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## GENDER AND SUPPORT FOR ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS: EVIDENCE FROM EGYPT, KUWAIT AND PALESTINE

This article explores the determinants of public support for organized Islamic groups among women and men using public opinion data from Egypt, Kuwait and Palestine. Specifically, we examine both the within-system differences between men and women in these three societies and the between-system differences among Kuwaiti, Egyptian and Palestinian supporters of Islamist movements. Our findings show that while there are few aggregate differences between men and women among any of the three populations surveyed, the profiles of supporters differ significantly as a function of both gender and country.

Several interrelated questions present themselves for analysis. First, what is the relative importance of religiosity and considerations of culture in producing support for Islamist movements, and what, alternatively, is the degree to which such support is a response to political and economic grievances? Next, what is the explanatory power of factors relating to personal status, including gender, age, and education? Finally, to what extent do attitudes toward issues of gender affect levels of support for Islamic political groups? The analysis to follow aspires to shed light on each of these questions, and it will compare and contrast the answers found in each of the three societies for which survey data are available.

Prior to presenting and analyzing the survey data, we offer a brief overview of previous research on the growth of Islamist movements, first in general and thereafter as it relates to the circumstances of women. While this overview is a necessary point of departure for the present study, very little of the research to be reviewed has been carried out at the individual level of analysis. Most studies have dealt either with particular Islamist movements and their leaders or with the overall political and social environment within which these movements operate. The present inquiry, by contrast, focuses on the attitudes of individual citizens, not only in the aggregate but also with emphasis on the nature and determinants of attitudinal differences among ordinary men and women. Our investigation is nonetheless set against the background of a growing body of scholarly literature on Islamist movements. Some of our findings are consistent with this literature and some involve important deviations from the conclusions of previous research.

## Origins of Islamist Movements

The literature on political Islam identifies several factors contributing to the growing importance of Islamist groups and movements during the last quarter century. These factors can be categorized as political, economic, sociocultural, and external.<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that these categories are not mutually exclusive.

Politically, the countries of the Arab Middle East have undergone vast changes in the last fifty years. The experience of colonialism produced nationalist movements that gained power during the 1950s and 1960s. These movements, and the states they later formed, in almost all cases advocated a model of modernization based on industrialization and development along Western lines. In many instances there was also an emphasis on secularism in public law and public policy, especially in such areas as education, work, and the status of women. The push toward modernization and secularism was further abetted by the Arab-Israeli war of 1947-48, in which monarchies and other traditional regimes were discredited by their defeat at the hands of the new Jewish state.

Nationalist leaders made sweeping promises and raised high hopes as they assumed power, and for a decade or so many performed reasonably well. In countries like Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Syria and Iraq, although in different ways, there were important gains in education, industrialization, agriculture, and, in most cases, women's rights. Many nationalist regimes also constructed strong political machines and were effective in carrying out programs of political mobilization.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, the shortcomings of these nationalist governments were more visible than their accomplishments to many of the citizens they ruled. Most of these regimes had turned out to be either corrupt, authoritarian, or both, creating a climate of intolerance in which dissent was suppressed, sometimes brutally, and many ordinary men and women increasingly felt frustrated and marginalized. The result, as expressed by one analyst, was "widespread disillusion with the national liberation model" of government,<sup>2</sup> which in turn, as reported in an important early study, acted "as a trigger to the emergence, appear-

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<sup>1</sup> Valentine M. Moghadam, "Introduction and Overview: Gender Dynamics of Nationalism, Revolution, and Islamization." In Valentine M. Moghadam, ed., *Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies* (London: Zed, 1994), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

ance, or strengthening of Islamic groups."<sup>3</sup> Thus, for example, an investigation in Tunisia described a "revival of Islam" during the 1970s, noting that in response to mounting social discontent and political repression there emerged a "parallel [Islamist] society with its own laws and rules."<sup>4</sup>

The economic shortcomings of nationalist and secular Arab regimes were as pronounced as their political inadequacies. Despite some early gains, economic growth and development fell far short of expectations in almost all cases, and unemployment and underemployment were particularly serious problems by the 1970s, especially for the young. The latter situation was the result not only of governmental failures but of rapid population growth, which sent increasing numbers of young people into the labor force each year.

Except in the few countries with significant resources from petroleum exports, the combination of poor economic performance and rapid population growth created a situation which contributed to the growth of Islamic political movements. Among the urban poor, legions of young men, unable to find regular employment, spent most days on street corners or in coffee houses, becoming ever more disillusioned and embittered.<sup>5</sup> In present-day Algeria, interestingly, they are sometimes called "homeboys" (*houmistes*), boys from the neighborhood, or "wall boys," (*hittistes*), unemployed youth who have nothing to do and so "hang out," leaning against the walls that line many city streets.<sup>6</sup> In Egypt, Syria, and the Maghreb, these young men joined students and others in anti-government riots during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The circumstances of better-educated young people were also increasing unsatisfactory. Many of those educated after independence could not find jobs in the stagnant private sector and were accordingly dependent on the government for employment. The swelling ranks of the state bureaucracy put further strain on the economy, creating a vicious circle that was antithetical to economic growth. In addition, this situation left many well-educated individuals seriously underemployed, increasing their personal frustration and anger. Better-educated young men and women who are either unemployed or underemployed have thus been another source of support for Islamist movements,<sup>7</sup> which accordingly have found

