

States and Women's Rights in Central Asia

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Abstract:

In light of the U.S. involvement in the Middle East in the last decade, and more recently, a wave of popular uprisings in the region, Muslim societies have drawn much sociological interest. The position of women, a traditionally vulnerable group at times of political upheaval, is a topic of pressing concern. This paper applies findings from Mounira Charrad's (2001) *States and Women's Rights* to the new states of Central Asia. Charrad argued that kin group involvement in state formation determined whether North African law codes would be gender-egalitarian. In Central Asia we find that globalization led to liberal family codes, but these codes are often unenforced. Considering other measures, we find that women's status is higher than Charrad's findings would predict. We also see within-region variation that is inconsistent with an overall high degree of clan involvement. We argue that colonialism accounts for both anomalies: The Soviets created egalitarian institutions that still persist, but penetration was uneven and provoked different reactions. In Uzbekistan the Soviets unwittingly transformed the veil into a badge of resistance but did not alter local kin networks; today gender conservatism helps define Uzbek identity. Kazakhstan experienced no anti-veiling campaign, but the Soviets profoundly altered local networks; today Kazakhstan has the lowest inequality in Central Asia. Generalizing from these findings we suggest that kin dominance of local networks post-Arab-Spring will shape whether women's rights are legally enforced.

INTRODUCTION

Central Asian countries have grown in their strategic importance to the United States because of the availability of oil and access to Afghanistan on one hand, and the seeming fragility of these states on the other. For instance, the little known Kyrgyz Republic made headlines in the US in Summer 2010 because a revolution seemed to threaten the American-owned Manas Air Base, used to ship supplies to Afghanistan. The five Central Asian republics, formerly part of the Soviet Union, have traditionally been shielded from Western researchers by the exigencies of the cold war politics. As part of the effort to shed light on these lesser known Muslim societies, our article scrutinizes state formation and women's rights in Central Asia with a particular emphasis on Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. We chose these two countries because they represent divergent paths of post-independence transition and changes in women's rights.

In developing our theoretical framework, we take as a departure point Mounira Charrad's (2001) analysis of women's rights outcomes in post-colonial North Africa. Our work shares with Charrad a de-emphasis of the role of Islamic scripture in explaining women's rights in Islamic societies, focusing instead on the utility of kin group involvement in state formation. As distinct from North Africa, Central Asian legal codes dealing with women are almost uniformly enlightened, but what happens "on the ground" reveals more variation. We suggest that given the isomorphism of legal codes, for contemporary states the issue becomes one of enforcement rather than creation. We find that the relationship between native Central Asians and the Soviet Union, the colonizing

power, can account for both the relatively egalitarian nature of these societies overall and the on-the-ground variation between them. In particular, we focus on two countries, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, to suggest the importance of micro-level networks for shaping whether women take advantage of their legal rights.

To measure the viability of the framework, we test it on empirical cases of newly formed states. This paper examines Central Asia, an area that, while ethnically different from the Middle East and North Africa, shares with them Islamic culture, a history of colonialism, and a society with a strong clan or lineage component. We propose that our analysis not only elucidates the relationships between women's rights and state formation in Central Asia, but may also provide a theoretical framework for understanding the effects of the recent popular uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East on the conditions of women.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Comparative-historical sociologists have made great strides in understanding revolution and state formation (e.g., Sanderson 2005; Skocpol 1979 Moore 1993; Kiser and Kane 2001); the next step is to understand the variation in the revolution's impact. We focus here on how new state formation affects women. Perhaps the most important work in sociology to address this question is Mounira Charrad's (2001) *States and Women's Rights*. Using the variation in levels of women's rights in North Africa to counter claims that Islam inevitably leads to gender inequality, she demonstrates instead that the more kin groups were involved in North African state-making, the worse off

women were (as measured by legal statutes). While Charrad restricted her analysis to Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, her focus on causal mechanisms makes her findings ripe for application. It is too soon to know how post-revolutionary states in the Middle East and North Africa will evolve, but applying the mechanisms she identified to other newly independent states in Islamic societies will serve as a first step toward understanding more generally how state formation affects women's rights.

