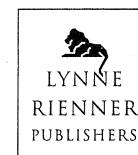


SECOND EDITION

MODERNIZING WOMEN

Gender and Social Change
in the Middle East

Valentine M. Moghadam



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Economic Development, State Policy, and Women's Employment

Let me explain this to you. If you want a position, something good, you have to pay a bribe. There is someone, like an agent, like the man you see to rent a house, and he is just for the small jobs in the government, like the police, or work cleaning an office, things like that. You give him money and he looks around for a position for you. Every job has its price, depending on how well it pays. You pay more for jobs that have a higher salary. But if you just want something normal, then you talk to people, you say hello to them everyday, get to know them, and see if they can find something for you. That is for the regular jobs, the ones that pay just 500 dirhams a month, things in a store or in a beauty shop. For a job with a good salary, you have to pay the agent. Maybe you will get something, and then he can have an offer for that job from someone else, and he can get you put out and he will put someone else there.

—Rabia, a twenty-four-year-old working-class woman, Marrakech, 2001

Women have invaded the public space: the markets, the streets, public transport, even airplanes. Women are today fruit and vegetable vendors, run second-hand clothes stores, are hairdressers and photographers; there is even a female butcher and at least one taxi-driver. They operate in the open in an area where a decade ago the philosophy of religious extremists projecting the distorted image of women's role and place was rampant, and women largely confined to an "inside" role.

—Essma Ben Hamida,
ENDA Inter-Arabe, March 2000

The position of women within the labor market is frequently studied as an empirical measure of women's status. Access to remunerative work in the formal sector of the economy—as distinct from outwork, housework, or other types of informal-sector activities—is regarded by many feminists and researchers in the field of women-in-development (WID) and gender-and-development (GAD) as an important indicator of women's social positions and legal status. For those who argue that women's economic dependence on men is the root cause of their disadvantaged status, the gender composition of

the labor force and change in the structure of labor force rewards are key targets. Employed women tend to have greater control over decisionmaking within the family. Households also benefit when women control income and spending, and the well-being of children is increasingly linked to female education and income. Many feminists regard women's involvement in paid employment as a pathway to social and gender consciousness, autonomy, and empowerment. Societal benefits of increased female employment include diminishing fertility rates and a more skilled and competitive human resource base. Investment in women's education and employment is increasingly understood as integral to building the national human resource base.¹

At the same time, much feminist and WID/GAD scholarship has documented the adverse conditions under which many women work, particularly in developing countries with authoritarian regimes and weak labor protection laws. Marxist and feminist researchers have been especially critical of factory employment tied to multinational corporations (MNCs), and much ink has been spilled over the exploitation of women in export processing zones (EPZs) and free trade zones. Many studies argued that the changing international division of labor was predicated upon the globalization of production and the search for cheap labor, and that the feminization of labor, especially in textiles and electronics, was the latest strategy in that search. A major debate arose over whether this new utilization of female labor reduced women's economic status or improved it. Most of the case studies in the literature came from Latin America, especially Mexico, and from Southeast Asia, particularly South Korea and Malaysia.² Ester Boserup, whose landmark study *Women's Role in Economic Development* launched the field of women-in-development and argued that the process of industrialization marginalized female producers, noted later that economic development has opposing effects on different groups of women: "Whereas young women are drawn into industrial employment and increasing numbers of educated women obtain white-collar jobs in social and other services, the situation of older, uneducated women may deteriorate because the family enterprises in which they work may suffer from competition with the growing modern sector."³

Are MENA women solely the victims of patriarchal gender arrangements, or does political economy, including the vagaries of the global economy, play a role? The Middle East has not figured prominently in the WID/GAD literature, partly because of the difficulty of obtaining data and partly because of a common view that cultural and religious factors influence women's lives more than do economic factors. In the same essay cited above, Boserup states that rapid development inevitably creates tension between sexes and generations and spawns pressure groups that seek to preserve or reintroduce the traditional hierarchical cultural pattern. She cites the "oil rich countries in the Arab world, which have attempted to preserve the family system of domesticated and secluded women by mass importation of foreign

male labor, and in which mass movements of Muslim revival pursue the same aim."⁴ A reader in women, gender, and development includes two chapters on the Middle East (out of thirty-five), but both are about veiling and oppressive family laws rather than women and development issues per se.⁵

As was discussed in Chapter 1, myths and stereotypes abound regarding women's social positions in Muslim countries. A common view has held that traditional gender relations are entrenched and women's economic roles are insignificant, especially in the modern sector. What are some of the patterns, or comparative indicators, that support such a view? In 1975 the percentage of economically active females among those of working age in Muslim countries (which would include those of Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia as well as the Middle East) was less than half of that in non-Muslim countries.⁶ Because of their industrialization strategies, Indonesia and Malaysia began to develop relatively large female labor forces, but the Muslim countries of South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa lagged behind. By 1980 the female share of the paid labor force was smaller in MENA countries than in the Southeast Asian newly industrialized countries and, of course, smaller than in the advanced industrialized countries, though not substantially different from that of Latin America or South Asia, with their huge informal sectors. But the ratio of women to men in the labor force was lowest in the Middle East (29 percent) and highest in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, where the ratio was 90 percent.⁷ In 1990, women's share of the labor force in the MENA countries was 18.7 percent, compared with 22.0 percent in South Asia, 26.3 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, 37.8 percent in sub-Saharan Africa, and 41.2 percent in East and Southeast Asia.⁸ And as recently as 2000, women's activity rates were lowest in the Arab countries, when compared with other developing or middle-income regions, as we saw in Table 1.1. Such comparative data cannot be contested. But what explains the differences? According to a UN survey, "the level of women's work [is] consistently low in countries with a predominantly Muslim population, such as Bangladesh, Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan, and the Syrian Arab Republic, where cultural restrictions that discourage women from doing most types of work are common."⁹ Richard Anker of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has written of MENA that "a key feature of this region is the predominance of Islam, an influence that undoubtedly plays a major role in affecting occupational segregation by sex, as well as female labor force participation."¹⁰ Note that only "culture" is provided as an explanation.

Following from the premise that an important indicator of women's status is the extent of their integration into the formal labor force, this chapter examines women's employment opportunities and describes the specific characteristics of the paid female labor force in the Middle East and North Africa. The chapter also identifies the structural determinants of women's access to remunerative work in the formal sector of the economy and explains the vari-

ations in the region. Attention to this region is important because (1) it is underresearched outside of Middle East studies; (2) it is frequently left out of book volumes on women workers in the world economy; and (3) it is a good test of assumptions and propositions about capital's global quest for cheap labor and about the relationship between women's employment and women's empowerment.

This chapter will show that women's employment patterns are largely shaped by the political economy of the region and that female employment has been constrained by overall limited industrialization. At the same time, there is considerable variation within the region in terms of women's economic status and employment opportunities. To explain these differences, we need to examine specific development strategies, state policies, the nature of political elites, and women's class location. I will also show how the post-oil-boom era of economic liberalization and the challenges of globalization have affected or are likely to affect women's employment and economic status.

The Internationalization of Capital and the Middle East

In the 1960s and 1970s the Middle East was part of the global process of the internationalization of productive and financial capital—now better known as (economic) globalization. Relationships between countries and regions changed as the old colonial division of labor—whereby the periphery provided raw materials and the core countries provided manufactured goods (at very unequal pricing schemes)—underwent some modification. Increasingly, countries on the periphery (also known as third world countries, developing countries, or less-developed countries) established an industrial base, sought to diversify their products, and aspired to export manufactures and industrial goods to the core. The term “newly industrialized country,” or NIC, was coined to describe countries making a significant shift in the composition of their labor force, the source of the national product, and the direction of trade. Major changes occurred in the structure of national economies and the labor force.

During the 1970s and 1980s the trends included the following: a regional and global decline in agriculture; an increase in the service sector; and a shift toward industrial employment, especially in the developing countries, many of which had embarked upon rapid industrialization as a key factor in their development. Significant factors influencing these trends were the changing structure of world labor markets, involving massive rural and international migration; the relocation of labor-intensive industries; and the spread of new technologies, changing the nature of work. Particularly important for women was the relocation of labor-intensive industries from industrially developed to developing countries in search of cheap labor; the laborers were mostly

young, unmarried, and inexperienced women. Textiles and clothing were the first industries relocated, followed by food processing, electronics, and in some cases pharmaceuticals. In this process, various forms of subcontracting arrangements were made to relocate production or set up subsidiaries with foreign or partly foreign capital.¹¹

During this period the large MENA countries, such as Iran, Egypt, Turkey, and Algeria, were pursuing import-substitution industrialization, where machinery was imported to run local industries producing consumer goods. This strategy was associated with an economic system characterized by central planning and a large public sector, and it opened up some employment opportunities for women, mainly in the expanded civil service but also in state-run factories or industrial plants in the private sector receiving state support and foreign investment. The rise of oil prices in the early 1970s led to a proliferation of development projects in the OPEC countries, massive intraregional male labor flows from capital-poor to oil-rich countries, and considerable intraregional investment and development assistance. In the MENA region as a whole, the augmentation in the activities of capital was followed by increased male employment and an increase in the portion of the labor force involved in industry and services. These changes also affected women, who were increasingly brought into the labor force.

Among those developing countries where female employment grew significantly during the 1970s, especially high increases were reported in Tunisia and South Yemen. In a 1982 special economic report on South Yemen (the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen [PDRY]), the World Bank estimated women's employment at more than 20 percent. Between 1976 and 1984 the number of women working in the public and mixed sectors doubled in South Yemen. Massive intraregional migration of men from the labor surplus countries of Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen to better-paying jobs in the oil-rich states of the region (such as Libya, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE) also affected female employment patterns. The migratory trend created shortages in the labor markets of the sending countries, resulting in some cases in the agricultural sector's dependence on female workers.¹² At least one of the labor-receiving countries also experienced a dramatic rise in female labor force participation. In Kuwait the number of economically active women doubled between 1970 and 1980, by which time women represented 18.8 percent of total salaried employees. Women's employment grew in Iran during the 1970s, as well.

As new jobs were created in the service and industrial sectors, many came to be filled by women. For relatively well-educated women, jobs in teaching, health, and welfare offered the greatest possibilities, while in countries such as Turkey and Egypt women's participation increased in commercial and industrial enterprises and public administration. During the period of rapid growth, governments instituted social security programs, and protective

legislation for working mothers—such as paid maternity leave and workplace nurseries—was in place in all MENA countries.¹³

The degree of occupational choice that women had within the structure of employment was linked to the type of industrialization the country was undergoing, the extent of state intervention, the size of the public sector, and the class background of women entering the labor force. In some places, development and state expansion afforded women a wider range of professional work opportunities than was available in the most industrialized societies of the West. This breadth of options was particularly striking in Turkey, where in the 1970s the female share of teaching, banking, and medical positions reached one-third, and where one in every five practicing lawyers was female.¹⁴ A similar pattern was found for other third world countries, such as Mexico, Argentina, and India. Cross-national studies conducted in the 1970s indicated that in societies undergoing capitalist development, there was a curvilinear relationship between the level of development and the range of professional careers open to women. At intermediate levels there were higher proportions of women in professional schools and the professional labor market than at either extreme. Thus, law, medicine, dentistry, and even engineering constituted a cluster of occupations open to women.¹⁵ But class was another explanatory variable. A kind of “positive discrimination” or quota system was operating for the upper class, limiting the social mobility of the lower classes. Ayse Oncü explained that under conditions of rapid expansion, the elite recruitment patterns into the most prestigious and highly remunerated professions were maintained by the admission of women from the upper reaches of the social hierarchy.¹⁶

In the Middle East, as elsewhere, the formal economy could not absorb all the entrants to the labor force, and the urban population grew rapidly because of natural population growth and high in-migration rates. By the 1990s, a combination of declining oil prices, mismanagement of economic resources, and expensive and destructive conflicts led to economic stagnation and indebtedness in many countries. There was less foreign direct investment (FDI) in the Middle East than in any other region in the world economy. This period also saw rising unemployment (including very high rates of women’s unemployment), the expansion of the urban informal sector, and an increase in female-headed households resulting from male migration, divorce, and widowhood.