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<sup>3</sup> Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, "The Islamic Resurgence: Sources, Dynamics, and Implications." In Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, ed. *Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World* (New York: Praeger, 1982), p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Tessler, "Political Change and the Islamic Revival in Tunisia." *The Maghreb Review* 5 (1980):8-19.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Tessler, "The Alienation of Urban Youth." In I. William Zartman and Mark Habeeb, eds., *State and Society in Contemporary North Africa* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Brown, "Lost in Algiers," *Mediterraneans* 4 (Summer 1993): 8-18.

<sup>7</sup> Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

high schools and universities to be fertile fields for recruitment in Egypt,<sup>8</sup> Tunisia,<sup>9</sup> and elsewhere. Indeed, by the late 1970s, Muslim groups were not only active but had in most cases displaced leftist organizations as the primary vehicles for political activity on many high school and university campuses.

Finally, these economic complaints have been reinforced by a large and growing gap between rich and poor, meaning that the burdens of underdevelopment are not shared equitably and that, despite economic difficulties, there are islands of affluence and privilege in most Arab states. A related complaint is that elite membership is determined in most instances not by ability, dedication, or service to society, but rather by personal and political connections. Resentment of those who benefit from this situation, and of the regimes that are believed to tolerate or even encourage it, is an important additional factor producing support for Islamist movements that present themselves as opponents of the status quo.<sup>10</sup>

These political and economic problems were exacerbated by rapid sociocultural change. Rural-urban migration occurred at a pace far exceeding the absorptive capacity of cities, creating not only shanty towns but anomie and alienation as well.<sup>11</sup> Many of the new urban residents were exposed to the proliferation of material goods, only to have their desires frustrated by unemployment and the lack of opportunities for advancement.<sup>12</sup>

This situation, as well as rapid social change more generally, created another opportunity for Islamist movements, who appealed to the frustrated social classes by emphasizing familiar religious symbols. Ironically, perhaps, the state itself often gave legitimacy to such activity, seeking to win popular support by proclaiming its own attachment to Islamic values. In addition, in Egypt and a number of other countries, particularly during the 1970s, the regime often encouraged religious movements in order to balance a perceived challenge from the political left. Only later did governments recognize that Islamist movements posed an even greater challenge, but by then it was often too late to control the most radical Muslim groups.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Guilain Denoëux, "Religious Networks and Urban Unrest: Lessons from Iranian and Egyptian Experiences." In Kay B. Warren, ed., *The Violence Within: Cultural and Political Opposition in Divided Nations* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> Elbaki Hermassi, "La société tunisienne au miroir Islamiste." *Maghreb-Machrek* 103 (1984): 39-56.

<sup>10</sup> Mark Tessler, "Anger and Governance in the Arab-World: Lessons from the Maghrib and Implications for the West." *The Jerusalem Journal of International Relations* 13 (1991): 7-33.

<sup>11</sup> Halim Barakat, *The Arab World: Society, Culture, and State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 170.

<sup>12</sup> Roy, pp. 3-4.

<sup>13</sup> Margot Badrān, "Competing Agenda: Feminists, Islam, and the State in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Egypt." In Deniz Kandiyoti, ed. *Women, Islam, and the State* (London: MacMillan, 1991), p. 222.

Adding to these domestic considerations was the influence of significant external developments. The Arab-Israeli war of June 1967 was particularly important. With revolutionary regimes in Egypt and Syria defeated even more decisively than had been their feudalistic predecessors in 1948, there was a decline in the influence and prestige of the secular models of development by which these states had been guided. Correspondingly, there was suddenly a new credibility to the Islamist argument that progress could be achieved only if the Arabs were guided by an indigenous political formula, namely that provided by Islam. Calling for governance based on Islamic law, Muslim ideologues proclaimed to the defeated Arabs that Islam "could do what no imported doctrine could hope to do -- mobilize the believers, instill discipline, and inspire people to make sacrifices and, if necessary, to die."<sup>14</sup>

Another important external factor was the rise of OPEC and the accumulation during the 1970s of huge revenue surpluses by Saudi Arabia and other petroleum-exporting states of the Arab Gulf. These conservative regimes subsequently devoted substantial sums to religious enterprises throughout the Arab world. They provided funds for the construction of religious schools and mosques, and also for Islamic cultural and political organizations.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, the Iranian revolution of 1979 was of critical importance. On the one hand, Iran, too, used some of its considerable wealth from petroleum exports to support Islamic movements in other countries. In addition, however, the Islamic regime in revolutionary Iran supported anti-government Muslim groups opposed to the status quo in a number of Arab states, providing assistance that sometimes included military equipment and personnel. Moreover, beyond the practical significance of this aid, the Iranian revolution was itself of tremendous symbolic importance. Reversing the experience of the 1967 war, in which the small Jewish state had defeated the many Arab armies ranged against it, the Iranian opposition had, under the banner of Islam, succeeded in ousting a government which possessed enormous military power and was actively supported by the West.

