (London: International KAR, 1982), pp. 1-2.

⁸⁶ Bizhan Jazani, *Armed Struggle in Iran: The Road To Mobilization of The Masses*, trans. Iran Committee (London: Iran Committee, 1976), pp. 111-112.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 93.

⁸⁸ Sanasarian, 'An Analysis of Fida'i and Mujahidin Positions', p. 99.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 101.

into the night' and appeared to view their imprisonment as a mark of distinction, which would be of use to them within the party once they were released.⁹⁰

The imprisonment and torture of Ashraf Dehgani supports this view, as she became an iconic figure of resistance within the Fadian. Both Dehgani and her brother Behrouz were arrested in 1971, and tortured by the regime. While her brother died in captivity, she escaped and went on to write her memoirs. She left a message at the end of her memoirs, to the Shah and the 'enemy at large', renewing her commitment to continue her struggle to the death.

This time I shall fight against you with a deeper sense of revenge—revenge for my martyred comrades; revenge for the blood of the people...there is no honour greater than dying for people's freedom...I have taken up arms and will fight for the annihilation of the regime that protects you, and will spend the last drop of my blood for the liberation of our people.⁹¹

Dehgani's writings illustrate that like many female leftists she accepted 'equality of the sexes',⁹² but identified primarily with a political movement aimed at eradicating class oppression through a socialist revolution. This in itself does not prove she viewed herself as inferior or secondary to male Fadian members, and if anything, her writings challenge Sanasarian's claim of intellectual or revolutionary inferiority. Dehgani wrote unapologetically of her views, with no reference to male leaders of her organisation, giving detailed descriptions of the tortures she was subjected to. Moreover, her threats against the regime 'I shall fight against you', 'I have taken up arms and will fight for the annihilation of the regime', were all written in the first person, highlighting a strong sense of self

⁹⁰ Cynthia Brown Dwyer, 'Women Imprisoned in the Kingdom of the Mullahs', in *Women and Revolution in Iran*, ed. Guity Nashat (Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), p. 268.

⁹¹ Ashraf Dehgani, *Torture and Resistance in Iran: Memories of the Woman Guerrilla Member of the OIPFG*, trans. The Iran Committee (London: Iran Committee, 1978), p. 146.

⁹² Ibid, Haleh Afshar, *Women and Politics in the Third World*, ed. Haleh Afshar, (London: Routledge, 1996), p.157.

and agency that indicated not all Fadiani women viewed themselves as 'inferior' in revolutionary ability to their male comrades.

The Mojahedin-i-Khalgh was another guerrilla organisation with a fast-growing female following, which by 1981 numbered around 20,000.⁹³ Like the Fadiani, the Mojahedin were born after the 1963 uprising and radicalised towards armed struggle.⁹⁴ While most of the Fadiani originated from the Tudeh and Marxists in the National Front, the Mojahedin were religiously oriented.⁹⁵ The group became popular among the working classes and more 'progressive *bazaaris*'.⁹⁶ They argued *Shi'ism* would inspire the masses to join the revolution, and followed many of Shariati's ideas and revolutionary messages.⁹⁷ Sanasarian argues that considering the dedication with which Shariati attempted to confront the woman's question, it is not surprising to find that the Mojahedin were more committed and consistent in addressing the issue of women's rights than other groups, including the secular Fadiani-i-Khalgh.⁹⁸ The organisation argued that confining women to the family sphere was a form of enslavement to the husband, and that the capitalist system prevented women from entering society by exploiting them further in the marketplace.⁹⁹

The statements of the executed Mojahid, Mehdi Rezai, claimed that the group received some of their arms from the Palestinian al-Fattah organisation.¹⁰⁰ Their activities were similarly focused on killing members of the Shah's regime

⁹³ Cynthia Dwyer, 'p. 274.

⁹⁴ Sima Bahar, p. 183.

⁹⁵ Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 220.

⁹⁶ Sanasarian, 'An Analysis of Fida'i and Mujahidin Positions', p. 103.

⁹⁷ Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 221.

⁹⁸ Sanasarian, 'An Analysis of Fida'i and Mujahidin Positions', pp. 102-104.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 102.

¹⁰⁰ Mehdi Rezai, p. 14.

and attacking small institutional targets.¹⁰¹ However, unlike the Fadian, the Mojahedin guerrilla attacks were often justified and moralised in Islamic terms. Indeed, Mehdi Rezai referred to Ali, the first *Shi'a* Imam, as the group's leader, and declared their objective as a response to 'the divine call and the oppressed people's cries', making references to *Qur'anic* verses.¹⁰² In 1972 they blew up the offices of a weekly magazine *Een Hafteh*, on the basis that it was printing 'pornographic pictures, thereby pursuing the vicious colonialist objective of corrupting the youth' in line with Shariati's emphasis on 'western corruption' and female piety and modesty.¹⁰³

Kazem Radjavi, Iran's first ambassador to the UN following the 1979 Revolution and brother of Massoud Radjavi, secretary-general of the Mojahedin, explained the importance of *jihad* and martyrdom within the organisation.

The Mojahed...must work simultaneously at his own emancipation through an internal *jihad* and an external one at every instant. This double *jihad* has a common goal: emancipation on both an individual and social level...Martyrdom is viewed as proof of a just battle.¹⁰⁴

The concept of *jihad* and martyrdom were thus incorporated as revolutionary and nationalist milestones in pursuit of social and political justice.

Sansarian's interviews with female members of the Mojahedin led her to conclude that glorification of martyrdom very much affected the Mojahedin's female members, who generally exhibited 'a burning desire for death'.¹⁰⁵ Dwyer was struck by the strong-mindedness and self-discipline of young Mojahedin women, who she wrote were amongst the most stimulating and admirable

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁰² Mehdi Rezai, p. 15.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ Kazem Radjavi, *La Revolution Iranienne et Les Moudjahedines* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1983), p. 114.

¹⁰⁵ Sansarian, 'An Analysis of Fida'i and Mujahidin Positions', p. 103.

women at Evin prison.¹⁰⁶ She described how one of them, 15 year old Azam, would wake early to begin her prayers and daily fast during the month of Ramadan, writing, 'Though only a teenager Azam seemed as mature both physically and emotionally as a woman twice her age'.¹⁰⁷ She recalled finding her studying for her high school maths exams after getting x-rays as a result of prison beatings, and how sometimes Azam would put aside her *Qur'an* or maths and lead everyone in singing Mojahed marching songs.¹⁰⁸ Dwyer reaffirmed that women welcomed arrests, as time served would raise them in the eyes of their comrades when they went home.¹⁰⁹

Shariati's models of Zaynab and Fatima stressed loyalty, suffering, and sacrifice through Zaynab's active physical rebellion, and Fatima's rearing of revolutionary martyrs. Shariati's ultimate female role model was Fatima, known as 'mother of her father', mother of the martyrs Husain and Hassan and Zaynab.¹¹⁰ He venerated her maternal qualities, and her endless suffering, and her willingness to sacrifice her own family for the cause of revolutionary justice. Zaynab's strength too was defined through her sacrifices as the surviving heroine of Karbala and the loyal messenger of revolution against tyranny. The Mojahedin exalted Mehdi Rezai's mother as a symbol of maternal resistance, declaring her message to her son during his arrest and torture "Never put your guns down" would 'echo in the ears of the Iranian people's children forever'.¹¹¹ Her four children, including a daughter, all died for the cause, and when this outcome is compared to that of Fatima's fate, the mother of martyrs Hassan and

¹⁰⁶ Cynthia Dwyer, pp. 269, 274.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 274.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 275.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ali Shariati, *Shariati on Shariati*, p. 70.

¹¹¹ Mehdi Rezai, pp. 1, 3.

Husain and the revolutionary Zaynab, Mother Rezai can be seen fulfilling the role model of Fatima, and her daughter fulfilling the role of Zaynab.

This section argues that this ‘desire for death’, and the incredible resolve under arrest and torture were manifestations of the feminine ideals of self-sacrifice and unwavering loyalty emphasised by the opposition, and realised through Shariati’s models of Fatima and Zaynab. Additionally, it is argued that Shariati’s focus on women who did not belong to either the ‘traditional mould’ or the ‘new imported mould’ was an attempt to co-opt women who were influenced by the effects of the earlier women’s movement and Pahlavi state policies, who wanted greater political and social space, but who were also politically and culturally conflicted, and thus drawn to the authenticity arguments of the revolutionary opposition. In turn, some women looking for alternative models, or frustrated with state limits on their political activity, were able to negotiate greater political/revolutionary space for themselves within the secular and religious left by striking patriarchal bargains with opposition leaders centred on the models and limits outlined by these groups.

Section 3: Women and Radicalisation of the Islamist Movement in Egypt

This section looks at changing definitions of authenticity, nationalism, and women’s behaviour within the Islamist movement by focusing on the Muslim Brotherhood and the alternative models of womanhood promoted by female Islamist Zaynab al-Ghazali. This section argues that rejecting Nasser’s pan-Arabism the Islamist movement redefined nationalism through the notion of a global Islamic community or *ummah*. This altered notions of authenticity and what/who constituted the ‘infidel’ or ‘external enemy’, and therefore, against

whom violent *jihad* could be sanctioned. Ideologues like Qutb and women like al-Ghazali attacked the Islamic authenticity of the state, arguing it was in a state of *jahiliyah*, rendering it a legitimate target for militant Jihadi groups. As an Islamist, al-Ghazali thus challenged the state's patriarchal control on the basis of its illegitimacy/*jahiliya*.

By keeping her organisation separate from the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Ghazali initially put forward a more independent and political definition of Islamic womanhood than her affiliates in the Muslim Sisterhood. The emphasis on women's 'spiritual/religious equality' by late 19th century Islamic modernists like Rashid Ridha and Mohammad Abduh¹¹² created the space for women to join the *da'wa* movement. This section argues that al-Ghazali was able to negotiate a greater socio-political role for herself within the movement by striking exceptional bargains with leaders like al-Banna and key ideologues like Qutb around notions of equality in *da'wa*, as well as nationalist notions of 'educated motherhood', which saw her challenge patriarchal limits on gender-mixing by lecturing and teaching mixed audiences. On the other hand, as state repression against the Islamists increased, merging her activities and accepting the patriarchal limits of the Brotherhood's male leaders offered al-Ghazali the better bargain at that point in time in pursuit of her goals of an Islamic society/state. Nevertheless, she continued to present herself as an equal and/or superior guide to male brotherhood members by describing her greater endurance of prison torture, and the prophetic visions she received. Her prison memoirs can be viewed as form of patriarchal bargaining intended to assert herself within the Islamist movement. While her writing indicated she viewed herself as an

¹¹² Saba Mahmood, 'The Politics of Piety', pp. 82-94.

exception, and while her actions may have been based on temporary bargains with Brotherhood leaders, her descriptions of her activities in her memoirs nevertheless provide a different and more politicised model of Islamist womanhood.

3.1 Ideologues of the Islamist movement in Egypt

In Egypt, as in Iran, certain events helped radicalise ideas and attitudes within the opposition movement. The Islamic opposition had always centred its attacks of inauthenticity on the constructed dichotomy of 'East and West', however, who or what constituted the west, infidel, or enemy changed over the 20th century. During the nationalist revolution the west had been epitomised by the ideas and actions of British imperialism. Inauthenticity was therefore defined through an external enemy represented by a foreign nation, intruder, and coloniser. From the late 1940s/early 1950s definitions of the west had broadened as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict to include Israel, and its American backers, alongside western European countries. However, revised interpretations of Islamic modernist thought and writings on *jihad* by men like al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb were used to extend these definitions to the Arab region, and the Egyptian nation itself.

The writings of both al-Banna and Qutb, argued that only freedom from western clutches and the implementation of an Islamic state would cure society of all its ills. Referring to the effects of westernisation, Muslim Brotherhood founder, al-Banna had argued in 1949,

A disease afflicting these Eastern nations assumes a variety of aspects and has many symptoms. It has done harm to every expression of their lives...while through imitation of the West, the viper's venoms creeps

insidiously into their affairs, poisoning their blood and sullying the purity of their well being.¹¹³

Al-Banna argued that imitation of the west had corrupted society and government, and emphasised that the Brotherhood's call was a global one.¹¹⁴ Yet, he also emphasised Arab unity and culture in this context, arguing 'Islam cannot progress, without the unity and progress of the Arabs'.¹¹⁵ However, as Nasser's suppression of the Muslim Brotherhood intensified, and following the defeat of pan-Arab projects and the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Brotherhood leaders stressed Islamic unity across a wider/global Islamic *umma*. This was not so much a contradiction or rejection of the 'Arab unity' al-Banna had underlined, as a rejection of Nasser's model of pan-Arab nationalism. Rather, the Islamist movement put forward a new definition of authentic Egyptian nationalism that challenged secular politics and Nasser's pan-Arab model in favour of political Islam and Muslim unity. This altered notions of authenticity and what/who constituted the infidel or enemy, and thus against whom violent *jihad* could be sanctioned.

Al-Banna's tracts emphasised that that the Brotherhood detested 'fanaticism of outlook', preferring instead to convert men by 'the gentle methods of forbearance and affection'.¹¹⁶ However, while he denounced fanaticism and defined non-physical *jihad*, the 'struggle' against oneself, as more fundamental, his writings nevertheless provided justification for war and physical *jihad*'.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Hassan al-Banna, *Five Tracts of Hassan Al-Banna (1906-1949): A Selection from the Majmuat Rasail al-Imam al-Shahid Hassan al-Banna*, trans. Charles Wendell (Berkley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 61.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 61-62, 64, 88-89.

¹¹⁵ Hasan al-Banna, *Selected Writings of Hasan al-Banna Shaheed*, trans. S.A. Qureshi, (New Delhi: Milat Book Centre, 1999), p. 62.

¹¹⁶ al-Banna, *Five Tracts*, p. 60.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 49, 53.

Moreover, he defined the final stage of reform as a ‘practical struggle’, where ‘principles shall be enforced’.¹¹⁸ Thus, more extreme elements of the Islamist movement could interpret these statements to justify violence against the ‘enemies of Islam’, be they external or within the nation itself. Following al-Banna’s assassination, the extended arrests and torture of Muslim Brotherhood members inspired many Islamists to take on more militant views. Qutb’s writings, particularly works like *Milestones*, called for perpetual physical *jihad* and inspired Islamists towards more violent action. For Qutb the separation of religion and politics in the west was akin to *jahiliyah*, a degraded state attributed to pre-Islamic Arabia and ignorance of God.¹¹⁹ Qutb argued that anyone living outside the system of Islam was effectively living in *jahiliyah*, writing ‘the whole world is steeped in *jahiliyyah*...a rebellion against God’s sovereignty on earth’.¹²⁰ Qutb sanctioned the use of offensive *jihad* to eliminate *jahiliyah*, which meant women were also subject to *jihad*.¹²¹ Qutb argued Dar ul-Islam (the house/abode of Islam) had no national or regional borders, redefining Dar ul-harb (the house of war) to include any so-called Muslim states that promoted *jahiliya*; ‘Indeed, people are not Muslims, as they proclaim to be, as long as they live the life of *jahiliyyah*’.¹²²

Islamists like Mohammad Abdel Salam Faraj were able to expand and apply Qutb’s ideas to define the Egyptian state as being in a state of *jahiliyah*, and thus justify violent *jihad* against this ‘so-called Muslim’ nation, by attacking the authenticity of its Islamic character. In *Al-Farida Al-Gha’ibah* (The Neglected

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 182.

¹¹⁹ Sayid Qutb, *The Sayid Qutb Reader, Selected Writings on Politics, Religion and Society*, ed. Albert J. Bergesen, (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 21-22.

¹²⁰ Qutb, *Milestones*, (Damascus: Dar al-Ilm, 19-), p.11.

¹²¹ Talhami, p. 72.

¹²² Qutb, *Milestones*, pp. 62-63, 137.