Oil, Liberalization, and Women’s Employment

Chapter 1 noted the social structural diversity of the Middle East, which has implications for gender relations generally and for women’s roles and status more specifically. We now examine the political economy of the region and its implications for women’s employment. In particular I will try to show the

connection between patterns of industrialization and patterns of female employment. It may be helpful to begin with two complementary typologies of the region. In his discussion of industrialization in the Middle East, Robert Mabro has offered the following classification:

- Oil economies poor in other resources, including population (Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE).
- Mixed oil economies (Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Tunisia).
- Non-oil economies (Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan, Turkey, Yemen).

In their 1990 study of the political economy of the region, Alan Richards and John Waterbury offer the following taxonomy:

- The Coupon Clippers: Libya, Kuwait, Oman, UAE, Bahrain, and Qatar. These states have much oil and little of anything else, including people. They have been and will continue to be almost entirely dependent upon oil and any money earned from overseas investments.
- The Oil Industrializers: Iraq, Iran, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia. The first three states share the main features of large oil exports, a substantial population, other natural resources, and a chance to create industrial and agricultural sectors that will be sustainable over the long run. Saudi Arabia lacks the non-oil resources of the first three countries.
- The Watchmakers: Israel, Jordan, Tunisia, and Syria. These four small countries have limited natural resources and must therefore concentrate on investing in human capital and exporting skill-intensive manufactures. In the early 1990s, manufactured goods accounted for 84 percent of Israeli, 52 percent of Jordanian, and 42 percent of Tunisian exports.
- The NICs: Turkey, Egypt, and Morocco. These countries have relatively large populations, relatively good agricultural land or potential, and a long experience with industrial production.
- The Agro-Poor: Sudan and Yemen. These are the poorest countries of the region and ones where the agricultural-development-led strategy of industrial growth seems to offer the best hope.¹⁷

The two classifications differ somewhat, but the essential point I make here is that patterns of women’s employment generally follow from the given political economy. Unlike Latin America and Southeast Asia, the Middle East has seen fairly limited industrialization, which has served, among other things, to limit female labor force participation. But, as we shall see below, there are interesting variations in women’s labor force participation.

Concerted industrialization began in Latin America and Southeast Asia earlier than it did in the Middle East. In the case of South Korea, first Japan

and then the United States played a role in expanding agricultural and industrial production as well as education. In Brazil and Mexico, foreign investment played an important role in propelling industrialization, although import-substitution industrialization remained the main development strategy. In the early 1960s, Southeast Asian countries embarked upon a state-directed export industrialization strategy, which, along with the rapid expansion of world trade in the 1960s, contributed to their dramatic economic growth.¹⁸ In the Caribbean, where plantation agriculture and the demands of colonialism had already created a supply of female labor, foreign investment relied on female labor for export manufacturing.¹⁹ In the Middle East, the industrialization drive gained momentum when revolutionary regimes took over in Egypt, Iraq, and Syria and the Shah of Iran decided to divert oil revenues to finance industrialization. Between 1955 and 1975 the industrialization of the Middle East (with the notable exception of Israel) followed a classic pattern of import-substitution industrialization.

Those countries rich in oil and poor in other resources (Mabro's first category) chose an industrial strategy based on petroleum products and petrochemicals. A strategy relying on oil, gas, and finance, which is heavily capital-intensive and minimizes the use of labor, is not conducive to female employment. The industrialization of other countries (Mabro's second and third groups) followed a typical pattern of ISI, although Algeria, Iran, and Iraq remained dependent on oil revenues for foreign exchange and to finance imports and development projects. In the Middle East, unlike Latin America, ISI did not evolve into manufacturing for export. Because of oil revenues, governments chose to extend the import-substitution process, moving into capital-intensive sectors involving sophisticated technology. For the OPEC countries in MENA, foreign exchange from oil revenues constituted the accumulation of capital, although an industrial labor force in the manufacturing sector was also created. In both the oil and mixed oil economies, the contribution of petroleum to the national income was such as to make the apparent share of other sectors appear insignificant. Oil revenues certainly were used for domestic investment purposes. But investment in iron and steel plants, petrochemicals, car assembly plants, and similar industries turned out to be not only costly and inefficient but also not especially conducive to increased female employment.

If oil-based growth and capital-intensive production did not lead to a huge demand for female labor, another factor in the relatively low levels of female employment during the oil-boom era pertained to the high wages that accrued to workers in the region. An analysis of wage trends by economist Massoud Karshenas shows that workers' wages were higher in most of the countries of the Middle East and North Africa than they were in Asian countries such as Indonesia, Korea, and Malaysia. Higher wages earned by men

served to limit the supply of job-seeking women during the oil-boom years.²⁰ This reinforced what we may call the patriarchal gender contract—the implicit and often explicit agreement that men are the breadwinners and are responsible for financially maintaining wives, children, and elderly parents, and that women are wives, homemakers, mothers, and caregivers. The patriarchal gender contract also has justified men's domination within the public sphere of markets and the state and women's concentration in the private sphere of the family.

In the 1980s, in line with the changing global economy and as a result of rising indebtedness, the non-oil MENA countries turned to an export-oriented growth strategy in manufacturing and agriculture. For example, although Tunisia exports oil, as a share of exports oil was a smaller commodity in Tunisia than in OPEC countries—42 percent in 1985 compared to Saudi Arabia's 97 percent or Iran's 85 percent. In 1990 its manufactured exports constituted 69 percent of total exports, and in 2000 that figure increased to 77 percent. Turkey provides another example. Following the 1980 military coup, Turkey began to liberalize its economy and shift from ISI to export-oriented industrialization (EOI). By 1990 its manufactured exports constituted 68 percent of total exports, and in 2000 that figure grew to 81 percent. Morocco and Jordan similarly expanded their manufacturing sectors.²¹ Egypt under Sadat tried to follow the Turkish model and liberalize its economic system to promote industrial exports, but since then it has been less successful than Turkey. It should be noted that the non-oil industrializing economies (the Watchmakers and NICs) have tended to employ more women than the oil economies, and in some of those countries policymakers have actively encouraged women's economic participation.

Industrialization and Female Proletarianization

By 1990, global trends in female employment included the following: the proletarianization of women and their sectoral distribution in services and industry; the globalization of female labor via MNCs and female labor migration; and the feminization of poverty, with the interrelated phenomena of high unemployment rates, growth of the urban informal sector, and the proliferation of female-headed households. MNC relocation initially mainly affected women in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia, where the most important areas of activity for foreign investors in the export manufacturing sector were the textile, clothing, and electronics industries. In the 1990s, China saw a growing share of foreign direct investment and MNC activity, combined with high levels of female employment in the export manufacturing sector.



Turkish women's involvement in export manufacturing, especially of ready-made garments, has increased. Photo by Val Moghadam.

Compared to other regions in the world economy, the Middle East has received relatively low levels of foreign direct investment. Despite the role played by petrodollars in global finance, the Arab world and Iran remain comparatively cut off from financial globalization, for better or for worse. Considering just the Arab region, the share of total FDI barely came to 1 percent over the period 1976–1998, with a steady downward trend.²² Along with the factors mentioned above (the oil economy and high wages), this has served to limit female proletarianization and overall participation in paid employment. In Iran a world-market factory, commencing operations in 1974 with U.S. and West German capital investment, produced shoes, leather goods, textiles, and garments.²³ However, most of the workers were male. The high concentrations of female labor in MNCs characteristic of Southeast Asian and some Latin American countries are rarely found in the Middle East, partly because EOI has not been pursued by all the countries of the region and partly because of reliance on revenue and foreign exchange from oil exports. Mabro has written that Iran probably would have embarked upon an export-oriented strategy if the 1979 revolution and the war with Iraq had not arrested the process of industrial development.²⁴ This proposition would help explain the decline in

female industrial employment in the years immediately following the 1979 revolution and the stagnation in overall female employment in the Islamic Republic. (See Chapter 6 for details.)

Despite some industrialization and growth in manufacturing exports, industry in MENA countries has failed to make progress comparable to that achieved in India, Brazil, South Korea, or China. Richards and Waterbury note that total manufacturing value-added (MVA) in the region is slightly less than that of South Korea, and that it is instructive "to compare MVA for Turkey and Iran with that of Italy, which has roughly the same number of people: Italy's MVA is ten and one-half times that of Turkey and roughly sixteen times that of Iran."²⁵ This ratio has implications for patterns of female employment: lower levels of industrialization or manufacturing for export mean less female proletarianization and activity in the productive sectors.

However, countries that embarked on export-led industrialization report higher proportions of women involved in the manufacturing sector. For example, Tunisia and Morocco have seen considerable amounts of foreign direct investment from France, Italy, and Spain in telecommunications, metals, textiles and garments, and food processing. Data from the ILO show that by the early 1990s, the female share of manufacturing workers was 43 percent in Tunisia and 37 percent in Morocco; in each country, a high proportion of all working women were involved in manufacturing.²⁶ Evidence from the MENA region would therefore confirm the view in the WID/GAD literature that export-led industrialization and female employment are positively related. The region also provides evidence that oil-centered industrialization inhibits female employment. Algeria, Iran, and Saudi Arabia have relied heavily on oil extraction and revenues, and in all three countries only a small proportion of the female economically active population is gainfully employed.

We should discuss the special case of Turkey, because although it is the most industrialized MENA country, it does not have the high levels of female industrial employment or even the high female share of formal-sector employment that one would expect. In fact, Turkish women remain concentrated in agricultural work rather than in the modern industrial sector. Although Turkey's proximity to Europe and its greater participation in the international division of labor have drawn more women into world-market activities, most of these activities are in the informal sector—unwaged, family-based production of agricultural goods or carpets or textiles, as has been documented by Mine Cinar and others. Agriculture, light manufacturing industry (tobacco, textiles/apparel, food/beverages, packaging of chemicals), and certain subdivisions of service industries are typically "feminine" occupations, but they constitute a relatively small percentage of Turkey's female labor force. In 1980 fully 88 percent of all economically active Turkish women were in agriculture. During the 1990s this figure declined to 65 percent and more women became involved in manufacturing employment with

the shift from import-substitution to export-oriented industrialization; in fact, one survey showed that women's share of manufacturing reached a high of 25 percent in the mid-1990s.²⁷ Turkish feminist economists have conducted studies that confirm a positive relationship between export orientation and share of female employment. They have also found that marital status is an important determinant of women's participation in manufacturing; "wives and mothers" are less likely to be found in formal manufacturing firms and more likely to be found working in subcontracting arrangements at home, where they are not always captured in official statistics.²⁸ Employment in the formal manufacturing sector therefore remains a predominantly male phenomenon in Turkey.

Another special case is that of Palestine, where refugee and nonrefugee women were drawn into the textile industry, often as part of subcontracting arrangements with Israeli firms under exploitative conditions. Hanan Aruri of the Palestinian Working Women Society (PWWS) wrote in 1998 that the textile workshops in the West Bank and Gaza employed about 30,000 workers, of whom 70 percent were women. The majority of the workshops were subcontracting for Israeli companies that supplied the cloth, designs, and patterns. The majority of the women were from rural areas and refugee camps and worked out of economic need, but they lacked education and literacy and were often unskilled. A PWWS survey found that 80 percent of the women workers surveyed were the head of their household; the health conditions in the factories ranged from poor to moderate; and the salaries of the women workers were 25–30 percent of the salaries of men with the same working hours and years of service. Suha Hindiyeh-Mani studied married women homeworkers and found that the husband was the one who received his wife's salary. Jennifer Olmsted, who studied nonrefugee women in Bethlehem, found that acceptance of women working in the wage labor force was growing, but there was still a perception that women should not work in certain types of work, particularly manual labor.²⁹ Palestine is a special case in that the gender division of labor changed after the expropriation of Palestinian land with the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 and the occupation of the West Bank in 1967, and changed again as a result of new economic arrangements in the 1990s. In any event, the limited access to paid labor that Palestinian women were beginning to have was disrupted by the second intifada, the reoccupation of the West Bank, and the Israeli military incursions of 2002.