### Islamist Movements and Women

There is a need to consider the support of substantial numbers of women for Islamist movements. Such support is an enigma to some Western observers, since it would appear that many of these movements seek

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<sup>14</sup> Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 52.

<sup>15</sup> Moghadam, p. 8.

to restrict women's political, economic, and social choices. In fact, however, as will be reported below, the present study does not find a significant difference between the proportion of women and men supporting these movements in the three countries examined. Clearly, therefore, many Muslim women must believe that Islamist movements offer them something in return for their support.

To begin, it must be emphasized that not all Muslim groups have the same views about women. All of these groups are admittedly hostile to contemporary notions of women's emancipation. Indeed, almost all strongly advocate Muslim dress for women, oppose any contact between the sexes with the potential to lead to intimacy outside of marriage, and believe that women's roles should be confined to those of wife and mother. At most, a married woman should work outside the home only if this does not interfere with her primary obligation, which is to care for her husband and to bear and raise Muslim children.

At the same time, at least some Islamist groups, including the large and mainstream Muslim Brotherhood, stress the rights as well as the obligations of women. The Brotherhood and many other Muslim groups encourage education for women, for example, even at the highest level. Indeed, the founder of the Brotherhood in Egypt, Ḥasan al-Bannā, favored women's participation in public life and established private schools for the education of women in the 1930s. Some Muslim groups also concede that men have neglected women's rights and been excessive in imposing obligations, although they add that this is the result of the overall corruption and spiritual emptiness of the present-day social order.<sup>16</sup>

Reflecting this belief that women should be politically conscious and socially active, female supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood have formed their own organizations in a number of countries. Commonly known as the Muslim Sisters, these groups are particularly active on university campuses in Egypt, Kuwait, and many other Arab and Muslim countries, and they are often heavily involved in efforts to mobilize student opinion on behalf of the Brotherhood or other Islamic movements. An important model for such Islamic women's organizations is the Society of Muslim Women that was formed in Egypt in the 1950s. The society undertook charitable work in a number of areas. It also carried out underground political work on behalf of the Muslim Brotherhood, especially after the organization was declared illegal.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Islamic Militancy as Social Movement: The Case of Two Groups in Egypt." In Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, ed. *Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World* (New York: Praeger, 1982), p. 122.

<sup>17</sup> Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 29.

These examples make it clear that many associated with the Muslim Brotherhood and other Muslim groups do not believe that Islam desires women to be ignorant or uninvolved in public life. On the contrary, the image of some Western observers notwithstanding, most Islamist movements believe that women should be politically conscious, and many proclaim in this connection that the battle for a just society is not one in which only men are warriors. Consistent with this perspective, even as they assert that the roles to be played by men and women are not identical, Islamists often argue passionately that Islam, properly understood, is a force for the advancement of women and for equality between the sexes.

Turning from the appeal and receptivity of Islamist movements to the motivations of individuals, it appears that women have the same concerns about the political and economic status quo, and the same desire for cultural continuity in the midst of rapid social change, as do men. Thus, for example, women recruited into Islamist movements tend to have the same socioeconomic status as their male counterparts. Many are the daughters of rural-urban migrants, and many have pursued their education only to find the prospects bleak for employment upon graduation. Islamist movements offer these women a chance to participate, seemingly meaningfully, in the shaping of an agenda both for their own lives and for the larger social and political order.<sup>18</sup>

Additionally, despite their rhetoric of domesticity and conservatism, Islamist movements often provide women with a vehicle by which to assert their autonomy and build social networks outside the home.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, these networks are unlikely to threaten either male family members or a society based on Islam. In this way, women with ties to Islamist movements may actually gain influence within the family and society, to the extent that their religious "credentials" force parents, male siblings, and other men to give greater weight to their views. For at least some women, support for the practice of veiling can also be understood in this context. While non-Islamist women often see the practice as a form of social control, many Islamist women regard this duty as an assertion of their identity which enhances their autonomy and is thus both liberating and empowering.<sup>20</sup>

This assessment leads to the hypothesis that women as well as men will be well represented among the supporters of Islamist movements. It also suggests that there are likely to be significant similarities between the

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<sup>18</sup> Deniz Kandiyoti, "Introduction," in Deniz Kandiyoti, ed., *Women, Islam, and the State* (London: MacMillan, 1991), p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> Yesim Arat, "Islamic Fundamentalism and Women in Turkey." *Muslim World* 80, (1990): p. 21.

<sup>20</sup> Moghadam, pp. 9-10; Arat, p. 22.

men and women who support such movements. There should be considerable comparability with respect to age, education and socioeconomic status, for example, and also with respect to alienation from the state and levels of political consciousness and concern.