Duty), Faraj argued violent *jihad* was an obligation for every Muslim against even Muslim rulers who did not implement *Shari'a*.¹²³ Similarly to Qutb, he refuted those who defined *jihad* as defensive, and declared 'it is obligatory for the Muslims to raise their swords under the very eyes of the Leaders who hide the Truth', which for Faraj included any Muslim rulers who did not implement an Islamic state.¹²⁴ It was through such rationalisation that his al-Jihad group planned and justified the assassination of Sadat in 1981, as an inauthentic Muslim leader promoting *jahiliyah*.

2.2 The Muslim Brotherhood/Sisterhood and Zaynab al-Ghazali

The Muslim Brotherhood's original mission as defined by al-Banna was Islamic revival and the establishment of an Islamic state.¹²⁵ These views were carried and supported by the Muslim Sisterhood under Labiba Ahmad, and later by Zaynab al-Ghazali. Al-Ghazali's complex legacy as a pioneering *da'iya* has resulted in conflicting views about her contribution to gender discourse in Egypt. Some writers like Leila Ahmed have argued that despite the inconsistencies between her actions and statements, she demonstrated 'a determination to find feminism within Islam'.¹²⁶ Miriam Cooke has similarly labelled her an 'Islamic feminist', based on her subversion of conventional definitions of Muslim women's domestic roles, her visible political and religious leadership, and her autobiographical writings, which set a precedent for Islamist women going forward.¹²⁷ On the other hand, Marilyn Booth asks 'in describing her own acts

¹²³ Mohammad Abdel Salam Faraj, 'Al-Farida Al-Gha'ibah', in Johannes J.G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat's Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East* (New York: Macmillan, 1986).

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, p.192.

¹²⁵ al-Banna, *Five Tracts*, p. 60.

¹²⁶ Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, pp. 196-197, 199-200, 207.

¹²⁷ Cooke, *Women Claim Islam*, p. 61, 100, 104.

as exceptional and historically contingent, how much space does al-Ghazali leave for most women, who do not have al-Ghazali's rather peculiar life circumstances? Al-Ghazali seems to essentialise gender in terms of prescribed social duties, even if the *da'wa* offers a temporary break from normal social time'.¹²⁸ Roxanne L Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman argue that it is precisely because she promoted some conventional gender definitions that she was able to redefine 'women's education in Islam, participation in *jihad*, and engagement in *da'wa* as a necessary expression of, rather than threat to, Muslim tradition'.¹²⁹

Zaynab al-Ghazali wrote that her original society, the Muslim Ladies Group, had been established in 1936 with the goal of promoting Islamic *da'wa*.¹³⁰ Like al-Banna, al-Ghazali stressed her group worked to 'spread the message of *Allah*, and to strive for the making of a Muslim *umma*'.¹³¹ The organisation was not strictly a woman's group; it recruited men as well, and aimed its efforts at society at large.¹³² It published a magazine, and, like the Muslim Brotherhood, was engaged in both social work and educational activities.¹³³ From the start, al-Banna sought to co-opt al-Ghazali's activities by asking her to take over as president of *al-Akhawat al-Muslimat* (The Muslim Sisterhood). Al-Banna encouraged al-Ghazali to take an active political role, employing her as a diplomatic mediator to resolve tensions between Prime Minister Nahhas and his

¹²⁸ Marilyn Booth, Reviewed Work: Women Claim Islam: Creating Islamic Feminism Through Literature by Miriam Cooke, *World Literature Today*, Vol. 76, No. 2, Spring, 2002.

¹²⁹ Roxanne L Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: texts and contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden*, ed. Roxanne L Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 282.

¹³⁰ al-Ghazali, *Return of the Pharaoh*, p. 11.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* p. 12.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.* p. 13.

organisation in 1949.¹³⁴ However, al-Ghazali maintained her independence and only properly merged her activities with the Brotherhood after al-Banna's death.

During the 1950s, Al-Ghazali used her Muslim Ladies magazine to denounce Nasser's regime and argued that Brotherhood members should not accept ministerial posts in 'a government whose legislation is not Allah's law', implying they should be expelled from the group if they did so. She recalled the Brotherhood's reaction:

Abd al-Qadir 'Awdah asked me to postpone any further writing about the issue...yet, as I saw it, the issue was crucial and once again I began addressing it.....'Awdah again visited me, but this time with an order from al-Hudaibi, asking me to stop my commentary...I obeyed the order. From then on, all my activities had to conform to my pledge of allegiance to the Ikhwan, even to the extent of requiring the Murshid's prior consent for everything, including my participation in the Vienna Peace Conference.¹³⁵

While al-Ghazali can initially be seen challenging some male Brotherhood leaders on the subject of ministerial posts, as state crackdowns increased on the Islamist movement and against her own group, she increasingly viewed merging her activities and conforming to its male-leadership as the better bargain. She chose to stress her allegiance to the Brotherhood at this juncture, to encourage unity of the movement towards the common goal of an Islamic state.

The testimony of Muslim Sister Fatima Abdel-Hadi indicated that al-Ghazali was an exception within the movement. Abdel-Hadi's reaction to the Muslim Ladies Group's mixed lectures, her questions to al-Banna about al-Ghazali causing a 'split' within the *da'wa* movement (discussed in chapter 4), indicated she viewed her as a divisive and non-conformist figure. While other female Islamists, particularly those who chose to remain in al-Ghazali's Muslim

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 26.

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 29.

Ladies Group, may not have shared her views it is clear that al-Ghazali's definitions of Islamic womanhood differed markedly from those upheld by the majority of the Muslim sisterhood. While it can be argued that these differences or non-conformities were tolerated because of the particular political context, namely the state's suppression of the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Ghazali nevertheless put forward a more political and active notion of Islamic womanhood that could be taken up by Islamist women should it provide the better bargain.

Abdel-Hadi's writing illustrated how the Muslim Sisterhood was transformed from a society focused on *da'wa* and social work into an ideological and political one in line with the Muslim Brotherhood's own transformation in this direction.¹³⁶ Hussam Tammam has argued that the reason al-Ghazali rose to prominence over leading Sisters like Abdel-Hadi or Amal al-Ashamawi, was because the former epitomised 'the transformation of the Muslim Sisterhood from a social proselytisation movement into blatant political activism'.¹³⁷ Yet, al-Banna's successors did not emphasise independent political or professional activity for women, and Qutb in particular linked their 'natural roles' to their 'biological capacities': 'There is the case of men being overseers over women...Because a man is free from the cares of maternity, he can attend to the affairs of society.¹³⁸ He defined the family as 'the basis' of society, and wrote that the basis of the family was 'the division of labour between husband and wife, and

¹³⁶ Abdel-Hadi, *Rihlati*.

¹³⁷ Hussam Tammam, 'Egyptian Muslim Sisterhood and a new Historic Testimony', *Ahram Online*, 15 September 2011, p. 2.

¹³⁸ Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, trans. John B. Hardie (New York: Islamic Publications International, 2000), pp. 73-74.

the upbringing of children'.¹³⁹ He argued that any society whose division of work was not based on 'family responsibility and natural gifts' was 'jahili'.

Where a woman's role is merely to be attractive, sexy and flirtatious, and a woman is freed from her basic responsibility of bringing up children; and if, on her own or under social demand, she prefers to become a hostess or a stewardess in a hotel or ship or air company, thus spending her ability for material productivity rather than in the training of human beings...then such a civilisation is 'backward' from the human point of view, or 'jahili' in Islamic terminology.¹⁴⁰

Moreover, Qutb argued that women's rights within both the western and communist contexts had resulted only in their sexual and economic exploitation, describing the 'rubbish heap of the West' and 'the evil and dirty materialism of the East',¹⁴¹ '[look] at this behaviour, like animals, which you call 'free mixing of the sexes'; at this vulgarity which you call 'emancipation of women'.¹⁴² Yet, despite his emphasis on gender segregation, Al-Ghazali wrote that Qutb would often visit her at her home to explain and answer questions to youth followers.¹⁴³

On the one hand, al-Ghazali appeared to support Qutb's view on women's 'natural roles' by arguing that once Islamic rule was realised, women would retreat to their natural domain as nurturers of the nation's men, and pointing to Qutb's written works such as 'Social Justice in Islam', as guides for model Muslim behaviour.¹⁴⁴ On the other hand, she subverted limits on Muslim women's social and political behaviour by defining her own activities as religious duty and linking them with modern nationalist notions of educated motherhood. She defined women as teachers and nurturers of men, arguing 'sometimes it takes

¹³⁹ Qutb, *Milestones*, p.97

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 98.

¹⁴¹ Qutb, *Social Justice*, *Milestones*, p. 139.

¹⁴² Qutb, *Milestones*, p. 139.

¹⁴³ al-Ghazali, *Return of the Pharaoh*, p. 42.

¹⁴⁴ al-Gahzali, *Ayyam min Hayati*, p. 148, Talhami, p. 52.

very long to establish the Islamic government...women should get a chance to train the male members of the *umma'*, and defining herself as a leading educator, meeting with Qutb while he was in prison in 1962 to seek guidance on their Islamic education syllabuses.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, while endorsing the idea of women's natural roles as mothers and wives, she simultaneously extended and challenged these definitions through her own activism. Describing a conversation with her husband, al-Ghazali provided a definition of Islamic womanhood that placed *da'wa* above women's 'natural', domestic roles.

You should not ask me about my activities with other *mujahidin* and let trust be full between us...in the event of any clash between the marriage contract's interest and that of *da'awah* [proselytising], our marriage will end...I accept that ordering me to listen to you is amongst your rights, but Allah is greater than ourselves.¹⁴⁶

She wrote that her husband supported her and that when youth followers would visit late at night, he would wake her up to say 'some of your children are in the study-room'.¹⁴⁷ By defining Ikhwan youth as her 'children', al-Ghazali was able to justify gender mixing on the basis of *da'wa* and her role as a religious mother-educator figure.

Like the nationalist revolution of 1919, Islamist women were able to provide leadership and organisation when male Brotherhood members were arrested. It was over this kind of social work that al-Ghazali's activities overlapped with those of the Muslim Sisterhood¹⁴⁸, who according to Abdel-Hadi were also very active in raising funds and donations for the families of Brotherhood members in detention.¹⁴⁹ However, the Sisterhood was also

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p.120, 41.

¹⁴⁶ al-Ghazali, *Return of the Pharaoh*, p. 38.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 39.

¹⁴⁸ al-Gahzali, *Ayyam min Hayati*, p. 33.

¹⁴⁹ Abdel-Hadi, p. 24

engaged in other social activities, which were very specific to them. Abdel-Hadi describes the key role that sisterhood members played, in arranging proposals and marriages for members of the Brotherhood and Sisterhood.¹⁵⁰ Inter-organisational marriages were encouraged, with Abdel-Hadi describing these arrangements as amongst their most important activities. She explained how she would liaise with Muslim Brother Mahmood al-Jawhari, who oversaw the Sisterhood's operations.

I was key in many of these marriages, I would get the characteristics of the *Ikhwan* person from Mahmood al-Jawhari, and go about matching him to the appropriate Sister.¹⁵¹

As a result, ties between Brotherhood and Sisterhood members were further solidified through marriage, which was also used to attract new members to the organisations.

Al-Ghazali indicated her activities had always been more political both within her own organisation and later on in the 1950s when she 'swore allegiance' to the Brotherhood. She wrote that she joined forces with the Sisters, describing women like Amal al-Ashmawi and Aminah al-Jawjari as 'mujahidas', but making no mention of Abdel-Hadi.¹⁵² Al-Ghazali claimed that in the late 1950's she formed a triumvirate with 'Abd al-Fattah Isma'il and Qutb with permission from Brotherhood leader Hassan Hudaibi, highlighting her desire to portray herself as an influential/leading political figure within the group.¹⁵³ Farid Abd al-Khaliq, who joined the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1940's argued that the increasing politicisation of the Brotherhood towards more revolutionary activity and al-Ghazali's 'role in the plans of 1965, with 'Abdul Fattah Isma'il,

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 30-33, 38-39, 45-46, 52.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, pp. 38-39.

¹⁵² al-Ghazali, *Return of the Pharaoh*, p. 32.

¹⁵³ Ibid, pp. 33-25, 39.

'Abdul Aziz, and Sayyid Qutb, to build secret cells to change the political system', raised her prominence in '*Aml al-niswi al-Islami* (Islamic women's work) from that point onwards.¹⁵⁴

Al-Ghazali was eventually arrested in 1965, and sentenced to 25 years in prison for her activities with the Muslim Brotherhood, specifically her supposed part in a plot to assassinate Nasser. Many members of the Muslim Sisterhood were also arrested, including Fatma Abdel-Hadi, although her recollections of prison, while harrowing, were not as dramatic. Al-Ghazali described beatings, torture, and incessant interrogations throughout her imprisonment.¹⁵⁵ She described many prophetic visions, presenting herself as a 'chosen' Muslim guide, endorsed by the Prophet himself through his 'conversations' with her, 'Oh Zainab! You are following the path of Allah and His Prophet'.¹⁵⁶

Euben and Zaman argue that al-Ghazali's memoirs are more 'reflexive hagiography than autobiography', a 'self-creation' that presented al-Ghazali as a '*murshida*' (female guide) and *mujahida* (female who struggles/fighter) and set a new precedent for women in the previously exclusive male arena of 'Islamist prison testimonials'.¹⁵⁷ Ghazali thus presented herself as a superior Muslim guide by comparing her endurance and survival of prison beatings and torture to the breaking down or death of some 'young', Brotherhood members under the same conditions.¹⁵⁸ It can also be argued that although she viewed and presented herself as an exceptional *da'iya*, her leadership of the Muslim Ladies Group, her activities within the Muslim Brotherhood, and her autobiographical

¹⁵⁴ Farid Abd al-Kahliq in Fatima Abd al-Hadi, *Rihlati*, p. 18

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 65.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.53-54, 138-139, 150.

¹⁵⁷ R.L. Euben p. 281

¹⁵⁸ al-Gahzali, *Ayyam min Hayati* p. 60.

writing constituted efforts to revise patriarchal bargains within the Islamist movement, and by striking these bargains even temporarily, was able to put forward a more political and active model of Islamic womanhood.

Conclusion

Chapter 5 showed how notions of authenticity changed from the early 20th century to incorporate anti-western/'westoxification' and anti-capitalist discourses by the 1960s. In this chapter it was shown how the ostentatious and ceremonial displays in late 1960s and early 1970s Iran alienated more people away from the state. Similarly, the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and 1971 foreign policy shift under Sadat encouraged notions of the Egyptian state as a *jahili* entity. It was also shown how revolutionary ideologues in Iran reinterpreted women's roles in response to these changes to put forward more militant and revolutionary definitions. The recurrent themes of women's loyalty and self-sacrifice, emphasised throughout the Constitutional period, were revised by Shariati using the figures of Fatima and Zaynab to produce more revolutionary interpretations than writers like Bint al Shati', who had portrayed them as more passive, sad figures (as discussed in chapter 5).¹⁵⁹ It is argued that women struck patriarchal bargains with groups like the Mojahedin-i-Khalgh as a way of challenging state authenticity and limits on women's public activity through their revolutionary activities, arrest and martyrdom; the latter manifesting out of these revised themes of loyalty and sacrifice.

Islamist ideologues and activists in Egypt similarly responded to changing socio-political factors, creating more public and political space for some Islamist

¹⁵⁹ Bint al-Shati', *Banat al-Nabi* p. 178; *Aqilat Bani Hashim*, pp. 146-147.

women, particularly during periods of heightened state suppression, such as the 1954 and 1960s crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood. Women within the Islamist movement challenged the authenticity and authority of the patriarchal state on the basis of its Islamic illegitimacy. In this context, *jihad fi sabil Allah* became a way of challenging state limits on women's independent activities, with recurrent themes of female sacrifice and endurance of hardship revised through *da'wa* activities, social and educational work, covert political activity as in the case of al-Ghazali, and arrest and torture by the state.

