

Anti-Americanism, Authoritarianism, and Attitudes about Women in Politics: Evidence from a Survey Experiment in Jordan*

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May 27, 2012

*We gratefully acknowledge the Bradley Foundation, the Bobst Center for Peace and Justice, and the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies for their support. We thank Jamal Salameh and Fares Braizat for help with the survey's design and implementation. We also thank Kevin Arceneaux, Lisa Blaydes, Laurie Brand, Nick Carnes, Janine Clark, Jeff Colgan, Karam Dana, Alice Kang, Ben Lauderdale, Noam Lupu, Michael McKoy, Tom Pepinsky, Eve Sandberg, Laura Sjoberg, and participants at seminars at Brown, Harvard, and Princeton Universities for helpful feedback on earlier versions of this paper. The paper was previously presented at the 2011 Annual Meetings of the International Studies Association, Middle East Studies Association, and American Political Science Association. This research was exempted by Princeton's Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects under IRB Protocol #0000004924. The authors' names are listed alphabetically.

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Abstract

Since September 11, 2001, the United States has promoted women's political participation in the Middle East. Given high levels of anti-Americanism in the region, does public American support for women in politics undermine popular support? More broadly, how does the context in which women's representation is promoted shape popular support for women in politics? Using evidence from a nationally representative survey experiment in Jordan, this paper finds that an American endorsement of the country's gender quota has no average effect on popular support for women in politics. The endorsement does, however, depress support for women in politics among Jordanians who oppose the monarchy significantly more than among Jordanians who support it. To explain the findings, the paper develops an argument about elite cues in authoritarian settings that emphasizes how domestic patterns of support and opposition to autocrats determine citizens' receptivity to elite cues. The paper illuminates the politics underlying women's representation and elite cues in authoritarian regimes and contributes to the study and practice of democracy promotion.

The Arab region has the lowest percent of women in parliament of any region in the world: 12 percent. It has also experienced the past decade's largest increase in women's parliamentary representation; in 2001, just 5 percent of the representatives in Arab legislatures were women.¹ That increase was tied to the passage of quotas that reserved seats or spaces on political party lists for women in Algeria (2002), Djibouti (2002), Egypt (2009), Iraq (2004), Jordan (2003), Mauritania (2006), Morocco (2002), Somalia (2004), Sudan (2005), and Tunisia (2004). Arab states' adoption of quotas is part of a global trend (Krook, 2009).

Previous research suggests that quotas could improve women's descriptive and substantive representation in politics. Cross-national analysis shows that gender quotas are the main factor that determines the number of women in the world's legislatures today (Tripp and Kang, 2008). Furthermore, evidence from India, where randomly-selected seats on local councils are reserved for women, shows that women elected through quotas govern differently than men (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004), that quotas make women more likely to be elected even after they are withdrawn (Bhavnani, 2009), and that quotas reduce gender stereotypes (Beaman et al., 2009).

But there are also serious concerns about how likely quotas in Arab states are to improve women's political standing. They arise because, in countries where women have been otherwise excluded from official positions of power, foreign pressure has often caused undemocratic political leaders to adopt quotas (Krook, 2006; Bush, 2011*b*). Indeed, advancing women's civic and political engagement has been a pillar of American foreign policy in the Middle East since September 11, 2001 (Ottaway, 2005*a*; Abu-Lughod, 2002). The flagship American initiative promoting political reform in the Arab world, for example, counts "supporting women" as one of its main priorities.² Yet when quotas are adopted under international pressure, the conditions that support their success in countries such as India—including democratic institutions, civil society mobilization, and social norms—may be absent. Moreover, people may view quotas as a foreign imposition.

¹See <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm> and Dahlerup (2009, 28).

²See <http://mepi.state.gov/mepi/english-mepi/what-we-do/supporting-women>.

Anti-American political attitudes—which are unusually strong in the Middle East (Chiozza, 2007, 125)—may prompt people to oppose female politicians and threaten quotas’ legitimacy. Consistent with that observation, many policy makers, activists, and scholars assume that overt American support for political reforms in the Middle East jeopardizes domestic support for those reforms.

Thus, in order to assess how likely gender quotas are to improve the civic and political standing of Arab women, we need to understand how international pressure affects ordinary citizens’ views about women in politics. Ordinary citizens’ attitudes matter since quotas need at least some popular support for female parliamentarians to gain office, have legitimacy, and make laws. This paper addresses three related questions. First, does foreign support for quotas undermine public support for women’s representation? Second, would support from more popular domestic opinion leaders—specifically, Islamic religious leaders (imams)—enhance public support? Finally, and most fundamentally, how does the context in which quotas for women are enacted shape popular support for these quotas and, ultimately, their effectiveness?

To answer those questions, this paper begins to develop a theory of elite endorsements in authoritarian settings. Elite cues—particularly partisan cues—can significantly affect citizens’ political beliefs in democracies (Lupia and McCubbins, 1998). In contrast, in many autocracies, popular support or opposition to the incumbent regime (as opposed to partisan allegiance) is the crucial political cleavage. When political elites endorse an authoritarian regime’s policies, including quotas, they reveal their support for that regime to ordinary citizens. Thus, citizens who oppose an authoritarian regime will be less likely to accept elite endorsements of that regime’s policies than citizens who support the regime.

This argument has direct implications for how international support for gender quotas and other political reforms is likely to influence popular attitudes in the Middle East. Conventional wisdom suggests that an American endorsement of gender quotas would depress popular support for women’s representation because the United States is a generally distrusted actor in the region. Instead, we focus on the role of domestic politics, emphasizing how popular support for the regime

moderates the effect of foreign cues. When foreign actors endorse quotas, they appear to support autocrats' quota policies and are likely to prompt a more negative reaction among regime opponents than regime supporters. That effect should not be confined to international endorsers. One might expect that other elite endorsers of women's quotas, such as local imams, would similarly elicit an effect that is moderated by attitudes towards the regime—even if those endorsers are more popular than the United States domestically. These patterns should be exacerbated when the elite endorsers are already seen as being pro-regime.

To understand how the context in which quotas are adopted affects public attitudes towards those quotas, this paper explores how support for an authoritarian regime moderates the effect of foreign cues on support for women in politics. We use evidence from a survey experiment conducted in Jordan in Fall 2010. The experiment exposed respondents to information about Jordan's quota and randomly informed them about an endorsement—from an American government-supported organization or imams—before measuring their support for women's political representation. In the real world, the United States pressures countries to increase women's political representation in part to correct for societies' lack of support for women in politics. The survey's experimental design thus provided us with a unique opportunity to examine the independent effect of foreign influence on ordinary citizens' attitudes. As we explain in more detail below, we focus on Jordan—where the king decreed a six-seat quota for the elected lower house of parliament in 2003 and increased it to twelve seats out of 120 in 2010—since Jordan has relatively high anti-Americanism and foreign pressure to increase women's political participation.