### Data Base and Research Design

The data to be presented and analyzed in the present study are from public opinion surveys carried out in Egypt, Kuwait, and Palestine. The Egyptian and Kuwaiti data were collected by Dr. Jamal S. Al-Suwaidi, professor of political science at UAE University and director of the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research in Abu Dhabi. The same interview schedule was used in Egypt and Kuwait. The Palestinian data were collected by the Center for Palestine Research and Studies in Nablus, under the supervision of its director, Dr. Khalil Shikaki, and the head of its polling unit, Dr. Nadir Said. Surveys in all three countries included questions about support for Islamic political movements, as well as questions about the backgrounds and attitudes of respondents.

The Egyptian and Kuwaiti surveys were carried out in mid-1988, based on stratified samples of adults in Cairo and Kuwait City. All respondents are Sunni Muslims; Egyptian Christians and Kuwaiti Shi'ites were not included. Each sample includes an approximately equal proportion of men and women, and each is also heterogeneous and generally representative with respect to age, education, socioeconomic status, and place of residence. As a result, the 293 respondents interviewed in Egypt and the 300 respondents interviewed in Kuwait are broadly representative of the adult, urban, Sunni Muslim populations from which they are drawn. Information pertaining to sampling and measurement, including the training of research assistants who administered the interview schedule and procedures for assessing measurement validity and reliability, has been reported in detail in previous publications.<sup>21</sup>

The Palestinian survey was carried out in April 1994, based on an area probability sample of 2,006 West Bank and Gaza residents. CPRS has conducted polls every month or two since the signing of the September 1993 agreement between the PLO and Israel. Limited in substantive scope but increasingly accurate with respect to sampling and measurement procedures, CPRS polls have a modest urban bias but are otherwise highly representative. Christians as well as Muslims are included among respondents, but the former constitute less than 4 percent of the sample and, as

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<sup>21</sup> Jamal Sanad and Mark Tessler, "Women and Religion in a Modern Islamic Society: The Case of Kuwait." In Emile Sahliyah, ed. *Religious Resurgences and Politics in the Contemporary World* (Syracuse: State University of New York Press, 1990); Tessler, 1995.

confirmed by subsequent analysis, findings pertinent to the present study are the same whether or not they are removed from the data base. Data from the CPRS poll of April 1994, the eighth it had conducted, have been selected for the present investigation because this poll gave special attention to issues pertaining to women.<sup>22</sup>

The data from these three samples provide a strong foundation for examining determinants of support for Islamist movements in the Arab world, both in general and with respect to considerations of gender. First, as noted, all three samples are highly representative, at least of the urban population, and all accordingly possess male and female respondents in almost equal proportions.

A second strength of the data base constructed for the present study is the potential to shed light on trends that apply beyond Egypt, Kuwait, and Palestine. While no single study can be authoritative, a very considerable portion of the variance that exists among Sunni Muslim Arabs is encompassed by the populations from which samples have been drawn. For example, the characteristics and circumstances of the population of Egypt are in at least some respects analogous to those in Tunisia, Algeria, Jordan and Morocco. In each of these countries, as well as Egypt, levels of economic development are low and the population faces serious economic difficulties, including inadequacies of employment, housing, and education. Due to rapid population growth and a continuing exodus from the countryside, these problems are particularly severe among the young and in urban areas. There are also similarities in the political circumstances of these countries. All are (or were) governed by regimes that tolerate a measure of political openness and competition, even as they also tolerate significant corruption and a political class with privileged access to state resources.

Similarly, the situation of Kuwait's population is broadly comparable to that of Arabs in the other states and sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf. There is a high level of affluence, reflecting the juxtaposition of a small population and great wealth from petroleum exports. There is also a conservative social environment, associated with the historic absence of large and cosmopolitan urban centers. Finally, there is a near-total absence of democratic political forms. Political life is monarchical in character, marked by the dominance of a single family and the corresponding absence of political parties.

Palestinians, being stateless, are probably less typical of other Arab communities. Yet the sample drawn in West Bank and Gaza may shed

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<sup>22</sup> Khalil Shikaki, "Reports of Public Opinion Surveys Conducted in the West Bank and Gaza" (Nablus, West Bank: Center for Palestine Research and Studies, 1994).

light on the attitudes of Palestinians elsewhere, and also, perhaps, on the inclinations of occupied and stateless populations more broadly. In addition, the situation in the West Bank and Gaza since the establishment of the Palestine National Authority has in some ways begun to resemble that of Egypt and other Arab republics. There are serious economic problems, and political life is marked by an important degree of openness and competition, even as corruption and authoritarianism are also prominent among patterns of governance.

A third important strength of the present study derives from the comparative analysis that is made possible by the cross-national data base. To the extent that the nature and determinants of attitudes are dissimilar among two or all three of the samples, these variations may be attributed, at least in part, to any aggregate, system-level characteristics that differentiate among the populations from which samples have been drawn, such as level of affluence or degree of political openness. In this way, information will be gained about the conditions under which particular attitudes and attitudinal determinants are salient. Alternatively, if identical or similar patterns are found among the three samples, it will be possible to conclude that system-level attributes are irrelevant in these instances, and there will accordingly be greater confidence in their generalizability across different populations within the Arab and Islamic world.

