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Women's Movements within Euro-Mediterranean Politics:

Necessity of Going beyond 'the Arab Woman'

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The image of the protesting Arab woman, once 'marginalized' and 'oppressed', but now 'emancipated', in Tahrir Square in January 2011 was only an episode, a moment, in a historical process that continues today with all its complexities. Europe has always been part of this complex historical process as a (neo)colonial power, a donor, a political ally of, and, sometimes, an obstacle to women's movements and their causes. These contradictory representations have intrinsically rendered southern Mediterranean women movements 'Euro-Mediterranean'. This chapter is an examination of women's movements in the southern Mediterranean region (primarily in North Africa), placing them within wider Euro-Mediterranean political and economic dynamics.

The argument is that women's movements in all their heterogeneity as secular, nationalist, leftist, Islamist, feminist, and non-feminist have been objects and subjects of Euro-Mediterranean politics since the colonial period. They have sometimes made uneasy alliances with states and 'Europe', and sometimes raised their critical voices against patriarchal/monial practices originating from their societies, states or 'Europe'. This analysis starts with the discussion of women's movements during the colonial era. In this period, women took part in anti-colonial struggles as Islamists, socialists, and nationalists. This is followed by a discussion of the second period when women's movements were banned, co-opted or instrumentalized by the postcolonial states. In this second period, women's movements continued their struggles, forming coalitions with both state and non-state level actors in order to advance their position. Europe was generally represented as a source of moral and political corruption whose colonial interests had never faded away. Towards the end of the period, Europe sometimes emerged as a new political ally, a donor, or sometimes as a neocolonial power. The second period ended with the Arab uprisings. Finally, the discussion will move to women's movements in the post-2011 Euro-Mediterranean region in order to analyse how the uprisings have affected the women in the region, and how 'Europe' has reacted to 'the awakening of Arab women'.

Women in Anticolonial Struggles

The emergence of the first women's movements in the southern Mediterranean occurred at a time not very different from that of their counterparts' in the north. Those in the north were preoccupied with struggles for universal suffrage and/or equal wages, depending on their ideological orientation. In addition to those struggles, women's movements in the

southern Mediterranean had to organize against colonialism and for national independence. In other words, 'Europe', by recourse to its colonialism, was a fundamental political dynamic for the first wave of women's movements. This anticolonial position has had recurring effects on the organizational structures and political alliances they have established, the strategies they have adopted, and the problems they have faced since the inception of women's movements. These effects are still echoed in contemporary Euro-Mediterranean politics.

The colonial period and the anticolonial struggles of southern Mediterranean countries resulted in two major modulations of Europe in particular and the West in general. The first one was the representation of Europe and colonial powers as the embodiment of political corruption, violent oppression of the colonized societies, and economic exploitation. This view, mainly shared by leftist, nationalist and/or Marxist groups, was countered by another modulation stemming from Islamist groups. While not completely abandoning the exploitative dimension of colonialism, this one mainly concentrated on a culturalist narrative. 'Europe' was represented as morally corrupt and as constantly attempting to spread its own cultural and political values such as secularism, materialism, and individualism (Jad, 2004: 34-5).

These two modulations are vital not only to understand the major political dynamics in the following decades in the region, but also, and more importantly, to understand how the issue of 'woman' was appropriated according to contending political ideologies, regime forces, and the opposition. It is also important for understanding what types of political activism women's movements had to pursue. Furthermore, women's movements developed diverse representations of Europe in their ideologies and activism. To put it differently, women, with their bodies and identities, found themselves in the uneasy junction of colonialism, anti-colonialism, Islamism, nationalism, and modernization as objects and subjects of politics.

In many southern Mediterranean countries, from Egypt to Tunisia, the modernization process and anticolonial (or pro-independence) struggles went in parallel in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Modernization of education, bureaucracy, and the military toat varying degrees in these counties led to the emergence of upper and middle class women who were politically conscious and economically (relatively) powerful enough to pursue their feminist political agendas, i.e. the Egyptian Feminist Movement (EFM) and the Modern Women Community in the Ottoman Empire. According to Hafez (2015: 48), 'the progression from Ottoman to European status symbols and shift in cultural norms brought about by modernization and colonialism caused many women to reflect on their contradictory plight as symbols of tradition and culture on the one hand, and as epitomising modernity and progress on the other'. Indeed, women were put at the centre of contestation between diverse political groups, whose representations of women varied.