Charrad's explanation centers on the role of kin groups. Scholars have become increasingly interested in the relationships between the family and the state, including both government influence on family law through welfare policies as well as the influence of family on state formation (Haney and Pollard 2003; Hartman 2004; Shamma 2002; Adams 2007; Adams forthcoming; Loos 2006; Thomas 2003; Collins 2006; Pollard 2005; Glosser 2003; O'Connor et al. 1999; Sainsbury 2000; Khoury and Kostiner 1990; Najmabadi 2005; Htun 2003; Miler 1998; Khazeni 2010; Kandiyoti 1991). Most recently, patrimonialism, referring to political systems that involve kinship or kin-like ties (Charrad and Adams 2011:7), was the focus of an issue of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*. Understanding the influence of family (in this context referred to as "tribes," "clans," or "kin groups") continues to be relevant for understanding a variety of governmental and human rights issues in Africa,

the Middle East, and Asia.¹ Indeed, the persistence of these groups in a world organized into a state system suggests that this topic has the promise of building on and advancing the gains made by comparative-historical work on state formation. Thus far, however, a great deal of this work has focused on single-country studies, or, less often, single-region studies, and generally has not sought to create more general theories about the interrelationships between family and the state.

Other work on Islamic societies gives provisional support for applying Charrad's findings from the North African case. For instance, a comparison of state formation in Iraq and Lebanon revealed that a conscious strategy by the Iraqi government to curtail the influence of kin groups was associated with increased availability of education and work opportunities for women, relative to the lack of these opportunities in Lebanon, where the government delegated most personal status laws to religious authorities (Joseph 1991). This example illustrates that evidence can be found outside of North Africa for the importance of kin groups in shaping women's rights and opportunities and suggests that Charrad's model may form the basis of the beginnings of a theory of state formation and women's rights.

¹ Scholars have discussed at length the motivation for using terms such as kin grouping, clan, and tribe. In this paper, we use the term 'clan,' as it is the most commonly used in work on Central Asia. For a discussion of these terms, see Khoury and Kostiner 1990; Charrad 2011; Charrad 2001; and Collins 2009. Ilkhamov (2004) challenges the use of the term 'clan' for Central Asia, claiming that it implies a unit based on common descent when in fact these groupings can include a variety of informal partnerships including reciprocal exchanges between coworkers, neighbors, or classmates. However, most sociological discussions recognize the relevance of non-kin-based ties (e.g., Charrad and Adams 2011; Collins 2011).

In particular, Charrad's (2001) focus on post-colonial Islamic societies provides a useful model for investigating state formation and women's rights in Central Asia. Perhaps because of the region's increasing visibility, scholars have been directing their attention to the transition to independence of Central Asian countries (Collins 2006; Luong 2004; Edgar 2004; Sahadeo and Zanca 2007; Roy 2000). Scholars agree that clan politics are key for understanding the region. For instance, Collins (2006) argues that the persistence of kin groups (or "clans") in Central Asia influences the nature and direction of regime transition as well as post-transition regime durability. A separate strand of research has explored women's rights in Central Asia, especially Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (Abashin 2000; Northrop 2004; Massell 1974 Kamp 2008; Corcoran-Nantes 2005; Kasymova 2006; Racioppi and See 2009; Gunes-Ayata and Ergun 2009; Urazimova 2006; Kasymova 2002).

Charrad's compelling analysis of North Africa leads us to combine these two strands of research on Central Asia to ask to what extent the involvement of kin groups in state formation has affected women's rights. We argue that the Central Asian cases are generally consistent with Charrad's finding that more kin involvement in state formation is associated with fewer rights for women. However, two anomalies arise: First, given the high degree of kin group involvement in state formation across Central Asia, women's status is not as low as Charrad's findings would predict. In addition, Kazakhstan emerges here as an exception, with gender equality ratings higher than some European countries.