As a pioneering *da'iya*, al-Ghazali was able to challenge Islamist limits on gender mixing using modernist notions of gender equality in *da'wa* and nationalist notions of educated motherhood. However, by the 1950s and 60s, as state repression against the Brotherhood increased, and the Muslim Ladies Group was eventually banned by the state, she moved to unify more directly with the Brotherhood as the better-perceived patriarchal bargain. However, al-Ghazali nevertheless attempted to portray herself as equal or superior to male Brotherhood members in *jihad fi sabil Allah* by describing a greater endurance of torture and the occurrence of prophetic visions in prison. While the writing of her memoirs can be viewed as an attempt to assert herself exceptionally within the Islamist movement, by publishing her experiences she put forward a more complex, political model of Islamic womanhood, contributing to academic debates on 'Islamic feminism'. As notions of authenticity and historical figures are not static, their legacies can be renegotiated at any time; controversial figures like Qurrat al-Ayn who were once repudiated as inauthentic, or non-conformist figures like Zaynab al-Ghazali who did not represent the ideals of the

majority, can at a later time be taken up by others to represent or symbolise revised notions of authenticity and womanhood.

Chapter 7

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 and The Fall of Sadat (1970-1980)

In the previous chapter it was shown how opposition groups in Egypt and Iran produced alternative models of authentic womanhood. This chapter focuses on key developments in the lead up to the 1979 Iranian Revolution, and Sadat's assassination in Egypt. It relies on documents from the US National Archives on the WOI and Egyptian women in the 1970s, documents from the British National Archives on Sadat's policies and its effects, the memoirs and writings of key actors in Iran including the Shah, Mahnaz Afkhami, Bamdad, Farmanfarmaian, Fatemeh Pakravan, Manouchehr Ganji, and figures within the anti-shah movement such as Jalal Al-i-Ahmad, Ali Shariati, Azar Nafisi, Shirin Ebadi. These are complemented with samples from Khomeini's speeches, interviews, and press articles from newspapers at the time, such as *The Daily Telegraph*, *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, and Persian *Kayhan*. Similarly for Egypt, the memoirs, public diaries, and speeches of Anwar Sadat are used along with memoirs and published writings of Jehan Sadat, Nawal el-Saadawi, Zaynab al-Ghazali, Fatima Abdel-Hadi and Amina al-Said.

This chapter will show that the state and opposition groups competed for power, in part through the production of different gender norms, each attempting to co-opt a new generation of educated women to validate their different models of cultural authenticity. As the opposition movements in Egypt and Iran gained strength, state feminists had to manoeuvre around the regime and the opposition's contradictory definitions of womanhood in order to effect changes. The dual strategy of repression and limited liberalisation used by both

the Shah and Sadat is analysed to assess its effects on state feminism and women's rights movements. The chapter is split into 2 sections. Section arguments, which are highlighted at the start, are used to make 3 comparative arguments.

The first comparative argument is that both the Iranian and Egyptian states entered into 'patriarchal battles' with the opposition, that is competition for political power centred on notions of womanhood and gender-relations, promoting the activism of state feminists as a way of weakening the opposition's models of womanhood. This chapter's second comparative argument is that by employing a dual strategy of compromise and repression against the opposition, the Egyptian and Iranian states validated contradictory notions of modern womanhood by compromising on women's rights in order to pacify their patriarchal rivals, thus hindering the effects of their own state feminist projects.

In Iran, the Shah's conciliatory gestures towards the religious opposition, which included the abolition of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, helped turn some state feminists against the regime, and bolstered female support for Ayatollah Khomeini. In Egypt, Sadat's attempts to co-opt the support of Islamists through the consideration of Islamic legislation proposals, such as the revision of Article 11 of the Constitution in 1971, and his suppression of independent feminists like Nawal el-Saadawi weakened the women's rights movement.

This chapter's final comparative argument is that although 'patriarchal battles' between the state and the opposition were centred on state feminism and veiling, the re-veiling phenomenon in Iran and Egypt was different, and formed part of very different bargains with the opposition. While in both cases unveiling/veiling was used to demarcate a line between western and authentic

female behaviour, as a way of signalling whether the state or the Islamist opposition was gaining power, it was only in Egypt that veiling formed part of actual bargains struck between women and the Islamic opposition. Egyptian women promoted veiling as part of patriarchal bargains with the Islamists for greater social space, in order to continue pursuing university education, whilst projecting their modesty and promoting society's Islamisation as a more authentic model of Egyptian womanhood. However, in Iran, secular women donned the veil as an anti-imperialist and anti-Pahlavi symbol of the revolution, and did not necessarily promote the act of veiling as an authentic act outside the context of revolution. Women like Ebadi and Farmanfarmaian, who came to support the revolution, did not negotiate for greater space in exchange for veiling, or the promotion of Islamic practices after the revolution. As a result, once the regime was overthrown, and news spread of Khomeini's enforced veiling law, thousands of women took to the streets in March 1979 to demonstrate against enforced veiling, and in defence of broader women's rights.

Section 1: Women, the WOI, and the 1979 Iranian Revolution

Many writers like Bahar and Keddie have argued that the effects of the WOI on Iran's female population were limited by a lack of grassroots demand, and the WOI's association with the regime. Keddie argues that the WOI was automatically shunned as an extension of the regime, turning women away from wholly feminist causes in general.¹ Bahar points out that while Iranian women under the Shah's regime enjoyed a better position, especially in legal terms, these changes were imposed from above and were not the result of a conscious

¹ Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 229.

grassroots demand.² As demand did not come from the majority of women themselves, Bahar argues most women did not understand the essence of these changes or how to apply them.³

In contrast, this section argues that the limitations of the WOI, or the limited effects of its projects, were linked to patriarchal battles between the state and the opposition, which centred on state feminism and hindered much of the WOI's work. WOI feminists had to balance between the state and the religious opposition's conflicting constructs of womanhood, whilst often pushing for reforms outside 'the sphere of traditional Islam' and 'against the will of conservative religious leaders'.⁴ It is argued that the Pahlavi state attempted to maintain dominance over patriarchal rivals in the opposition by balancing between repressive tactics, and compromise, which led to more contradictory notions of women's rights. In the second half of this section women's revolutionary activity and support for Khomeini is analysed. It is argued that ideologically diverse women had different motives based on their social backgrounds, but that support for Khomeini was largely motivated by ideological trends promoted by thinkers like Jalal Al-i-Ahmed and Ali Shariati, which allowed various groups to unite around notions of Pahlavi westoxification and inauthenticity.

Female support was encouraged by the Shah's ineffective strategies in dealing with the religious opposition, such as his abandonment of the post of Ministry of Women's Affairs, which according to Afkhami encouraged WOI

² Sima Bahar, p. 182.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Afkhami, 'The Women's Organisation of Iran', p. 133.

women to join the anti-Shah movement.⁵ As a consequence, the veil was used as an anti-establishment and revolutionary symbol. It is argued that this usage was the result of Reza Shah's Women's Awakening reforms, which had linked unveiling with notions of westernisation and western dress, turning the veil into a symbol of authenticity against the Pahlavi state and imperialism. Consequently, secular Tudeh and Fadayan women did not support protests against Khomeini's enforced veiling decree in March 1979, as unveiling was associated with the imperialist, westoxified Pahlavi state, and its westernised-bourgeois supporters.

1.1 Totalitarianism, The Rastakhiz Party, and The WOI

In many ways, the contradictions and inconsistencies of the regime's policies came to a head during the 1970s. Writing in 1973, Iranian journalist Pari Shayk al-Islami argued that in 'today's society in Iran, women still don't have the status they deserve with regards to *tasawu huquq* (equality of rights)' but that many female intellectuals had surpassed their male peers, and were working on equal footing to men in fields such as her own.⁶ She argued that 'men's selfishness' had promoted *Gom-namiy-i Zan* (the loss of woman's name) in Iranian history, and that researchers/journalists were working to fill these historical gaps and give women their rightful place in Iran's intellectual and national history.⁷ In the previous chapters it was shown that in order to promote Iranian modernity, the Shah encouraged women to join the public sphere, promoting female employment and education as an extension of their responsibilities as educated

⁵ Afkhami, 'The Women's Organization of Iran', p.110.

⁶ Shaykh al-Islami, Bakhsh/chapter 4.

⁷ Ibid.

wives and mothers. As such, the regime supported female social work in particular, as an extension of these roles.

Farmanfarmaian wrote that by 1973 her school of social work was expanding and admitting more students.⁸ Afkhami argued that the WOIs consistent work convinced the government that its services were necessary for national development.⁹ As a result, she claimed an ideological turning point came in 1973, when the WOI revised its constitution; 'the revised constitution made no mention of women's role in the home...the goal was 'defending the individual, family and social rights of women to ensure their complete equality".¹⁰ This was followed by the passing of the Family Protection Act in 1975, in stronger form than the original 1967 Act. The act gave women the right to initiate divorce on the same grounds as men, transferred matters on child custody and alimony to a special family court, limited polygamy by requiring the first wife's permission, legalised abortion with the husband's consent, and increased women's marriage age to 18. According to Afkhami, unmarried women could also have abortions up to the 8th week of pregnancy.¹¹

Moreover, internationally the WOI was becoming very active and vocal. This increase in international activity mirrored the shift in foreign policy between Reza Shah and his son towards greater western investment. For instance in December 1974 the Iranian government contributed 30,000 USD to the International Women's Year committee.¹² The WOI became more active internationally than state feminists had been under Reza Shah. Afkhami wrote

⁸ Farmanfarmaian, p. 285.

⁹ Afkhami, 'The Women's Organisation of Iran', pp. 115-116; Ashraf Pahlavi, p. 155.

¹⁰Ibid, pp. 121-122.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 132.

¹² Memo from US Department of State to the United Nations, 2 December 1974, Document number: 1974, USUNN05600, USNA.

that at the 1975 International Women's Year Conference in Mexico Iran played a principal role in establishing the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), which planned to host its 1980 conference in Iran.¹³

Correspondences between the US embassy in Tehran and the US Department of State in Washington show that before the WOI presented its proposal in Mexico, which included the plan for the establishment of the research centre, the Iranian government had requested and acquired the support of the US delegation to help secure approval for the WOI's proposals.¹⁴ American association with the WOI's initiatives contributed to the latter's image as a tool of the Pahlavi regime. Moreover, other than US backing, the Iranians failed to gain any contributions to the proposed centre from any other member countries.¹⁵ In fact, memos from meetings shows that the proposal for INSTRAW met with more 'silence than support', as no other contributions were made other than a personal USD 1 million contribution from Ashraf Pahlavi on condition that the institute be located in Iran.¹⁶ Many member states showed a lack of interest in the institute, with Denmark expressing concerns it would duplicate other UN body efforts, and the African delegations opposing the idea it be located in Iran out of fears the Iranian government was seeking to control the proposed institute.¹⁷

¹³ Afkhami, 'The Women's Organisation Of Iran', p. 123.

¹⁴ Memo from US Embassy in Tehran to US Department of State, 6 June 1975, Document number: 1975TEHRAN05294; Memo from US Embassy in Mexico to US Department of State, 24 June 1975, Document number: 1975MEXICO05530; Memo from UN Economic and Social Council, 24 July 1975, Document number: 1975GENEVA05913, USNA.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Memo from US mission at the United Nations to Department of State, 14 May 1976, Document number: 1976USUNN02115, USNA.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Despite the state's support for social work, the Shah's increasingly authoritarian style came to a head during this period. In 1975 he ended the two-party system that had been in place since 1957, in favour of the single *Rastakhiz* or Resurgence Party, designed to control political participation and to mobilise the middle and lower classes.¹⁸ Manouchehr Ganji, Minister to the Shah and a member of the U.N Committee on Human Rights at the time, explained that very soon after the Party was created the Shah declared that any person who did not enter the Party would be seen as a traitor, and punished accordingly.¹⁹ Farmanfarmaian wrote that the Party intruded itself into every aspect of life, and anyone who did not cooperate with the regime was duly jailed or tortured.²⁰

Everybody was expected to join, and anyone who didn't feel like doing so could go to the foreign ministry, get a passport and leave the country...humiliated and resentful like everyone else, I got a group membership application form, and signed my name to it.²¹

US government documents reaffirmed that although voter numbers were at a record high, people were under pressure to do so as their identity cards would be stamped to prove they had registered.²² Moreover, they added that the average 'Iranian man in the street...generally presumes the outcome has been decided in advance', a view confirmed by the 'election' of the Shah's courtiers and ministers to top positions.²³ Mahnaz Afkhami was originally named Deputy Chairman of the Party's executive board, and although this was dropped at the

¹⁸ Stempel, pp. 31, 33-35.

¹⁹ Ganji, pp. 2-3.

²⁰ Farmanfarmaian, p. 279.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Memo from US Embassy in Tehran to US Department of State, 17 June 1975, Document number: 1975TEHRAN05703, USNA.

²³ Ibid.

June 1975 'elections', she nevertheless formed part of the party's first political bureau in October 1975.²⁴

Farmanfarmaian added that tensions were further exacerbated by what she described as

A government campaign of psychological degradation...No anniversary of significance to the Pahlavis, could pass without a 'festival of national thanksgiving'...I was expected to send a quota of students and faculty to march in the parade. Needless to say nobody wanted to attend...but not going meant drawing the attention of SAVAK.²⁵

As a result, instead of mobilising more Iranians towards the regime, the Resurgence Party built resentment amongst the educated middle classes, and amongst female activists like Farmanfarmaian, despite state funding for her school of social work. Moreover, Farmanfarmian recalled how the oil-fuelled economic boom produced a new class of Iranian nouveaux riches whose ostentatious spending was not only exasperating to the poorest classes but 'like a heady explosive inhalant' to people like herself and her students.²⁶ Even Ashraf Pahlavi admitted 'the gap between rich and poor became more pronounced, and more dangerous to the stability of the regime.²⁷

According to Afkhami, by the late 1970s the WOI had some 2,000 paid specialists working in 120 centres throughout the country, writing that 'by 1976 more than a million women participated in one or more of the centres'.²⁸ She credited the WOI Family Welfare Centres with playing a pivotal role in building legitimacy for the WOI at grassroots levels, by providing healthcare, hygiene, child care, and counselling services to the poorest classes, both within Tehran

²⁴ Ibid, Memos from US Embassy in Tehran to US Department of State, 8 May 1975, Document number: 1975TEHRAN04312, and 22 October 1975, Document: 1975TEHRAN10338, USNA.

²⁵ Farmanfarmaian, p. 279.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 278.

²⁷ Ashraf Pahlavi, p. 187.

²⁸ Afkhami, 'The Women's Organization Of Iran', pp. 116-117, 132-133.

and across the country.²⁹ She added that 12 of these centres were located in the most 'impoverished areas of south Tehran', where the WOI's school of social work was also located.³⁰ Fatemeh Pakravan, wife of Iranian Minister General Hassan Pakravan, described the scenes of poverty in South Tehran's slums between 1976 and 1977.

I just couldn't believe my eyes...some of them lived in pens, completely patched up with pieces of nylon on them. The open-air canals were heaped with dirt and garbage...you cold not imagine what it was like.³¹

Yet, Afkhami insisted the WOI's centres were crucial in improving the conditions in these slums. However, she did acknowledge that the WOI's association with the regime tainted its initiatives.³² She wrote that leftist opponents disparaged the movement because acknowledging its impact would have been tantamount to praising the regime, while religious fundamentalists opposed the WOI because its activities conflicted with their version of Islam.³³

Afkhami wrote that the WOI achieved most of its women's rights reforms 'outside the sphere of traditional Islam and against the will of conservative religious leaders'.³⁴ However, she also explained that the WOI consistently tried to compromise where possible with religious leaders to help advance their projects. She wrote that the Shah's support for WOI's proposals was not a given, but depended on 'sufficient social pressure from various power groups within and outside the government...to convince him that a manageable convergence of opinion existed in favour of the move'.³⁵ As such, the name of the WOI centres

²⁹ Ibid, pp. 115-117.

³⁰ Ibid, p.117.

³¹ Pakravan, pp. 120-121.

³² Afkhami, 'The Women's Organization Of Iran', p. 123.

³³ Ibid, pp. 128-129.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 133.

³⁵ Ibid, p.110.

was changed from Women's Centres to Family Welfare Centres, in order to stress their goal was to 'strengthen the family', as many men 'resented any attempt to draw women out of the house and into society'.³⁶ Moreover, a concerted effort was made to draw women from influential religious families to the centres.