In general, Islamists interpreted the increasing presence of women in the public space as another Western, colonial, and European infiltration to corrupt the Muslim society. This culturalist and essentialist view on society was not simply about women, but concerned the turbulence caused by modernization in society, and the political, economic and social reverberations of this process. Protecting Muslim women meant both fighting colonialism and conserving the Islamic essence of the society. As Kandiyoti (1991: 32) puts, Islamists were not against the adoption of the technology of the West, but its cultural infiltration had to be stopped, and this rendered discussions about polygyny and veiling central to political imaginations about what the society should be like. Surprisingly, modernist/nationalist/pro-left ideology was not immensely different from the latter. Duality marked their strategy of instrumentalization of women. On the one hand, the modernization of women was equated with that of society—the presence of women in the public space was represented as a signifier of being modern. On the other hand, an Egyptian or Algerian woman was represented as the keeper of the local values and traditions. Women of the nation were not simply those taking active part in public life as teachers, doctors, lawyers, politicians, but also and maybe more fundamentally, the wives and mothers who maintained the family and passed the nation's values to their children while preserving her honour in the public space (Hafez, 2015: 49-50). This dual role tailored for women had strong implications for women's movements in the following decades.

These complex dynamics in the region revealed gender to be one of the main determinants of politics, where women's movements developed diverse positions in relation to dominant political groups, Europe, and, also, to each other.

In many southern Mediterranean states, secular and Islamist women's movements emerged concomitantly. These movements made political alliances with dominant political groups depending on their position vis-à-vis Europe. For example, this division was observable in the EFM in Egypt, which was closer to secular/nationalist groups with membership of Muslims and Christian alike, and the Muslim Women's Society, founded in 1935 by Zeineb Al Ghazali. These movements developed alternative views about women, society, and modernization in their countries, which can be summed up as a dichotomy between 'secular' and 'Islamist' women's movements. However, this dichotomy should be approached cautiously, since these movements shared commonalities. Al Ghazali's feminist activism matured within the EFM, finding that it was not as 'secular' as it was presented. For example, its journal had articles criticizing the Turkish women who justified their emancipation by reference to foreign laws (particularly the Swiss-based civil code adopted in Turkey in 1926), arguing that Muslim women should be under Shari'ah (Badran, 1991: 210). Furthermore, in their struggles against colonialism, the secular–Islamist binary was dissolved. The EFM was joined by the Muslim Women's Society MWS and the Muslim Sisters in Egypt; in Algeria, women's accounts about the Algerian War of Independence were conglomerations of religion, culture, nation, country, and independence. As discussed below, the postcolonial states developed similar positions towards these organizations in banning or co-opting them.

Lastly, in this period, southern Mediterranean women's organizations engaged with international and regional activities. The EFM had close relations with the International Women's Suffragette Alliance; the Turkish Women's Association hosted the International Women's Conference in Turkey in 1935. Women's movements from different Arab countries also organized the pan-Arab Women's Conference in Cairo in 1945. These activities were important reminders to their counterparts in Europe of their 'white feminism' by opening up possibilities of diversifying women's experiences in the Euro-Mediterranean region (Jad, 2004: 36). Their international and regional activities continued until the postcolonial regimes co-opted them. Islamist women's organizations, however, formulated a more critical position towards these activities, as Europe in its totality was considered to be a culturally imperialist formation that essentially contradicted Islam.

This period left two important legacies for the women's movements in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Firstly, the emergence of contending women's movements and their participation in anti-colonial struggles in line with their ideological positioning not only signified women's activism and agency since their inception, but also revealed how women'smovements lay at the centre of discussions about what type of society and political organization the country should aim for. Secondly, women's movements were 'Euro-Mediterranean' in character, as 'Europe' was integral to their ideologies and politics.