A Methodological Note

It is important to establish at the outset the problems entailed in studying women's economic activities in the Middle East. First, the region suffers from a paucity of data on women's productive activities and contributions to

national development. A major problem involves definitions of work and employment; much of what women perform in the urban informal sector or household is not recognized as a contribution to the national income or development but is rather perceived to be a private service to the family. Women's agricultural work also has tended to be underreported in national accounts. This nonrecognition lies not only with statisticians and policymakers but also with ordinary men and women, who may be motivated by prevailing attitudes and modesty codes to refrain from providing an accurate description of women's productive activities. As a result, census data in many countries frequently report an extremely small economically active female population. A second problem: inconsistency in data collection across government agencies. The census bureau may report a very small female agricultural work force, but a manpower or labor force survey, or an agricultural census, will account for women more properly and indicate a much larger female work force. There is also inconsistency in data collection across countries, making comparisons difficult. Some countries count persons over the age of fifteen as part of the labor force, other countries count persons aged ten and above, still others include persons aged six and over. A third problem lies with the informal sector. Small workshops, such as textile enterprises, that rely on female labor may avoid taxation through nonregistration. Not only does this result in a further underestimation of women's industrial participation, but it entails more exploitative work conditions.³⁰

Because of such problems, which make time-series and comparative analysis difficult, care must be exercised in reviewing and interpreting available data. However, this chapter is concerned principally with examining women's access to the formal sector of the economy and to salaried employment, where the data presented are more reliable. Women's employment data in public services and large-scale industry are virtually free from gaps in coverage.

Table 2.1 provides data on the female share of employment in all nonagricultural economic activities (that is, manufacturing and services). The table shows the diversity across countries in the region, but it also illustrates the limited nature of women's involvement in the nonagricultural labor force and in paid employment, especially when compared with Asian countries. Because of the methodological problems discussed above, it is difficult to discern a pattern of women's involvement in manufacturing; in some countries the female share of manufacturing declined between the 1960s and 1980s (e.g., Jordan, Iran) while in others the female share steadily increased (e.g., Egypt, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia). It is not clear why women's manufacturing employment declined between 1961 and 1979 in Jordan's case; one can speculate about enumeration issues, rising wages, or the impact of the 1967 war and the influx of Palestinian refugees. In Iran's case, the dramatic decline between 1976 and 1986 is certainly a function of the revolution and the new

Table 2.1 Female Share of Employment in Nonagricultural Activities (%), MENA and East Asian Countries

MENA	All Workers		Paid Employment	
	Manufacturing	Nonagriculture	Manufacturing	Nonagriculture
Egypt				
1960	4	11	3	12
1966	5	10	4	13
1976	7	14	7	12
1989	—	—	9	18
Iran				
1956	34	23	30	24
1966	40	21	33	22
1976	38	22	20	17
1986	15	11	7	11
Jordan				
1961	16	11	3	10
1979	6	10	5	12
1984	11	23	11	23
Morocco				
1960	30	16	22	22
1982	36	26	—	—
Syria				
1960	7	10	7	12
1981	11	12	9	13
Tunisia				
1956	22	17	8	12
1975	52	29	29	21
1984	56	30	34	24
Turkey				
1965	8	8	—	—
1970	23	13	14	12
1980	15	13	14	15
1985	15	13	15	16

Sources: ILO, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics 1990, 1995* (Geneva: ILO, 1990, 1995); and for Sri Lanka, Guy Standing, "Global Feminization Through Flexible Labour: A Theme Revisited," *World Development* 27 (3) (1999): 583–602.

Note: Some of the data are based on enterprise surveys, others on census data.

regime's emphasis on family roles for women. The table also provides figures on paid employment. It shows that in some countries the majority of women in manufacturing are not salaried workers but rather home-based workers. This seems especially to be the case with Iran in 1976, Turkey in 1970, and Tunisia in all years.

But what is most striking about Table 2.1—apart from the way that Morocco and Tunisia stand out among MENA countries in terms of women's involvement in manufacturing—is the contrast with the Asian countries. Dur-

Table 2.1 continued

East Asia	All Workers		Paid Employment	
	Manufacturing	Nonagriculture	Manufacturing	Nonagriculture
China				
1980	39	35	39	35
1991	45	39	45	39
Hong Kong				
1961	33	30	35	32
1976	46	37	48	39
1986	46	40	47	42
S. Korea				
1960	27	27	26	26
1975	38	34	38	33
1980	36	34	38	34
Indonesia				
1961	38	30	—	—
1971	43	35	35	25
1980	45	35	36	24
Malaysia				
1957	17	14	14	14
1980	41	31	42	32
Thailand				
1960	38	39	27	23
1980	47	44	43	37
Sri Lanka				
1975	32	18	32	18
1985	39	25	39	25
1988	47	35	47	35
1991	58	39	58	39

ing the period under consideration, women in the Asian countries had a far larger share of manufacturing employment—and larger shares of paid employment in manufacturing and other nonagricultural sectors—than did women in the Middle East and North Africa.

Thus, Susan Joeckes's argument that industrialization in parts of the third world "has been as much female-led as export led" must be qualified for the Middle East. And Guy Standing's contention that "women are being substituted for men in various occupational categories, including manufacturing and production work" also does not quite apply in the Middle East, where men predominate in the industrial sector, except for Morocco and Tunisia.³¹ To be

sure, in nearly all the large countries women are engaged in light manufacturing—clothing, woven goods, shoes, food processing, confectioneries. But in the cities of the Middle East, most women are marginalized from production and especially from the formal-sector productive process, and are concentrated in community, social, and personal services. There does seem to be a widespread Middle Eastern attitude that factory work is not suitable for women, although this belief may be tied to the limited demand for female labor given the type of industrialization path the MENA countries chose in the past. Economic development has led to the creation of a female labor force, but that labor force is small in part because industrialization, an important stage of economic development, has been fairly limited in the region. From a world-system perspective, because the region has functioned as a source of oil and petrodollars, international capital and Middle East states alike have not aggressively pursued foreign investment in the kinds of industry likely to enhance female employment. As Mabro has observed: “The Arab countries, Iran, and, to a lesser extent, Turkey have still a long way to go on the road to industrialization.”³²

Characteristics of the Female Labor Force

I have argued above that oil-based industrialization served to limit the demand for and supply of women workers, hence the low involvement of MENA women in manufacturing (except for Morocco and Tunisia) when compared to Asian countries and those Latin American countries that saw increasing levels of investment by multinational corporations in the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1980s and 1990s, as MENA countries shifted from a state-directed development strategy with large public sectors to a neoliberal growth strategy favoring the expansion of the private sector, women encountered new employment problems. I will discuss these employment problems at the end of this section. What will be highlighted now are some of the distinctive characteristics of the female labor force in the MENA region.

Since the 1970s, many researchers have noted that to the extent that women are employed in MENA countries, they tend to be concentrated in professional occupations, mainly in what are known as community, social, and public services. The high incidence of women workers in the “professional, technical, and related workers” group in most countries could have been the outcome of occupational stereotyping prevalent in the region, where women cluster around specific jobs such as teaching and nursing. It could also have been a function of the relationship between class, income, and work participation, whereby women from elite families were most likely to be those who were employed. Researchers also have commented on an apparent disinclination by women to enter sales work and service occupations in the private sec-

tor. Ghazy Mujahid explained women’s avoidance of such jobs in terms of cultural norms, as these are occupations with the highest likelihood of indiscriminate contact with outsiders.³³ One likely explanation is that the merchant class has been typically male, and the traditional urban markets—bazaars and souks—have been the province of men. Thus, until recently, the largest percentages of employed women in MENA countries were in the teaching professions. Some of these observations remain true even today, but there have been some changes. Variations should also be mentioned. Nursing has not been considered an appropriate occupation for women in the Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, and these countries import nurses from abroad. Clerical work is common among women in Egypt and Turkey, but not in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Working women tend to be unmarried in Jordan and Syria, but in Egypt a higher proportion of women in the work force are married.

One characteristic of the female labor force in MENA countries pertains to the very low rates of participation. The labor force participation rate—or the economic activity rate—refers to the proportion of the economically active population in relation to the working-age population. As can be seen in Table 2.2, the female rates were extremely low between the 1960s and 1980s. During the 1970s, economic activity rates of women were exceeding 20 percent in most regions of the developing world; by the 1980s, about 40 percent of the population of working-age women were employed in most countries. The highest rates of economic activity for women were found in East Asia (59 percent) and the Soviet Union (60 percent). The very low rates for the MENA region seen in Table 2.2 may be partly related to some methodological flaws (e.g., undercounting of women in agriculture and in the urban informal sector), although it is not clear why the undercounting of women should be so much more severe in the MENA region than elsewhere. But even assuming some undercounting, the fact remains that labor force participation has been a largely male activity. Women’s activity rates rose during the 1990s, partly the result of an increase in the supply of job-seeking women due to economic difficulties in the post-oil-boom era, and partly due to better enumeration techniques. In 1997, women’s labor force participation rates averaged 31 percent for the Middle East and North Africa. This was still low compared to other regions in the developing world, where women’s economic activity rates were between 45 and 62 percent. But some MENA countries reported higher rates than the average—Turkey 50 percent, Tunisia 37 percent, and Morocco 41 percent in 2000.³⁴

Another characteristic is the small female share of the total labor force, again compared to other regions. According to one UN database, the female share of the total labor force in 1995 in various regions was as follows: 37 percent in sub-Saharan Africa, 25 percent in South Asia, 43 percent in East Asia, 37 percent in Southeast Asia, 27 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean—and 17 percent in the Arab region (which would exclude Iran and

Table 2.2 Evolution of Labor Force Participation (%), Selected Countries

Country	Year	Male	Female	Total
Algeria	1966	42.2	1.8	21.7
	1975	43.4	1.9	22.3
	1982	38.9	2.9	21.1
	1987	42.4	4.4	23.6
	1995	76.1	24.3	50.4
Egypt	1966	51.2	4.2	27.9
	1975	50.4	4.1	27.9
	1982	48.2	5.8	27.3
	1986	48.1	6.2	27.7
	1995	67.3	21.6	47.9
Iran	1966	50.7	8.3	30.2
	1976	48.1	8.9	29.1
	1982 ^a	46.3	7.0	27.6
	1986	45.5	5.4	25.9
	1995	79.2	25.2	52.5
Jordan	1961	42.4	2.6	22.9
	1971	43.1	2.6	23.1
	1979	38.0	3.3	21.3
	1990	75.6	17.4	47.4
Kuwait	1965	61.3	4.8	39.4
	1970	53.0	5.2	32.4
	1975	49.5	7.8	30.6
	1980	55.1	10.9	36.2
	1985	55.8	18.1	39.5
	1995	78.8	59.8	39.0
Libya	1964	46.6	2.7	25.6
	1975	47.4	2.7	25.9
	1990	80.6	20.6	52.8
	1995	78.2	22.9	52.3
Morocco	1960	50.1	5.9	28.0
	1971	44.5	8.0	26.3
	1975	44.4	7.9	26.1
	1982	47.9	11.6	29.6
	1990	80.0	38.8	59.2
	1995	79.3	59.5	40.0
Syria	1960	46.0	5.4	26.3
	1970	42.7	5.5	24.8
	1981	42.2	4.1	23.6
	1984	40.3	6.8	23.9
	1990	78.3	23.6	51.2
	1995	78.1	26.1	52.3
Tunisia	1966	44.4	3.0	24.1
	1975	48.9	12.6	31.0
	1984	47.4	13.3	30.6
	1990	79.6	32.9	56.3
	1995	79.4	35.0	57.3
Turkey	1985	50.1	21.9	36.2
	1990	79.7	34.2	56.6
	1997	74.4	27.8	50.8

Sources: ILO, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics, Retrospective Edition, 1945–1989* (Geneva: ILO, 1990), tab. 1, p. 60; ILO, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics 1981, 1985, 1991* (Geneva: ILO, 1981, 1985, 1991), tab. 1. Figures for the 1990s are from ILO, *Key Indicators of the Labour Market, 1999 ed.* (Geneva: ILO, 1999).

Notes: The labor force participation rate refers to the proportion of the population of working years involved in some form of economy activity.

a. The 1982 figures for Iran are for urban areas only.