We argue that the nature of colonial interactions can account for both of these anomalies. In particular, the relatively high degree of penetration by the Soviet state into

Central Asian societies left an imprint on social institutions that could be a double-edged sword. On one hand, the Soviet state created unprecedented opportunities for women in the areas of work and education that have lasted post-Independence and might account for the relatively low level of gender inequality, compared to other non-OECD countries. On the other hand, the Soviet attempt to “liberate” women from their families’ control, as exemplified by a brutal anti-veiling campaign in Uzbekistan, would ultimately lead traditional roles for women to become a marker of cultural and national identity. Focusing on the contrasting cases of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, we argue that pre-colonial characteristics (namely how sedentarized a society was) together with colonial action (such as the extent to which local network composition was altered) shaped the degree to which gender conservatism became a badge of identity.

Kin Groups, the State, and Women’s Rights in North Africa and Central Asia

In North Africa, post-colonial family policy was shaped both by pre-colonial Islamic law and the independent state’s relationship with kin groups in the process of state formation (Charrad 2001). (Family policy focuses on practices related to divorce, inheritance, and polygamy.) Charrad (2001: 9) defines kin groups as a segment of a tribe –smaller but sharing the same logic of organization as a tribe, which in the Maghribi context “is best conceptualized as a political entity, bound by shared conceptions of patrilineal kinship serving as a basis for solidarity, and oriented toward the collective defense of itself as a group.” Writing about Central Asia, Kathleen Collins (2006:17) uses the term “clan” (which will adopt for the remainder of this paper), which she describes as

“an informal organization comprising a network of individuals linked by kin and fictive kin identities”. Clan ties are “networks based on the rational calculations of the individuals made within a collectivist cultural and institutional context” (Collins 2006: 17).

Both of these definitions share an emphasis on kinship as a basis for solidarity, which is oriented toward furthering the group’s self-interest; indeed, Collins (2006: 26) refers to Charrad’s definition in forming her own. (While not making it central to her definition, Collins (2005:44), like Charrad (2001:9) notes the importance of patrilineal organization.) In addition, like Charrad’s “kin groupings,” clans are smaller subdivisions of tribes, a term avoided partly for its primordial connotations and partly because of its inaccuracy in the Central Asian context; the Soviet system destroyed the nomadic tribes in many areas (Collins 2006: 37). We believe that Collins’ emphasis on the network organization of clans is a useful addition to Charrad’s definition because it points to an underlying mechanism for how clans penetrate formal government.

In Morocco, French colonialism left kin groups in place, and at independence the Moroccan monarchy co-opted these kin groups. The monarchy pursued policies that preserved kin-based solidarities in politics, administration, and family law, which retained its Islamic roots, favoring patrilineal and subordinating women (Charrad 2001:158). In Algeria, colonialism destroyed some tribes while leaving others in place. Here, Algeria retained most points of the conservative Islamic code, but for more than twenty years the Algerian Family Code was upheld by those reformers who favored a more liberal view of the family. This paralysis was based in differences between those

segments of the government who wanted to transform extended kinship and those who wanted to preserve it (Charrad 2001: 200). Ultimately, however, the Algerian government tried to diminish the appeal of Islamic fundamentalism, which it viewed as a rival, by adopting the conservative, rather than the reformed version of the Family Code. By contrast, Tunisia inherited a relatively strong bureaucracy from pre-colonial and colonial periods that remained relatively autonomous from tribal groupings. As a result, Tunisia alone adopted a family law that gave greater rights to women (Charrad 2001).