State Feminism of Postcolonial Period in Euro-Mediterranean

Women actively took part in anti-colonial struggles, from Algeria to Egypt. They organised movements in Egypt and Algeria to mobilise women and men against the colonisers; public preachers emerged from these movements to keep up the morality of the units; women also became active participants in public life as nurses, teachers, and workers. Moreover, they joined active fighting individually or organised guerrilla groups, i.e. the *Moudjahidines,* the women fighters in the Algerian War of Independence. However, it must be noted that this active participation in the fight did not necessarily lead to boosting gender equality, as in the case of the Moroccan liberation struggle. Women were considered as 'helpers' rather than fighters, in spite of the high risk they faced when transporting weapons, guiding soldiers through the mountains, or carrying messages (Baker, 1998: 166). Following independence, both secular and Islamist parties in Algeria failed to promote the representation of women in politics (Abu Haidar and Amrane, 1999).

Feminist literature is rich in explaining the women who broke the patriarchal boundaries between the public and private during times of conflict; however, following the conflict, these women were expected to 'return' to the feminised private space. This pattern can be observed in the postcolonial states in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Most women's organisations were either banned, as in Egypt and Jordan, or co-opted, as in Syria, Algeria, and Tunisia, 'despite the broad-based nature of independence struggles' (Jad, 2004: 37). As a similar trend emerged in the post-uprisings period from 2011 onwards, it is important to

discuss how women's movements were positioned in the post-colonial states following the anti-colonial struggles.

As discussed above, a dynamic emerged within the modernisation discussions that were about the secularist and Islamist division in women's movements. This discussion was appropriated in the post-colonial period. The competition over women's bodies and identities became a question of what type of nation, society, individual and regime should be constructed. In postcolonial southern Mediterranean countries, different political projects capitalised on women's bodies and identities in order to justify and legitimise their own political agenda and marginalise the alternatives. In other words, divisions between Islamist and secularist women's movements with their crosscutting class hierarchies were reproduced by masculine political ideologies of nationalism/socialism, on the one hand, and political Islam, on the other, as the fundamental binary where the fate of the country lay.

This is the period of state feminism in the Euro-Mediterranean region. State feminism refers to a political ideology that appropriates some of the feminist objectives in the state's political agenda with the objective of increasing and consolidating the state's legitimacy internally and externally, and suppressing the domestic opposition by recourse to their criticisms of women's rights and freedoms. It should be noted that state feminism has not performed similarly across or within southern Mediterranean countries. Especially towards the end of this period, 'Europe', in the form of the European Union, became one of the actors that interacted with women's movements under the framework of state feminism and developmentalism.

Following Libyan independence in 1951, King Idris al-Sanusi launched a modernisation process focusing on development, education, and women's empowerment. The Women's Renaissance Society of Benghazi (1954) and Women's Society of Libya (1957) were two main women's movements that furthered women's empowerment in line with the modernising regime's political agenda. General Qadhafi's coup and his dictatorship from 1969 to 2011 generated difficult implications for women's movements, most of which were co-opted by the State. The Qadhafi regime's main principles involved gender equality along with socialism, Arabism, and anti-imperialism. He even took certain measures such as compulsory military service for women in 1979 in order to push women towards the public space. In 1989, Libya signed the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) with reservations. However, none of these led to more and equal participation of women in political, economic, and social life, partly because of the patrimonial state's presence that did not allow pluralism, and partly because of the auxiliary status of women's movements, rather than them being strong alternatives (Bugaighis, 2014: 107). Whereas Qadhafi appropriated and instrumentalized women's movements to consolidate his regime and power domestically and internationally, this did not prevent the regime from disciplining women's bodies, sexualities, and subjectivities in the name of

'Islamic identity', such as compulsory 'virginity tests' for girls and women accused of adultery (Alnaas and Pratt, 2015: 157-8).

A similar pattern can be observed in Tunisia as well. Tunisia became an independent state in 1956. Only five months after independence, the Family Code (CSP) was legalised, which promoted the status of women in public and social life. However, as Charrad (2001: 322) argues, the political agenda behind the CSP was nation-building by delegitimising and dissolving loyalties based on kinship and Islam. As in Libya, women were once more represented as the 'bearers' of the new independent Tunisian nation: their bodies and identities were modulated as the carriers of the new political agenda. The postcolonial state claimed itself as the protector and promoter of women's rights. While secular feminist movements found themselves as part of the state feminist political agenda, Islamist feminist movements (e.g. an-Nahdha) started to gain strength in the 1980s. Following Bourguiba, Ben-Ali mobilised 'both autonomous and state-affiliated feminist organizations against the Islamist political opposition' against the backdrop of rising popularity of an-Nahdha (Khalil, 2015: 62).