By consciously seeking the participation of female members of the families of the leading clergy in the centre's activities wherever necessary, and by including religious instruction and the reading of the Qur'an in special classes in some areas, the WOI minimized confrontation with the clergy, whose overt opposition would have drastically curtailed the expansion of the network.³⁷

Afkhami described the WOI's strategy of balancing religious opposition to their projects against the Shah's 'modernising impulses' and the ruling elite's 'essentially unsympathetic attitude to women's rights'.³⁸ She compared the relatively smooth approval for a quota system to encourage female participation in technical and engineering fields, against the conservative backlash that erupted over the WOI's initiative to abolish the requirement for a husband's permission for women to acquire passports. The latter cost women two senate seats, and led to the resignation of Senator Mehrangiz Manuchehriyan amidst accusations of the WOI 'espousing loose moral standards and policies that would weaken family ties'.³⁹

Thus, Afkhami's writing indicated that WOI feminists had to consistently toe a line between the state and the religious opposition's conflicting constructs of womanhood. However, many reforms were also passed against the will of most conservative leaders, such as the Family Protection reforms, when enough support was garnered from the ruling elite, and where those reforms coincided

³⁶ Ibid, p. 127.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid, p.133

³⁹ Ibid, p. 126.

with the Shah's modernisation goals. Thus, this section argues that the Iranian state entered into patriarchal battles with the opposition around the WOI's projects and initiatives, approving reforms that conflicted with the opposition's notions of womanhood as a way of asserting its power. Thus, as the Islamic opposition gained more ground and support, the Shah was encouraged to forsake some of his women's rights reforms as he viewed bargains with Iranian feminists too costly to keep, as later sections will illustrate.

1.2 Protests Abroad and the Introduction of Limited Liberalisation

Between 1972 and 1976 the government security forces were at their most brutal.⁴⁰ Independent activism, which was unable to express itself on Iranian soil, was finding outlets in Europe and the US. Azar Nafisi explained that the Confederation of Iranian Students, which was one of the strongest campus movements in the US, attracted youths by functioning as an umbrella organisation of different ideological groups.⁴¹ She explained that the organisation stress gender-neutrality and rejected the secular feminist movement as bourgeois.⁴² From 1976 onwards, social unrest rose critically, as did the effects of economic recession, inflation, urban overcrowding, glaring income gaps, and the lack of political freedom.⁴³

On 9 October 1977, the US embassy in Tehran reported that 'masked students' at Tehran University 'broke windows and burned a bus during violent demonstrations intended to bring about segregation of women students'.⁴⁴ The incident led to protests by women's organisations, and condemnation from the

⁴⁰ Stempel, p. 41.

⁴¹ Nafisi, p. 203.

⁴² Ibid, pp. 203-204.

⁴³ Keddie, *Modern Iran*, p. 168.

⁴⁴ US Embassy in Tehran to US Secretary of State, 13 October 1977, Document number 1977TEHRAN09082, Film number D770380-0370, USNA.

Shah of the ‘traitorous, anti-revolutionary and regrettable incidents’, whose goal he said was to set the country back 2,000 years.⁴⁵ In the same year, Ashraf Pahlavi’s car was also attacked in an attempt to assassinate her while she was in France.⁴⁶ Farmanfarmaian described how the incident allowed SAVAK to crack down even further on dissidents.⁴⁷ Nafisi’s father was summoned by the secret police and forced to make promises about her future conduct as a result of her activism abroad.⁴⁸

However, the situation suddenly changed in 1977 when the Shah introduced some limited liberalisation measures in an attempt to appease the opposition.⁴⁹ This led to the publication of two open letters, one to the Shah by former National Front members ‘articulating liberal aspirations’, and a second letter to the Prime Minister by 40 intellectuals ‘calling for increased intellectual freedom and the reestablishment of the writers guild’.⁵⁰ Farmanfarmaian recalled her optimism at these ‘abrupt and hopeful’ changes.⁵¹ Ganji wrote that in November 1976 the Shah accepted his recommendation to conclude an agreement with the International Committee of The Red Cross (ICRC), to monitor prison conditions in Iran.⁵² He wrote that by early 1977 the Shah had become more cooperative over Iran’s human rights issues than ever before.⁵³ The effects of this limited liberalisation did not bring about any positive results for the Shah.

⁴⁵ Ibid, US Embassy in Tehran to US Secretary of State, 17 October 1977, Document number 1977TEHRAN09143, USNA.

⁴⁶ Ashraf Pahlavi, p. 190.

⁴⁷ Farmanfarmaian, p. 288.

⁴⁸ Nafisi, p. 204.

⁴⁹ Stempel, p. 41.

⁵⁰ Memo from US Secretary of State to US Embassy in Tehran, 26 October 1977, 1977STATE256506, D770394-0093, USNA.

⁵¹ Farmanfarmaian, pp. 286-287.

⁵² Ganji, p. 2.

⁵³ Ibid.

As Farmanfarmaian recollected, 'allowed to rise to the surface...people's anger was churning like magma in a crater'.⁵⁴

Farmanfarmaian explained how anti-Shah demonstrations during the Shah's state visit to the US in November 1977 smashed his image of invincibility.⁵⁵ Nafisi was part of these demonstrations on 15 November 1977 in Washington DC, where she explained 2,000 male and female students had gathered around the White House, and where she, along with two other women gave speeches and shouted out 'Death to the Shah; CIA agents, US advisors out of Iran'.⁵⁶ An important outcome of these demonstrations was that they set off more student demonstrations in Iran, particularly in Tehran and Isfahan.⁵⁷ Internal US documents described these protests as the 'effects of a well-publicised liberalisation undertaken by the government of Iran since last spring, which is universally attributed to United States government pressure'.⁵⁸ Protests in Iran became more frequent as radical groups were encouraged to actively recruit members at universities and elsewhere, and the religious opposition began to organise more visible demonstrations and seminars calling for Khomeini's return.⁵⁹

On the 22 January 1978, the WOI coordinated a number of 'counter-demonstrations' throughout the country, with Afkhami forwarding a telegram to the Shah 'on behalf of Iranian women' declaring 'war on agents of foreigners and

⁵⁴ Farmanfarmaian, pp. 287-288.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p.288.

⁵⁶ Nafisi, pp. 211-212.

⁵⁷ US Embassy Tehran to US Secretary of State, 15 December 1977, Document Number: 1977TEHRAN10993, USNA.

⁵⁸ US Secretary of State/US Embassy in Tehran, 27 December 1977, Document Number: 1977TEHRAN11408, USNA.

⁵⁹ Farmanfarmaian, p. 288.

reactionaries who want women to return to the infernal period of the past'.⁶⁰

This was followed by a congress to commemorate 'Iranian Women's Rights Day' on 27 February 1978.⁶¹ As Minister of State for Women's Affairs and Secretary General of the WOI, Afkhami's statements regarding the revolutionary protests were not representative of the views of the majority of Iranian women, or indeed of all WOI members, as their subsequent participation in revolutionary protests testified.⁶² Afkhami recalled asking the secretary of their Kerman branch whom the veiled women leading the Kerman revolutionary demonstrations had been. 'She responded, 'they were our own members. We kept saying 'mobilize the women,' now they're mobilized, and they shout 'down with the regime''.⁶³

Thus the Shah's actions led to splits within the WOI itself, with Afkhami's followers declaring a 'war' against 'reactionaries'/revolutionaries while their Kerman members demonstrated against the Shah in support of the revolutionary movement. When hundreds of people were killed in the infamous Cinema Rex fire in August 1978, where exit doors had been deliberately blocked to prevent people escaping, the majority of Iranians believed it to be the work of SAVAK. Nafisi recalled,

The callous brutality of the act was another argument for the overthrow of the Shah's regime...later it emerged that fire had been planned by sympathisers of the religious opposition.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ US Embassy Tehran to US Secretary of State, 23 January 1978, Document Number: 1978TEHRAN00810, USNA.

⁶¹ US Embassy Tehran to US Secretary of State, 2 March 1978, Document Number: 1978TEHRAN02173, USNA.

⁶² Afkhami, 'The Women's Organization Of Iran', p.110

⁶³ Afkhami, 'An introduction to the Women's Organization of Iran', Foundation for Iranian Studies, <http://fis-iran.org/en/women/organization/introduction>

⁶⁴ Nafisi, pp. 213-214.

Responding to outrage over the incident, the Shah made further concessions to the religious opposition hoping to 'restore tranquillity', replacing Prime Minister Amuzegar with Sharif-Emami because of the latter's strong ties to the clergy.⁶⁵ The US ambassador to Tehran elaborated on the Shah's motives in granting these concessions.

He had deliberately contrived to present these changes so that they would be seen as concession from him personally...but he had no confidence that 'these priests' can ever be fully satisfied...and cited their 'insistence on no women in the Cabinet, no women in high places.'⁶⁶

The worst confrontation with the regime took place on 7 September 1978, a day that would be remembered as 'Black Friday'. Around 20,000 demonstrators gathered in Jaleh Square in Tehran and ignored the army commander's orders to disperse. The army subsequently opened fire, killing hundreds of men and women, and wounding thousands of others.

In further concessions to the Islamists, the government closed casinos, reverted to the Islamic Calendar, abolished the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and eliminated the 'women's portfolio in favour of a religious endowments portfolio', leading to threats of resignation from the head of the women's organisation in Isfahan.⁶⁷ Nafisi argued the overdue gestures of compromise were interpreted by the opposition as a loss of will.⁶⁸ Consequently, these reactionary measures only helped embolden the opposition, who began to feel their actions were shaking the regime's confidence.

A widespread fear is that by going this far, the Shah has given the religious reactionaries a feeling of power, and now he must either

⁶⁵ US Embassy in Tehran to Secretary of State, 28 August 1978, Document Number: 1978TEHRAN08187, USNA.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ US Consulate in Isfahan to Secretary of State, 10 September 1978, Document Number: 1978ISFAHA00092, USNA.

⁶⁸ Nafisi, p. 216.

continue to give in, or crack down on them—and either might provoke disturbances much worse than Iran has seen so far.⁶⁹

The state's fluctuation between repression and liberalisation was interpreted as a sign of weakness, as the Shah himself later admitted.⁷⁰ Farmanfarmaian wrote that the Shah's vacillation was all the more alarming to 'moderate people' like herself, as increasing funeral processions and memorial demonstrations implied that the authority of the mullahs was growing.⁷¹ This section argues that the state's dual strategy of repression and compromise vis-à-vis the opposition, which resulted in the granting-then-revoking of women's rights reforms, validated different and conflicting notions of womanhood, splitting women within the WOI.

1.3 Mixed Messages of 1979 Iranian Revolution

Increasing female support for Ayatollah Khomeini, the man who condemned women's suffrage in 1963, perplexed many international observers, as did increasing use of the veil by wider numbers of Iranian women. Some writers like Mary E. Hegland and Janet Bauer stress that many women took part in the revolution as religious activity.⁷² While Bauer stresses that motives differed according to class, she argues women from middle-class homes participated as 'wives, mothers and sisters', whilst among the poor, religion and the manipulation of religious symbols provided the motivation for their activity.⁷³ Others like Bahar and Anne H. Betteridge stress women's participation as nationalist activity, downplaying religious and 'feminist' motives. Bahar points

⁶⁹ US Consulate in Isfahan to Secretary of State, 10 September 1978, USNA.

⁷⁰ Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *The Shah's Story*, p. 172.

⁷¹ Farmanfarmaian, p. 293.

⁷² Mary E Hegland, 'Aliabad Women: Revolution as Religious Activity', in *Women and Revolution in Iran*, ed. Guity Nashat (Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), p. 171.

⁷³ Janet Bauer, 'Poor Women and Social Consciousness in Revolutionary Iran', in *Women and Revolution in Iran*, ed. Guity Nashat, (Boulder Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), pp. 142, 157, 161.

out that like the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, women's participation was part of the whole nation's struggle,⁷⁴ while Betteridge argues that women participated primarily as Iranians who opposed the Pahlavi government, and not as 'women per se', although there was a vague understanding that respect for women's social position was part of the revolution's aims.⁷⁵

The idea that some groups of women were motivated purely by religion, nationalism, or family ties, does not take into account the extensive overlap and interweaving of religious, oppositional politics, and nationalist ideas that characterised this period of Iranian history. In the previous chapter it was shown how the models of Zaynab and Fatima within the Mojahedin-i-Khalgh combined religious ideas with notions of revolution, modernity, and Marxism. Female Mojahedin members, many of whom came from more modest, lower-class backgrounds, were not purely motivated by religion or family links, but by these interconnected religious, political, nationalist, ideas, which directly confronted women's roles and rights. Similarly, Fadian women like Ashraf Dehgani who joined the organisation with her brother, maintained her struggle after his death, and based on her writing was motivated by her own political worldview and commitment to socialism. Furthermore, motives differed not only according to class, education levels, and religious background, but also in response to the political climate and ideological changes that were taking place.

Jalal Al-i-Ahmad himself had experienced an evolution from socialism, as a leading Tudeh member, to a new form of political Islam as the revolutionary writer of *Gharbzadegi*, an ideological trend motivated by 'gaining *az nau*

⁷⁴ Sima Bahar, p. 185.

⁷⁵ Anne H. Betteridge, 'To Veil or Not to Veil: A Matter of Protest or Policy', in *Women and Revolution in Iran*, pp. 171-172, p. 109.

shinaktan-i khish (a renewed acquaintance with ourselves) rather than a simple 'return to Islam'.⁷⁶ Al-i-Ahmad's wife attempted to explain this transformation, emphasising it was a deliberate and carefully thought-out decision, 'his partial return to religion and to the Hidden Imam was a path towards freedom from the evils of imperialism and towards gaining a national identity'.⁷⁷ Rejection of westernisation was one of the key shared tenants across politically diverse revolutionary groups, which allowed ideologically opposed leaders to mix various revolutionary messages in an attempt to co-opt greater support.

Al-i-Ahmad and Shariati's reformist brand of Islam attacked 'fanatics'⁷⁸ like Khomeini, claiming: 'in Islam, the scholars are not wise people...they do not have a handful or a bucketful or a truckful of knowledge'.⁷⁹ However, their re-interpretation of Shi'a narratives was not only taken up by revolutionary groups like the Mojahedin, but by Islamist scholars like Khomeini as well. In the blind fervour of the revolution, the ideas and messages of different ideologues became muddled and interchangeable. Thus, while Al-i-Ahmad and Shariati denounced clerics like Khomeini, their messages nevertheless fortified his position by increasing the credibility of Islam as an alternative socio-political discourse. It allowed clerics like Khomeini to selectively draw messages from reformist thinkers and use them to validate their leadership of the revolution.

While in exile in Paris, Khomeini released messages defining the movement as an independence struggle against 'the superpowers, which have stolen our oil...who are working through the Shah to oppress the Iranian

⁷⁶ Al-i-Ahmad, pp. 12-13.

⁷⁷ Simin Daneshvar, 'Jalal's Sunset', in *A Stone on a Grave* by Jalal Al-i-Ahmad, trans. Blake Robert Atwood (California: Mazda Publishers, 2008), p. 99.

⁷⁸ Al-i-Ahmad, p. 117.

⁷⁹ Shariati, 'Fatima is Fatima', p. 88.

nation',⁸⁰ mirroring much of Al-i-Ahmed and Shariati's arguments. Moreover, the inconsistencies and ambiguities within Khomeini's various tracts, declarations, and speeches, indicate that he often altered his messages or kept them vague to influence revolutionary support in his favour. For instance, although Khomeini had attacked the White Revolution reforms on women, particularly female suffrage, during the revolution he attempted to reassure women with statements such as 'Islam made women equal with men; in fact, it shows a concern for women that it does not show for men...woman must have a say in the fundamental destiny of the country'.⁸¹ He stressed women's roles as 'mothers' and 'rearers of men', and rather than discuss gender-discrimination, emphasised different 'restrictions' on both men and women. 'If nations were deprived of courageous women to rear true men, they would decline and collapse...if Islam has imposed certain restrictions on both women and men, it is for the benefit of both'.⁸²

Furthermore, Khomeini assured women of their importance, and often gave them the impression the revolution would work in their favour.