Our findings broadly support the argument. Even though few Jordanians report favorable opinions about the United States government, informing Jordanians about an American endorsement of Jordan's gender quota does not reduce support for women's representation on average. Furthermore, although most Jordanians report favorable attitudes about imams, informing them about a religious endorsement does not improve support on average. Instead, both endorsements depress support among female Jordanians—the people most vulnerable to regime policies—who oppose

the monarchy significantly more than among female Jordanians who support it. An authoritarian political context thus has important implications for the information that policy endorsements transmit. That finding holds even though regime opponents are not less likely than regime supporters to favor women's education, women working outside the home, or women as political leaders.

The findings contribute to both theory and practice. Beyond adapting theories of elite cues to authoritarian settings, the paper contributes to a growing literature on democracy promotion (Carothers, 1999; Donno, 2010; Finkel, Pérez-Liñán and Seligson, 2007; Hyde, 2011; Kelley, 2012). Democracy promotion can provoke public outrage, especially in countries where citizens are predisposed to be suspicious of outside powers (Carothers, 2006). To date, however, the individual-level effects of democracy promotion have received little scholarly attention.³ Those effects are, however, important as the United States re-crafts its foreign policy in the Middle East in the wake of the "Arab Spring." At least in Jordan, we show that American support for women's quotas will not necessarily undermine their legitimacy, despite anti-Americanism. It can, however, backfire among Jordanians that view it as unwanted support for the Hashemite monarchy.

We begin by developing an argument about how elite cues could affect support for women's representation in the authoritarian Middle East. The second section introduces the research design. The third and fourth sections present and discuss our main results: endorsements do not affect average levels of popular support for women's representation in Jordan. Instead, their effect is conditional on respondents' attitudes about the authoritarian regime. The final section concludes by discussing the paper's implications for theory and practice and directions for future research.

³Hyde (2007) and Corstange and Marinov (2012) are two notable exceptions.

1 Outside Actors and Public Support for Women's Representation

When international actors encourage countries to liberalize, do they succeed? Outside actors have played important roles in democratizing countries under certain conditions (Finkel, Pérez-Liñán and Seligson, 2007; Hyde, 2011; Kelley, 2012; Levitsky and Way, 2005; Pevehouse, 2002; Scott and Steele, 2011). But their record is not uniformly positive. Previous research shows that some democracy promotion efforts are poorly designed and have inadvertently reinforced authoritarian survival (Carothers, 1999; Carapico, 2002). Moreover, when foreign pressure causes countries to adopt human rights laws, their human rights practices do not necessarily improve and sometimes even worsen (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui, 2005; Hathaway, 2002).

The existing debate largely focuses on the state-level consequences of international democracy promotion. That emphasis is understandable, but individual-level consequences matter, as well. First, many of the changes that must occur for countries to democratize occur on an individual level. That is especially true in the case of improving gender equality in politics, since women face significant social barriers to participation in politics in the Middle East. In the 2005/2006 Arab Barometer survey, for example, 80 percent of Jordanians agreed that men make better political leaders than women.⁴ If women are to access and assume positions of political leadership, they must enjoy sufficient popular support to continue to lead. Hence, influencing levels of public opinion is essential for activists that seek to improve women's political representation.

Second, international democracy promotion efforts can trigger nationalist reactions among individual citizens that researchers should study. The 2012 backlash against American-funded democracy promotion NGOs like the National Democratic Institute in Egypt and the United Arab Emirates highlights that phenomenon's importance. Anti-American attitudes are common in the

⁴See <http://www.arabbarometer.org>. Co-Principal Investigators: Mark Tessler and Amaney Jamal.

Arab world and threaten the legitimacy of various U.S.-supported political reforms there (Chiozza, 2009; Katzenstein and Keohane, 2007; Lynch, 2007; Ottaway, 2005*b*; Haddad, 2007). Foreign pressure on a culturally sensitive issue such as women's rights may be especially susceptible to legitimacy problems. Indeed, some female politicians have gone so far to resign from office to protest what they viewed as illegitimate and externally imposed gender quotas (Krook, 2006, 315). Thus, this paper seeks to understand how outside actors' support for women's political participation affects individuals' attitudes on that issue in the Middle East. Our starting point for developing an argument about how American support for women in politics might affect political attitudes in the Middle East is the literature on source cues.

1.1 Elite Endorsements and Political Attitudes in Democracies

When political elites publicly support or oppose a political issue, they often affect the public's attitudes about that policy. That is the general insight developed by a sizeable body of research in American politics that shows how trusted elites (usually political or media leaders) influence mass political attitudes.⁵ In public opinion polls, elites who ordinary people view as knowledgeable and as sharing their interests can shape those citizens' stated political preferences in significant ways through endorsements (Druckman and Lupia, 2000, 15). Researchers often argue that the effects of such partisan cues on political attitudes are stronger than the effects of new policy information (Bullock, 2011, 496). At least two mechanisms of elite cues' influence are noted in the literature. The first mechanism is that political elites can provide new information to ordinary citizens, who usually know less about politics than elites, which those people then use to evaluate (or reevaluate) a political issue. The second mechanism is that political elites' statements can enable respondents to voice an opinion on a political issue instead of answering "don't know" to a survey question.

⁵The literature is large. Important studies include: Arceneaux (2008); Berinsky (2009); Druckman (2001); Kam (2005); Rahn (1993); Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock (1991); Zaller (1992).

In a democratic setting such as the United States, citizens tend to view the elites in their political parties as knowledgeable and trustworthy sources about politics. Even in an only pseudo-democratic setting, such as twenty-first century Russia under Vladimir Putin, party cues can significantly affect citizens' political attitudes (Brader and Tucker, 2008). But how do elite endorsements work in truly authoritarian settings, including in the Arab world, where political parties may be weak, forbidden, or non-existent? Which political elites do citizens in autocracies rely upon as sources when forming their opinions about policy issues? After all, as Lupia and McCubbins (1998, 11) explain, "concepts such as reputation, party, or ideology are useful heuristics [to citizens] only if they convey information about knowledge and trust." As we discuss below, one possibility is that international and domestic elites' cues are relevant and thus directly translated into popular political attitudes, conditional on how trusted the elites are; another possibility is that popular support or opposition to the regime is the more salient political divide.

Although our framework should apply to a number of endorsers and policies in authoritarian regimes, we focus on the particular issue of foreign endorsements of women's representation in the Middle East. As previously discussed, we do so because international support for women in politics has been common in the Middle East since September 11, 2001, and we need to understand how international pressure affects ordinary citizens' views about women in politics in order to assess how effective those efforts are. We consider foreign—and specifically, American—actors as "elites" in the region since they enjoy commonly recognized political and social power and influence in the Middle East.