The case of Egypt shows both resemblances and differences with Libya and Tunisia. As regards similarities, the Nassar regime in Egypt from 1952 onwards integrated modernisation, nation-building, developmentalism, and increasing women's participation in the new state policy agenda. The Nasser regime quickly passed legislation about the rights of work and employment for women. To counter the Muslim Brotherhood-supported *fatwa* that claimed that granting political rights for women was against Islam, the regime granted universal suffrage in 1956. Meanwhile, the Egyptian Feminist Union was banned. Feminists formed other organisations, such as the Women's Committee for Electoral Awareness and the National Feminist Union, although they were quickly banned along with the Muslim Sisters. In 1964, organising women's political organisations was completely banned (Badran, 1991: 216-7). Anwar Sadat continued the practice of the Nasser regime to promote women's rights without provoking the rising political Islam in Egypt, all the while keeping the authoritarian grip on the women movements.

The Hosni Mubarak regime (1981–2011) was the period of neoliberalization, when the number of women's NGOs sharply increased. This was partly because 'the Mubarak regime sought to gain legitimacy in the international community as an arbiter of civil society' (Sika, 2014: 64). However, this meant that the state's coercive power on the women's movements partially decreased as the left-wing, Marxist, socialist, Islamist women's organisations increased in number, although this prevented them from forming a unified feminist movement (Sika, 2014: 64). Furthermore, the Mubarak regime successfully instrumentalised women's movements such as the National Council for Women. Important developments followed in the area of family law (such as the unconditional right for women to divorce) and in the public space (in 2003, the first female judges were appointed). In 2010, a quota for women in parliamentary elections was introduced (Hafez, 2015: 64). However, it must be

noted that state feminism *par excellence* in Egypt defined women as 'proper' or 'improper' based on their political views. Some secular, Islamist, Marxist women's movements actively participated in the first strong anti-Mubarak movement in 2004–2005, the *Kifayeh*, (Enough!). The regime thugs harassed protesting women violently under the auspices of the police (Sika, 2014: 65).

Whereas Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt were examples of state feminism where women's movements had to form uneasy alliances with the authoritarian regimes by constructing secular/Islamist women's movements' binaries, Algeria (until the civil war in 1991) and Morocco were the countries where the modernizing state sacrificed women's rights to appease the Islamist opposition. After the war of independence, Algerian women's movements gained some advances in political, social and economic rights (Sinha, 2014, 35). However, the Family Law especially was a subject of disagreement among the conservative and modernising elites, as the status of women was the backbone of their respective political agendas. In 1984, the Family Law was passed to appease the rising Islamist movement, including controversial closes on polygamy, the husband's right to denounce marriage leaving the women and children unprotected and even forced marriages (Charrad, 2001: 199). The rise of the Islamic Salvation Front and the civil war following the cancellation of the election in 1991 witnessed increasing violence towards women by the Islamists. However, women's movements continued their resistance through forming autonomous organisations such as the National Women's Coordination, Women Living under Muslim Law and Collectif 95 Maghreb Egalité.

Following Morocco's independence, the main Moroccan political parties, namely the Istiqlal Party and Democratic Party, formed women's branches. However, neither these party-affiliated movements nor Princess Lalla Aicha's support for women's rights generated any significant progress. At the beginning of the 2000s, the new king Mohamed VI gave signs of possible change in women's status in the family and personal status law, although he immediately retreated when the Islamist Justice and Development Party (*Parti de la Justice et du Développement*, PJD, after the similarly named Turkish party) organised a huge rally to halt the process (Touti, 2014: 123-4). When the Casablanca bombings (May 2013) forced political Islamists to the political margins, the women's organisations in Morocco seized the opportunity for new laws improving women's conditions. In October 2003, the king authorized a new nationality law granting some equality for women in family (Touti, 2014: 125).