## Findings and Analysis

A number of items in the survey instrument employed in Egypt and Kuwait dealt with attitudes toward Islamist movements. A statistical technique known as factor analysis identified the most reliable and valid of these items,<sup>23</sup> and from these the following item was selected for the present analysis: "Do you support current organized Islamic movements?" In the Palestinian survey, which asked fewer questions and was more narrow in scope, attitudes toward Islamist movements were gauged by an item asking about partisan preferences. Specifically, respondents were asked to identify the party whose candidates they would be most likely to support when elections are held in West Bank and Gaza, and they were then classified according to whether they chose candidates from HAMAS or Islamic Jihād, rather than those from a nationalist, leftist or other party, including independents.

As noted earlier, there is not a large or significant difference between the proportion of women and men supporting Islamist movements in the three countries examined. Findings are presented in Table 1, which shows

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<sup>23</sup> Sanad and Tessler; Tessler 1995.

that men are consistently more likely to express support for political Islam but that these gender-linked differences are of only limited magnitude. The pattern is similar among Egyptians, Kuwaitis, and Palestinians.

**Table 1. Levels of Support for Islamist Movements Among Female and Male Respondents from Egypt, Kuwait and Palestine**

		<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>
<u>Egypt:</u>	Supports	11%	14%
	Somewhat Supports	25%	30%
	Uncertain	9%	7%
	Does Not Support	55%	49%
		100%	100%
<u>Kuwait:</u>	Supports	13%	16%
	Somewhat Supports	32%	38%
	Uncertain	18%	11%
	Does Not Support	37%	35%
		100%	100%
<u>Palestine:</u>	Supports	15%	17%
	Does Not Support	85%	83%
		100%	100%

Contingency table analysis has been employed to examine the demographic attributes and also the attitudes associated with support for Islamist movements. The specific attributes and attitudes examined are referred to as "independent variables," with degree of support for political Islam being the "dependent variable." The relationships between independent and dependent variables are explored separately for men and women from each country, thus permitting a comparison of the explanatory utility of each independent variable across six respondent categories based on gender and nationality. The resultant tables and associated values of chi square, a common non-parametric test of statistical significance, are presented in an appendix.

The data from Egypt and Kuwait permit examination of the following independent variables: age, education, level of personal religiosity, level of personal political involvement, attitudes toward the status of women, and attitudes about whether the government tries to meet the needs of ordinary citizens. The data from Palestine are more limited, given the restricted focus of the survey instrument. Accordingly, the independent variables that may be examined using Palestinian data are age, education, level of personal political involvement, and attitudes toward the status of women. There were no items pertaining to either level of personal religiosity or attitudes about the government's commitment to helping ordinary citizens.

The first independent variable examined is age. While some scholarly literature suggests that Islamists have greater appeal among younger individuals, this is the case only among Egyptian men. There is an inverse and statistically significant relationship between age and expressed support for political Islam among the male respondents from Egypt. By contrast, the age distribution of those who do and do not support Islamist movements is generally similar, and in no case large enough to be statistically significant, for all five of the other respondent categories based on gender and nationality.

The next independent variable, education, also displays explanatory power for only one of the respondent categories: Kuwaiti men. Some studies call attention to the effectiveness of Islamist appeals among the poorly educated, while other stress their success among the better educated, particularly on university campuses. Findings from the present study suggest that each of these propositions in most cases tells only part of the story. As with age, the educational levels of those who do and do not support political Islam are generally similar, and in no instance are differences statistically significant, for five of the six respondent categories based on gender and nationality. The one exception is male respondents in Kuwait, among whom expressed support for Islamist movements is associated with higher levels of education, and particularly with the possession of a university degree.

The third independent variable, level of religiosity, can be examined only for the Egyptian and Kuwaiti samples since there were no questions about personal religiosity in the Palestinian survey. The interview schedule administered in Egypt and Kuwait contained a large number of items dealing with personal observance and piety, and, as with the measure of the dependent variable, factor analysis was used to identify the most reliable and valid of these items. The item selected for the present study, which factor analysis identified as the best overall measure, asked respondents, "How often do you refer to religious teachings when making important decisions concerning your life?"

While it might be assumed that support for Islamist movements is always more pronounced among those who are more religious, this is in fact the case in only two of the four respondent categories. Specifically, among female respondents in Egypt and among male respondents in Kuwait, those who express support for political Islam are more religious than those who do not. This is not the case among either male respondents in Egypt or female respondents in Kuwait, however. In both of the latter instances, there is virtually no difference in the religiosity levels of those who do and do not support Islamist movements.

Level of political involvement is the fourth independent variable to be examined. This is measured in the Egyptian and Kuwaiti samples by an item asking respondents whether or not they consider themselves to be active in politics. As with other items, the reliability and validity of this measure has been confirmed by factor analysis. In the Palestinian survey, where there were fewer items from which to choose, the item selected asks respondents whether or not they plan to vote when elections are held in the West Bank and Gaza. This measure may not be entirely valid, however, since an intention not to vote may reflect protest sentiments as well as a lack of interest in politics, and results should accordingly be interpreted with caution.