1.2 The Politics of Elite Endorsements in the Authoritarian Middle East

The conventional wisdom among many policy makers, activists, and scholars is that overt American endorsements of political reforms in the Middle East, including of quotas for women in politics, threaten to reduce popular support for those goals due to anti-Americanism in the region. This conventional wisdom builds upon insights from the aforementioned literature on elite cues, noting

that because the United States is a generally distrusted actor, many ordinary citizens may react negatively to its political endorsements. Democracy promotion expert Thomas Carothers (2006), for example, argues that fears of American meddling are partially responsible for a backlash against democracy promotion around the world. Surveys by the Pew Global Attitudes Project, which indicate that no more than 20 percent of citizens in Egypt, Jordan, and the Palestinian Territories held a positive view of the United States in 2011, seem to confirm the risks faced by American leaders when publicly supporting political reform in the Middle East.⁶

Leaders clearly worry about those risks. In his account of American foreign policy making during the Arab uprisings of 2011, Marc Lynch (2012, 197) describes President Obama taking care to avoid charges of American interference in Egypt's revolution and to underline that the United States understood that the popular movements bringing down dictators in the Middle East were being driven by Arabs, for Arabs. His administration's fear—that public perceptions of American interference could sour popular attitudes towards indigenous reformers' efforts—is one shared by activists in the region. As one women's rights activist in Jordan told us in an interview in 2010, “Ever since I became involved with women's rights issues, there have always been accusations that I'm a foreign agent. You wouldn't want to say publicly that you got support from the United Kingdom or United States, especially during the lead up to the Iraq War.”⁷

According to this perspective, overt American support for a political reform such as a gender quota is likely to decrease popular support for women in politics in the Middle East. The rationale is that because the United States is a distrusted political actor for many audiences in the region, people should reject its policy endorsements. Only 38 percent of the respondents in our survey reported a great deal or quite a lot of trust in the American government, suggesting that American endorsements could indeed diminish support for women's political participation there.

The flip side of the conventional wisdom about how American endorsements are likely to

⁶See <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/?indicator=1>.

⁷Interview with Rana Husseini, conducted by author, July 6, 2010, Amman, Jordan.

structure popular support for women in politics in the Middle East is that endorsements from more trusted domestic elites, such as Islamic religious leaders, should enhance popular support for women's representation. Because imams are commonly trusted leaders throughout the region, we would expect their policy endorsements to positively influence popular attitudes. Public opinion in Jordan again seems to fit this pattern, with 85 percent of the respondents in our survey claiming to have a great deal or quite a lot of trust in religious leaders. As a consequence, one might expect that if religious leaders voice support for women's representation, then ordinary citizens in Jordan would be more likely to support it, as well. Local activists work within religious circles to secure legitimation of women's rights, suggesting that they, too, believe trusted religious endorsements should matter (Clark, 2006, 549). If the conventional wisdom about the detrimental effects of American endorsements and positive effects of religious endorsements is correct, then citizens' trust in and proximity to political elites are what determine their policy positions, not how citizens feel about the regime. Hypothesis 1 summarizes this perspective.

H1: Endorsements by the distrusted United States of a gender quota should negatively affect Arab citizens' attitudes about women's representation; endorsements by trusted imams should positively affect citizens' attitudes about women's representation.

Although the conventional wisdom rightly underscores the skepticism of many ordinary citizens in the Arab world about the United States as a democracy promoter, we argue—and find—that it misunderstands the relevant political cleavages in authoritarian societies and underestimates the importance of regime support and opposition. Individuals' attitudes about their rulers can significantly affect their reactions to foreign support for women's rights and democracy in their countries. As we show later in the paper, American endorsements of a quota policy adopted by an authoritarian regime do not, in fact, depress support for women in politics, either on average or among respondents that distrusted the United States. Likewise, religious endorsements of the quota do not raise support for women in politics, either on average or among respondents that trusted religious

leaders. The reason is that if citizens are already skeptical of their regimes, any attempt to further legitimize the regime through endorsements of its policies can frustrate citizens.

In authoritarian settings, support or opposition to the incumbent regime is a—perhaps the—key political cleavage. Despite the existence of legislatures in many authoritarian countries today, including in the Middle East, ordinary citizens still have little control over many policy decisions (Gandhi and Lust-Okar, 2009). Thus, the key political issue for them is whether or not to support the incumbent authoritarian regime overall. In other words, source cues *should* matter for political attitudes even in non-democracies. Crucially, however, people already have strong attitudes about their autocratic rulers and it is *those* attitudes (not their attitudes about the United States or religious leaders) that should determine their receptivity to various elite cues. Diverse factors, including ideology, economic incentives, and political information, affect the attitudes of ordinary citizens in authoritarian settings vis-à-vis their political leaders. In the Arab world specifically, some would-be democrats unequivocally support their autocratic governments despite supporting democratic values because they fear that democracy would endanger economic relations with other countries and especially the United States (Jamal, 2012).

According to this perspective, regime supporters should respond positively to elite endorsements that reinforce the regime's policies and positions, whereas regime opponents should respond negatively to such endorsements. The logic behind those predictions is that an elite endorsement of an authoritarian regime's policies provides relevant information to citizens that they can use to evaluate the endorsers and the endorsers' support for the regime's policies. Such policy endorsements are especially valuable in authoritarian environments, where accurate political information is scarce and preference falsification is common (Kuran, 1991). In this framework, a citizen might generally distrust the United States, but whether or not she believes that the United States shares her view of the regime is what determines how an American endorsement of that regime's policies shapes her political attitudes.

Importantly for this argument, many political reforms, including gender quotas, can be—and

are—viewed by Arab publics as being linked to authoritarian regimes. Improving women’s rights is often thought to be a strategy of authoritarian survival in the Arab world (Ottaway, 2005a), and so public support or opposition to a quota may be readily viewed through the lens of authoritarian support or opposition. That lens applies to many countries in the region because when autocratic leaders adopt gender quotas by decree, they do so without the general support of or input from the public. Consistent with the view of Arab quotas as a policy of autocrats, research from the cases of Morocco (Sater, 2007) and Jordan (Sabbagh, 2005, 63) shows that quota laws are often manipulated by autocrats in such a way that ensure the women elected through quotas are likely to support them. In this way, gender quotas are similar to other seemingly democratic institutions, including legislatures, which autocrats have adopted as a means of survival. As we discuss below, evidence from our survey confirms that regime supporters in Jordan are notably more supportive of the gender quota than regime opponents.

Since quotas are viewed as a pro-regime policy, we expect that elite endorsements of a country’s gender quota will signal their value as endorsers to regime supporters, but not to regime opponents. Consequently, when political elites endorse a gender quota, they should cause more negative attitudes towards women’s representation among regime opponents than among regime supporters. This conditional effect should be visible in the case of foreign endorsements of women’s representation, but it should also hold with other types of endorsers of women’s representation, including local religious leaders. In other words, the conditional effects of pro-regime endorsements should exist regardless of the endorser’s pre-existing trust among the population. The political cleavage of support and opposition to the regime structures the interpretation of elite endorsements. Among regime supporters, a pro-regime endorsement increases trust and reveals information about the endorser’s commitment to the regime. Among regime opponents, a pro-regime endorsement decreases trust for similar reasons. Hypothesis 2 summarizes this argument.

