

and retheorizing the 'International.' It will be of great interest to scholars and practitioners of IR, especially those seeking to question the

epistemological foundations of the discipline and challenge the normalized vision of the international.

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## Islam, Gender, and Democracy in Comparative Perspective

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*Edited by Jocelyne Cesari and José Casanova*

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*Reviewed by Ravza Altuntaş Çakır, İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim University*

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Gender and democratization are among the topics in which the notion of 'Islamic exceptionalism' appears to be most evident. Exceptionalism here implies an intrinsic quality in 'Islamic' culture that prevents women's emancipation and gender equality. The edited volume, *Islam, Gender, and Democracy in Comparative Perspective*, succeeds in disproving the assumptions of exceptionalism. A universal approach does not exist for the development of women's rights. The contributors to this volume aptly demonstrate that the relationship between religion, secularism, democracy, and gender is multifaceted, not only in the Muslim world but globally.

The editors, Jocelyne Cesari and José Casanova divide the volume into two conceptual parts. The first looks at religion, gender, state, law, and democracy through diverse disciplinary perspectives such as sociology, history, law, and political science. Part two consists of case studies of different Muslim examples, both in terms of women's rights policies and the contextualized responses of social actors, Islamic and secular alike, to the question of gender.

A central theme of the edited volume is the diverse correlation between democratization



and women's rights in Muslim national settings, as elsewhere in the world. José Casanova (Chapter 2) and Joan W. Scott (Chapter 3) look at the intersection of women's rights concerning secularism and democratization in the Catholic world and present critical insights with comparative significance for Muslim contexts. Casanova argues that during the third wave of democratization, issues of gender, such as abortion and same-sex marriage, did not play a determining role. He problematizes the correlation between democracy and secularism and the oversimplifications produced by this connection regarding women's rights. Scott questions the secularization thesis by showing that secularization did not necessarily go hand in hand with the extension of women's rights in France, where laicism maintained a misogynistic character until the mid-twentieth century. Scott finds *l'affaire du foulard* to be not an issue of women's emancipation, but a 'civilizing mission' in disguise, driven by laicism that has never accorded gender equality a primary position (p. 74).

*Islam, Gender, and Democracy in Comparative Perspective* contains contributions showing the miscellaneous and contested nature

of the relationship between democratization, secularism, and women's rights. Case studies of Iran (Chapter 9), Malaysia (Chapter 11), and Indonesia (Chapter 4) display a negative correlation between democratization and women's empowerment. In direct contrast to the Catholic world where democratization results in a lack of women's rights, these countries, similar to Turkey, granted women's empowerment even under authoritarian state policies. On the other hand, the Senegalese and Bangladeshi cases show how democratization runs parallel with the advancement of women's rights. According to Katherine Marshall (Chapter 6), there is a certain degree of reconciliation between secular and religious authorities in Senegal and Bangladesh regarding women's empowerment. In both cases, the backlash against women's rights often comes from radical groups. Ziba Mir-Hussein, in her contribution, highlights the polarization and ideological conflict between 'Islamic' and 'secularist' forces surrounding women's rights in Iran (p. 212). These observations indicate the importance of social reconciliation and cohesion in social and political reform in regard to democratization in general and women's rights in particular.

A common thread in each chapter is the contested nature of the relationship between the state, national actors, and global ideas when it comes to gender in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Muslim world. Complex rights discourses, practices, and policies are evident, borne out by complex social processes involving the state, women's groups, and Islamic actors. Cesari, observes the advancement of women's social, economic, and political rights in most of the Muslim world while 'the rights of the self,' such as sexual and family rights, remain generally patriarchal and conservative (p. 7). She examines the state's simultaneous yet contradictory roles in advancing women's

rights, both as a discourse and in policymaking, in social, political, and economic realms and suppressing them in private law matters. In Chapter 4, Robert W. Hefner teases out the tensions between state policies on gender and Islamic social actors. State and the feminist groups equally resort to Islamic hermeneutics to justify their activities. In Chapter 5, Susanne Schröter explores the relationship between transnational religious activism and women's rights and national legal systems. Similarly, Cesari observes, "state policies are increasingly challenged by transnational ideas and agents which influence the national context of Islamic religiosity" (p. 41).

Refutation of Islamic exceptionalism in this book is undertaken through the consideration of socio-political factors in women's rights, such as regime type, kinship, communal stratification, familial relations, 'political and institutional landscape', and the 'pre-established moral capital of religion' (pp. 28, 40). Islamic theology does not determine women's rights situations in the Muslim world. This nuanced approach helps to account for the absence of equal access to divorce in Egypt and Algeria and its presence in Turkey, Tunisia, and Indonesia. Even though Islam cannot be taken as a determining factor, as Cesari argues, the reshaping of religious and societal norms has an impact on gender equality. In Chapter 5, Schröter argues that the demand for democracy during the period of the *Nahda* (Arab renaissance) went hand in hand with women's emancipation, both directly linked to the reinterpretation of Islam. Malia Stivens's detailed work on Malaysia (Chapter 11) focuses on the significance of women's groups in reshaping Islamic thinking and practice. Correspondingly, Yüksel Sezgin, in Chapter 7, underlines the positioning of religious groups vis-à-vis the state in changing the accounts of Islamic family law.