It seems likely that support for Islamist movements is associated with high levels of political involvement, and this is in fact the case for men in Egypt and women in Kuwait. Among both of these respondent categories, those who consider themselves active in politics are more likely to express support for political Islam. This is not the case for men in Kuwait or women in Egypt, however, where levels of support in both instances are comparable among those who do and those who do not rate themselves as politically active. Finally, in Palestine, there is an inverse relationship between level of political involvement and support for Islamist movements among both men and women. Palestinian respondents who are more politically involved are less likely to express a preference for either HAMAS or Islamic Jihād than are those who report lower levels of political involvement.

The fifth independent variable examined concerns attitudes toward issues of gender, and specifically whether women should have the same rights and opportunities as men. The survey in Egypt and Kuwait once again used factor analysis to select and evaluate items, with the item chosen for the present study asking respondents either to agree or to disagree with the following statement: "Women should be required to cease work after marriage in order to devote full-time to their homes and families." In Palestine, the item selected asked respondents whether or not they would be willing to vote for a female candidate who ran for election to the Palestinian Council.

As discussed with respect to gender itself, popular Western perceptions lead to an expectation that support for women's rights and opportunities are inversely associated with support for Islamist movements. This is the case for only two of the respondent categories, however: men and women in Palestine. In these instances, respondents who favor more rights and opportunities for women are less likely to express support for Islamist movements than are respondents who oppose more rights and opportunities for women. For the other categories, the independent variable bears no significant relationship to attitudes toward political Islam. Among women and men in both Egypt and Kuwait, levels of support for Islamist movements are comparable among those who agree and those who disagree that women should have more rights and opportunities.

The final independent variable, which has been examined only in the Egyptian and Kuwaiti cases, deals with assessments of the government's commitment to helping ordinary citizens. The survey item employed in the present study asks respondents whether they agree or disagree that the government usually ignores the needs of the people. This item was again selected through the use of factor analysis, which shows it to be one of several reliable and valid items involving an evaluation of the regime.

It was expected that those with an unfavorable evaluation of the government would be more likely than others to support Islamist movements, and this is in fact the case among women in Egypt, men in Egypt, and women in Kuwait. Moreover, among men in Kuwait the difference is in the anticipated direction and falls just short of statistical significance.

Figure 1 presents a summary of these findings, identifying those independent variables that bear a strong and significant relationship to support for Islamist movements for each of the six respondent categories. It thus provides a listing of those personal attributes and attitudes that are associated with support for political Islam.

Not all respondents with a favorable predisposition toward Islamist movements possess these characteristics, of course. Indeed, to the extent that some independent variables are not related at all to support for political Islam in some respondent categories, those who support Islamist movements in these instances possess exactly the same attributes and hold exactly the same attitudes as those who do not support Muslim political movements. Nevertheless, considerations of gender and nationality define circumstances in which supporters of political Islam *are* drawn to a disproportionate degree from the ranks of individuals with certain characteristics. Figure 1 identifies these characteristics and the circumstances that determine their salience, thereby offering a set of partial demographic profiles of the men and women most likely to support Islamist movements.

**Figure 1. Attributes and Attitudes Associated with Support for Islamist Movements Among Female and Male Respondents from Egypt, Kuwait and Palestine**

	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>
<u>Egypt:</u>	more religious negative view of the government	younger more politically involved negative view of the government
<u>Kuwait:</u>	more politically involved negative view of the government	better educated more religious
<u>Palestine:</u>	less politically involved less supportive of women's rights	less politically involved less supportive of women's rights

## Conclusions

Although the main preoccupation of the present study is with findings related to gender, a few brief comments about support for Islamist movements more generally may also be offered. For several of the respondent categories, particularly for men in Egypt but also for men in Kuwait, the data present a useful partial profile of the attributes which are present to a disproportionate degree among individuals with a favorable predisposition toward political Islam. Among Egyptian men, these include younger age, higher levels of political activity, and a negative view of the government. Among Kuwaiti men, these include higher levels of education and greater religiosity.

These findings among men in Egypt and Kuwait demonstrate that there is more than one path leading to support for political Islam, and that the salience of any given path depends, not surprisingly, on the broader political, economic, and sociocultural environment. In Egypt, where economic problems are paramount and the government is held to be at least partly responsible, anti-regime Islamism receives considerable support from younger men, whose future is presumably less certain, from those who as often as not have lower levels of personal religiosity, from those who consider themselves active in politics, and from those with a less favorable view of the government. In Kuwait, by contrast, a wealthy society whose culture is more traditional and conservative, support for politics under the banner of Islam comes more frequently from well-educated men who are more pious and personally involved in their religion. It appears, in other

words, that in Egypt Islamist movements appeal to a disproportionate degree to men whose grievances are in the realm of political economy, whereas in Kuwait Islamism appeals most often to those whose concerns are religious and spiritual.

Turning to considerations of gender, four sets of observations may be offered based on the available evidence. First, as previously noted, women are no less likely than men to express support for Islamist movements. This is the case in all three of the countries examined.