H2: Elite endorsements of an authoritarian regime’s gender quota should more negatively affect attitudes about women’s representation among opponents of the regime

than among supporters of the regime.

2 The Research Design and Case Selection

This section explains our selection of the Jordanian case and describes our strategy for testing the hypotheses laid out above. Jordan presents an appealing location to test our argument about elite cues in an authoritarian setting because it is a monarchy ranked “unfree” by Freedom House that has experienced considerable international pressure to improve women’s representation and that has high levels of popular anti-Americanism. As a country with historically low levels of female participation in civic life, Jordan is thus both a realistic and important case in which to study how foreign endorsements of women’s political participation affect popular attitudes.

Despite the value of understanding how foreign cues affect popular attitudes about women’s participation in politics, studying those effects is not straightforward. Foreign actors such as the United States only pressure countries to increase women’s representation when popular attitudes about women’s representation are already unfavorable. That is, Arab states adopt quotas in part to correct for society’s general lack of support for women’s representation. Thus, an observational study of the effects of foreign endorsements of women’s quotas on popular opinion would suffer from an endogeneity problem. An experimental design allows us to expose randomly selected participants to foreign endorsements. Furthermore, focusing on individual-level effects within a single country allows us to collect data on important other factors—specifically, support or opposition to the authoritarian regime—that we expect will condition the effects of elite endorsements.

2.1 Women’s Quotas in Jordan

Jordan adopted a gender quota in 2003 and increased it in 2010 under heavy international pressure to improve women’s representation. Jordan has long depended heavily on foreign aid (Peters and Moore, 2009). Recent aid agreements, such as a \$275 million Millennium Challenge Corporation

grant from the United States and €223 million European Union aid package, have been conditional on political reforms.⁸ The ruling King Abdullah has thus sought to maintain “a veneer of political openness and moderation” for foreign aid donors (Yom, 2009, 164). One strategy for doing so has been improving women’s political participation, including by adopting gender quotas in the national parliament and municipal councils. Although the national parliament is far from a fully democratic institution, it is the site of important political competition and fights over access to state resources (Lust-Okar, 2006).

Although our purpose is not to make a causal argument about international factors and the adoption of Jordan’s gender quota, it is clear that the United States has strongly supported women’s political participation in Jordan.⁹ American government-funded democracy promotion activities in Jordan have included: a female candidate training program run by the National Democratic Institute, an American NGO that trained twelve out of the thirteen women elected to the parliament in 2010; sessions for female MPs run by the Arab Women’s Leadership Institute, an offshoot of the International Republican Institute, another American NGO; and a parliamentary training and monitoring program run by the Jordanian NGO Sisterhood is Global that was funded by the National Endowment for Democracy, a quasi-governmental American foundation.¹⁰ Such programs are typical of international democracy promotion since the end of the Cold War, during which time developing countries that depend heavily on foreign aid or have been the targets of democracy promotion have been more likely to adopt quotas than other countries (Bush, 2011*b*).

Since it was adopted under foreign pressure, Jordan’s quota has legitimacy problems that im-

⁸See Khalid Neimat, “EU Increases Financial Assistance for Kingdom’s Reforms in Coming 3 Years,” *Jordan Times*, June 1, 2010; and “Jordan Obtains ‘Advanced Status’ with EU,” *Jordan Times*, October 27, 2010.

⁹For that, see David and Nanes (2011) and Bush (2011*b*).

¹⁰See National Endowment for Democracy (2004, 98-99) and http://www.ndi.org/women_make_strides_jordan.

pede its efficacy and warrant study of the effects of international support.¹¹ A lack of civil society support for the quota makes it harder for female candidates to gain office, have legitimacy, and influence legislation. Furthermore, since Jordan has high levels of popular anti-Americanism, if many ordinary citizens believe that the quota was a foreign imposition, they could resent it. Most Jordanians distrust the United States; between just 1 and 25 percent of Jordanians have held a favorable opinion of the United States since 2002.¹²

It is worth noting that many citizens do view Jordan's gender quota as being linked to the Hashemite monarchy, a precondition for our argument to apply. After all, Jordan's quota is an institution that was adopted in a top-down manner by the King, who was seeking to impress foreign aid donors, rather than in a bottom-up manner as a result of civil society mobilization. Although female activists once campaigned for a quota in Jordan, they were not heavily involved in the King's quota decree and many opposed it (Clark, 2006, 555). Toujan Al-Faisal, Jordan's first female member of parliament and now a human rights activist, told us in an interview:

I think the international community is really committed to gender quotas. I have really met this global sisterhood and they're very sincere. Quotas can be really good elsewhere in the world. . . [But] the regime just takes the quota as a form of make-up to put on the face of the regime—it's like a facelift and no one notices that the main parts of the face are still there. It's just a façade because the international community cares about it. If they [the government] really cared, they would address the fundamental

¹¹On how this is a more general problem for gender quotas adopted in circumstances like Jordan's, see Franceschet, Krook and Piscopo (2012, 237).

¹²See <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/?indicator=1&country=111&response=Favorable>. To consider another data source, James Zogby reported that 10 percent of Jordanians held a favorable opinion of the United States in 2011—lower than the percents in Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia. See "Arab Attitudes: 2011," available at <http://www.aaiusa.org/reports/arab-attitudes-2011>.

concerns of women activists and other human rights activists in Jordan.¹³

Consistent with the idea that Jordan's gender quota is a pro-regime policy, regime supporters in our survey support the quota more than regime opponents.¹⁴ Specifically, regime supporters on average want ten more seats reserved for women than regime opponents ($p < 0.08$ two-tailed in a t-test with unequal variance). This relationship is particularly striking since, as we show below, regime supporters are not generally more likely to support women's rights than regime opponents.

2.2 The Experimental Research Design

To assess the relationship between endorsements of women's political representation and public support, this paper uses evidence from an original survey. We embedded an experiment in a general political attitudes survey that respondents completed face-to-face with local interviewers.¹⁵ After a pre-test, the Jordanian survey research firm Accurate Opinion conducted the survey in Arabic on behalf of the authors over the course of one week prior to the November 9, 2010 parliamentary election. The nationally representative sample comprised 2,200 Jordanian residents at least

¹³Interview with Toujan Al-Faisal, conducted by author, June 30, 2010, Amman, Jordan.

¹⁴As we discuss below, we use trust in Jordan's Prime Minister as an indicator of regime support.