The Laws of Islam are for the benefit of both man and woman, and woman must have a say in the fundamental destiny of the country. Just as you have participated in our revolutionary movement...now you must also participate in its triumph...the country belongs to you.⁸³

Khomeini thus appeared to signal a more active national role for women in contrast to the perceived token or state-controlled activity under the Shah. These statements can be viewed as attempts to co-opt educated women and

⁸⁰ US Embassy in Paris to US Secretary of State, 13 October 1978, Document Number: 1978PARIS33871, USNA.

⁸¹ Ruhollah Khomeini, 'Address to a Group of Women in Qum, 6 March 1979', in *Islam and Revolution*, p. 263.

⁸² *Ibid.* pp. 263-264.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

female activists by indicating that they would take an equal part in the nation's construction as part of new bargains with the post-revolutionary state. That was how Farmanfarmaian came to believe Khomeini's return might be beneficial.

He now seemed to advocate political participation for women. He had said publicly that the clergy did not wish to rule the country...his return as Iran's spiritual leader might act as a strong binding force the country so desperately needed.⁸⁴

As the revolution gained more strength, the Shah's ineffective attempts to control the situation saw members of WOI become disillusioned with the regime.⁸⁵

The Shah's abolition of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the women's portfolio showed that he was willing to forsake women's rights to maintain power over his political rivals. These unilateral acts abandoned earlier patriarchal bargains struck with the WOI and female activists working with government support, turning more educated women who had benefited from state support, such as Farmanfarmaian and Ebadi, against the regime. As Ebadi explained,

I found myself drawn to the opposition voices that hailed Ayatollah Khomeini as their leader. It seemed in no way a contradiction or me—an educated professional woman...faith occupied a central role in our middle-class lives...who did I have more in common with, in the end: an opposition led by mullahs...or the gilded court of the Shah?⁸⁶

Moreover, while women's revolutionary activity was motivated by their specific social and ideological differences, the common goal of ousting the 'westoxified' Pahlavi regime meant that ideologically diverse women united in their support for Khomeini as a means to an end.

⁸⁴ Farmanfarmaian, p. 318.

⁸⁵ Afkhami, 'The Women's Organization Of Iran', p.110.

⁸⁶ Ebadi, p. 33.

According to Nafisi, the Confederation of Iranian students abroad 'denigrated' family links and ties, and women's activity was encouraged to be independent of social relationships.⁸⁷ For women like Nafisi the priority of ousting the regime prevented them from supporting any leaders the regime put forward, including National Front leader Shahpour Bakhtiar, whom Nafisi accused of being a compromiser; 'I like so many others, was for a complete break with the Shah, nothing less than the overthrow of the regime would do'.⁸⁸ This uncompromising position encouraged their support for Khomeini as a strong anti-imperialist, and anti-Pahlavi voice.

Too arrogant to think of him as a threat and deliberately ignorant of his designs, we supported him. And yet everything was there for us to see...he had denounced women's suffrage as a form of prostitution; he had made countless pronouncements against minorities...we welcomed the vehemence of Khomeini's rants against imperialists and the Shah and were willing to overlook the fact that they were not delivered by a champion of freedom.⁸⁹

This section argues that the different accounts of women like Farmanfarmaian, Nafisi, and Ebadi indicate that women's support for Khomeini varied according to social class, education, and political backgrounds, and was the combined result of ideological trends within the revolutionary movement, the Shah's ineffective attempts to regain control through concessions to the opposition, and growing unity around the notion of Pahlavi inauthenticity. As such, the increase in veiling during this period can be seen as a manifestation of these developments. In other words, secular women donned the veil as a means of challenging the cultural and political legitimacy of the Pahlavi regime. However, in the following section it will be shown how the religious opposition promoted

⁸⁷ Nafisi, p.203.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 217.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p.210

this phenomenon as a rejection of Reza Shah's Unveiling Decree of 1936 and Mohammad Reza Shah's White Revolution of 1963.

1.4 Veiling during the 1979 Revolution

Writers like Sanasarian, Afshar and Betteridge have argued that the veil was used during the revolution as an anti-Pahlavi symbol. Afshar points to its use by women with communist ideas to argue similarly to Sanasarian that the veil during the revolution served two purposes: it was a way to prevent easy identification by SAVAK, and it was a symbolic gesture against the westernised regime.⁹⁰ Betteridge similarly emphasises that the veil was used to represent morality in opposition to the 'immorality of the Shah's regime and to the west in general.'⁹¹ Farmanfarmaian's account of the changes she witnessed amongst her own students supports the view that women veiled as an anti-western, anti-Imperialist symbol against the regime. She wrote how discontent amongst men and women took on an increasingly religious character in the lead up to the revolution.

In only a few months the doctrines of 'Islamic Marxism' had gained enormous strength and visibility at the University and on other campuses...At my own school many male undergraduates were wearing buttoned shirts without ties to emphasise that they were not 'Westernisers'...many women students had defiantly put on the black *chador* or black clothes to show their support.⁹²

Khomeini himself did not simply define veiling as 'Islamic dress', but encouraged the politicisation of its use as an anti-Imperialist symbol, equating Iranian authenticity, morality and freedom with the act of veiling.

⁹⁰ Sanasarian, *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran*, p. 11; Soraya Afshar, 'The Attitude of the Iranian Left to the Women's Question', in *Women of Iran*, ed. Farah Azari p. 116.

⁹¹ Betteridge, 'To Veil or Not to Veil', p. 110.

⁹² Farmanfarmaian, p. 288.

Could any Muslim agree with this scandalous uncovering of women? The women of Iran have risen up against the Shah themselves...‘we don’t want to be forced into immorality! We want to be free!’⁹³

The black coloured chadors worn during the revolutionary protests had historically been used during funeral, official, and religious ceremonies, such as *Rowzeh* and *Ashura*. Khomeini emphasised the Shah’s description of the Islamic revolutionary movement as the ‘Black reaction’, declaring ‘the religious scholars and Islam are Black Reaction! And you have carried out your White Revolution in the midst of all this Black Reaction!’⁹⁴ The increasing use of specifically black chadors during the revolution, over the more frequently used light coloured and printed chadors common amongst Bazaar and working class women, was therefore not insignificant when placed in the context of Khomeini’s scathing condemnation of the ‘White’ Revolution in 1963.

Moreover, increased veiling during the revolution allowed Khomeini to manipulate the images, arguing female activism was religiously inspired and that only veiled women had proved themselves useful to the Iranian nation.

The women who contributed to the revolution were, and are, women in the Islamic dress...the coquettes who put on makeup and go into the street showing off...did not fight against the Shah...They do not know how to be useful, neither socially, nor politically, nor professionally.⁹⁵

In this way, Khomeini used revolutionary veiling to link this act to his definitions of Iranian womanhood and nationalism. However, his first attempt to enforce these ideas was met with substantial female resistance on the first International Women’s Day demonstrations following the revolution, on 8 March 1979. Upon hearing that Khomeini had declared enforced veiling for all government

⁹³ Khomeini, ‘Speech delivered at the Mosque of Shaykh Ansari in Najaf, 8 Jan 1978’, in *Islam and Revolution*, p. 222.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Orianna Fallaci, ‘An interview with Khomeini’, *The New York Times*, 7 October 1979.

employees, demonstrator numbers grew into the thousands.⁹⁶ Although men's Shari'a dress code only prohibited them from wearing shorts in public, they were unofficially encouraged to cease wearing ties, as Khomeini promoted the notion of *kravatis* (tie-wearing men) as cronies of the west.⁹⁷

Women protested against the veiling decree, calling out for the preservation of their rights, including their right to choose what to wear. The Family Protection Act had been nullified the previous month,⁹⁸ and female marchers called out for their freedom and equal rights, chanting 'we condemn all forms of dictatorship', 'freedom is neither Eastern nor western. It's universal'.⁹⁹ Two female protestors in chadors interviewed during the march said that they were there to support freedom of choice, that they fought and died during the revolution like men, with one adding 'our children have studied and become educated they want their freedom...I don't want men to force my daughters to wear the veil'.¹⁰⁰ *The Economist* reported 'middle-class women, leftist or westernised, demonstrated four times in the past few days, braving insult and harassment bordering on serious violence'.¹⁰¹

Writers like Sanasarian have argued that the refusal of groups like the Mojahedin-i-Khalgh, Fadayan-i-Khalgh, and Tudeh to back the 8 March women's demonstrations was linked to the fact that the groups did not believe in a separate women's rights movement, were male-led, and defined most of their

⁹⁶ Guy Rais, 'Warning Shots At The Women's Rights Demonstration In Tehran', *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 March 1979, 2IAW/2/A/71, WLA.

⁹⁷ Ervand Abrahamian, Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic, (London: .B. Tauris & Co, 1993), p.30.

⁹⁸ Elizabeth Mayer, 'Restrictions on the Rights and Freedoms of Women' in Women in Islam, Critical Concepts in Sociology, ed. Haideh Moghissi (New York: Routledge, 2005), p.384

⁹⁹ Movement for the Liberation of Women, MLF's Video footage from the 8 March 1979 Women's Demonstrations, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKkgCSBj3aY>.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Iran: On With Scarves Off With Veils, *The Economist*, 17 March 1979, 2IAW/2/A/71, WLA.

goals in masculine terms.¹⁰² However, women's political differences, and different definitions of womanhood/cultural authenticity, meant they did not all unite over the women's demonstrations of March 1979. Sansarian's argument downplays the fact that many women agreed with the view of group leaders that the revolution had to be successful first before they could focus on gender-equality, or greater social changes. Ebadi explained how in the wake of having her judgeship stripped, she was let down by the revolutionaries she had supported.

I stood with this revolution. You owe me an answer...‘We'll attend to your rights later’, they promised. ‘But we have more urgent problems right now’...in their hierarchy of priorities women's rights would forever come last.¹⁰³

The misleading statements of Islamist leader Khomeini, and the splintering of the opposition in the aftermath of the revolution, meant that women were left with little space and leverage with which to strike new patriarchal bargains to improve their position. Women who did not veil, irrespective of their social, political, or professional achievements, were automatically shunned as inauthentic and anti-nationalist.

These new notions allowed Khomeini's regime to justify the execution of women like Dr Farakhro Parsa, first female parliamentarian and Minister of Education, as part of a political purge against hundreds of the Shah's senior officials. Dr Parsa, was arrested in February 1980¹⁰⁴, and was found guilty of ‘corruption on earth, warring with God, spreading prostitution, and working for the imperialists’.¹⁰⁵ The interweaving of religious and revolutionary narratives,

¹⁰²Sanasarian, ‘An Analysis of Fida'i and Mujahidin Positions’, p. 105.

¹⁰³ Ebadi, p. 56.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Dr Parsa and Husband Arrested’, *Kayhan* (Persian language), 18 February 1980.

¹⁰⁵ Nafisi, p.68.

Khomeini's lectures about women's roles during the revolution, and the quotes from ideologically diverse women mentioned above indicate, in contrast to Hegland and Bauer, that many 'poor' and 'religious' women, like many women during the revolution, were not purely motivated by religion but by multiple factors that combined notions of political justice, religion, and cultural authenticity. As such, this section argues that veiling during the revolution was used to symbolise resistance against imperialism and Pahlavi rule, which went back much earlier to the reign of Reza Shah in the early 20th century.

Reza Shah's modernisation reforms, particularly his western dress code for men in 1928, and the 1935 ban on veiling¹⁰⁶, linked unveiling with westernisation or western dress and notions of inauthentic Iranian womanhood. As such, women's use of the veil was an attempt to symbolise authenticity through a rejection of Pahlavi enforced reforms, rather than veiling as Islamic practice. It was for this reason that protests against Khomeini's enforced veiling in March 1979 were easily conflated with Pahlavi support, or western bourgeois behaviour by leftist groups, as black chadors/veiling became associated with revolutionary support against the inauthentic Pahlavi reforms of Reza Shah and his successor Mohammad Reza Shah, particularly the 1936 Unveiling Decree and the White Revolution reforms of 1963.

Section 2: Sadat, Egyptian State feminism, and the Islamic Opposition

This section looks at definitions of womanhood and female activism under the leadership of Sadat. Much of Sadat's domestic and foreign policies were inspired

¹⁰⁶ John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 54.

by a desire to disassociate himself with Nasser's political legacy. However, like Nasser, Sadat suppressed any independent feminist activity, which did not complement his regime's goals, such as the work of Nawal el-Saadawi. This section argues that while Sadat's definition of Egyptian womanhood emphasised women's role in the family rather than in the work force, the state entered into patriarchal battles with the Islamist opposition using the activism of women like Amina al-Said and Aisha Rateb to help challenge Islamist gender constructs. However, Jehan's leadership of state feminism enabled women's campaigns to be portrayed as inauthentic top-down policies, and tainted the efforts of women like Rateb and al-Said by association.

Sadat's double standards on female activism and his vacillation between suppression and negotiation in dealing with Islamist/political rivals proved ineffective strategies. Fury over the Camp David accords and outrage over 'Jehan's laws', in the wake of frustrations with Sadat's *infitah* policies, helped Islamists portray Sadat as an infidel/enemy of Islam and justifiable target of *jihad*. Groups within the Islamic movement, which became known collectively as *Jama'at al-Islamiya*, became an increasingly dominant force on university campuses, calling for gender segregation and veiling. Once again it is argued that the veil was not simply used as a religious symbol, but converted into a political one to symbolise political and cultural resistance against the secular Egyptian state. Female students asserted themselves as symbols of cultural authenticity through the promotion of veiling as part of patriarchal bargains with the *Jama'at al-Islamiya* for greater social space. In other words the veil became the centre of patriarchal battles with the Egyptian state over gender norms, with state-

feminists like al-Said publishing polemical attacks on veiling in her editorials against the promotion of veiling by the *Jama'at al-Islamiya*.

2.1 Sadat's Policies, Family Planning and Female Activism

As mentioned earlier, Sadat's position was weakened as the state of 'no peace, no war' continued between Egypt and Israel following the 1967 War.¹⁰⁷ By September 1971 diplomatic relations between Jordan, Egypt and Syria had been renewed, and in early 1973 coordination with Syria began.¹⁰⁸ The 1973 War was far better planned than the 1967 War; the Egyptians had acquired long-range Scud Missiles, the Syrians FROG missiles, both had learned valuable lessons from their defeat in 1967, and coordination had been ensured with other Arab countries for reinforcements.¹⁰⁹ Caught completely off-guard, US intervention, code-named 'Operation Nickel Grass', delivered more than 22,000 tons of material to the Israelis allowing them to drive the Syrians back to Damascus and encircle the Egyptians in the Sinai.¹¹⁰ American intervention compelled Sadat to accept a ceasefire, declaring 'I am not prepared to fight America'.¹¹¹ Following the 1973 War, Sadat turned his focus towards the Peace Process and balancing ties between the USSR and the US, a clear departure from what Nasser's position had been

We are now in the process of reorienting our [foreign] relations...a clear-cut and positive neutrality between the two world camps...the world has abandoned cold war and adopted détente.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Herzog, p. 23.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 30.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 31.

¹¹⁰ Sadat, *In search of Identity*, p. 244; Oren, p. 534.

¹¹¹ Sadat, 'Press Conference Held by President Anwar El Sadat, Cairo, 31 October 1973', *Speeches and Interviews by President Anwar El Sadat: July-December 1973* (Cairo: Ministry of Information, 1974), pp. 221, 223.

¹¹² Sadat, *The Public Diary of President Sadat*, Part II, ed. Raphael Israel (Leiden: Brill, 1979), pp. 478-479.