Turkey). The average for all developing countries was 35 percent.³⁵ A different UN database shows that whereas in 1980 women composed about 20 percent of the total labor force in Western Asia (which would include Iran and Turkey), that figure increased to 26 percent in 1997. But again, the female share was relatively small, compared to South America (38 percent), the Caribbean, East Asia, and Southeast Asia (43 percent), and Central Asia (46 percent).³⁶

A third characteristic of the female labor force, again relative to other regions and to men, has been the limited access of women to wage employment. Women generally constitute a small percentage of the total salaried work force in the MENA countries.³⁷ Between 1970 and 1990, the female share of total employees increased, but it remained small. This is illustrated in Table 2.3. A fourth feature is that women have been conspicuously absent from certain occupations, especially in private sales and services and in the sector of hotels, restaurants, and wholesale and retail trade, at least according to official statistics for wage employment. Lebanon may be an exception to this rule, given its traditionally large private sector and small public sector.³⁸ This particular characteristic of female labor in MENA countries is illustrated in Table 2.4.

A fifth distinctive feature is that female nonagricultural employment in MENA countries has been concentrated in public-sector professional jobs, a function of the correlation between educational attainment and female labor force participation. Indeed, according to one analyst, “women’s share of employment in [the professional and technical group] is two and a half times

Table 2.3 Female Share of Total Employees (%), Selected MENA Countries

	1970	1980	1990	Other Years
Algeria	5	8	10	
Egypt	9	9	16	17.7 (1995)
Iran	15	12	10	12 (1996)
Iraq	—	8	11	
Jordan	—	9	10	11 (1993)
Kuwait	8	14	21	
Morocco	—	18	25	22 (1992)
Syria	10	9	15	17 (1991)
Tunisia	6	15	17	23 (1994)
Turkey	14	15	18	

Sources: UN, *WISTAT CD-ROM* (Geneva: UN, 1994); ILO, *Yearbook of Labor Statistics 1996, 1997* (Geneva: ILO, 1996, 1997), tab. 2E; *Statistical Yearbook of Iran 1375/1996* (Tehran: Islamic Republic of Iran, 1997), tab. 3.4, p. 74, and tab. 3.9, p. 81.

Note: On Lebanon, see *Al-Raida* 15 (82) (Summer 1998), special issue: *Women in the Labor Force*, which reports that women’s share of employment is 20 percent (p. 16).

Table 2.4 Female Service Employment by Subsectors (%), Selected MENA Countries

	Trade, Restaurants, and Hotels		Transport, Storage, and Communications		Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, and Business Services		Community, Social, and Personal Services	
	1980	1990–1994	1980	1990–1994	1980	1990–1994	1980	1990–1994
Algeria	2.7	3.7	3.4	4.2	16.4	12.4	19.4	19.9
Bahrain	4.1	6.9	9.9	11.9	27.1	12.3	21.9	31.4
Egypt	5.7	17.7	3.3	5.9	18.8	18.1	17.6	26.1
Iran, Islamic Republic	2.0	1.7	2.2	1.4	9.4	9.2	18.9	13.6
Jordan	2.1	2.1	0.6	0.6	15.9	15.9	13.8	13.8
Kuwait	3.2	4.6	4.9	5.8	14.2	16.2	25.1	36.1
Lebanon	4.4	4.0	3.4	3.4	10.8	10.8	20.3	20.3
Libya	1.4	1.4	0.8	0.8	8.3	8.3	10.5	10.5
Morocco	4.8	3.9	2.9	2.4	27.9	23.7	18.8	18.8
Qatar		1.4		3.8		9.7		9.7
Saudi Arabia		0.7		0.5		0.6		38
Syria	2.7	2.9	2.4	2.6	14.7	12.3	16.8	21.2
Tunisia	6.0	8.1	5.3	21.9	24.6	24.6	21.0	21.0
Turkey	4.6	7.0	4.9	4.7	25.8	29.3	14.8	19.2
United Arab Emirates	2.8	4.0	2.3	3.3	11.0	11.2	11.3	20.5

Source: UN, Women's Indicator and Statistics Database (WISTAT), 1994.

their share in the non-agricultural labour force. Turkey, an OECD member, follows the typical pattern of Middle Eastern countries where a large proportion of working women are in a professional or technical occupation. . . . Social and cultural factors do ensure that most adult women in the Middle East and North Africa region do not work in the non-agricultural labour force, but for the relatively few who do, an unusually high percentage (by world standards) have a professional or technical job (often teacher or nurse)."³⁹ These features are illustrated in Table 2.4, which shows a consistent concentration of women in community, social, and personal services. But that table also shows another feature—the relatively large proportion of women obtaining professional jobs in finance, insurance, real estate, and business services, especially in Morocco, Tunisia, and Turkey. And as seen in Table 2.5, a growing proportion of public service jobs are held by women.

In examining occupational distribution, one finds that MENA countries have minimal female presence in administrative and managerial occupations.

Table 2.5 Women's Share of Public Service Employment, Selected MENA Countries

	% Female
Iran	
1986	30
1991	31
1996	38
Kuwait	
1983	31
1994	39
Morocco	
1989	29
1991	31
Qatar	
1988	9
Syria	
1980	19
1992	27
Turkey	
1994	35

Sources: Alachkar, Ahmad. 1996. "Economic Reform and Women in Syria." Pp. 99–114 in Khoury and Demetriadis, eds., *Structural Adjustment, Economic Liberalization, Privatization, and Women's Employment in Selected Countries of the Middle East and North Africa*; UNDP-Ankara. 1996. *Human Development Report 1996*. Turkey. Ankara: UNDP; Islamic Republic of Iran [IRI]. 1995. *National Report on Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Prepared for the Fourth World Conference on Women*. Tehran: Bureau of Women's Affairs; IRI. 1997. *Statistical Yearbook 1375 [1996]*. Tehran: Statistical Center of Iran; and Guy Standing, "Global Feminization Through Flexible Labor: Labour: A Theme Revisited," *World Development* 27 (3) (1999): 583–602.

In the late 1990s the percentages ranged from a low of under 6 percent in Algeria, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, and Syria, to 10–13 percent in Egypt, Tunisia, and Turkey. Only Morocco, interestingly but inexplicably, reported a 25 percent female share of administrative and managerial positions.⁴⁰

I have discussed the political economy of the region, the specificities of development strategies, the limited nature of industrialization, and the consequent patterns of female employment. In the 1980s all Middle Eastern countries were beset by economic and political difficulties, which also affected women's economic status and employment possibilities. The economic crisis in the Middle East occurred in the context of a worldwide crisis resulting in part from the drop in real prices of primary commodities, including oil. The global oil market became very unstable, leading to fluctuating and declining prices. The near-collapse of prices in 1986 (from \$28 per barrel to \$7 per barrel) had repercussions throughout the Middle East: austerity measures were introduced, availability of development aid decreased, and major development projects were reevaluated or suspended. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 raised the price of oil again, but the damage already had been done. In the 1980s countries of the Middle East, and especially North Africa, experienced low or negative economic growth rates, declining state revenues, and high levels of indebtedness to foreign creditors. In some cases (Egypt, Morocco, Algeria), debts became truly enormous in relation to the country's economic capacities; Turkey was placed on the World Bank's list of "severely indebted middle-income countries." According to the UN, debt as a percentage of GNP for the Middle East and North Africa in 1989 rose to 70 percent; during the 1980s the region's debt increased from \$4.4 billion to \$118.8 billion.⁴¹

The most active Arab borrowers from the World Bank—Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia—had to impose austerity measures on their populations as a result of World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural adjustment policy packages, and several experienced "IMF riots."⁴² High population growth rates coupled with heavy rural-urban migration concentrated larger numbers of the unemployed in major cities. The livelihood of lower-middle-class and working-class women (and men) was adversely affected by the debt and the inflationary-recessionary cycles plaguing the region, especially in Morocco, Algeria, Iran, and Egypt. In Israel the serious economic plight was alleviated by massive U.S. aid. But elsewhere, tough economic reforms, along with poverty, unemployment, and debt servicing—as well as political repression—served to delegitimize "Western-style" systems and revive questions of cultural identity, including renewed calls for greater control over female mobility. It was in this context of economic failures and political delegitimation that Islamist movements began to present themselves as alternatives. (See Chapter 5 for a full discussion.)

One effect of this economic downturn on women's labor force participation was an increase in the supply of job-seeking women—but also a dramatic

increase in women's unemployment during the 1990s. In Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia, women's unemployment rates ranged from 20 to 25 percent; even in the ostensibly rich oil-producing shaikhdoms of Bahrain and Oman, job-seeking young women experienced rates of unemployment as high as 30 percent.⁴³ The frustration that working-class women in particular experienced in looking for meaningful jobs but not finding them is captured in the first quote at the beginning of this chapter. Given the low rates of female labor force participation and the small amount of female labor force shares, it is clear that women's unemployment rates have been disproportionately high. During the 1990s, therefore, the MENA countries produced yet another distinctive feature of the female labor force—the feminization of unemployment.

State Policies and Women's Status: Some Cases

If natural resource endowments, national development strategies, and international economic factors have largely shaped women's employment patterns, what distinct role has the national state played? What is the impact of state-directed legal measures, public campaigns, educational programs, and investment decisions? We find that (1) there are variations in state policies in the region, particularly with regard to the mobilization of female labor and women's integration into the formal economy and public life, and (2) in all cases the state has been a major determinant of women's legal and economic status. In some cases a regime's search for political legitimacy, a larger labor force, or an expanded social base led it to construct health, education, and welfare services conducive to greater work participation by women, and to encourage female activity in the public sphere. Examples are the Iraqi Baathists during the 1960s and 1970s, the Pahlavi state in Iran in the same period, Tunisia under the late president Habib Bourguiba, and Egypt under Gamal Abdul Nasser. In other cases state managers were wedded to the patriarchal gender contract and refrained from encouraging female participation in the paid labor force. Examples included Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Jordan.

In most MENA countries, women have remained an underutilized human resource because of limited industrialization, the gender ideology stressing women's family roles, and ambivalence on the part of state managers toward the full participation of women in economic development and policy formulation. As a result, MENA women have not yet established labor force attachment, and they have a long way to go before they attain the participation rates and access to salaried employment of women in other semiperipheral countries, not to mention the advanced industrialized world. Nevertheless, economic development, the expansion of the state, legal reform, and educational attainment by women have had interesting consequences, some intended, others wholly unintended. Let us examine these on a country-by-country basis.

Turkey

Turkey provides a nearly unique example (the other being Tunisia) of a country that replaced the Islamic personal status laws with a civil law code regulating personal and family relations and equalizing the duties and responsibilities of the sexes. As we will see in Chapter 3, Kemalist reforms in the 1920s introduced secular legal codes based on Western models. Such legal codes provide an important basis for women to act as autonomous persons. In the late 1960s there were signs that women in one region of western Turkey were exercising their full legal right to sue for divorce to protect their personal reputations and their claims to property. Another result of the Kemalist reforms is that Turkey became unique among Middle Eastern or Muslim countries in having large numbers of women in the legal profession.⁴⁴ But during the 1980s there was a shift in state orientation, when the social democratic years of the 1970s were halted by the 1980 military coup. Between 1983 and 1990 some 700 Quranic schools were established throughout the country, and their graduates raised calls for Islamization. During this period Prime Minister Turgut Ozal, the architect of a tough stabilization and structural adjustment program, was also the most openly Islamic Turkish leader in modern times.

One area where the Turkish state has been deficient is in the provision of literacy and education, especially for girls. Between 1975 and 1985 the illiterate female population declined from 49 percent to 32 percent, but the reduction of male illiteracy was much steeper, from 24 percent to 13 percent. By the end of the 1990s, the illiteracy rate of women over age fifteen had declined to 25 percent—but this compared with a male illiteracy rate of just 7 percent. Discriminatory attitudes toward women persist in Turkey, especially in the rural areas, where most female illiteracy is found.