¹⁵A few notes about the survey: First, the experiment was the first one in the survey, so there are no concerns about spillover. Second, in keeping with customs in the region, men interviewed men and women interviewed women. Third, our results are robust to controls for interviewers' religious dress, which two recent studies indicate may affect survey responses (Benstead, 2010; Blaydes and Gillum, 2011). Finally, since the short script was read out loud, noncompliance with the treatment should be minimized.

eighteen years old.¹⁶ The response rate was 98 percent.¹⁷

The experiment involved informing the survey respondents about Jordan's gender quota and telling them about a randomly assigned endorsement of the quota. Endorsements came either from an American government-funded organization or Jordanian imams. We included an endorsement by local religious leaders as an aforementioned point of comparison with the American endorsement. If our argument is correct, a religious endorsement of quotas—despite Jordanians' vastly greater levels of trust in religious leaders than in the United States—should also elicit an effect that is conditional on respondents' pre-existing support or opposition to the Hashemite monarchy.

Interviewers read this script to respondents in the control group: "In 2003, the electoral law in Jordan was revised to include a six-seat minimum quota for women in the national parliament. The new electoral law, which was announced in May 2010, raised the quota to twelve seats that are reserved for women." The control group did not receive an endorsement, which provides a baseline for comparison (Gaines, Kuklinski and Quirk, 2007, 8-9). Interviewers read the same script to respondents in treatment groups but read an endorsement at the end as follows.¹⁸

- Treatment 1: Many U.S. government-funded organizations in Jordan, including the Na-

¹⁶The median ages, (un)employment rates, and population distributions in the survey are statistically indistinguishable from those reported by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Department of Statistics at http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/linked-html/jordan_no.htm.

¹⁷AAPOR Response Rate Category 1, which is the number of complete interviews divided by the number of complete interviews plus the number of partial interviews plus the number of non-interviews (refusals, break-offs, and non-contacts). See <http://www.aapor.org/standards.asp>. Although extremely high for other regions, this response rate is comparable to the response rates obtained by the Arab Barometer.

¹⁸Future surveys could inform a control group that quotas and women's political representation are endorsed but not specify an endorser to minimize acquiescence bias. Since we do not find any positive average treatment effects, however, we do not think that acquiescence bias is a major problem in our survey.

tional Democratic Institute, have strongly supported women's political participation and the women who were elected via the quota in the past.

- Treatment 2: Many imams and other religious leaders in Jordan have strongly supported women's political participation and the women who were elected via the quota in the past.¹⁹

The experiment entailed complete randomization within the blocks of Jordan's governorates (provinces). Table 1 in the Appendix shows the design. Blocking on geographic regions worked well for our survey teams who lacked computer access. Since relevant characteristics vary geographically in Jordan (e.g., income, education level, and country of origin), blocking promoted covariate balance across the experimental conditions (Horiuchi, Imai and Taniguchi, 2007).

The randomization procedure generally succeeded, as illustrated in Table 2 in the Appendix. There are no statistically significant ($p < 0.10$) differences in age, employment status, religion, religiosity, geographic location, political knowledge, country of origin, or income across the groups. Furthermore, mean responses to attitudinal variables that may affect our outcomes of interest, such as pre-existing support for women serving as political leaders, working outside of the home, and attending college, do not notably vary across the experimental conditions. The exception is that more men [women] received the control [treatment 2]; as a consequence there are also some differences between those groups in education levels. We thus conduct sub-sample analysis by gender.

After receiving the treatment, respondents were asked a number of questions: how likely they

¹⁹We omitted the name of a religious endorser because no nationally recognizable Jordanian imam had endorsed the quota. This omission may impede comparisons across the treatment groups and likely biases us *against* finding similar conditional average treatment effects. Note that men and women answered questions following the religious treatment as often as after the other treatment and control. Some prominent religious leaders in Islam, such as the Egyptian cleric Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, have endorsed women's political participation, so this endorsement should not be entirely implausible. Moreover, and as we discuss in more detail below, religious leaders in Jordan may be viewed as allies of the monarchy, which lends the endorsement some credibility.

were to vote for a woman in the parliamentary election; how willing they would be to contact a female member of parliament; and to what extent they supported women voting, running for municipal councils, running for parliament, and being appointed as an ambassador, judge, minister, or prime minister. We created an index that averaged responses to those questions, which were all measured on a four-point scale and were highly correlated. That index serves as our main dependent variable: *support for women's political representation*.

What are the basic trends in support for women's political representation? As Figure 1 shows, women on average reported moderate (i.e., not strong) support for women's representation; men on average reported moderate opposition to women's representation. In response to a question that asked how many seats out of 120 should be reserved for women, 17 percent of men and 4 percent of women said none. On average, men wanted eighteen seats to be reserved for women and women twenty-six—both greater than the current twelve. Jordanians supported the gender quota in our survey even though 74 percent of respondents thought that men make better political leaders than women and only 16 percent of the people who have had a woman run for parliament in their district have voted for her. Although no women were elected outside of the quota in 2003, one woman was in 2007 and 2010.

It is important to note that the mean responses on attitudinal questions reported in Figure 1 are not necessarily “true” values. Since the survey includes sensitive questions, respondents may anticipate the interviewer's socially desirable response and alter their answers accordingly. Importantly for our research design, however, the treatments should not interact with the magnitude of social desirability bias. In other words, the endorsements are unlikely to change the respondent's likelihood of anticipating the interviewer's socially desirable response.

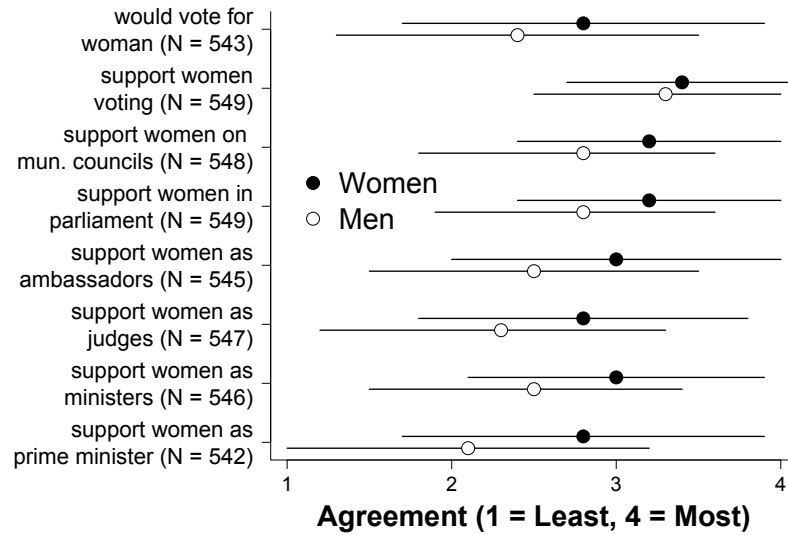


Figure 1: **Support for Women's Political Representation.** Dots represent the control group's mean; lines extend from the mean +/- a standard deviation.

3 Results

3.1 Average Effects: American Endorsements Do Not Harm Support for Women in Politics

Does informing citizens about endorsements of the gender quota by American elites and Jordanian imams affect their support for women's representation? Figure 2 reports the average treatment effects for men and women—in other words, the differences in average responses between the control and treatment groups using the index measure as our dependent variable. In robustness checks, we confirmed the results by recoding the responses dichotomously (i.e., supporters versus non-supporters) rather than on a four-point scale.