Sadat's political and economic disassociation from Nasser lead to the 1974-1977 *infitah* (opening the door) policies, which continued to promote greater private sector investment as explained in his October Paper.¹¹³ *Infitah* was motivated by Sadat's need to attract the foreign investment he felt was necessary to solve Egypt's economic crisis.¹¹⁴ Internal British documents on the reopening of the Suez Canal in 1975 refer to Sadat's request for British technical assistance and consultancy on how to 'expedite the movement of ships through the Canal'.¹¹⁵ In 1975, he declared, 'I need the new technology that is available in the world'.¹¹⁶

Sadat's ideological differences with Nasser resulted in a different approach to women's rights. Writers like Talhami have argued that Sadat had always been a staunch supporter of Egyptian feminism.¹¹⁷ His wife, Jehan, portrayed herself as the fundamental force behind women's rights campaigns, but stressed her husband's resistance to many of her ideas. She explained that right from the start she had decided to take a far more active public role than her predecessor, Tahia Abdel Nasser.¹¹⁸ Jehan explained Sadat would often grow impatient with her attempts to push him to support women-rights legislation.¹¹⁹ She wrote that he showed a less than enthusiastic reaction to her running for a seat on the People's Council of Munufiyya, 'Remember that the more you work

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p. 491.

¹¹⁴ Marvin G. Weinbaum, 'Egypt's "Infitah" and the Politics of US Economic Assistance', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1985, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ Implications of the Reopening of the Suez Canal-Suez Canal Movement Control Study, 14 March 1975, FO93/661, UKNA.

¹¹⁶ Sadat, *The Public Diary of President Sadat*, Part I, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ Talhami, p. 84.

¹¹⁸ Jehan Sadat, p. 256.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 301.

outside the home, the more you will be criticised...run if you like and see if the men will vote for you'.¹²⁰

While Sadat publically appeared to encourage his wife's active role and feminist campaigning, she wrote that he would often lose his temper over her activism, especially over the Family Planning campaign.¹²¹ She wrote that 'her' Family Planning campaign was aimed at curbing Egypt's rising population, something she struggled to get her husband to support. Sadat's ideological departure from Nasserism meant moving away from socialist definitions of womanhood and socialist economic systems towards privatisation of the market and prioritisation of women's roles within the family sphere. In his speeches Sadat equated the Egyptian family with the Egyptian nation, and defined women's nationalist roles as teachers in the home, revising early 20th century Wafdist notions of the modern patriarchal family as the heart of the Egyptian nation (discussed in chapter 2).

I should like to draw your attention to one thing only, namely, the family. The family is the nucleus of the homeland...when I speak of the family I refer very specially to the role of the woman. It is she who forms the family, lays downs concepts and principals for our coming generations.¹²²

This viewpoint helps explain both his hesitation to family-planning campaigns, and the state's interference in the family sphere as a national issue towards the end of the decade (discussed later in the chapter).

When it came to female activism, Sadat maintained Nasser's strategy of creating space for feminists and women who generally complemented the regime's agenda, such as Minister of Social Affairs, Aisha Rateb, and feminist-

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 310.

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 320.

¹²² Sadat, 'Address by President Anwar El Sadat to the Arab Socialist Union Women Leaderships, 5 July 1973', *Speeches and Interviews by President Anwar el-Sadat: July-December 1973*, pp. 7, 9.

journalist, Amina al-Said, whilst suppressing those who contradicted or criticised his ideas and policies, like Nawal el-Saadawi. A medical doctor, and feminist writer with Marxist views, el-Saadawi's books were censored by Sadat as they had been under Nasser's regime. She explained how her writing became a way for her to challenge patriarchal society and the patriarchal state:

Writing became a weapon with which to fight the system, which draws its authority from the autocratic power exercised by the ruler of the state, and that of the father or the husband in the family. The written word for me became an act of rebellion against injustice.¹²³

Thus, restrictions on independent political activism encouraged el-Saadawi to look for alternative ways to challenge the state's limits through written word and biographical writing, as Egyptian women had done in the early 20th century. However, el-Saadawi was too controversial in her views to be useful to the regime, pushing issues over which the state was unwilling to bargain, by publishing writing about Female Genital Mutilation, sexuality, religion, and politics. The government responded in 1972 by banning her book *Al-Mar'a wa al-Jins* ('Women and Sex'), which also lead to her losing her job at the Ministry of Health, and saw her magazine *Health* banned.¹²⁴

On the other hand, Amina al-Said's rejection of Islamic fundamentalism made her writing especially useful in challenging Islamic opposition to Sadat's regime. The power source of the Islamists and *Jama'at al-Islamiya* was based on university campuses and colleges, and involved a large number of women. Their influence led to an increase in veiling or re-veiling, particularly among young female university students. In 1973, on the 50th anniversary of the founding of

¹²³ Nawal el-Saadawi, *A Daughter of Isis: The Autobiography of Nawal El Saadawi*, trans. Sherif Hetata (London: Zed Books, 1999), p. 352.

¹²⁴ Nawal el-Saadawi, Interview with Saadawi, 'The Bitter Lot of Women: An interview' in The Nawal el Saadawi Reader, (London: Zed Books, 1997), p.68.

the EFU and Sha'rawi's unveiling, al-Said wrote an editorial condemning the use of the veil, calling it the 'greatest enemy of civilisation and advancement'.¹²⁵ She finished the editorial by asking what the young women of the 'modern Arab feminist generation' had added to the efforts of earlier feminist vanguards.

I believe that if the modern Arab woman is honest...she will discover that she has not added anything new... and that she has not been part of any effort worth mentioning in advancing the feminist liberation movement.¹²⁶

This was followed by another editorial in 1976, confronting a prominent religious leader who had attacked her and other feminists in the press for their Family Law reform campaign.

I wonder who among our feminist leaders who have spent the best years of their lives in the service of their nation deserves such defamation?...If the 'Shaikh of Shaikhs' has forgotten, we remind him that the Quran says: 'Those who defame honourable women shall be cursed in this world and the next'.¹²⁷

Thus, while Sadat's definition of Egyptian womanhood emphasised women's role in the family rather than in the labour force or work place, he made room for women like al-Said and Rateb who complemented his reforms and helped him counteract his political rivals.

In this way, the state entered into 'patriarchal battles' with the opposition over conflicting gender norms, using the activism of women like al-Said and Rateb to help challenge the Islamic opposition. However, Jehan's leadership of state supported feminist projects marked them as inauthentic top-down policies, and tainted women like Rateb and al-Said by association. Women like el-Saadawi were dangerous to Sadat, as her overt criticism and independent

¹²⁵ Amina al-Said, 'Feast of Unveiling, Feast of Renaissance, 1973', in Badran and Cooke, *Opening the Gates*, pp. 360-361.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 361.

¹²⁷ Amina al-Said, 'Why, Reverend Shaikh?, 1976', in Badran and Cooke, *Opening the Gates*, pp. 364-365.

activism challenged the regime's legitimacy and authority, weakening its position and leverage within such patriarchal battles. As economic and political frustrations with the regime intensified, the Islamist opposition engaged in far more frequent and overt attacks on these 'western feminists', as the next sections will show.

2.2 Failures of *Infitah* and the Camp David Accords

While Sadat had wanted to appear more democratic than Nasser, in reality he was more contradictory in dealing with the opposition, vacillating between suppression and compromise. After taking over as president, he initially released many of the Islamists who had been imprisoned under Nasser, including Zaynab al-Ghazali,¹²⁸ giving addresses to delegations of *ulama*, and attempting to reassure them of Egypt's role as a 'bearer' and 'defender' of Islam.¹²⁹ In September 1971 Sadat revised the Egyptian Constitution. Article 19 of the 1956 Constitution had stipulated 'the state shall guarantee *tawfiq* (agreement) between women's work in society and her duties in the family',¹³⁰ however Article 11 of the 1971 Constitution added a significant final clause.

The state shall guarantee *tawfiq*/agreement between a woman's duties towards her family, her work in society, and her equality with men in all the fields of political, social/economic, and intellectual/cultural life without prejudice to the provisions and laws of Islamic *Shari'a*.¹³¹

Thus the revised Constitution only affirmed women's equality with men where it did not contravene *Shari'a* law. At the 1975 World Conference on Women's Year in Mexico, Sadat's wife emphasised Islam as a 'liberal system with respect to women' and blamed 'foreign domination' for 'alien attitudes' creeping into

¹²⁸ al-Ghazali, *Return of The Pharaoh*, pp. 185-186.

¹²⁹ Sadat, 'Address by Anwar El Sadat to the Delegation of Ulemas, 16 May 1971', *Speeches and Interviews by President Anwar El Sadat April-December 1971*, p. 147.

¹³⁰ Taha Muhammad, p. 71

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 75.

Islamic society.¹³² Yet, according to Jehan, Sadat's motive in opening up space for the Islamists was based on the threat that the Nasserists and other oppositionists posed to his leadership.¹³³ As such, his tactics oscillated from co-optation and compromise, through the adoption of greater Islamic legislation, to more repressive measures when Islamic groups became more militant or more overtly challenged his authority.

The opposition began to argue that *infitah*'s programs had strayed from both the ideals of equity at home, and solidarity with the wider Arab world.¹³⁴ Economically speaking, *infitah* policies had promoted class divisions and tensions as the gap between Egypt's rich and poor widened.¹³⁵ The British Foreign Office reported that the rising socio-economic problems of Sadat's *infitah* policies were clear for all to see by the end of the decade.¹³⁶ A quarterly report from the US Embassy in Cairo recorded that 'the absence of major foreign or domestic achievements has harmed Sadat's leadership position. He is now being cautiously but overtly challenged by elements of left, right and centre'.¹³⁷ A letter from British Prime Minister Callaghan in September 1977 illustrated the importance of reaching a peace agreement with Israel.¹³⁸ The Middle East Research and Information Project reported that other than a 1977 oil agreement with Ford (UK), serious investors had not followed, explaining 'a settlement of

¹³² US Embassy Mexico to US Secretary of State, 24 June 1975, Document number: 1975MEXICO05530, USNA.

¹³³ Jehan Sadat, p. 256.

¹³⁴ Marvin G. Weinbaum, 'Egypt's "Infitah" and the Politics of US Economic Assistance', p. 218, Marie-Christine Aulas, 'Sadat's Egypt: A Balance Sheet', *MERIP Reports*, No. 107, July-August, 1982, p. 8.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 217.

¹³⁶ A 'Marshal Plan' For Egypt, 1 March 1979, PREM16/20223, British National Archives.

¹³⁷ US Embassy Cairo to US Secretary of State, Quarterly Political Assessment, 1 September 1977, Document number: 1977CAIRO16357, USNA.

¹³⁸ Prime Minister's Personal Message (James Callaghan), 15 September 1977, PREM16/2023, UKNA

the Middle East crisis is central for assuring investors of the regime's stability'.¹³⁹

Thus, against wider Egyptian and Arab opinion, and the growing Islamist opposition, Sadat chose to pursue peace with Israel motivated by these economic and domestic issues.

As early as 1975, Sadat had declared 'when I decided to reopen the Canal, I wanted thereby to tell the entire world that I was not afraid of peace and that I was acting towards achieving it'.¹⁴⁰ By November 1977, Sadat felt compelled to open secret communication channels with Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin as a solution to the 'psychological barrier' that separated their two sides.¹⁴¹ His new approach included an initiative to visit Israel himself; 'I therefore decided to go right to the Knesset...I wanted to put the ball in their court'.¹⁴² He described the opposition to this initiative from Arab leaders such as Hafez al-Assad, and from his own government, specifically his Foreign Minister, who objected to the initiative and resigned in protest.¹⁴³ A British diplomatic report attributed the greatest criticism over these initiatives to the 'Islamists', 'Pro-Arab leftists', and 'old Nasserites'.¹⁴⁴ However, the reaction from Sadat's Foreign Minister indicated many viewed the initiative as an attack on Egyptian nationalism, Arab unity, and Muslim solidarity.

Sadat attempted to appease and co-opt the Islamic opposition by considering proposals for additional Islamic legislation.¹⁴⁵ According to internal US government documents, the Coptic community organised protests over the

¹³⁹ Judith Tucker, 'While Sadat Shuffles: Economic Decay, Political Ferment In Egypt', *MERIP Reports*, no. 65, March 1978, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Sadat, *The Public Diary of President Sadat*, Part II, 2 June 1975, p. 898.

¹⁴¹ Sadat, *In search of Identity*, p. 303.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 308.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

¹⁴⁴ President Sadat's Peace Offensive, 28 November 1977, p. 2, F093/1277, UKNA.

¹⁴⁵ US Embassy Cairo To US Secretary of State, 6 September 1977, Document Number: 1977CAIRO14757, USNA.

proposed Islamic legislation, particularly concerned with the possible passage of an apostate bill.¹⁴⁶ The US Embassy in Cairo reported that it was likely at least one of the Islamic bills would be passed, 'if only to demonstrate Egypt's Muslim credentials', however, it also reported that incidents of violence between Copts and Muslims had begun to increase across the country.¹⁴⁷

By the following year Sadat had signed the historic and controversial Camp David Accords. Mediated by Carter in 1978, and guaranteed by US aid and support, Begin and Sadat were able to agree on two interlocking treaties known collectively as the Camp David Accords. In the first agreement, peace between Israel and Egypt was established on the basis of Israel's complete withdrawal from the Sinai and a normalisation of relations with Egypt. In the second, a framework was set for peace between Israel and the wider Arab world, which included a five-year period of Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza that would be followed by talks on territories' final status, potentially leading to statehood.¹⁴⁸ Right from the start, the wider Arab world, led by Syria, Iraq and Libya, denounced the treaty as treasonous and announced a total boycott of Egypt, with the Palestinian leader Arafat calling for Sadat's assassination.¹⁴⁹ Sadat's speech on 18 September 1978 congratulating Egyptians and their Palestinian brothers, fell on deaf ears.¹⁵⁰ Sadat's attempt to redefine Egyptian nationalism through this shift in economic and foreign policy, away from Nasserism, pan-Arabism, and Islamism, alienated him from the Arab region and

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Oren, p. 540.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 541.

¹⁵⁰ Sadat, 'Message by President Anwar Al Sadat to the People of Egypt, Washington, 18 September 1978', *Speeches and Interviews of President Anwar Al Sadat, July-December 1978* (Cairo, A.R.E State Information Service, 1979), pp. 88-89.

increasing segments of the Egyptian population. Islamic opposition grew, capitalising on the failures of his *Infitah* policies, his visit to Israel, the Camp David Accords, and attacked any steps he took for social reform as inauthentic and heretical, particularly those concerning women.

2.3 Jama'at al-Islamiya and Jehan's Laws

Infitah's economic failures coupled with Sadat's shift towards peace with Israel encouraged the activity and growth of violent *jihadi* offshoots within the Islamic opposition. Once such offshoot, which became active in the 1970s was *Takfir wal Hijrah*, created under the leadership of Shukri Mustafa who was among those jailed with Qutb in 1965. Abd al-Rahman Abu al-Khayr, a one-time member of *Takfir wal Hijra*, claimed that the original split responsible for the creation of the group had occurred during the Brotherhood's imprisonment, and that disagreements centred on differing religious or 'minor theological' interpretations.¹⁵¹ Al-Khayr, like Zaynab al-Ghazali, persistently denied the existence of violent offshoots like *Takfir wal Hijrah*, emphasising instead that there existed only the wider '*Jama'at Al-Muslimin* (or *Jama'at al-Islamiya*).¹⁵²

Sadat continued to vacillate between compromise and suppression with the Islamist opposition, promoting contradictory notions of women's rights. On the one hand, he amended the Constitution again in 1976, making Islam the main source of state legislation, promoting Islamist attacks on women's rights reforms.¹⁵³ On the other hand, the kidnapping and execution of former Minister of Islamic Trusts by *Takfir wal Hijra* in 1977 resulted in a massive crackdown

¹⁵¹ Abu al-Khayr, pp. 43, 93.

¹⁵² Ibid, p. 124.

¹⁵³ Keddie, *Women in the Middle East: Past and Present* (New Jersey, 2007), p.124

and the arrest of 620 Islamists.¹⁵⁴ According to Israeli sources, Takfir wal Hijrah was the only *jihadi* organisation that permitted women into its ranks, and in 1977, 27 of them were arrested as suspected members of the organisation upon the assassination of the minister of Islamic trusts.¹⁵⁵ These developments suggest that ideological justification or endorsement of female participation in physical *jihad*, and the role of more political female Islamists like al-Ghazali in contributing to the increasing politicisation of the Brotherhood (discussed in chapter 6) helped move some women towards political *jihadi* groups within the Islamist movement.