For the majority of Turkish women, wage work is elusive, primarily because of the structure of Turkey's agrarian sector, in which so many women are involved. Unlike many developing countries that have large commercialized farms or semifeudal landholdings, Turkey's countryside is characterized by what Caglar Keyder calls a system of "peasant proprietorships."⁴⁵ This system, along with Turkey's pursuit of agricultural production for export, has left most Turkish women as unwaged family workers, undereducated, and situated in rural patriarchal gender arrangements. Rural-urban migration did not lead to higher levels of female economic participation; to the contrary, research has shown that the earlier generation of migrant women withdrew from the labor force. Since then, migrant women have been more inclined to take in home-based work or to engage in domestic employment.⁴⁶

There is evidence from Turkey that, in contrast to farm work or traditional manufacturing (monetized rural carpet weaving), wage work in the formal sector seems to improve women's standing in the household. Yildiz Ecevit's study of Turkish factory workers showed that "married women factory

workers in Bursa have gained a considerable degree of power over decision-making in their families as a result of their employment. Over half the married women who were interviewed reported that they and their husbands took decisions together and often consulted each other." Hale Bolak's research on marital power dynamics within working-class households in Istanbul led her to conclude that "whether or not the woman's position as breadwinner has a critical effect on her financial autonomy and on the allocation of household responsibilities, the traditional basis of male authority is ideologically challenged through a discourse that includes intra- as well as extra-household roles in the definition of 'male responsibility.'"⁴⁷

Egypt

In the late 1950s and during the administration of the late Gamal Abdul Nasser, Egypt's public sector expanded significantly through a series of Egyptianization decrees (1956–1959) that gave the government control of foreign-owned assets such as the Suez Canal. These decrees were followed in the early 1960s by the adoption of a highly centralized development policy approach and a massive wave of nationalizations of Egyptian-owned enterprises in industry, banking, trade, and transport. At the same time, the government embarked on an employment drive that required state-owned enterprises to include among their annual targets the creation of significant numbers of new jobs; the administrative apparatus of the state was also expanded rapidly at both the central and local government levels. Equally important was the objective of spreading health and education services, bringing a corresponding growth of government employment in these services. The state's guarantee of a job to all high school and university graduates encouraged women, including women from working-class and lower-middle-class families, to take advantage of the government's free education policy.

A distinctive feature of the Nasser government was its political support for the education of women and their integration into national development. Labor Law 91 of 1954 guaranteed equal rights and equal wages, and made special provisions for married women and mothers. As Homa Hoodfar notes, these provisions were expanded under Anwar Sadat to facilitate women's labor-market participation. "This law was applied primarily in the public sector, which made jobs in this area particularly attractive to women. As a result, the state became the single most important employer of women."⁴⁸

The Nasser era ended when his successor, Sadat, introduced the policy of *infatih*, or economic opening. By the mid-1980s the Egyptian government was faced with the difficult issue of how to reduce its commitment to job creation in the face of severe recessionary conditions. These conditions included a record level of 15.5 percent overall (open) unemployment, according to the 1986 population census (up from 7 percent in the 1976 census), and with poor

prospects for either the domestic productive sectors or the oil-rich Arab markets to create significant job opportunities for Egyptian workers. Moreover, high inflation effectively eroded the financial advantage of the white-collar work force. The recession fueled social tensions and led to a growth in Islamism, with its attendant ideological and social pressures on women. Employed women now felt compelled to appear in hijab at work, even though they would claim that the turn to Islamic dress was their own choice.

Since Nasser's time many women have entered previously male strongholds—universities, the administration, professions, industry, the business world, diplomacy, politics. But the economic crisis in Egypt and rapid population growth limit formal employment opportunities for women. As economic conditions worsened, more women sought work out of economic need, but found few job opportunities. When the government cut back on public-sector employment, the rate of unemployment among educated women increased dramatically—to 22 percent in 1995. For the vast majority of Egyptian women, life goes on as unpaid family workers on peasant plots, as street vendors and hawkers in the urban informal sector, as home-based seamstresses or beauticians, or in any one of a myriad of small-scale income-generating activities.



Poor women in southern Egypt augment the family budget by working in small clothing factories. Photo by Val Moghadam.

Tunisia

Government policy since independence has prioritized women's emancipation and integration into the economy, and the constitution and civil code have reflected and reinforced that position. Staunchly secular, President Bourguiba made the participation of women in public life a major policy goal. The constitution ensured all citizens the same rights and obligations. Polygamy and male repudiation were outlawed, allowing women the right to petition for divorce and custody of their children. The legacy of such legal reform has made Tunisia the most liberal country in the Arab world.

In 1960 a law gave the minority of women who were members of the social insurance service (mainly those employed in industry, handicrafts, and services, with the exception of housework) the right to pregnancy leave—six weeks before delivery and six weeks afterward. During this period 50 percent of monthly wages were to be paid.⁴⁹ Subsequently, the length of maternity leave was set at thirty days, apparently as part of government policy to lower the birthrate. Public employees were also entitled to childcare leaves. Law no. 81-6 of February 12, 1981, introduced a social security scheme for wage-earning agricultural workers and those engaged in cooperative undertakings. The following year this scheme was extended to cover small farmers and the self-employed—a law that would benefit women as well.

In the 1980s the distribution of the female labor force was more balanced in Tunisia than in many other Middle Eastern countries: 26 percent in agriculture, 48 percent in manufacturing, 21 percent in services. The female share of government employment was 24.5 percent in 1987; of the country's magistrates, 13.5 percent were women; of medical personnel, 20.6 percent; of paramedical personnel, 48 percent; of the country's teachers, 31.5 percent. Women's participation in formal politics matched the trends in employment. In 1981 there were seven female deputies in parliament; in 1983 there were 50,000 female members of the ruling social-democratic Neo-Destour Party and 57,000 members of the National Union of Tunisian Women; and in 1985 some 492 women were voted municipal councilors around the country.⁵⁰

The following years saw economic problems that encouraged Islamist forces and threatened women's gains. In May 1989 Islamists competed openly in Tunisia's parliamentary elections, winning 14 percent of the total vote and 30 percent in Tunis and other cities to beat the main secular opposition party, the Movement of Democratic Socialists, into third place.⁵¹ After the removal of Habib Bourguiba by Zein el-Abedin Ben Ali, more mosques were built and Quranic universities restored. However, the Tunisian state remained opposed to Islamist political aspirations and formally committed to the advancement of women and their full involvement in economic development. President Ben Ali, in particular, saw himself as a champion of women's rights. Tunisian women benefit from a favorable political-legal environment and enjoy an

array of professional and occupational choices, although they face daunting unemployment rates. Tunisia also has developed a cadre of professional women—such as Essma Ben Hamida of ENDA Inter-Arabe, quoted at the beginning of this chapter—who work with low-income women on development projects that provide microcredit services, vocational training, job counseling, and environmental education, and “promote active exercise of citizenship.”⁵²

Iraq

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Ba’th Party had an interest both in recruiting women into the labor force to alleviate a continuing labor shortage and in wresting women’s allegiance away from kin, family, or ethnic group and shifting it to the party-state. The Free Education Law of 1975 benefited women as well as men. The 1978 Personal Status Law, although limited in its objectives, aimed to reduce the control of extended families over women. In November 1977 the government conducted a census to determine the characteristics of the illiterate; of 2.2 million illiterates aged fifteen to forty-five, 70 percent were women. The government then passed laws requiring attendance at adult literacy classes, made extensive use of trade unions and other “popular organizations” and daily use of television and radio. Different textbooks were prepared for peasants, workers, and housewives.⁵³ Women were recruited into state-controlled agencies and put through public education as well as vocational training and political indoctrination.

By 1979, 51 percent of Baghdad University’s first-year medical school class was female, as were 75 percent of students in the English translation department at Mustansiriyah University. The General Federation of Iraqi Women grew in importance, even organizing sports events for women athletes. The ruling Ba’th Party encouraged a wide range of employment for women, who by the late 1970s accounted for 29 percent of the country’s medical doctors, 46 percent of dentists, 70 percent of pharmacists, 46 percent of teachers and university lecturers, 33 percent of the staff of government departments, 26 percent of workers in industry, and 45 percent of farm employees.⁵⁴ Maternity leave was generous, and jobs of pregnant women were protected. Many young Iraqi women traveled abroad and studied on scholarships.

The onset of the war with Iran brought about a toughening of the state’s position on women, and progress stalled under Saddam Hussein. In April 1982 the government issued a regulation stating that married women were not allowed to travel unless accompanied by their husbands; unmarried women were required to have the written consent of their fathers or guardians. Women were told that it was their patriotic duty to fill jobs vacated by men now at the front; they also were told that they should bear five children to narrow the gap between Iraq’s population (then 15 million

people) and Iran’s (47 million). In 1986 birth control devices disappeared from pharmacy shelves. According to one account, women’s participation in the formal labor force more than doubled in the 1980s.⁵⁵ During the 1990s, Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait led to the destructive coalition war against Iraq and a harsh sanctions regime that resulted in the deterioration of the country’s physical and social infrastructure and a serious decline in the population’s well-being. What began as a forward-looking program for socioeconomic development and women’s rights in the 1960s and 1970s encountered setbacks in the 1980s and 1990s as a result of misguided state actions and punitive international measures.

Iran

The case of Iran elucidates the unintended consequences of development and state policies on women’s gender consciousness. In 1962 the Pahlavi state granted women the vote and in 1967 introduced the Family Protection Act, which limited polygamy, allowed women to initiate divorce, and increased their child custody rights after divorce or widowhood. However, the Shah himself was opposed to “women’s lib” and frequently derided the demands of Western feminists. Moreover, his reforms were in place for only ten years and did not have widespread impact. In 1979 the new Islamic state abrogated many of these liberal codes. Among other things, the new authorities adopted a pronatalist stance that deemed women, especially young mothers, inappropriate for full-time work. Significantly, the very first display of opposition to the Islamists—and this at the height of the new regime’s popularity and support—came from educated middle-class women in early March 1979. These were the women who had been the principal beneficiaries of several decades of modernization. Development—however limited and skewed in its Iranian variant—combined with state reforms had allowed a segment of the female population upward social mobility through education and employment. There was a stratum and generation of women who opposed veiling and rejected Islamist exhortations that working women in the civil service return to the joys of domesticity. These women were subsequently silenced—and some were imprisoned, killed, or exiled—but their political activism must be regarded as nothing less than remarkable.

By the late 1980s a number of factors converged to modify and liberalize the Islamist state’s position on women, education, and work. These factors included the expansion of the state apparatus, the dearth of male labor in a war situation, and women’s own resistance to their second-class citizenship. Educated and employed secular and Islamic feminists in Iran—lawyers, publishers, members of parliament, university professors—have been demanding a modification of the rigid gender rules implemented in the early 1980s and pushing for changes in family law and labor legislation to increase women’s

rights. This activism is illustrative of both the interplay of structure, consciousness, and agency, and of unexpected outcomes of state policies. (See Chapter 6 for details on Iran.)

For the small percentage of women in the formal sector, government employment provides many advantages. Nearly all women who are waged and salaried are in the public sector, where they enjoy insurance, pensions, and other benefits. Labor legislation enacted in 1990 provides women with ninety days of maternity leave, at least half of which must be taken after childbirth. There is also a job-back guarantee with no loss of seniority and a half-hour break every three hours for breast-feeding, with a crèche provided at the workplace.⁵⁶ The private sector remains a largely male domain in Iran, although more women are beginning to work in the growing sector of voluntary or nongovernmental organizations. All working women, however, are required to appear in hijab, which is at minimum a large scarf covering all the hair and neck, and a long-sleeved and loose-fitting smock or manteau that covers the body's contours.

Algeria

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the Algerian government promoted industrialization in tandem with the preservation of the close-knit family union. The state's attitude toward family law and personal status oscillated for over twenty years. Both the industrial strategy and the pronatalist Boumedienne social policy worked against female employment. By the 1980s, as a result of a galloping birthrate, nearly three-quarters of Algeria's population was under the age of thirty, and many were unemployed. According to the 1987 census, the employed population numbered 3.7 million men and a mere 365,000 women—out of a total population of 13 million people over the age of fifteen. The female share of the employed population was 8.8 percent. Still, these figures represented a steady increase in female employment since 1966.