The examples from different southern Mediterranean regimes highlighted that women's bodies and identities were a fundamental arena of contestation of opposing political projects. This was another area where the secular/Islamist binary was dissolved; that is, secular, nationalist, and socialist regimes claimed the ownership of female bodies to be disciplined, and through these disciplining practices, protected the moral essence (Islamism) of the society. Meanwhile, secular/Islamist binaries between the women's organisations

were constructed and consolidated by the regimes, while the 'proper' secular women's movements were to be heard by the regimes at the expense of other types of women's organisations. Notwithstanding the important improvements on women's rights in these countries, these improvements were instruments of regime consolidation (Ben Ali's Tunisia and Mubarak's Egypt), while women's organisations found themselves cooperating with the regimes in order to advance women's rights, given the existing legal constraints. However, this did not prevent secular and Islamist movements from uniting against misogynistic laws (Jünemann, 2013: 46). It must also be noted that women's movements that explicitly positioned themselves against the political and economic agenda of the regimes were persecuted by the regimes, which instrumentalized women's bodies and identities as a practice of appeasing the opposition, as in the case of Morocco and, especially, Algeria.

In the mid-1990s, women's movements in the southern Mediterranean were struggling with civil, family, and citizenship laws that hindered gender equality. They were also struggling with political, economic, and social marginalisation of women, as well as authoritarian governments that either appropriated women's causes for the state political agenda, or instrumentalized women's issues in their relations with the opposition. The European Union made its first entry into this political struggle in 1995.

The EU's first articulation of gender equality was integrated into the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, established in 1995. This was a novel initiative through which the EU adopted a proactive foreign policy in cooperation not only with southern Mediterranean states, but also with economic groups and civil society. According to one view, its holistic approach reflected a 'gendered human security' approach that extended the security policies from narrowly defined military security to human, economic, and political security (Harders, 2003). However, in spite of this holistic approach, women's issues were incorporated in the second basket (the Economic Partnership) only to promote the increasing role of women in development and employment, while the other two baskets did not include any clause about women or women's movements (Orbie, 2006: 62). This reductionist approach was attempted to be fixed from 2001 onwards by gender-mainstreaming the EMP. In 2001, the Commission and the EU Presidency organised a high-level forum on 'the role of women in economic development'. The conclusions of the forum were endorsed by the Euro-Mediterranean foreign ministers and in 2004 the 'Regional Programme on Enhancing the Role of Women in Economic Life' was launched to allocate €5 million to finance women entrepreneurs (Orbie, 2006: 63-4). The EU's approach shifted towards increasing gender equality through economic development, not *vice versa*.

In 2004 the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was launched, through which the 'women in development' approach of the EMP was replaced by a 'gender and development' approach. The latter refers to 'the integration of a gender equality perspective and gender equality aim into all policies, in an effort to transform society and obtain social justice for all people' (Debusscher, 2012: 323). The European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), as the new

financial tool, was introduced with a priority area of 'gender equality promotion'. However, a detailed analysis of the ENP has shown very little transformation on women's issues from an economic perspective (Debusscher, 2012: 333). Given the lack of improvement in gender equality in the southern Mediterranean, the Euro-Mediterranean ministerial conference in Istanbul in 2006 created the 'Istanbul Process', with an action plan of €4.5 million. However, the focus was again on increasing the role of women in economic life. The process was marginal to wider political relations (Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, 2009).

How did the women's movements relate to the EU's proactive economy-focused actorness? One of the primary implications of the new EU role in boosting civil society, including women organisations, has been 'NGO-ization' of the women's movements. According to Islah Jad (2004: 40-2), Arab women's movements have been going through a process in which establishing an NGO, rendering it attractive of EU or UN funding, and using the funds to 'educate' women have become main parameters of political activism. However, this has resulted in certain political and ethical problems. For example, NGOs often act like top-down agents of modern institutions. In addition to this, the organisation of NGOs with a board and a director with English language skills is less inclusive and egalitarian than women movements.

The EU's approach, however, suffers from deeper problems. According to extensive research by Debusscher (2012: 335), civil society voices have been critical of the reductionism of the EU that assumes causality between the free market economy and gender equality, while extremely important issues even in economic spheres, such as harassment in work places and unequal wages, have been ignored. Furthermore, in spite of the focus on 'gender', the EU's insistence solely on women has ignored the role of men in the reproduction of gender inequalities; and therefore, women have been represented as the only group with responsibility for creating the conditions of equality (Debusscher, 2012: 336). The EU's developmentalist approach certainly matched the neoliberalization process in southern Mediterranean countries. However, what kind of women's movements and to what extent they have benefited from this developmentalism remains an open question.