That the fall-out of the Camp David Accords coincided with the culmination of Sadat's Family Planning campaigns and Personal Status Law Reforms only served to further inflame Islamic opposition against the regime. Jehan wrote that following much resistance Sadat only gave into 'her demands' on Family Planning after watching a presentation given by an American family-planning group about the 'population explosion' that was threatening the country.¹⁵⁶ US government documents indicate that Sadat's interest in the subject was motivated by US efforts to 'press Egyptian Authorities to undertake a more vigorous population control program', encouraging the Egyptian press to report on the 'catastrophic consequences of Egypt's population explosion'.¹⁵⁷ Sadat acted to restrict food allowances to families with more than five members,

¹⁵⁴ Esposito, p.239

¹⁵⁵ Talhami, pp. 59-60.

¹⁵⁶ Jehan Sadat, p. 320.

¹⁵⁷ US Embassy Cairo to US Secretary of State, 15 July 1978, Document Number: 1978CAIRO17110, USNA.

supported a nation wide campaign to convince people to have fewer children, and whole communities were invited to attend birth-control seminars.¹⁵⁸

The realm of the family had always been a scared area for Islamist leaders, and as such, when it came to the issue of Personal Status Law, Jehan wrote that both Aisha Rateb and Amina al-Said warned her of the strong backlash they were likely to receive from the Islamists.¹⁵⁹ Despite three of the highest religious authorities in Egypt, including the Mufti, serving on the reform committee, Jehan recalled the backlash.

Atheist! Petty Dictator! Enemy of the Family! These were just a few of the names Islamic extremists began calling us in the spring of 1978 when the committee released the list of proposed and really quite mild reforms.¹⁶⁰ In the previous chapter it was shown how al-Ghazali and other Islamists came to view religious institutions associated with the state, including al-Azhar, as inauthentic extensions of the regime.¹⁶¹ Among the reforms were the requirement that a husband inform his wife of his intent to take a new wife, the first wife's right to seek a divorce within 12 months in such cases, and her right to retain the family home for her children.¹⁶² The reforms had apparently been written in accordance with *Qur'anic* laws, yet, Islamists nevertheless accused them of being un-Islamic, shouting, 'These are Jehan's laws, not Islam's laws'.¹⁶³ Jehan was accused, along with Rateb and al-Said, of 'imitating western women', with riots breaking out at al-Azhar University:

Hundreds of male students screamed, marching around the university courtyard... 'we want one, two, three, four wives!'... When the

¹⁵⁸ Jehan Sadat, p. 321.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 356, 357.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 358.

¹⁶¹ al-Gahzali, *Ayyam min Hayati*, pp. 21, 27.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

demonstrators spilled out into the street, the police had to disband the highly agitated crowd.¹⁶⁴

Despite the religious backlash on 20 June 1979, Sadat issued the first of two presidential decrees about women, which included the Personal Status reforms and a bill to add 30 female seats to the Egyptian Parliament, with 20% of all seats on the 26 People's Councils going to women.¹⁶⁵

The 1979 Iranian Revolution had a significant effect on the wider region, and on Islamist opposition movements in particular. In Egypt, the Islamists were emboldened by what they perceived as an Islamic victory over western imperialism. Sadat's decision to offer the Shah and his family refuge in the wake of the revolution further aggravated Islamic opposition against him.

Down with Sadat! Out with the Shah, the alcoholic, the dictator, the adulterer! On the campuses of Egypt's universities, the fanatic minority had been demonstrating steadily since the Shah's arrival...now the fanatics were calling my husband a *kafir*.¹⁶⁶

Moreover, Sadat's double standards and suppression of leftist opposition meant that he lost support from activists outside the Islamic movement as well. For instance, his approval of the personal status law reforms for women was offset by his suppression of el-Saadawi's feminist work.

El-Saadawi's condemnation of Sadat's policies, and in particular the Camp David treaty, resulted in her imprisonment, 'the president had ordered my incarceration with hundreds of others who had opposed the Camp David treaty'.¹⁶⁷ The outrage over Camp David also resulted in direct attacks on Egyptian state-feminists abroad. Jehan Sadat explained how at the 1980 World

¹⁶⁴ Jehan Sadat, p. 361.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, pp. 361, 364-365.

¹⁶⁶ Jehan Sadat, pp. 425-426.

¹⁶⁷ Nawal el-Saadawi, *Walking Through Fire: A Life of Nawal el-Saadawi*, ed. Sherif Hetata (London: Zed Books, 2002), p. 220.

Conference On Women in Copenhagen, the Palestinian delegation shouted as she delivered her speech,

'Down, traitor!...your husband betrayed the Arabs!'...'Traitor! Traitor! Sadat is a traitor!' other Palestinians began to shout, their voices so loud that it was almost impossible for me to continue'.¹⁶⁸

Sadat's double standard on female activism, his wife's self-proclaimed leadership of the women's movement, and the attacks on his authenticity were compounded by his ineffective balancing strategy in dealing with the Islamist opposition and the escalating violence between Coptic Christians and Muslims in Egypt.

Similarly to the Shah of Iran, Sadat vacillated between capitulation and suppression in dealing with political opposition and female activism. From 1978 onwards the *Jama'at al-Islamiya* became an increasingly active and dominant force on university campuses from Cairo to Alexandria, calling for gender segregation and veiling.¹⁶⁹

2.4 New Forms of Veiling and Definitions of Cultural Authenticity

Writers like El-Guindi have argued that veiling began shortly after the 1973 October War as part of an assertive movement beginning the synthesis between modernity and authenticity.¹⁷⁰ Fatima Abdel-Hadi and Brotherhood member Farid Abd al-Khalil's autobiographical writing shed light on the political and ideological transformations that took place within the Islamist movement over the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁷¹ Abdel-Hadi described her first meeting with the Sisterhood in 1942, arriving unveiled wearing a short dress, 'which stopped at the knee as was the fashion in those days'. When it came time to pray,

¹⁶⁸ Jehan Sadat, p. 430.

¹⁶⁹ US Consulate Alexandria to US Embassy Cairo and US Secretary of State, 23 October 1978, Document Number: 1978ALEXAN00872, USNA.

¹⁷⁰ Fadwa El-Guindi, 'Veiling Infitah with Muslim Ethic: Egypt's Contemporary Islamic Movement', *Social Problems*, vol. 28, no. 4, April 1981, pp. 465, 481.

¹⁷¹ Fatima Abdel Hadi, *Rihlati*.

Amina Mohammad, the secretary, turned to me and said 'how can you pray with uncovered hair and bare legs?'...I took out an écharpe (scarf) and covered my hair and prayed in my short dress.¹⁷²

Farid Abd al-Khalilq, who joined the Ikhwan in the 1940s, and whose wife was a member of the Muslim Sisterhood, mentioned that his sister was unveiled before her marriage, and that what was viewed as sufficient *hijab* was the 'écharpe or head cover'.¹⁷³

Abdel-Hadi recalled how the Sisters used to wear long scarves and long 'jackets', and how they would carry pins while they were on public transport to prick the bodies/legs of women in short skirts, only to apologise and use the opportunity to discuss modest clothing and call them into the Sisterhood.¹⁷⁴ Although the Sisterhood was active in encouraging women to abandon western clothing (short dresses) and dress more 'modestly', Abd al-Khalilq emphasised that women's 'fashion' and the *hijab* were not crucial issues within the organisation during this early period.¹⁷⁵

We didn't discuss fashion too much, but talked of adherence to 'modesty'/'modest dress', and avoiding vulgarity/nudity...the question of the veil, its shape, its colour, its length, its shortness did not concern us much.¹⁷⁶

Abd al-Khalilq argued that the form and type of veiling changed over the 1970s to incorporate a style that was 'foreign' to Egyptian people.

As far as the *Niqab* (face veil) we did not hear of it at the time, or rather we never heard or saw a single case of *Niqab* wearing among the Sisters until after the changes of the 1970s in Egypt, which saw the entry of Wahhabi ideas from the Gulf states, which were foreign to the Islamic practices in Egypt and the Brotherhood.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² Ibid, p. 21.

¹⁷³ al-Khalilq in ibid, p. 16.

¹⁷⁴ Abdel-Hadi, p. 28, 37.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 15.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 15-16.

¹⁷⁷ al-Khalilq in ibid, p.16

Thus according to Abd al-Khaliq and Abdel-Hadi, a more Wahhabi form of veiling, increasingly became adopted by the Islamist groups in this later period.

Hussam Tammam has argued that as the Sisterhood was politicised in response to wider changes following the 1952 Revolution, the veil was transformed into a political symbol.¹⁷⁸ Expanding on this, this section argues that women were increasingly co-opted by the Islamist movement to illustrate the latter's socio-political dominance through the adoption of imported Wahhabi practices, particularly stricter gender segregation and different Wahhabi-style veiling, as new definitions of cultural authenticity. It is argued women, particularly students on university campuses where the *Jama'at al-Islamiya* was most active, asserted themselves as symbols of these new definitions by promoting veiling as part of patriarchal bargains with the Islamists for more educational and social/public space.

Furthermore, it is argued that veiling formed part of patriarchal battles between the state and the Islamic opposition, who used this female practice to attack each other along lines of cultural authenticity. As such, state-feminists like al-Said published attacks on veiling to counteract calls for increased veiling by the *Jama'at al-Islamiya*. Attempts to limit their influence on university campuses, through such measures as postponing student union elections because of the 'predominance of the Islamic group in faculty elections' proved ineffective.¹⁷⁹ Expansion of the Islamist movement and notions of Sadat as an enemy of Islam, and thus a justifiable target of *jihad*, lead to his assassination by a member of Islamic Jihad in 1981.

¹⁷⁸ Hussam Tammam, in *ibid*, pp. 9-10.

¹⁷⁹ US Consulate Alexandria to US Embassy Cairo and US Secretary of State, 23 October 1978, Document Number: 1978ALEXAN00872USNA.

Conclusion

Whether *Jama'at al-Islamiya* or Khomeini, veiling was encouraged to demonstrate the image of 'Islamisation', as a way of asserting power over the secular Egyptian and Iranian states. However, while re-veiling was used to illustrate dominance and cultural authenticity within the religious opposition movements in both Iran and Egypt, this was done in very different ways. While in both cases revised and new forms of veiling were used as symbols of political resistance and cultural authenticity against the state, it was only in Egypt that some women promoted veiling as part of patriarchal bargains struck with the Islamic opposition in exchange for education, and public activity in a more authentic, Islamised society. In Iran, many female revolutionaries had not defined veiling as an authentic Iranian act outside the revolution. As a result, many women demonstrated against Khomeini's enforced veiling and enforced Islamisation in March 1979. Furthermore, the Islamisation of the Iranian State after the 1979 meant that the veil ceased to represent a political symbol of resistance against the state.

This chapter has shown that both the Iranian and Egyptian states were engaged in patriarchal battles with the religious opposition, using their different models of womanhood to assert political power. It was not that men simply used women to indicate what was authentic, but that some women were drawn towards these alternatives out of their own socio-political frustrations to represent what they viewed as culturally authentic. However, by employing a dual strategy of compromise and repression against the opposition, the Egyptian and Iranian states under the Shah and Sadat validated contradictory notions of

womanhood by compromising on women's rights in order to pacify their political enemies, thus hindering the effects of state feminist projects.

'What we require is not a formal return to tradition and religion but a rereading, a reinterpretation, of our history that can illuminate the present and pave the way to a better future'.

Nawal el-Saadawi

Conclusion

During the 1850s, Qajari male writers like Muhammad Sipihr labelled Qurrat al-'Ayn a polyandrous prostitute. By the 1940s, Constitutional historian Kasravi was labelling her both 'Shir-Zan' (lion-woman/lioness) and mentally unstable. Now, over 160 years after her death, some Iranian writers are calling her a 'trailblazer', an 'advocate of women's equality in Iran', referring to her as 'the first suffrage martyr'.¹ The case of Qurrat al-'Ayn offers a strong example of how myths and legends are revised in line with changing notions of authenticity to validate new notions of womanhood, nationalism, and national identity. When notions of authenticity are understood as part of changing patriarchal bargains, it becomes easier to understand that historical figures are not static; even those who were once repudiated as completely inauthentic, can later come to symbolise cultural and national authenticity, and may similarly fall out of favour, or indeed 'memory', when they no longer fit or complement dominant discourses of a period.

Similarly, while Zaynab al-Ghazali may have viewed herself as an exception, and been viewed as one by the majority of her peers, the model of Islamic womanhood that she put forward, which inspired a lively academic debate, is not static and is thus open to negotiation and renegotiation. If she has

¹ Nina Ansary, *Jewels of Allah: The Untold Story of Women in Iran*, (California: Revela Press, 2015).

come to constitute a model of 'Islamic feminism' for some writers or activists, perhaps it is because, as we have seen over the last 7 chapters, she has come, or some parts of her actions, have come to represent the better bargain for some women who are challenging the patriarchal ownership of Islamic scholarship and/or the definitions of the Islamic fundamentalist movement. As we have also seen over the course of these 7 chapters, the same patriarchal bargain is not necessarily acceptable or upheld by similar groups of women, be they political activists, social activists, religious activists, state feminists or academic writers. As women are not monolithic entities, their historic figures are similarly not viewed or interpreted monolithically, open to different and often conflicting interpretations by a diverse range of women at any point in time.

Terminology, too, is historically interpreted in response to changing socio-political factors and notions of cultural authenticity. As such, while terms may have one set of connotations at one point in time, those connotations can change over time to encompass different ideas, interpretations and implications. In 1976, as the Islamic revolutionary movement was gaining greater ground, and more revolutionary models of Islamic womanhood were being put forward as discussed in chapter 6, Farhat Qa'im Maqami wrote *Azadi ya Isarat-i-Zan*² (Freedom or slavery of women?). He argued that 'freedom' and 'slavery' with regards to women were not new terms, but that the state had manipulated the word *azadi* (freedom) to mean immorality and a loss of cultural and national heritage, whilst making slavery a synonym for morality and religion. Thus, Maqami equated *azadi-i zan* or *azadi-i zanan* (women's liberation) with

² Farhat Qa'im Maqami, *Azadi ya Isarat-i-Zan: Muqaddama-I bar Jamia Shinasi-i-Zan*, (Tehran: Javidan, 1976).

immorality, promiscuity and a loss of cultural authenticity, a term that only a decade earlier was equated with female suffrage and the passing of the family protection laws by activists like Bamdad. Similarly, Buthayna Sha'ban argues that the word *Nisa'i* did not suffer from negative connotations at the start of the 20th century, but that some Arab thinkers in the 1980s began to 'blaspheme against it'.³ 'It is frustrating', she writes, 'that the word *Nisa'i* was absorbed in Arab thought much better at the beginning of the 20th century than towards the end of it'.⁴

Over the course of 7 chapters this thesis explored the development of notions of womanhood and women's rights and how these definitions changed in Iran and Egypt over a 100-year period. It showed that none of these definitions could be taken for granted, and that at every juncture different women and different types of female activists had to find novel, different, and more sophisticated approaches to maintain certain patriarchal bargains whilst attempting to strike new or revised ones.

Political Practices: Nationalist protests, Voting, and Revolutionary activism

Tracing the development of Egyptian and Iranian women's political practices from 1880-1980 has pointed to historic transformations in women's political identities and roles. More importantly it has highlighted how recurring themes of women's loyalty, purity, and sacrifice were revised through bargains with competing patriarchal forces that helped validate and authenticate these new roles within different contexts. The Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-

³ Sha'ban, p. 51

⁴ Ibid.

1911 and the Egyptian Revolution and Independence struggle of 1919-1922 provided women with a platform to test and challenge patriarchal limits on their public and political activity. While poor working class women had traditionally participated in riots and protests, often led by religious and community leaders, these two instances saw educated women from elite land-owning and wealthier upper class families participate in public protests for the first time. Persistent themes of female modesty, purity, and sacrifice were promoted in both contexts, but defined differently according to women's different social/class backgrounds. For instance, the daughters of Quchan in 1905 and the story of the Iranian washerwoman in 1908, reaffirmed notions of class and female oppression, with women's purity and sacrifice expressed through the loss of their bodies and livelihoods in these contexts. Elite women like Sedigheh Dowlatabadi and Mohtaram Eskandari realised their loyalty and sacrifice by risking their safety to organise secret societies, plan and execute covert activities and boycotts, and participate in mass public protests in 1911 in support of the constitutional movement.