Reasons for the low levels of female employment were Algeria's chronically high unemployment, a conservative cultural stance on the part of the leadership, and the specific development strategy pursued by the state. In Marnia Lazreg's pithy words, the state's attitude could be summed up as, "You don't have to work, sisters! This is socialism." Algeria's strategy emphasized heavy industrialization, partly on the assumption that this approach would eventually encourage mechanized agriculture. The new, large-scale factories such as steel works and petrochemical plants required skilled workers, and it was men who were trained for those jobs. The result was very low female labor participation in industry. Consequently, women became an underutilized source of labor, with implications for fertility, population growth rates, and overall societal development.

In the early 1980s the Algerian government began to make concessions to the growing Islamist movement and its supporters within the National Assembly. A family code was drafted, which alarmed many women and provoked protest demonstrations. In the midst of a privatization effort and faced with high rates of unemployment (on the order of 22 percent), a heavy debt-servicing burden, and other assorted economic ills, Algerian policymakers were unwilling to risk legislation that could potentially aggravate the situation and thus conceded to the Islamists in the National Assembly. The final bill, passed in 1984, gave women the legal right to work but rendered them economic dependents of men.⁵⁷ In the municipal elections of June 1990, the Islamist party won the most seats, a situation North African feminists and democrats felt was bound to adversely affect women's already fragile and limited rights. (See Chapter 5 for details.)

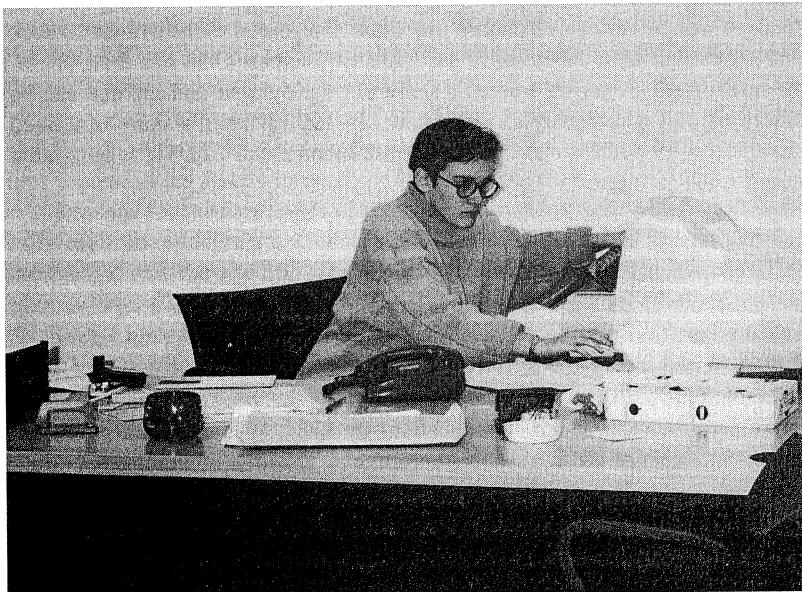
As a result of the Algerian state's cultural conservatism, women's participation in state and other social agencies was quite low compared to male participation. In the late 1980s women constituted only 11 percent of the employees of ministries, 34 percent of schoolteachers, 24 percent of higher education instructors, and 36 percent of public health workers. There were no women in the religious affairs and civil protection sectors. Still, Algerian women were more likely to work in the government sector than in the private sector. Indeed, 86 percent of employed Algerian women were employed in the public sector, as against 14 percent in the private sector. For Algerian men, the respective rates were 55 percent and 45 percent.⁵⁸ In the 1990s Algerian women faced a violent civil conflict pitting Islamists against the state, as well as serious economic problems that forced more women to seek jobs. Although their labor force participation increased, so did their unemployment rates. Algerian women's share of employment and income can be described only generously as inadequate. In 1995 women's share of earned income was 19 percent and their per capita income was \$2,051, as compared with \$7,467 for men.⁵⁹

Jordan

In Jordan one finds a low overall participation rate, partly due to a very high rate of population growth, a large under-fifteen population, high out-migration, and low female economic activity. During the 1970s the state encouraged education and indeed made school compulsory for nine years. The result was an impressive increase in female education: by 1984–1985 girls accounted for some 48 percent of the total school enrollment. The area of women's employment, however, showed less impressive progress, despite the fact that social policy provided for generous benefits to employed women. In 1979 the percentage of economically active women in the total labor force was only about



Although Jordan's female labor force remains small, both working-class and middle-class women participate: (above) hosiery factory employs women; (below) a personnel assistant at Hikma Pharmaceuticals in Amman. Photos by Val Moghadam.



4 percent, and the female share of employees was only 9 percent. Out-migration of Jordanian male labor did not cause an increasing number of women to enter the wage labor market; rather, their activities in the informal sector and as unpaid family workers increased. Labor shortages due to migration led to labor importation, mainly from Egypt, at all skill levels instead of the training of women in marketable skills.⁶⁰

Jordan's five-year plan (1980–1985) ostensibly sought to further integrate women into the development process and predicted an increase in female labor force participation and a larger female share of the total labor force. But by 1984 the female participation rate was only 4.8 percent. Only 8.4 percent of women of working age (fifteen to sixty-five) were reported as economically active, constituting a mere 10.5 percent of the total work force. Nearly half of all women in the modern sector were in education, while textile workers represented about 30 percent of Jordan's female labor force. In an untoward economic situation characterized by a large external debt and growing male unemployment, government policy implicitly discouraged female employment, and women's unemployment rates soared during the 1990s. Although Jordanian women are among the most educated in the region, this has not led to greater female involvement in the paid labor force, partly due to continuing conservative attitudes within the state and society and partly due to the difficulties of the economy in the context of the continuing Israel-Palestine conflict.

In the November 1989 parliamentary elections, the first held since 1967, thirty-four out of eighty seats were won by members of the Muslim Brotherhood and like-minded Islamists. That political outcome did nothing to help the legal status, economic conditions, and social positions of Jordanian women. But it did help to spur a women's movement that is challenging the patriarchal gender contract. (See Chapter 8.)

Saudi Arabia

State personnel designed policy not only to promote economic growth and development but also to reproduce traditional familial relations and sex segregation in education and employment. In Saudi Arabia women's place is in the home, and their lives are more circumscribed than in any other MENA country: the percentage of Saudi women who worked outside the home, mainly in the teaching and health sectors, was about 5 percent in the 1980s and 10 percent in the late 1990s. Elements of Saudi culture—devotion to Islam, extended-family values, the segregated status of women, and the Al-Saud monarchic hegemony—have been formulated in an increasingly deliberate fashion into a new political culture that acts as a screen to ensure that technological and human progress remains within acceptable bounds.⁶¹

The first private school for girls was started in the late 1950s and was the initiative of a princess from the royal family. Fifteen private girls schools sub-

sequently opened in four Saudi Arabian cities. In 1960 the female education system was placed under the auspices of the government, with supervision by the religious order. Expatriate teachers were employed to start with, then replaced progressively by Saudi women teachers. Educational facilities for girls became available nationwide and have provided for general, technical, vocational, and university-level education. In the 1980s, nearly a million female students were enrolled at various levels and constituted nearly 45 percent of the national student population. Professional education included medicine, pharmacy, teaching, commerce, and the social sciences.

By 1987 over 80,000 Saudi women were employed in the government, education, and health sectors.⁶² Nursing, however, was seen as culturally inappropriate for Saudi women, hence the importation of nurses from Egypt, the Philippines, India, and elsewhere. More recently, and to minimize sensitivities concerning male physicians and female patients, a substantial number of Saudi women physicians have been trained to treat women patients. In the wake of the Gulf crisis following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, Saudi authorities called for wider participation of women in the labor force "in the area of human services and medical services within the context of fully preserving Islamic and social values."⁶³ In November 1990 a group of forty Saudi women, most of them university lecturers, took this opportunity to demonstrate their desire for change by driving their own cars through the streets of Riyadh, an extraordinary action that stunned the country.

Saudi Arabia is not a country that readily provides a statistical profile of its population dynamics or its labor force; thus we know very little about the exact patterns of women's employment. We know that rich Saudi women own businesses, although male kin or employees often run the businesses. What is clear is that despite the country's enormous oil wealth, 36 percent of Saudi women over the age of fifteen were illiterate as recently as 1998. World Bank figures show that in 1997, nine years of schooling was expected for females—compared with eleven years in the Islamic Republic of Iran and fourteen years in South Korea.⁶⁴ In the wake of the very expensive Gulf War and declining oil prices, Saudi Arabia has confronted indebtedness, rising unemployment, and growing relative poverty. In this context, popular calls for change—including more demands by women—can be expected.

The State and Women's Employment: Opportunities and Constraints

Women's entry into public life in the MENA region was facilitated by state-sponsored education and by job opportunities in the expanding government sector and public services. Formal/modern-sector employment, and especially opportunities in the civil service, became an important source of status and livelihood. The active role of the government in national development meant

that many women no longer relied on a male guardian as provider, but rather the state. In this regard, the Middle East is not so different from other countries, for around the world the public sector and government employment have provided women with jobs, benefits, and security that may elude them in the private sphere.⁶⁵ As Fatima Mernissi once remarked, "The North African woman of today usually dreams of having a steady, wage-paying job with social security and health and retirement benefits, at a State institution; these women don't look to a man any longer for their survival, but to the State. While perhaps not ideal, this is nevertheless a breakthrough, an erosion of tradition. It also partly explains the Moroccan women's active participation in the urbanization process: they are leaving rural areas in numbers equaling men's migrations, for a 'better life' in the cities—and in European cities, as well."⁶⁶ In the latter part of the 1990s, Moroccan women's prospects for greater economic opportunity seemed poised to improve when a progressive government led by a socialist prime minister sought to implement a national action plan for women's development.

On the other hand, what the state gives the state can take away—as we have seen with the examples of Algeria, Iran, and Iraq in the 1980s. Moreover, the state is not always favorable to the advancement of women and their economic equality—especially when it is led by men holding patriarchal attitudes concerning women, work, and family. And some states are held hostage to international forces, such as the power wielded by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization, not to mention the U.S. government. As a Moroccan woman activist rhetorically asked, "How can the state improve the status of women, children, and the poor when international financial institutions are in control?"⁶⁷

Development, Work, and Women's Empowerment

"Integrating women in development" has come under attack by feminist researchers of Latin America, Asia, and Africa. They argue that women have indeed been integrated into development—much to their disadvantage, as they have become the latest group of exploited workers, a source of cheap and expendable labor. It has also been argued that capitalist development has everywhere reduced the economic status of women, resulting in marginalization and impoverishment. It is true that the term "development" obscures the relations of exploitation, unequal distribution of wealth, and other disparities (not to mention environmental degradation) that ensue. But it is also true that within a national economic framework there is room to improve working women's lot. Sex-segregated occupational distribution can be challenged and altered, as can gender-based wage differentials, inadequate support structures for working mothers, unfair labor legislation pertaining to women, unhealthy

work environments, and so on. These issues typically are taken up by trade unions, social movements, and women's organizations. Moreover, although the proletarianization of women entails labor control (as it does for men), wage work also provides prospects for women's autonomy—not an insignificant consideration in patriarchal contexts.

Whether modernization and paid employment have resulted in an increase or a diminution of women's economic status continues to be a matter of debate for the Middle East as for other semiperipheral countries. Some have argued that men's work and women's work are complementary in nomadic communities, and that modernization reduces, marginalizes, and devalues women's work. Amal Rassam argued that women of rural backgrounds suffered a decline in status; they lost the productive role they traditionally played in the preindustrial economy as the goods they produced were replaced by imported or locally produced factory ones. Mernissi's research, however, suggests a link between the deterioration of women's position and their preexisting dependence on men. Her interviews with Moroccan women working in various craft industries (such as weaving textiles and rugs) show how dependent women are upon men as intermediaries, a situation that only increases their precarious economic position. She concludes that the increasing capitalist penetration of such industries has had the consequence of further degrading women's status.⁶⁸ Thus, patriarchal gender arrangements constitute an intervening factor in the impact of development on women's status.