Second, those women who express support for Islamist movements are not drawn disproportionately from any particular sector of society. For example, age and education are not associated with support for political Islam among women from any of the countries examined. Thus, although a few limited conclusions may be drawn about the attitudes that are present to a disproportionate degree among women with an Islamist orientation, the more important finding is that women with a positive predisposition toward political Islam are for the most part similar to those without this predisposition. Put differently, those women in Egypt, Kuwait, and Palestine who support Islamist movements are a heterogeneous group, drawn from diverse backgrounds and possessing a broad range of attributes and attitudes.

Third, findings about women in Kuwait suggest an anti-establishment Islamist orientation which is similar to that of men in Egypt and contrasts with the more religious and spiritual perspective of men in Kuwait. This is probably explained by the fact that Kuwaiti women do not enjoy the same political rights as Kuwaiti men, and are thus attracted to political Islam for reasons related to protest rather than religious fulfillment. So far as issues of gender are concerned, this finding provides evidence that the attitudes of women are shaped by the same political, economic and sociocultural circumstances as those of men.

Fourth, support for political Islam is not necessarily associated with attitudes about the status of women. This is the case in some instances, including Palestinians of both sexes. But this is not the case for the other respondent categories. Thus, there is no inevitability about the connection between attitudes toward political Islam and attitudes toward women, meaning that support for Islamist organizations does not necessarily come from those who hold conservative views about the status of women. This is the case even among men, since Egyptian and Kuwaiti men who support Islamist movements do not display more conservative attitudes about issues related to gender.

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*Appendix: Levels of Support for Islamist Movements By Selected Attributes and Attitudes Among Female and Male Respondents from Egypt, Kuwait and Palestine*

1. Age

<b><u>Egyptian Women</u></b>	<b><u>29 and Under</u></b>	<b><u>30-39</u></b>	<b><u>40 and Over</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	68%	26%	6%	51
Uncertain or Does not Support	52%	35%	13%	88

chi square = 3.85; p > .05

<b><u>Egyptian Men</u></b>	<b><u>29 and Under</u></b>	<b><u>30-39</u></b>	<b><u>40 and Over</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	64%	24%	12%	66
Uncertain or Does not Support	43%	39%	18%	84

chi square = 6.42; p < .05

<b><u>Kuwaiti Women</u></b>	<b><u>29 and Under</u></b>	<b><u>30-39</u></b>	<b><u>40 and Over</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	79%	20%	1%	70
Uncertain or Does not Support	74%	26%	0%	84

chi square = 1.94; p > .05

(age - continued)

<b>Kuwaiti Men</b>	29 and <u>Under</u>	<u>30-39</u>	40 and <u>Over</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	58%	34%	9%	80
Uncertain or Does not Support	59%	27%	14%	63

chi square = 1.65; p > .05

<b>Palestinian Women</b>	31 and <u>Under</u>	<u>32-45</u>	46 and <u>Over</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	70%	20%	10%	125
Uncertain or Does not Support	68%	22%	10%	552

chi square = .41; p > .05

<b>Palestinian Men</b>	31 and <u>Under</u>	<u>32-45</u>	46 and <u>Over</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	52%	38%	10%	232
Uncertain or Does not Support	58%	30%	11%	929

chi square = 4.50; p > .05

2. Education

<u>Egyptian Women</u>	Intermediate				<u>Total</u>
	<u>School or Less</u>	<u>Secondary School</u>	<u>Some Post-Secondary</u>	<u>Completed University</u>	
Supports or Somewhat Supports	18%	31%	18%	33%	51
Uncertain or Does not Support	25%	28%	17%	30%	88

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chi square = 4.95; p > .05

<u>Egyptian Men</u>	Intermediate				<u>Total</u>
	<u>School or Less</u>	<u>Secondary School</u>	<u>Some Post-Secondary</u>	<u>Completed University</u>	
Supports or Somewhat Supports	27%	27%	17%	29%	66
Uncertain or Does not Support	27%	23%	16%	34%	84

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chi square = 5.84; p > .05

<u>Kuwaiti Women</u>	Intermediate				<u>Total</u>
	<u>School or Less</u>	<u>Secondary School</u>	<u>Some Post-Secondary</u>	<u>Completed University</u>	
Supports or Somewhat Supports	7%	28%	35%	30%	69
Uncertain or Does not Support	9%	17%	42%	32%	83

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chi square = 3.41; p > .05

(education - continued)

<b>Kuwaiti Men</b>	Intermediate				<b>Total</b>
	<u>School or Less</u>	<u>Secondary School</u>	<u>Some Post-Secondary</u>	<u>Completed University</u>	
Supports or Somewhat Supports	16%	30%	14%	40%	80
Uncertain or Does not Support	19%	42%	17%	22%	84

chi square = 10.77; p < .05

<b>Palestinian Women</b>	Intermediate				<b>Total</b>
	<u>School or Less</u>	<u>Secondary School</u>	<u>Some Post-Secondary</u>	<u>Completed University</u>	
Supports or Somewhat Supports	37%	28%	21%	14%	128
Uncertain or Does not Support	28%	34%	21%	17%	564

chi\_square = 4.79; p > .05

<b>Palestinian Men</b>	Intermediate				<b>Total</b>
	<u>School or Less</u>	<u>Secondary School</u>	<u>Some Post-Secondary</u>	<u>Completed University</u>	
Supports or Somewhat Supports	37%	33%	13%	17%	229
Uncertain or Does not Support	31%	32%	14%	23%	932

chi square = 6.13; p > .05

3. Religiosity (Refers to religious teachings when making important decisions)

<u>Egyptian Women</u>	<u>Always</u>	<u>Sometimes or Rarely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	65%	35%	51
Uncertain or Does not Support	46%	54%	85