As Figure 2 shows, there is little support for the conventional wisdom (Hypothesis 1) that American endorsements of Jordan's gender quota would worsen ordinary citizens' attitudes about women's representation because of unfavorable attitudes in Jordan towards the United States.

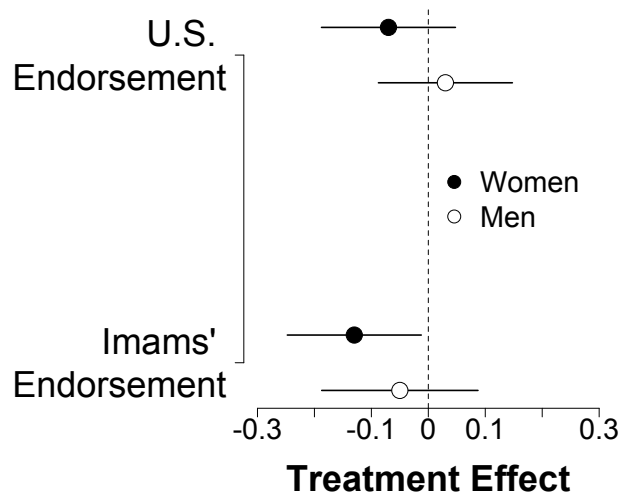


Figure 2: **Average Effects of Treatments on Support for Women's Representation.** Dots represent the average treatment effects. Error bars are 95 percent confidence intervals. Negative [positive] treatment effects represent a reduction [improvement] in support of women's political participation on a four-point scale.

Moreover, we do not find that religious endorsements improve those attitudes, despite generally high levels of trust in religious leaders. In fact, the religious endorsement depresses average support for women's representation, especially among women. Since the randomization procedure worked, the findings show the average effects of the treatments, holding constant factors—such as the respondents' religiosity, income levels, pre-existing support for women's rights, and so on—that might otherwise matter. Thus, generally trusted and distrusted elites do not affect public support for women's representation on average through endorsements.

We consider several alternative explanations for the lack of support for the conventional wisdom that generally low levels of trust in the United States would cause a backlash against women in politics when an American endorsement is revealed. The first alternative explanation is that support for women's representation in Jordan is already as high as it can be and thus the endorsement was not likely to alter peoples' attitudes. Yet as Figure 1 showed, on average, Jordanians fall

somewhere between moderate (i.e., not strong) opposition to and support of women's representation. This tepid support does not imply that the treatments could not have an effect on attitudes because they are already so positive. Conversely, perhaps the treatments do not have significant average effects because ordinary citizens think the quota is ineffective and ignore it. Yet 88 percent of the respondents in our survey support reserving seats in parliament for women and 69 percent support reserving more than the current twelve, suggesting that that is not the case.

The second alternative explanation is that respondents already believed that the United States and imams supported the quota and thus were not affected by the endorsement. A different way of phrasing that concern is that since Jordan's quota law preceded the survey, elite endorsements of it could have already shaped popular attitudes about women's representation. One way to address that concern is by examining treatment effects, conditional on respondents' pre-existing beliefs about the United States' and imams' support for women's representation. When Republicans, for example, endorsed Barack Obama's presidential campaign, their support gave a more meaningful signal to some voters than when Democrats did so (Eagly, Wood and Chaiken, 1978). People who think the United States or imams oppose women's representation may similarly be more likely to respond to the endorsements. We calculated the average treatment effects, conditional on respondents' pre-treatment beliefs about the endorser's support for gender equality. We found no evidence of significant effects.

Another way to address that issue is by searching the *Jordan Times* newspaper for articles containing the words "quota" and either "imams" or "National Democratic Institute."²⁰ We found two articles since 2007 that describe the National Democratic Institute supporting women's representation although not quotas, per se, and no articles that describe imams supporting women's representation. Those findings do not suggest widespread discussion of the endorsers' support for quotas and thus pre-experimental exposure to the treatments.

²⁰See <http://www.jordantimes.com>. We used the *Jordan Times* because other Jordanian newspapers do not have archives that can be searched online.

A final way to address pre-experimental exposure to the treatments is to analyze the effects of the treatments among respondents with varying levels political knowledge. To measure respondents' political knowledge, we asked them four factual questions about Jordanian politics.²¹ People with low political knowledge are less likely to have already been exposed to the treatments. We did not find, however, significant effects among low political knowledge respondents.²² We also tested for treatment effects just among respondents with mid-level political knowledge, who are usually more persuadable than high-knowledge people and more likely to receive the endorsement than low-knowledge people (Druckman and Lupia, 2000, 15). We obtained similar null results.

This analysis suggests that American endorsements do not decrease support for women's representation on average in Jordan and that religious endorsements do not increase support for it—contrary to conventional wisdom among policy makers, activists, and academics. We now turn our attention to how individual attitudes about the Jordanian monarchy shape the influence of elite cues on citizens' support for women's representation. We find that women in Jordan who oppose the regime are less likely to support women's representation than regime supporters both when imams and American elites endorse it. The Jordanian political environment and the politics underlying support and opposition to the regime thus influence citizens' reactions to elite endorsements.

²¹The questions—which pertained to the number of seats in parliament, the name of the Prime Minister, and the name of the head of the judiciary—sought to reduce non-responses and included multiple-choice answers (Mondak, 2001). High knowledge respondents answered 2-4 questions correctly (45 percent of the sample), middle knowledge 1-3 questions correctly (70 percent of the sample), and low knowledge 0-1 questions correctly (55 percent of the sample).

²²In fact, the endorsements affected high knowledge respondents more than low political knowledge respondents. High knowledge respondents are arguably more likely to be affected by the treatment than low knowledge respondents. That is because if some respondents respond negatively to the endorsements because they view the endorser as supporting the regime, higher knowledge people may be more likely to make that connection.

3.2 Effects Conditional on Attitudes about the Jordanian Monarchy

We gauge support for the Hashemite regime using the respondent's reported trust in the Prime Minister, which is measured dichotomously (i.e., trust or distrust). The Prime Minister is the highest-ranking political official in Jordan and direct appointed by the King. Replacing the Prime Minister has been called a "time-honored safety valve" for dealing with popular discontent in Jordan (Pelham, 2011). Because asking respondents directly in a survey about support for the King would be prohibited (and even if asked, is unlikely to yield reliable answers), this question is a next-best measure of trust in the regime.²³ In robustness checks, we use alternative measures for regime support and generate similar results. The first alternate measure is voting in the last parliamentary election, since many Jordanians stay home on Election Day because of political apathy and disenfranchisement.²⁴ The second alternate measure is the respondent's agreement with the following statement, which measures authoritarian tendencies: "People should always support the decisions of their government even if they disagree with these decisions."