The complex and contradictory nature of the relationship between development and women's status has been explored by a number of Turkish and Iranian researchers. Deniz Kandiyoti's research in the 1970s comparing the status of Turkish women in nomadic tribes, peasant villages, rural towns, and cities found that the influence of the patrilineal extended household—where the father dominates younger men and all women, and there is a hierarchy by age among the women—was pervasive in all sectors, but less so in the towns and cities because of neolocal residence and the diminished importance of elders. Compared to peasant and nomadic women, urban women played a sharply reduced role in the productive process. But peasant and nomadic women did not receive recognition for their own labor, not even for their offspring, as these belonged to the patrilineal extended family. In many parts of rural Turkey, women have been traditionally called the "enemy of the spoon," reflecting the perception that they share the food on the table without contributing economically to the household. Gunseli Berik's study of carpet weavers in rural Central Anatolia showed that male kin controlled the labor power and the wages of female weavers. This pattern has been found for Iran and Afghanistan as well. Nermin Abadan-Unat refers to the persistence of "archaic and patriarchal family structures," and Kandiyoti observes that "we cannot speak of a simple decline in women's status with the transition to an urban wage labor economy. Their diminished role in production may be off-

set by other factors, which are, however, increasingly specific to certain class sectors."⁶⁹

In a patriarchal context, therefore, the effects of development on women's status have varied by class and by location. Women certainly have more options in an urban setting, whereas in rural areas patriarchal family arrangements limit their options. Moreover, the major beneficiaries of the development process have largely been middle-class and upper-middle-class women, even though national development, legal reforms, and especially public education have resulted in some social mobility for women of other classes. There can be no doubt that expanding education and employment opportunities have created a generation of Middle Eastern women who are accustomed to working in the formal sector and indeed expect it. It should not be surprising that middle-class educated and employed women are the ones agitating for more progressive social change—for women as women and for women as workers.

Development must be seen, therefore, to have had a differential impact on women's lives. Its effects have been positive as well as negative, depending on region, culture, and class. Positive effects of development, and especially of wage employment, on working-class women include their greater participation in decisionmaking in the household. Ecevit's study of Turkish factory workers, cited earlier in this chapter, is instructive. There is growing evidence from around the world that employed women, including working-class women with factory jobs, value their work for the economic independence and family support it provides and for the opportunity to delay marriage and childbearing. In many countries, young women in particular are able to escape restrictive family circumstances and enjoy horizon-broadening experiences and the companionship of other women. Even women in EPZs or world-market factories have been known to express satisfaction with their jobs, although their working conditions are usually poor. In one study of Mexican *maquila* workers, almost two-thirds of respondents declared that they would keep working even if they did not need the money. Fatima Mernissi's interviews with working women in a world-market electronics plant show the value these women place on their jobs and the satisfaction employment brings to them. During a visit I made to a large pharmaceutical plant (not an EPZ) outside Casablanca in early December 1990, women workers revealed that they enjoyed their jobs, were cognizant of the better conditions of work and higher wages at that plant, and would continue to work even if the household did not require their additional income. The work force was unionized (the result of a bitter labor dispute some ten years earlier), and several of the women with whom I spoke had been or were workers' representatives.⁷⁰

Multinational corporations are not known for providing long-term stable jobs, and women's continued employment in the large-scale private sector depends to a great extent upon the vagaries of international trade and the

world market. As is well known, there is no job security in the private sector. Moreover, the public-sector wage bill everywhere is in a state of contraction as a result of privatization, the structural adjustment policies that began in the 1980s, and the imperatives of neoliberal globalization that emerged in the 1990s. Reasons for the labor market difficulties that Middle Eastern women have encountered are certainly not to be found in religion or culture. Economic and political forces have shaped their employment opportunities and constraints to a far greater extent.

Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed patterns of female employment over the past four decades in the modernizing countries of the Middle East and North Africa. An essential point of the endeavor has been to underscore the diversity of women's positions within the region and to link women's status and work opportunities to their class location, as well as to state policies, development strategies, the region's political economy, and the global economy. Many studies on the Middle East and commentaries by Islamists themselves tend to underestimate the heterogeneity of the region; they project a uniform culture and exaggerate its importance, elevating culture or religion to the status of single explanatory variable. My alternative position is that there is an interactive relationship of economic processes, political dynamics, and cultural practices. Only through such an approach can variations within the region and changes over time be understood.

Since the 1960s state expansion, economic development, oil wealth, and increased integration within the world system have combined to create educational and employment opportunities for women in the Middle East. Although benefits have spread unevenly, female education and employment are undermining patriarchal attitudes and practices. It should be noted that just as women were making inroads into public life, including the work force, a cultural and political backlash in the form of conservative Islamist movements took shape and targeted them. Notwithstanding the challenges of Islamization, MENA women have pursued educational attainment and employment to the extent possible, and have indeed made demands on their governments for greater economic participation. (See Chapter 8 for details.)

Female labor force participation is still low in relation to that of other regions of the world and, of course, in relation to male labor force participation. Several explanatory factors have been discussed in this chapter. One factor is the ambivalence of state managers to equality and empowerment for women. Another is economic mismanagement and stagnation. A third factor is the general low level of industrialization and transnational capitalist activity in the region, and the correspondingly small percentage of women in

industrial jobs. The oil economies chose a strategy that relied on oil, gas, and finance, thereby minimizing the use of labor and offering relatively few opportunities for women. Elsewhere, although ISI opened up some employment for women—for example, in state-run factories or industrial plants in the private sector receiving state support—the strategy tended to be capital-intensive and to favor male employment. In contrast, an export-led development approach accompanied by an influx of multinational corporations into a country seems to result in significant increases in female labor force participation, in particular increases in the female share of manufacturing, as we have seen with Morocco and Tunisia. The combination of petty commodity production, family farming, and oil production has worked to limit demand for female labor. In addition, women have been locked into a patriarchal family structure based on the traditional division of labor.

Equity and empowerment remain elusive for women when access to economic resources is reserved mainly for men. In the Middle East there continues to exist an exceedingly large population of underutilized labor—that is, women. Attention to the ways and means of integrating women in development therefore remains a pressing item on the national agenda of each country of the region. Policymakers must be persuaded of the positive payoff of investing in the education and employment of women: a more skilled work force, stabilized population growth, healthier children, more prosperous households, an expanding tax base. As countries have turned toward economic liberalization, encouraging manufacturing for export and increased trade, women's economic activity rates have increased. MENA women themselves are increasingly seeking paid employment, both to realize personal aspirations and because of economic need, as a Lebanese study found.⁷¹ Paid employment, however, remains elusive for the majority of women, hence their high unemployment rates. At the beginning of the new millennium, working women in the MENA region have come a long way, and in many countries they have significantly contributed to national development and economic growth, but economic development and state policies should have served women better than they have to date.

Notes

The opening quote from Rabia is from an interview conducted in Moroccan Arabic and translated for me by Patricia Kelly Spurles; Rabia was responding to the question: "How do you find a job?" The quote from Essma Ben Hamida is from her paper "Empowering Women Through Micro-Credit: A Case Study from Tunisia," presented at the Civil Society Workshop of the MDF3 Conference, Cairo, March 2000.

1. The following list is by no means complete, but it is representative of the WID/GAD and sociology-of-gender perspective, which puts a premium on women's integration into the paid labor force of the formal economy: Rae Lesser Blumberg,

"Introduction: Engendering Wealth and Well-Being in an Era of Economic Transformation," in Rae Lesser Blumberg et al., eds., *Engendering Wealth and Well-Being: Empowerment for Global Change* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995); Janet Saltzman Chafetz, *Sex and Advantage: A Comparative Macro-Structural Theory of Sex Stratification* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Allanheld, 1984); Daisy Dwyer and Judith Bruce, eds., *A Home Divided: Women and Income in the Third World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); Barbara Finlay, *The Women of Azua: Work and Family in the Rural Dominican Republic* (New York: Praeger, 1989); Janet Giele, "Women's Status in Comparative Perspective," in Janet Giele and Audrey Smock, eds., *Women's Roles and Status in Eight Countries* (New York: John Wiley, 1977), pp. 1-32; Susan Joekes, *Women in the World Economy: An INSTRAW Study* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Linda Lim, "Capitalism, Imperialism, and Patriarchy," in June Nash and Maria Patricia Fernandez-Kelly, eds., *Women, Men, and the International Division of Labor* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), pp. 70-92; Linda Lim, "Women's Work in Export Factories: The Politics of a Cause," in Irene Tinker, ed., *Persistent Inequalities: Women and World Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 101-122; Helen Safa, "Gender Inequality and Women's Wage Labour: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis," in V. M. Moghadam, ed., *Patriarchy and Development: Women's Positions at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 184-219; and V. M. Moghadam, ed., *Women, Work, and Economic Reform in the Middle East and North Africa* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

2. Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson, "The Subordination of Women and the Internationalisation of Factory Production," in Kate Young et al., eds., *Of Marriage and the Market: Women's Subordination in International Perspective* (London: CSE Books, 1981), pp. 144-166; Kathryn Ward, ed., *Women Workers and Global Restructuring* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 1990); Nash and Fernandez-Kelly, *Women, Men, and the International Division of Labor*; Annette Fuentes and Barbara Ehrenreich, *Women in the Global Factory* (Boston: South End Press, 1983); and Gita Sen and Caren Grown, *Development, Crises, and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987). For overviews of the debate, see Susan Tiano, "Gender, Work, and World Capitalism: Third World Women's Role in Development," in Beth Hess and Myra Marx Freece, eds., *Analyzing Gender* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1987), pp. 216-243; and Ruth Pearson, "Gender Issues in Industrialization," in T. Hewitt, H. Johnson, and D. Wield, eds., *Industrialization and Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 222-247.

3. Ester Boserup, "Economic Change and the Roles of Women," in Tinker, *Persistent Inequalities*, pp. 14-26. The quote appears on p. 24. Boserup's famous book is *Women's Role in Economic Development* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970).

4. Boserup, "Economic Change and the Roles of Women," p. 24.

5. Nalini Visvanathan et al., *The Women, Gender, and Development Reader* (London: Zed Books, 1997).

6. G. B. S. Mujahid, "Female Labour Force Participation in Jordan," in Julinda Abu Nasr, N. Khoury, and H. Azzam, eds., *Women, Employment, and Development in the Arab World* (The Hague: Mouton/ILO, 1985), p. 114.

7. Ruth Leger Sivard, *Women . . . A World Survey* (Washington, D.C.: World Priorities, 1985), p. 13.

8. Data from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), tab. 23, pp. 173-175.

9. Cited in Rae Lesser Blumberg, *Making the Case for the Gender Variable* (Washington, D.C.: USAID, 1989), p. 91.

10. Richard Anker, *Gender and Jobs: Sex Segregation of Occupations in the World* (Geneva: ILO, 1998), p. 145. Anker does concede that "the status of women varies greatly across Islamic countries."

11. ILO/INSTRAW, *Women in Economic Activity: A Global Statistical Survey, 1950-2000* (Santo Domingo: INSTRAW, 1985); Susan Joekes, *Women in the World Economy*; and Guy Standing, *Global Feminisation Through Flexible Labour*; WEP Labour Market Analysis Working Paper no. 31 (Geneva: ILO, 1989).

12. Mary Chamie, *Women of the World: Near East and North Africa* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce and Agency for International Development, 1985), p. 3; H. Azzam, Julinda Abu Nasr, and I. Lorffing, "An Overview of Arab Women in Population, Employment, and Economic Development," in Julinda Abu Nasr, N. Khoury, and H. Azzam, eds., *Women, Employment, and Development in the Arab World*, pp. 5-38.

13. ILO, *Women at Work* (special issue) (Geneva: ILO, 1985); and Anne-Marie Brocas, Anne-Marie Cailloux, and Virginie Oget, *Women and Social Security: Progress Towards Equality of Treatment* (Geneva: ILO, 1990).

14. Gulten Kazgan, "Labour Participation, Occupational Distribution, Educational Attainment, and the Socio-Economic Status of Women in the Turkish Economy," in Nermín Abadan-Unat, ed., *Women in Turkish Society* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981).

15. Constantina Safilios-Rothschild, "A Cross-Cultural Examination of Women's Marital, Educational, and Occupational Options," in M. T. S. Mednick et al., eds., *Women and Achievement* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1971), pp. 96-113.