Another issue is the mismatch between the EU's prerogative and its approach to gender equality and women's movements' historically constructed struggles in their countries. It goes without saying that the economic promotion of women has been part of the agenda of women's movements, although this agenda involves more than an economic objective. As discussed above, women's movements in the southern Mediterranean have struggled with laws and social norms that obscure gender equality by silencing and marginalising women. Family laws, citizenship laws, and civic laws have always been part of their political agenda. In their activism they often conflict with authoritarian regimes or social forces, whose contending political projects are realised through disciplining women's bodies and identities. However, the EU's relations with women's movements have been shaped in a way that has sidelined these historical political struggles, by prioritizing the economic dimension at the

expense of others. Whenever the EU makes a move towards promoting gender equality even in economic terms, it is always followed by a clause that the recommended measures should be in line with religious and cultural values, exactly those against which women's movements have fought (Orbie, 2006: 64). While doing this, and thus adopting a culturalist approach, the EU chose to exclude Islamist women organisations as partners (Jünemann, 2013: 47) .

During this period, which ended finalised with the Arab uprisings, the EU actively participated in gender politics by interacting with women's movements, providing financial resources and offering certain agendas. 'Europe' was no longer a model to be followed, a colonialist to be fought, or cultural imperialist. Women's political struggles have been influenced by the EU as a donor and source of funding. The latter's cautious approach can be explained by the political objective of not invoking the colonial memories of Western cultural imperialism and the imposition of certain values. However, this led to two problems: firstly, in relation to development and EU funding, colonial presence 'echoed' in women movements (Jad, 2004: 35); secondly, the EU's economy-oriented gender equality agenda did not always match that of women's movements, who were fighting family laws, oppressive politics, and social norms. The next section will discuss how the Arab uprisings have affected these relations.

Women's Movements in the Post-Arab Uprisings Period

The uprisings, which started in Tunisia in 2010 and spread almost to the entire MENA region, were a turning point for Euro-Mediterranean politics due to the fall of certain authoritarian regimes and changing geopolitical dynamics (Syrian civil war, competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran). The uprisings were also fundamental for women's movements in wider Euro-Mediterranean politics. This importance does not stem from the orientalist point of view that Arab women had finally 'awakened' and broken their chains of conservatism. The discussion has so far highlighted how women's movements in the Euro-Mediterranean region had actively performed politics at societal, state and regional levels. What renders the uprisings a turning point for women's movements was that, for the first time since the anti-colonial struggles, women with different identities and subjectivities interacted with each other, resisted together, and formed a collectivity in occupied squares and streets. Secular, Islamist, nationalist, and socialist feminists as well as women who did not identify with any of these ideologies not only talked to each other, but also developed trust between themselves by blurring the dichotomies created in the previous decades (Bilgic, 2015).

The uprisings are one episode in the prolonged historical process of women's movements in the region, as the developments during and after the uprisings underline that the political dynamics that shaped previous decades' women activism still continue to operate in the region. For example, in Egypt, following the fall of the Mubarak regime, women and men who came together to celebrate International Working Women's Day were severely harassed. When most of them were placed under custody by the interim military

government, women were forced to have 'virginity tests'; a supporter of compulsory tests from the government even argued that 'these girls are not like mine or your daughters. They stay with men in their tents on the square' (Abouelnaga, 2015: 43-4). This practice was also one of the 'secular' Mubarak government's practices towards the dissident women in the name of preserving the moral identity of the society by disciplining women, whose 'honour' and body was embodied in society.

Tunisia was another example where the authoritarian regime's legacy shaped the interim period between the revolution and the first free elections. In spite of the wide participation of women in the revolution, women were marginalized during this period. Dissident women were excluded from power positions, where only a few women (three at ministerial level, two of whom proceeded to resign) were 'allowed' (Khalil, 2015: 62). In spite of this, secular/left-wing women's organisations, such as the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women, and urban Islamist women movements, such as *En-Nour* from Tataouine, have become politically active (Khalil, 2015: 66-7). In Libya, women's civil society activism, such as that of the Libyan Women's Platform for Peace, secured 16.5% female representation in the new parliament (Langhi, 2015: 73). The M20 movement in Morocco successfully campaigned and achieved a gender equality clause in Article 19 of the Constitution (Touti, 2014: 130). That said, in some post-revolution states such as Egypt, the previously gained rights of women came under threat. The Mursi-led Muslim Brotherhood regime in Egypt not only resulted in less representation of women in politics, but also the new Constitution included elements in direct conflict with women's rights and freedoms. Meanwhile, the women's movements' struggle continued (Morsy, 2015: 90-6).