The volume contains case studies of different Muslim minority and majority contexts displaying a variety of state-religion relations and forms of religious accommodation. The chapters on majority Muslim contexts provide a wide range of Islamic and secular debates and policies regarding gender. State secularism in post-independence Turkey and Tunisia initiated an advancement of women's rights without democratization. In authoritarian secular states of the Muslim world, women's rights have been much less problematic than political liberties and individual freedoms. In other authoritarian Muslim majority states, however, with Islam embedded in their legal framework, such as Egypt and Pakistan, Islam was utilized to define and redefine 'the good citizen,' especially during periods of political turmoil (p. 7). A women's body has become a site for national identity, dominated by an Islamic cultural reference, in which rights, such as family life, sexuality, and divorce, could translate into forms of discrimination. Private law in these cases includes more discriminatory clauses against women accompanied by gender equality concerns with the codification of a certain account of *sharia*.

Despite Turkey having "one of the most progressive legal codes regarding women's rights," the presence of strong elements of patriarchal popular culture continues to undermine the struggle for gender equality there (p. 39). The edited book astutely shows how each Muslim majority country's complex social, political, and institutional features both offer distinctive prospects and place unique limits on women's rights.

State policies concerning women in Muslim minority contexts are also examined in this volume. Both Narian and Sezgin highlight state-religion relations in Muslim minority

cases (India, Israel, and Greece) with direct implications for women's empowerment. Vrinda Narian's case study on India (Chapter 8) suggests that demands for Islamic law may be seen as a human rights issue invoking religious multicultural accommodation methods (such as legal pluralism). Narian examines the tensions between individual and group rights embodied in the 'universal liberalism versus multiculturalism' debate, with a specific focus on Muslim minority women. Sezgin analyzes legal pluralism in Greece and Israel. States have refrained from intervening in Muslim Family Laws (MFLs) even where there has been a negative impact on gender equality. While political authorities hesitate to make legislative interventions, Sezgin reveals, the state civil courts provide a clear alternative for the Muslim minority that creates pressure for the reform of religious courts.

Contributions on a wide range of topical debates and examples under a single theme brought together by the editors is an ambitious task that requires organizational and conceptual clarity. The extensive introduction by Cesari explains the contents, key terms, arguments, and scope of the edited volume and provides an intelligible framing of all the chapters. Although a very well-structured volume, an afterword would have been helpful to interweave the various strands of positions together and illustrate the potential for further research.

Overall, in *Islam, Gender, and Democracy in Comparative Perspective*, Jocelyne Cesari and José Casanova bring together leading experts in various fields presenting in-depth case studies. The edited book presents multiple perspectives and a coherent research agenda characterized by an interdisciplinary approach. It is a major contribution to the

literature on gender relations, in part due to its original approach to questioning binary debates such as secularization-democratization as well as Islamic exceptionalism and women's rights. Through the case studies, the book goes beyond the Middle East to encompass analyses of the larger Muslim world. Its engagement with a broad range of compara-

tive literature, providing rich topics, issues, and debates, makes it a fascinating read. The volume is an authoritative source of reference for anyone interested in understating the nuanced relationship between democracy, secularism, and gender in contemporary Muslim settings in an objective and comprehensive way.

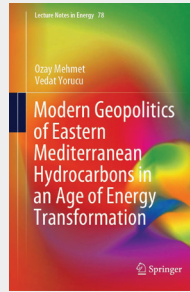
## Modern Geopolitics of Eastern Mediterranean Hydrocarbons in an Age of Energy Transformation

By Özay Mehmet and Vedat Yorucu

Springer, 2020, 172 pages, \$121.37, ISBN: 9783030435851

Reviewed by Büşra Zeynep Özdemir Daşcıoğlu, Sakarya University

The Eastern Mediterranean has been one of the most debated and contentious regions on the global agenda for the past two decades and has drawn attention by virtue of its unique location for much longer. In ancient times, it formed a major leg along the route of the Silk Road; after the Industrial Revolution, it enabled imperial powers to reach their colonies and markets; before WWI, states treated the Eastern Mediterranean like a constantly changing chessboard, as they scrambled to avoid adversaries while racing to meet a rapidly increasing oil demand. These days, the off-shore hydrocarbon reserves discovered there, and the prospects for discovering more, have made the region even more engrossing for circles and stakeholders from energy to economics, politics to the military. With a semi-enclosed sea as its central feature, one can count the number of maritime delimitation controversies between the coastal states of the region. To shed light on this complex environment, *Modern Geopolitics of Eastern*



*Mediterranean Hydrocarbons in an Age of Energy Transformation*, by Özay Mehmet and Vedat Yorucu, “is written as an exercise in rational behavior in support of regional cooperation in order to monetize hydrocarbon wealth in the Eastern Mediterranean” (p. v).

Throughout the book, the authors use the term “Eastern Mediterranean” to refer to the Levant from Egypt in the South through the coastline states of Israel, Lebanon, and Syria, to Turkey in the North, including the island of Cyprus as well. Although it does not have direct access to the Levant, Iraq is also considered among these states, since the country is one of the oldest oil producers in the world, and plays a significant role in the region.

The book consists of 12 chapters; following the introduction, Chapter 2 covers energy transformation from fossil fuels to renewable energy resources. Chapter 3 provides the theoretical background of the book; the authors