16. Ayse Oncü, "Turkish Women in the Professions: Why So Many?" in Abadan-Unat, *Women in Turkish Society*, p. 189.

17. Robert Mabro, "Industrialization," in Michael Adams, ed., *The Middle East* (New York: Facts-on-File, 1988), p. 689; and Alan Richards and John Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East: State, Class, and Economic Development* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 78-79.

18. Rhys Jenkins, "The Political Economy of Industrialization: A Comparison of Latin American and East Asian Newly Industrializing Countries," *Development and Change* 22 (2) (April 1991): 197-232. See also Nigel Harris, *The End of the Third World: Newly Industrializing Countries and the Decline of an Ideology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986).

19. Mary Johnson Osirim, "We Toil All the Livelong Day: Women in the English-Speaking Caribbean," in Consuelo Lopez-Springfield, ed., *Daughters of Caliban: Women in the Twentieth Century Caribbean* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 41-67.

20. See Massoud Karshenas and Valentine M. Moghadam, "Female Labor Force Participation and Economic Adjustment in the MENA Region," in Mine Cinar, ed., *The Economics of Women and Work in the Middle East and North Africa* (Amsterdam: JAI Press, 2001), pp. 51-74.

21. Data from UNDP, *Human Development Report 2002*, tab. 14, pp. 198-201.

22. UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report 2002* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). See also World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

23. See F. J. Heinrichs Frobel and O. Kreye, *The New International Division of Labour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), esp. the appendix's tab. III-17/18.

24. Mabro, "Industrialization," p. 692.

25. Richards and Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East*, 2nd ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), p. 65.

26. According to Laititia Cairoli, the garment industry in Fez is overwhelmingly female, although it attracts mainly young, unmarried women. See "Garment Factory Workers in the City of Fez," *Middle East Journal* 35 (1) (Winter 1999): 28–43.

27. Data from World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2000*, tab. 2.4, p. 52; and from ILO, *Yearbook of Labor Statistics 1997* (Geneva: ILO, 1997), tab. 2B. See also Mine Cinar, "Unskilled Urban Immigrant Women and Disguised Employment: Home Working Women in Contemporary Turkey," *World Development* 22 (3) (1994): 369–380.

28. Semsa Ozar and Gulay Gunluk-Senesen, "Determinants of Female (Non-) Participation in the Urban Labour Force in Turkey," *METU Studies in Development* 25 (2) (1998): 311–328. Their field survey also concluded that the high number of first-generation migrants in the big cities, who tend to be undereducated, affects labor force participation in the formal sector. See also Sule Ozler, "Export Orientation and Female Share of Employment: Evidence from Turkey," *World Development* 28 (7) (2000): 1239–1248.

29. Hanan Aruri, "The Palestinian Working Women Society," in *News From IRENE: International Restructuring Education Network Europe*, September 1998, p. 24; Jennifer Olmsted, "Women 'Manufacture' Economic Spaces in Bethlehem," *World Development* 24 (12) (1996): 1829–1840; and Suha Hindiyeh-Mani, "Women and Men Home-Based Workers in the Informal Sector in the West Bank Textile Industry," *Al-Raida* 15 (82) (Summer 1998): 24–27.

30. A very useful discussion of the methodological problems of Middle Eastern women's employment is Kailas C. Doctor and Nabil F. Khoury, "Arab Women's Education and Employment Profiles and Prospects: An Overview," in Nabil F. Khoury and Kailas C. Doctor, eds., *Education and Employment Issues of Women in Development in the Middle East* (Nicosia: Imprinta, 1991), esp. pp. 21–31.

31. Joekes, *Women in the World Economy*, p. 81; Standing, *Global Feminisation Through Flexible Labour*, p. 25.

32. Mabro, "Industrialization," p. 696.

33. Mujahid, "Female Labour Force Participation in Jordan," p. 115.

34. United Nations, *The World's Women: Trends and Statistics 2000* (New York: United Nations, 2000), chart 5.2, p. 110; UNDP, *Human Development Report 2002*, tab. 25. See also CAWTAR, *Globalization and Gender: Economic Participation of Arab Women* (Tunis: CAWTAR and UNDP, 2001), tab. A/27.

35. UNDP, *Human Development Report 1995*, tab. 39, p. 216.

36. United Nations, *The World's Women: Trends and Statistics 2000*, chart 5.1, p. 110.

37. However, because women's informal-sector, home-based, and agricultural work is generally undercounted, a higher proportion of the measured female labor force is gainfully employed, statistically.

38. See, for example, *Al-Raida* 15 (82) (Summer 1998), a special issue on Lebanese women in the labor force. See also Doctor and Khoury, *Education and Employment Issues*, p. 28; and Anker, *Gender and Jobs*, p. 166.

39. Anker, *Gender and Jobs*, p. 164.

40. UNDP, *Human Development Report 1998*, tab. 3, p. 134.

41. United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI), *Economic Development: The Debt Crisis* (New York: UNDPI, 1989).

42. See Tim Niblock and Emma Murphy, eds., *Economic and Political Liberalization in the Middle East* (London: British Academic Press, 1993); Ilya Harik and

Denis J. Sullivan, eds., *Privatization and Liberalization in the Middle East* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); and John Walton and David Seddon, *Free Markets and Food Riots: The Politics of Global Adjustment* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

43. See CAWTAR, *Globalization and Gender*, esp. chap. 6. See also V. M. Moghadam, "Enhancing Women's Economic Participation in the Middle East and North Africa," in Heba Handoussa and Zafiris Tzannatos, eds., *Employment Creation and Social Protection in the Middle East* (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 2002), pp. 237–279.

44. Nermi Abadan-Unat, "The Modernization of Turkish Women," *Middle East Journal* 32 (1978): 303. See also June Starr, "The Legal and Social Transformation of Rural Women in Aegean Turkey," in Renée Hirschon, ed., *Women and Property: Women as Property* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), pp. 96–116.

45. Caglar Keyder, "Social Structure and the Labour Market in Turkish Agriculture," *International Labour Review* 128 (6) (1989): 731–744.

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48. Homa Hoodfar, "Return to the Veil: Personal Strategy and Public Participation in Egypt," in Redclift and Sinclair, *Working Women*, p. 108.

49. Swedish International Development Authority, *Women in Developing Countries: Case Studies of Six Countries* (Stockholm: SIDA Research Division, 1974).

50. United Nations Fund for Population Activities and the Ministry of Planning, *La Femme et la Famille Tunisienne à Travers les Chiffres* (Tunis: United Nations Fund for Population Activities and the Ministry of Planning, 1984); Union Nationale des Femmes Tunisiennes (UNFT), *La Femme au Travail en Chiffres* (Tunis: UNFT, 1987).

51. *The Economist*, July 8, 1989, p. 48.

52. ENDA Inter-Arabe, "CRENDA: Micro-Credit Programme in the Poor Suburbs of Ettadhamen, Douar Hicher, Mnihla, Omrane Supérieur," handout distributed at the MDF3 Conference, Cairo, March 2000. ENDA Inter-Arabe is an international NGO founded in Tunis in 1990 as an autonomous, regional branch of ENDA Third World, based in Dakar, Senegal. The CRENDA microcredit program was launched in 1995.

53. Richards and Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East* (1990), p. 121.

54. ILO, *Women at Work*, p. 16. See also Ismail A. el Dulaimy, "Women, Human Resources, and National Development in Iraq," in Khoury and Doctor, *Education and Employment Issues*, pp. 91–105.

55. Andrea W. Lorenz, "Ishtar Was a Woman," Ms., May–June 1991, pp. 14–15.

56. *Labour Law and Social Security of the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Tehran: Korshid, 1369/1990), pp. 41–43 (in Persian).

57. See Peter Knauss, *The Persistence of Patriarchy: Class, Gender, and Ideology in Twentieth Century Algeria* (New York: Praeger, 1987).

58. Nouredine Saadi, *La Femme et la Loi en Algérie* (Casablanca: Editions Fennec for UNU/WIDER, 1991), p. 74. See also Institut National du Travail, *Revue Algérienne du Travail: L'Emploi en Algérie—Réalités et Perspectives* (Algiers: Institut National du Travail, 1987).

59. CAWTAR, *Globalization and Gender*, tab. A/24, p. 198.

60. Nadia Hijab, *Womanpower: The Arab Debate on Women and Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 96; and Mujahid, "Female Labour Force Participation in Jordan," p. 105. See also V. M. Moghadam, "Economic Restructuring and the Gender Contract: A Case Study of Jordan," in Marianne H. Marchand and Anne Sisson Runyan, eds., *Gender and Global Restructuring: Sightings, Sites, and Resistances* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 99–115.

61. See Eugene B. Gallagher and C. Maureen Searle, "Health Services and the Political Culture of Saudi Arabia," *Social Science Medical* (UK) 21 (3) (1985): 251–262; and Eleanor Abdella Doumato, "Women and Work in Saudi Arabia: How Flexible Are Islamic Margins?" *Middle East Journal* 53 (4) (Autumn 1999): 568–583.

62. Ghazy Mujahid, "Tradition, Women's Education, and National Development in Saudi Arabia," in Khoury and Doctor, *Education and Employment Issues*, pp. 75–89.

63. Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Saudis, Aroused by Iraqi Threat, Take Steps to Mobilize Population," *New York Times*, September 5, 1990, p. A1.

64. World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2000*, tab. 2.12.

65. In the United States, for example, the so-called glass ceiling blocking the advancement of women and minorities is more firmly in place in the private sector than in the public sector, where affirmative action goals are enforced. Around the world, not only are women's wages and employment conditions better on average in the public sector than in private wage employment, but also wage differentials between men and women are smaller in the public sector. See Wouter van Ginneken, ed., *Government and Its Employees: Case Studies of Development Countries* (Aldershort, UK: Avebury, 1991); and Standing, *Global Feminisation Through Flexible Labour*, p. 25.

66. Fatima Mernissi, "The Merchant's Daughter and the Son of the Sultan," in Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood Is Global* (New York: Anchor Books, 1984), pp. 448–449.

67. Khadija al-Feddy, speaking at the annual meeting of the Association of Women of the Mediterranean Region, Larnaca, Cyprus, July 2000.

68. Fatima Mernissi, *Doing Daily Battle: Interviews with Moroccan Women*, trans. Mary Jo Lakeland (London: Woman's Press, 1988); Amal Rassam, "Introduction: Arab Women—The Status of Research in the Social Sciences and the Status of Women," in *Social Science Research and Women in the Arab World* (London: Francis Pinter/UNESCO, 1984), pp. 1–3.

69. Deniz Kandiyoti, "Sex Roles and Social Change: A Comparative Appraisal of Turkey's Women," in Wellesley Editorial Committee, ed., *Women and National Development* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 57–73; Deniz Kandiyoti, "Urban Change and Women's Roles in Turkey: An Overview and Evaluation," in Cigdem Kagitcibasi, ed., *Sex Roles, Family, and Community in Turkey* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); and Deniz Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," *Gender and Society* 2 (3) (September 1988): 274–289. See also Günseli Berik, *Women Carpet Weavers in Rural Turkey: Patterns of Employment, Earnings, and Status*, Women, Work, and Development Series no. 15 (Geneva: ILO, 1987); and Abadan-Unat, "The Modernization of Turkish Women," p. 127. On Iran, see Haleh Afshar, "The Position of Women in an Iranian Village," in Haleh Afshar, ed., *Women, Work, and Ideology in the Third World* (London: Tavistock, 1985), pp. 63–82. On Afghanistan, see Chapter 7.

70. Author interviews at Polymedic/Hoechst/Maroc, Route de Rabat, Casablanca, December 3, 1990. I am grateful to the director-general, M. Abderrahim Chawki, for the opportunity to interview the women employees, and I am especially grateful to M. Abdelhay Bouzoubaa of the national staff of UNDP for arranging the site visit and the interviews. See also Fatima Mernissi, *Chahrzad N'est Pas Marocaine* (Casablanca: Editions le fennec, 1987); and Susan Tiano, "Maquiladora Women: A New Category of Workers?" in Ward, *Women Workers and Global Restructuring*, pp. 193–223.

71. *Al-Raida* 15 (82) (Summer 1998).