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chi square = 4.53; p < .05

<u>Egyptian Men</u>	<u>Always</u>	<u>Sometimes or Rarely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	47%	53%	66
Uncertain or Does not Support	50%	50%	84

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chi square = 1.36; p > .05

<u>Kuwaiti Women</u>	<u>Always</u>	<u>Sometimes or Rarely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	54%	46%	69
Uncertain or Does not Support	49%	51%	84

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chi square = .35; p > .05

(religiosity - continued)

<b>Kuwaiti Men</b>	<u>Always</u>	<u>Sometimes or Rarely</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	47%	53%	79
Uncertain or Does not Support	25%	75%	63

chi square = 6.89; p < .01

4. Active in Politics

<b>Egyptian Women</b>	<u>Active</u>	<u>Not Active</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	42%	58%	50
Uncertain or Does not Support	31%	69%	88

chi square = 1.80; p > .05

<b>Egyptian Men</b>	<u>Active</u>	<u>Not Active</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	65%	35%	66
Uncertain or Does not Support	35%	65%	84

chi square = 14.25; p < .001

(political activity - continued)

<b><u>Kuwaiti Women</u></b>	<b><u>Active</u></b>	<b><u>Not Active</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	61%	39%	70
Uncertain or Does not Support	40%	60%	84

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chi square = 6.70; p < .01

<b><u>Kuwaiti Men</u></b>	<b><u>Active</u></b>	<b><u>Not Active</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	60%	40%	80
Uncertain or Does not Support	46%	54%	63

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chi square = 2.77; p > .05

<b><u>Palestinian Women</u></b>	<b><u>Active</u></b>	<b><u>Not Active</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	57%	43%	132
Uncertain or Does not Support	72%	28%	564

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chi square = 11.83; p < .001

<u>Palestinian Men</u>	<u>Active</u>	<u>Not Active</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	62%	38%	229
Uncertain or Does not Support	77%	23%	947

chi square = 23.17; p < .001

5. Gender Equality (Should women be restricted to housework after marriage?)

<u>Egyptian Women</u>	<u>Disagrees with Restriction</u>	<u>Agrees with Restriction</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	51%	49%	51
Uncertain or Does not Support	47%	53%	88

chi square = .25; p > .05

<u>Egyptian Men</u>	<u>Disagrees with Restriction</u>	<u>Agrees with Restriction</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	82%	18%	66
Uncertain or Does not Support	68%	32%	84

chi square = 3.74; p > .05

(gender equality - continued)

<b><u>Kuwaiti Women</u></b>	Disagrees with <u>Restriction</u>	Agrees with <u>Restriction</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	20%	80%	70
Uncertain or Does not Support	17%	83%	84

chi square = .29; p &gt; .05

<b><u>Kuwaiti Men</u></b>	Disagrees with <u>Restriction</u>	Agrees with <u>Restriction</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	55%	45%	80
Uncertain or Does not Support	48%	52%	64

chi square = .61; p &gt; .05

(Palestinian item: would support women political candidates)

<b><u>Palestinian Women</u></b>	Would <u>Support</u>	Would Not <u>Support</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	43%	57%	134
Uncertain or Does not Support	77%	23%	580

chi square = 60.80; p &lt; .001

<b><u>Palestinian Men</u></b>	<u>Would Support</u>	<u>Would Not Support</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	27%	73%	245
Uncertain or Does not Support	66%	34%	962

chi square = 125.65; p < .001

6. View of Government (Government usually ignores needs of the people)

<b><u>Egyptian Women</u></b>	<u>Agrees/ Negative View</u>	<u>Uncertain</u>	<u>Disagrees/ Positive View</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	84%	2%	14%	51
Uncertain or Does not Support	59%	7%	34%	88

chi square = 9.55; p < .01

<b><u>Egyptian Men</u></b>	<u>Agrees/ Negative View</u>	<u>Uncertain</u>	<u>Disagrees/ Positive View</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	82%	3%	15%	66
Uncertain or Does not Support	56%	7%	37%	82

chi square = 11.04; p < .001

(View of Government - continued)

<b>Kuwaiti Women</b>	Agrees/ Negative <u>View</u>	<u>Uncertain</u>	Disagrees/ Positive <u>View</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	33%	10%	57%	69
Uncertain or Does not Support	35%	25%	40%	84

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chi square = 6.63; p < .05

<b>Kuwaiti Men</b>	Agrees/ Negative <u>View</u>	<u>Uncertain</u>	Disagrees/ Positive <u>View</u>	<u>Total</u>
Supports or Somewhat Supports	52%	10%	38%	79
Uncertain or Does not Support	33%	14%	53%	63

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chi square = 4.91; p > .05