We test Hypothesis 2 by calculating conditional average treatment effects (Imai and Strauss, 2011). Notably, we find statistically significant effects in the hypothesized directions—but only for women. Why elite endorsements affect women's responses more than men's remains an open question for future research. On the one hand, men may hold firmer—and more negative—opinions about women in politics than women and are therefore less easily moved by our experimental treatments. Men consistently answer questions in our survey more often than women, who are more likely to answer "don't know" or not respond. On the other hand, when we test for conditional average treatment effects by gender, our samples shrink. About one-quarter of our sample—521 respondents—are regime opponents according to the measure of trust in the Prime Minister. The diminished statistical power makes it more likely that we will find null results, even though the

²³In future studies, researchers might use implicit measures to measure support for the regime.

²⁴Lust-Okar (2006, 462); and "Elections in Jordan: Judging by Turnout," *The Economist*, November 6, 2010, page 60.

directions of the effects are often similar among men.

Figure 3 shows how pre-existing support for or opposition to the Jordanian monarchy, measured by reported trust in the Prime Minister, moderates the effects of the religious and American leaders' endorsements among female respondents. Women who oppose the regime respond more negatively both to the American government's endorsement and to the imams' endorsement than women who support it ($p < 0.003$ and $p < 0.001$, respectively). The effects are substantively significant. Recall that men on average report about 10 percent less support for women's representation than women do in our survey—0.4 points on a four-point scale. The American endorsement reduces support for women's representation by about 0.4 points among regime opponents; the imams' endorsement reduces it by about 0.5. In other words, the difference that we see in support for women's representation after the treatments among regime opponents is about the same—and in the case of the imams' endorsement, even more—than the average difference in support for women's representation between men and women. These findings are consistent with our argument that when imams and the United States government endorse the regime's quota, regime opponents will retrench more than regime supporters in their attitudes about women's representation as a consequence of their distaste for the endorser's support of the regime.

But who opposes the Jordanian regime? Could our findings be less about opposition to the monarchy and more about other factors that correlate with support for the regime? For example, is regime support stronger in segments of the population who are more urban, liberal, and or otherwise supportive of women's rights? In order to examine this valid concern, we look at the characteristics of regime supporters and opponents. Support or opposition to the Jordanian regime is not, however, correlated with a host of other pre-treatment measures that indicate how liberal or conservative the respondent's worldview is using conventional levels of statistical significance ($p < 0.10$). Such measures include support for democracy, support for women's education and women working outside the home, and attitudes about religion and politics.

A final conditional average treatment effect also seems to support our argument that elite en-

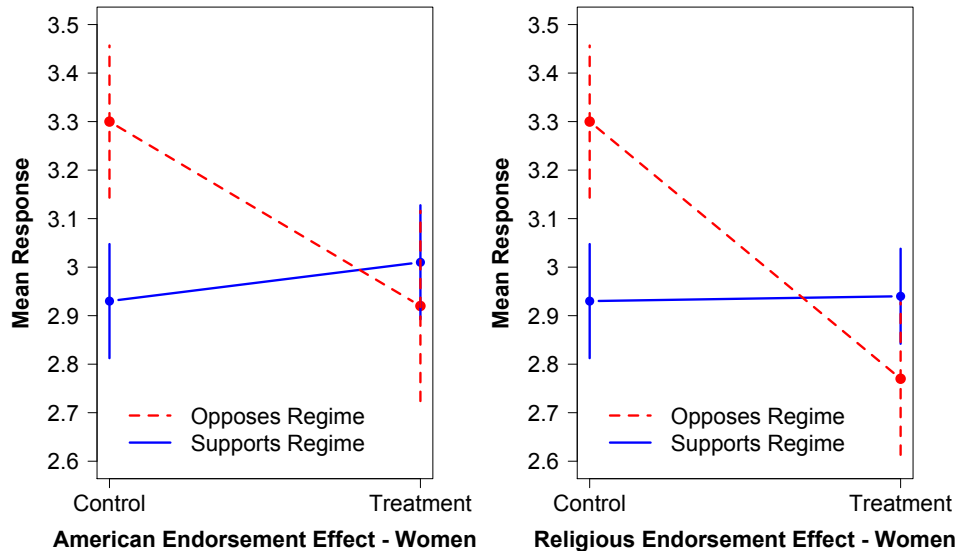


Figure 3: **Effect of Endorsements on Support for Women’s Representation, Conditional on Regime Support (Women).** Responses measured using the index variable. Dots represent the mean responses for each condition and are surrounded by 95% confidence intervals. Responses range from 1 (least favorable to women’s political participation) to 4 (most favorable).

endorsements can cause a public backlash among regime opponents by signaling the endorser’s support of the regime. The religious endorsement clearly causes female respondents of Palestinian origin to approve of women’s representation less than respondents of East Bank (i.e., non-Palestinian) origin using our index variable (difference = 0.26; $p < 0.04$). The American endorsement is associated with a similar effect, although it is not quite statistically significant at conventional levels ($p < 0.17$). The distinction between Jordanians of East Bank origin and of Palestinian origin is a key cleavage in Jordan. King Abdullah’s core supporters are Jordanians of East Bank origin; gerrymandered electoral districts ensure their over-representation in the parliament (Lust-Okar, 2006). Since respondents of Palestinian origin are more likely to oppose the monarchy, they are especially likely to dislike a pro-regime policy endorsement by American and religious elites.

4 Discussion

Taken together, these findings fail to support the conventional wisdom that informing citizens about elite endorsements will affect their support for women's representation in general. Instead, support or opposition to the regime determines how receptive respondents will be to elite endorsements of an authoritarian regime's policies. On the one hand, the findings give some hope to activists who seek to advance women's political standing in Jordan by working with the United States—American endorsements will not automatically de-legitimize gender quotas. They also suggest that achieving a rhetorical or symbolic blessing of women's representation from religious leaders will not be very helpful, at least in the short-term, in promoting egalitarian public attitudes. On the other hand, the findings suggest that Jordanians can view both international and domestic endorsements of women's political participation as support for the Hashemite monarchy—something disliked by opponents of the Jordanian regime but accepted by supporters.

It is worth noting that both American government and religious leaders in Jordan may be viewed as bolstering the non-democratic regime even without their endorsements of Jordan's gender quotas. The United States provides foreign aid to Jordan in exchange for support for its foreign policy objectives, including support for the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 and maintaining Jordan's peace treaty with Israel (Peters and Moore, 2009). Jordanian citizens therefore can plausibly view the United States as supporting the survival of the monarchy in Jordan.

Jordanians can also plausibly regard many domestic religious leaders as supporters of the monarchy. In Jordan, imams are legally considered civil servants and, as such, must undergo government interviews and various forms of surveillance (Wiktorowicz, 2001, Ch. 2). By involving imams in the bureaucratic state structure, the Jordanian state has co-opted religious institutions, as have autocrats in other Arab states (Zeghal, 2008). As a consequence, many Jordanian imams eschew talking about political issues during their sermons at Friday noon prayers, the primary weekly religious gatherings in Islam and potential opportunities for anti-regime mobilization. Jordanian

citizens may therefore regard imams as bolstering the political status quo.