As in previous decades, state feminism, divisions between different women's movements, and patriarchal regimes' desire to discipline women were still shaping regional politics. A difference may be that Islamist women's movements increasingly performed political activism. In Libya, after the revolution, Islamist women's movements such as *Harakat Qalam*, joined by the Muslim Brotherhood, run a campaign against CEDAW; their objective was to replace gender equality with gender complementarity (Alnaas and Pratt, 2015: 161). However, it can be misleading to put all Islamist women's movements categorically in the same basket. For example, in Egypt, while the International Islamic Committee of Women and Children has promoted an anti-feminist agenda, Women and Civilization has explored 'an Islamic, feminist epistemology and a discourse that is critical of both patriarchal interpretations of Islam and secular perspectives' (Abou-Bakr, 2015: 195). In Tunisia, radical, democratic, and Islamic women's movements also compete and interact with each other, having common goals such as addressing violence against women (Muhanna, 2015). These encounters and interactions can deepen the ideological differences among the movements, but also indicate healthy democratic competition. Moreover, as in previous decades, the interpretation of Islam has remained a platform where different feminist perspectives compete with one another.

While the region has been changing, how has the EU positioned itself vis-à-vis the women's movements? The EU's main reaction was the formulation of the New European Neighbourhood Policy (NENP). In 2013, the Commission (2013) stated that:

> Cultural and social discrimination against women remains a problem in the Southern neighbourhood. Women played an active part in the revolutions. Now it is crucial that the transition process and constitutional reform do not hinder progress on, or undermine the equality of women before the law and in society.

Does the above statement mean that the EU will retreat from the position of 'being sensitive to cultural differences'? Not necessarily. However, there is an *intention* that the EU will take a more active role in increasing political participation for women and supporting women's movements working towards this end (Robinson, 2013). This would correspond to the political agendas of most of the women's organizations discussed above furing the post-uprisings' period. However, caution is in order here. In a 2011 document, political participation of women was related to economic growth and job creation objectives (European Commission, 2011). In addition, 'Spring for Women', launched in 2012 with UN Women allocated €7.2 millon, largely focused on the economic empowerment of women through micro-financing. The former EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, similarly highlighted the role of microcredit in women's empowerment, thus following the pre-uprisings trend; she also opened the door to the possibility that the EU would be more influential in social discrimination through civil society support (Kunz and Maisenbacher, 2015: 13).

It is clear that during the post-uprisings period, the EU has engaged in some attempts to release gender equality from the narrowly defined economic agenda, with the objective of adressing the issue in its complexity. However, its success is questionable. Against the backdrop of colonial history and cultural neoimperalism accusations, it is a challenging task for the EU to promote its own agenda on gender. Additionally, if the EU decides to become more active, it will need to work with local women's movements. Then, the question would arise of which movements the EU would like to work with, given the rise in Islamist women's movements, without invoking its culturalist approach that excludes 'certain' women's movements as partners (Jünemann, 2013: 53). Finally, a recently published report by International Cooperation and Development (2015) on the behalf of the EU Commission revealed that the EU has not been giving necessary institutional support to gender equality in partner countries.

Conclusion

In this chapter, it has been argued that women's movements have been a constitutive dynamic of Euro-Mediterranean politics since the colonial period. Three conclusions can be derived from the analysis. The first is that, in all three periods, the European political, ideological, and economic presence in the region has been one of the determinants of gender politics. Women have often found themselves in a position where they must praise

or condemn 'Europe' in order to advance their struggles. The second theme is Islam, which defies the orientalist reading thereof. Islam has been one of the most important platforms through which women's movements performed their politics. Thirdly, given the ongoing struggles in the field, Euro-Mediterranean politics will continue to be shaped by the dynamics of gender and sex. Women's movements will remain one of the main groups of agents shaping, and being shaped by, this regional politics.

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