In Egypt, elite women's loyalty and sacrifice was realised through notions of the WWCC as nationalist mothers, whose supportive activities kept the revolution alive, particularly when Wafd leaders were arrested. Their relentless protesting in the face of British harassment as recounted by Huda Sha'rawi, and their written communiqués to women's organisations abroad and colonial diplomats during the revolution, pointed to their roles as protectors and sacrificial mothers of the poorer classes in the revolution. Lower class women realised their nationalist sacrifice with their lives, dying at the hands of British

bullets during nationalist protests, symbolising the exploitation and destruction of the Egyptian nation at the hands of its colonial oppressor. Women's experiences in these revolutions fostered their desire for more participation and representation in the nation's political processes. However, while men encouraged women's activities in such anti-colonial contexts, they were less willing to accommodate their political activities in domestic contexts.

Women's roles as bearers of cultural authenticity were particularly heightened in anti-colonial contexts, allowing nationalist men to indicate to their enemies what the 'true' nation looked like. In Egypt notions of the modern bourgeois family and educated motherhood were used to demonstrate Egypt's strength and readiness for independence. Once independence was achieved, nationalist men felt that educated mothers had to focus on nurturing the next generation, viewing women's political activity as a distraction from their domestic duties, and potentially divisive to the family, and thus the nation. Similarly in Iran, the Iranian Constitution denied women political rights along with the criminal and insane. In both countries some women chose to disassociate from nationalist men in the wake of such disappointment, choosing to pursue independent activity as a way of challenging existing limits on their political participation. Some women were more political than others; Dowlatabadi pushed limits on women's public activity by publishing her opinions on Iran's foreign policies in her *Zaban-i-Zanan*, while Eskandari linked the activities of her organisation, *Jamiyat-i-Nesvan-i-Vantankhah*, to those of her husband's Socialist Party.

Subsequently, the EFU and various women's rights activists in Iran forged alliances with international feminist groups as a way of asserting their political desires and changing political identities. They used these experiences to signal to nationalist men their potential as cultural ambassadors and political players. By the mid 1930s, however, events in Palestine were encouraging the EFU to shift its alliances from international to regional women's groups, as the IAW was increasingly viewed as a colonial instrument within the Palestinian-Zionist conflict. One again notions of cultural authenticity changed; the EFU went from defining itself as a cultural mediator between East and West, to the defender and protector of Arab feminism and wider Arab nationalism. Once again, patriarchal bargains with nationalist men were revised around changing notions of cultural authenticity, in this case pan-Arabism, which in the context of another anti-colonial struggle became the better-perceived bargain over international alliances with western women. This shift contributed to developing notions of Eastern versus Western feminism, affecting notions of authenticity within Egyptian feminism as it did so.

By the late 1940s women's bargains with the patriarchal state were increasingly focused on political representation and the vote. Women struck common ground with the state by linking notions of modernisation with female suffrage, with many female activists accepting co-optation bargains in pursuit of these goals. Women gauged the political context at every juncture, unifying to organise protests in pursuit of suffrage in 1951 Egypt and 1952 Iran, but turning to nationalist protests soon after because of the revolutionary instability of the period in both countries. As the Iranian and Egyptian states became increasingly

intolerant of independent female activism by the late 1950s and 1960s, some women tread a line between the patriarchal state and oppositional patriarchal forces in order to subtly challenge limits on their activities, while some were increasingly drawn to the opposition's alternative models of womanhood.

By the 1970s, women's participation in the revolutionary movement challenged state limits on women's independent activity, which now included violent action within militant guerrilla and revolutionary groups. Notions of Iranian women's loyalty and sacrifice were revised to incorporate arrest and torture as a manifestation of these ideals, as illustrated by the Mojahedin-i-Khalgh and Fadayan-i-Khalgh groups. In Egypt, women within the Islamist *da'wa* movement challenged the state's patriarchal control by defining it as *jahili*, and therefore illegitimate. Female *jihad* in this context came to incorporate education activities and religious preaching in mixed gender groups, increasing public roles as social workers, and even arrest and torture as proof of women's commitment, sacrifice, and dedication to *jihad fi sabil Allah*.

Social Practices: Education, Family, Social work

In both Iran and Egypt, women's writing appears as one of the first acts of female self-assertion and challenge to existing patriarchal limits and bargains. The writing and patronage of poems within 19th century Persian harems provides one of the earliest modes of self-expression and self-assertion in Iran. By the late 19th century elite women like Bibi Astarabadi and Taj al-Saltaneh were pushing patriarchal limits on women's seclusion and education within the royal court, the former launching a written attack in the 1890s on the Qajari tract *Tadib ol-Nesvan'* (*The Education of Women/ The Chastisement of Women*); an act that has

been defined by some more recently, as the 'first declaration of women's rights in the history of modern Iran'.⁵ Astarabadi's actions and her subsequent establishment of a girls' school in 1907 indicated how definitions of womanhood were in a state of flux, and how women themselves were engaged in both individual and collective ways in contributing to that change. Thus, Asatarabadi's emphasis on domestic science alongside scientific subjects supported modernist/constitutionalist ideas of educated womanhood.

Following the Constitutional Revolution many female nationalists focused on education, establishing private girls' schools and founding journals, through which they promoted notions of female education, public activity and social work. They had to be more careful and less overt with their activities initially as many in the Majlis remained extremely hostile to these ideas and notions of women's national/political equality. The modernisation reforms of Muhammad Ali helped create a less hostile environment in Egypt, where the emphasis on scientific education encouraged notions of female education at least to primary level. The late 19th century biographical works, novels, and journalistic endeavours of pioneering women in Egypt were interconnected and woven throughout these modernist debates of the 19th/early 20th centuries. Women like Zaynab Fawwaz and Aishah al-Taymurriya were seen challenging patriarchal limits using historical female figures to renegotiate notions of authentic womanhood. Successors like Malak Hifni Nasif, May Ziyada and Nabawiya Musa extended their ideas to challenge patriarchal limits on women's education, public activities, and work, striking common ground with modernist

⁵ Nina Ansary.

nationalist men at the same time as subtly challenging their authority and limits on women's reforms.

Women's experiences within the 1919-1922 Revolution spurred their desire for independent activity, seeing groups like the EFU challenge existing limits on women's higher education and international activities. By the 1930s and 40s, women were travelling to international feminist conferences, and coming back with post-graduate degrees from abroad. Women continued to use nationalist language as a way of maintaining and revising patriarchal bargains with men around their higher education and international activity. Women's education was presented as a nationalist goal, as an endeavour that would strengthen the nation and produce a better generation of Egyptian men and women for the good of the country. They drew upon the language of Islam to manoeuvre around criticism from Islamic clerics, but focused on striking bargains with nationalist men to continue their activities. For some women, however, the perceived western and secular character of the EFU and its elite constructs of womanhood encouraged different women's discourses and activities. Women like Labiba Ahmed and Zaynab al-Ghazali promoted more Islamic women's discourses, showing how Islamic womanhood and secular, modernist, nationalist ideas intersected with Islam from the beginning, encouraging revised definitions of women's religious activity through *da'wa*. Other women from non-elite, lower middle and working class backgrounds like Ruz al-Yusuf and Munira Thabit challenged the EFU's elitist definitions of women's roles through their promotion of journalism as professional work for women.

Sartorial Practices: Veiling

Revised definitions of women's rights, and the changing notions of authenticity that helped define these, incorporated changing ideas and definitions of veiling. As a symbol of the harem and domestic seclusion in urban centres, the veil became part of modernist discourses on women's rights and roles in the modern nation. 19th century reformers in Iran like Akhundzadeh and Kermani attempted to challenge the authenticity of veiling as an Iranian act, arguing it had been adopted as a result of the Arab Islamic invasion of Iran, and blaming it for a host of social ills. However, Qurrat al-'Ayn's unveiling and public activity in the mid 19th century had resulted in her peers labelling her promiscuous and inauthentic. As such, women like Bibi Khanom Astarabadi and Taj al-Saltaneh initially challenged notions on women's seclusion from within the walls of the Qajari harems, with Astarabadi establishing a girls' school in 1907 from her own home. However, the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911 provided nationalist women like Taj al-Saltaneh and Sedigheh Dowlatabadi an outlet through which to challenge existing limits on female seclusion and veiling, taking part in public protests outside the Majlis in 1911.

In Egypt, British colonial discourse attributed the nation's backwardness with the situation of its women, symbolised through their seclusion/veiling, the harem, and polygamy. The veil became an important component of modernist debates, which included both men and women who challenged notions of female seclusion and adopted a gradual change approach to unveiling. It was shown in chapter 1 how throughout the early 1900s female writers like Malak Hifni Nasif and women's rights activists like Huda Sha'rawi employed a gradual change

approach to unveiling (removing the face veil and long veils) in line with arguments of men like Qasim Amin. Similarly, the 1919-1922 Nationalist struggle in Egypt saw large numbers of women from the elite classes join in political protests, challenging limits on women's seclusion/veiling by promoting notions of the modern educated mother/family.

Following these revolutions, Iranian and Egyptian women began serious educational activities, and continued to challenge notions of female seclusion and veiling through their activities and numerous journal publications. By the late 1920s and 1930s some Egyptian women were pursuing independent female activism, and attending international conferences unveiled. In Iran, the rise of Reza Shah in 1925, and the establishment of the *Kanoun Banovan* in 1935 saw the state co-opt and adopt issues that had been at the forefront of women's campaigns in the early 20th century. As such, unveiling was not only encouraged, but by 1936 had been converted to official state policy through the 1936 Women's Awakening Project and Unveiling Decree. However, the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941 caused a conservative backlash on veiling, which saw the clerical establishment, epitomised by Khomeini's *Kashf al-Asrar* in 1943, equate unveiling and the Women's Awakening project with immorality and prostitution. However, this backlash was partly offset by a period of limited liberalisation, which saw the rise of many political parties and women's groups. Some women's groups unified under a coordinating committee after 1941 working on campaigns for their social and political 'liberation', while others forged alliances with new political parties as the better-perceived patriarchal bargain against this conservative backlash.

Contrastingly in 1940s and 1950s Egypt, the veil/unveiling had become a less necessary part of ongoing patriarchal bargains, as attitudes to women's public/social activities had changed, with organisations like the EFU focused on women's higher education, and the vote becoming a more central part of women's campaigns by the 1950s. Muslim Sister Fatima Abdel-Hadi recalled how by the 1950s veiling had become an anomaly in cities like Cairo, and how the Muslim sisterhood had been less concerned with their outward appearance, stressing only modest clothing, such as long jackets and shorter headscarves in keeping with normal religious Egyptian dress. The rise of Mohammad Reza Shah after 1953, and the launch of his White Revolution a decade later encouraged Iranian women to unveil by linking the image of unveiled women with the Shah's ideas of educated modern womanhood; the image of the Shah's wife, as perfectly poised, beautiful, and elegant in the latest western fashions providing the ideal of modern Iranian womanhood and femininity as defined by the Pahlavi state.

The rise of revolutionary ideas and groups in the 1970s led to alternative models of Iranian womanhood that stressed Islamic/*Shi'a* authenticity through a revolutionary remodelling of figures like Zaynab and Fatima. Once again notions of female purity, loyalty, and self-sacrifice were upheld as representations of the 'true' Iranian nation. Reza Shah's enforced Unveiling Decree in 1936, his son's emphasis on women's femininity and his 1963 White Revolution, promoted the use of black chadors throughout the revolution as symbols of resistance against the Pahlavi state and a rejection of its ideals. However, unlike women within the Islamist movement in Egypt, many female revolutionaries in Iran did not endorse veiling/chadors as symbols of authenticity outside the revolution, as

illustrated by their demonstrations against Khomeini's enforced veiling order in March 1979. By the 1970s in Egypt, veiling within the Islamist movement had begun to change, taking on Wahhabi influences, shaped by the changing ideas of Muslim Brotherhood members who had travelled to the Gulf countries to escape political and economic repression during the 1960s and 1970s. We see former Muslim Brotherhood/Sisterhood members like Farid Abd al-Khalil and Fatima Abdel-Hadi describing such practices as alien, foreign and inauthentic, pointing to how definitions of veiling changed to redefine notions of cultural authenticity through women's bodies as representations of moral/national purity.

Thus, practices like veiling, similarly to historical terms and figures, are not static but open to renegotiation, their interpretations constantly in flux, changing in response to wider socio-political developments. Changing notions of authenticity, which redefined such ideas, both influenced and were influenced by women's patriarchal bargaining within a variety of developing political and social contexts. Moreover, patriarchal forces engaged in 'patriarchal battles' around changing notions of womanhood as a way of competing for power. Throughout the period under investigation, women often sought the role of cultural carriers and symbols of cultural authenticity, particularly at times of political instability when this role became a more urgent part of patriarchal bargains with men.

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Personal Interviews with 40 Iranian Women

(Transcripts in Persian/transliterated-available on request)

2009

1. Interview with Parvaneh D, age 62, Translator, London, UK, 2009.
2. Interview with Roxana D, age 65, Farsi language teacher, London, 2009.

2010

3. Interview with JS, age 71, Archaeologist, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
4. Interview with Gazaleh S, age 63, Housewife, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
5. Interview with Azar H, age 86, Housewife, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
6. Interview with MA, age 89, School Headmistress, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
7. Interview with ZA, age 58, Nurse, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
8. Interview with FS, age 61, Professor of Microbiology, Tehran, Iran 2010.
9. Interview with Firooze N, 60, Retired Lawyer, Tehran, Iran 2010.
10. Interview with FNN, age 59, Photographer teacher, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
11. Interview with SB, 54, Journalist, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
12. Interview with Fatemeh R, age 56, Recruitment agent, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
13. Interview with Fariba R, age 63, Maths High School teacher, Tehran, Iran, 2011.
14. Interview with SR, age 57, Journalist, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
15. Interview with Poorandokhte A, age 75, Retired Primary School teacher, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
16. Interview with Mahileh A, age 79, Retired High School Headmistress (Double Masters in Chemistry and Physics) Tehran, Iran, 2010.
17. Interview with Shamsi S, age 66, Retired English High School teacher, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
18. Interview with Tooba AS, age 71, Retired Science High School Teacher, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
19. Interview with EMK, age 80, Retired Social Sciences High School Teacher, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
20. Interview with EF, age 58, Visual Artist, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
21. Interview with Noushin M, age 77, government employee, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
22. Interview with Afshan E age 63, Art teacher, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
23. Interview with Nazgol N, age 65, Lawyer, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
24. Interview with Sanaz S, age 57, Graphic Designer, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
25. Interview with SD, age 76, Writer, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
26. Interview with Shirin F, age 68, Housewife, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
27. Interview with AM, age 55, Nurse, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
28. Interview with Pari A, age 62, Housewife, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
29. Interview with Gita M, age 59, Interior Designer, Tehran, Iran, 2010.
30. Interview with LM, age 63, Nurse, Tehran, Iran, 2010.

2011

31. Interview with ES, age 54, London, 2011.

32. Interview with Bita K, age 68, Housewife, London, UK, 2011.
33. Interview with Haleh A, age 66, Housewife, London, UK, 2011.
34. Interview with Nazanin M, age 68, London, Artist, UK, 2011.
35. Interview with Afsaneh S, age 62, London, IT expert, UK, 2011
36. Interview with Azar S, age 74, Housewife, London, 2011.
37. Interview with Leila HS, age 55, Dubai, UAE, 2011.
38. Interview with Elham R age 78, Housewife, Paris, France, 2011.
39. Interview with Mojgan M, age 53, Housewife, Paris, (MA in Farsi), 2011.
40. Interview with Negar T, age 63, Office Secretary, Paris, France, 2011.