That the United States and local imams may be viewed as supporting the Jordanian regime makes it plausible that our female respondents are interpreting their endorsements of Jordan's gender quota as support for the regime. It also potentially complicates our inference about the causal mechanism behind the backlash against the endorsement of women's representation that we have observed. Do regime opponents report more negative views of women's representation after the endorsements than do the regime supporters because they gathered new information from the endorsements or because they distrusted or trusted certain endorsers to begin with? Even though they are less likely than regime supporters to support the gender quota, perhaps some regime opponents initially viewed the institution positively, only to change their opinions after hearing that the United States and imams endorsed it.

We cautiously conclude that respondents in our survey gathered information from the elite cues about the endorsers. There is, as would be expected, some evidence that regime opponents are less likely than regime supporters to hold favorable opinions of the United States and religious leaders. Regime supporters (again indicated by trust in the Prime Minister) are 19 percent more likely than regime opponents to trust the United States government and 18 percent more likely than regime opponents to trust imams. We do not, however, find any evidence of statistically significant treatment effects that are conditional on respondents' pre-existing trust of the endorser. In other words, people who said that they trusted the United States government or religious leaders prior to the treatment are no more or less likely to support women's representation after the treatments than are people who said that they did not trust those elites.

Thus, we tentatively conclude that respondents in our survey gathered information about the endorsers through their endorsements of regime policies and thus responded more negatively afterwards when asked about women's representation—rather than responding more negatively mainly because they already had low trust in the endorsers. Of course, causal mechanisms in experiments are notoriously hard to identify (Bullock, Green and Ha, 2010). Future research could more thor-

oughly parse apart the causal mechanisms by including endorsements from elites who are not so plausibly linked to the authoritarian regime as well as by randomly manipulating the hypothesized mediating variables (e.g., information about the endorser's support of the regime) in addition to randomly assigning the treatments themselves (Imai et al., 2011).

5 Conclusion

Amidst foreign pressure to improve women's representation, Jordan adopted a six-seat quota for women in parliament in 2003 and doubled that quota in 2010. Since the Jordanian public holds generally inegalitarian views about gender and distrusts foreign influence, this paper sought to determine how elite endorsements of women's representation would affect popular support for that goal. In particular, it sought to measure the impact of American and Islamic elite endorsements on popular attitudes, both in general and conditional on support for the Jordanian regime. In order to do so, we conducted an original survey experiment in Jordan—the first of its kind in the country.

Informing respondents about an American endorsement of women's representation did not reduce popular support on average; informing them of a religious endorsement did not raise it. These findings challenged conventional wisdoms—expressed by policy makers and academics alike—about anti-Americanism and religion in the Arab world. In contrast, both the American and imams' endorsements reduced support for women's representation more among female respondents who opposed the Jordanian regime than among those who supported it. That female regime opponents responded negatively to women in politics when imams and the United States endorsed it reveals that studying the influence of elite cues requires taking into account regime type and political context. In Jordan, as in other authoritarian contexts, regime support or opposition is a crucial variable for understanding how ordinary citizens will respond to elite cues.

Like all experiments, this one sacrificed external validity in favor of internal validity. Several aspects of the survey's design do, however, promote the findings' generalization. The sample was

nationally representative; furthermore, the endorsements were plausible. Although the actors in our experiment have not publicly endorsed quotas, the National Democratic Institute and some imams have supported female political candidates, meaning the endorsements are believable. A very strong or unrealistic treatment can limit an experiment's findings (Gaines, Kuklinski and Quirk, 2007, 6). The tradeoff is that the plausibility of the endorsements may lead to pre-experimental exposure to the treatment. We addressed that concern by examining how the treatments affected respondents with varying degrees of political knowledge and assessing how frequently the endorsers were reported as supporting women's political participation in the press.

The findings contribute to both policy and theory. From a policy perspective, our findings contribute to discussions about how the United States should promote democracy in the Middle East. Since the Arab Spring, Arab commentators such as Wadah Khanfar, the former director general of *Al Jazeera*, as well as American officials, have emphasized that foreign actors must not taint the efforts of indigenous reformers.²⁵ At least for the case of gender quotas, our results show that liberal reform can be popular even if they are adopted under heavy international pressure. Even when the public generally distrusts the United States, American support for gender quotas does not necessarily undermine their legitimacy. If American support is not hurting public attitudes towards women in politics on average, its net effect on women's representation may be positive.

Furthermore, it appears that the United States' policy endorsements are seen as suspect only insofar as domestic opponents of the regime link them to an authoritarian regime's policies. American policy makers therefore should be mindful of whether or not their democracy promotion efforts can be perceived as reinforcing authoritarian regimes.²⁶ Of course, we cannot know if foreign pres-

²⁵Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Fiddling While Libya Burns," *New York Times*, March 13, 2011; and Shadi Hamid, "What Obama and American Liberals Don't Understand About the Arab Spring," *The New Republic*, October 1, 2011.

²⁶For some discussion of how American democracy promotion are at times compatible with authoritarian regimes, see Bush (2011a).

sure will be benign in other political contexts or on other issues. Still, our findings are significant for Jordan, where the United States has invested millions of dollars in improving women's representation. Insofar as Jordan is an exemplar of broader trends in Arab states in terms of foreign pressure, the findings are suggestive and call for further research in other settings.

From a theoretical perspective, our paper adapted theories of elite cues to authoritarian contexts. Trusted endorsements of regime-sanctioned policies can reveal an endorser's support of an unpopular regime and its policies and thus backfire among regime opponents. Thus, the overall context of authoritarian politics—in which certain policies, such as quotas, and certain elites, such as American officials and imams, can be perceived as supporters of the regime—may shape popular perceptions of the usefulness of said policies for larger issues like women's representation. It is not clear whether policy issues that do not deal with women's rights would elicit similar responses, but the findings pave the path for future work in this area.

To fully explore these implications, additional research is needed. Experimental research could examine if support for the regime moderates the influence of elite endorsements in other authoritarian contexts and on other policy issues. In Jordan, experiments could examine the effects of endorsements of women's representation by diverse religious leaders as well as by other "trusted" political elites, such as tribal leaders or the leaders of neighboring Arab countries. They could also examine the effects of non-political endorsements. Observational research could explore the effects of gender quotas on other outcomes in the context of international pressure. Do quotas and other international attempts to support women's representation generate better substantive representation for women? Other dependent variables—the number and type of women who are elected to public office, the policies that parliaments pass, and so on—should be examined. For now, our findings suggest that gender quotas can enjoy some popular legitimacy in authoritarian settings even as patterns of regime opposition may reduce support for elite-imposed women's rights.

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