Clan Involvement in Central Asia

In Central Asian countries, there is less variation in kin involvement in state formation. Prior to 1917 ethnic identities in Central Asia were relatively unimportant (Edgar 2006); instead, “tribal designations were far more significant to individual identity than broader categories such as ‘Turk’ or ‘Tajik’ “(Khalid 1998). These tribes, or clans, were essential for the functioning of society and engaged in social, economic, and political activity. For instance, leaders of clan villages were responsible for implementing customary law before the emergence of the modern state (Collins 2009). A number of scholars argue that despite Soviet attempts to root out clans, clans persisted throughout the Soviet period (Schatz 2004; Collins 2009; Northrop 2004; Dzhemal 2004).

In fact, some scholars argue that because the Soviet state was based on an economy of shortage in which kinship connections were key to access to goods and services, the state was actually the reason clans persisted (Schatz 2004). Moreover, Moscow’s desire to keep power in the hands of a stable, educated, more Russified elite helped keep clans in

power (Collins 2009). Indeed, virtually all of the leaders of the Central Asian republics are linked to the most powerful clans who have dominated the region for centuries (Collins 2002). For instance, Islam Karimov, who shifted from Party Secretary to President at the time of Uzbekistan's independence, was chosen during the Soviet period because he had the support of the leaders of the most important clans, in particular Ismail Djurabekov, minister for Water Management, and Shukrullo Mirsaidov, the mayor of Tashkent, (at Independence, Deputy Prime Minister and Prime Minister, respectively (Ilkhamov 2004). Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan are all dominated by "the hegemony of clan politics" (Collins 2009: 60).

Clans penetrate the government in three ways: (1) kin-based patronage; (2) asset-stripping; and "crowding out" of formal institutions (Collins 2009: 60). At all levels, clan members with access to state institutions dole out positions through patronage rather than through merit. For instance, Kazakhstan's President Nazarbayev "skillfully dispenses political patronage in order to enrich his relatives, maintain the support of close allies, and to co-opt potential opposition" (Luong 2004: 273). Indeed, almost his entire family holds positions of power in the Kazakhstan government: two of three daughters, his wife, and his sons-in-law (Dzhemal 2004). More generally, very few Kazakhs entered the political elite without connections, "and the younger members who rose meteorically to prominence at the end of the 1990s were often either relatives or close friends of the regime" (Cummings 2005:110). Similarly, in Uzbekistan, Radio Free Europe reports that President Karimov's daughter Gulnara, a jewelry designer (described by WikiLeaks as "the most hated person in Uzbekistan" for her corruption), is being groomed to succeed

him. Clan elites also use the clan to “crowd out” more formal organizations (such as political parties, unions, and class organizations) to mobilize social support for their agendas (Collins 2009). For instance, when a Kazakh elder criticized President Nazarbayev, within a few days, 30,000 members of his clan joined the opposition party, Ak Zhol (Dzhemal 2004). In short, clan involvement was uniformly high across Central Asia post-Independence.

Measuring Women’s Rights in North Africa and Central Asia

If clan involvement in Central Asian state formation was uniformly high, we would expect, based on Charrad’s findings, that women’s rights would be correspondingly low. However, applying Charrad’s (2001) argument to Central Asia reveals how geopolitical context can influence family codes. In particular, we see a uniformly rosy picture across Central Asian countries: Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan all have laws protecting women’s inheritance, right to divorce, and right to monogamy (Gunes-Ayata and Ergun 2009; OECD 2009; Kasymova 2006; Abashin 2000). However, this uniformity in *de jure* equality reflects more about the role of globalization in the years since North African countries gained independence. To be integrated into the Western world now requires becoming members of international organizations and ratifying international treaties dealing with human rights, and by the time of Central Asian independence women’s rights were central to human rights norms, “thereby becoming a yardstick for a country’s prestige in the international community” (Gunes-Ayata and

Ergun 2009, p. 220). Therefore, globalization is essential for understanding post-Soviet gender politics (Gunes-Ayata and Ergun 2009).

Yet in many Central Asian countries there is a gap between theory and practice; despite committing to international norms on gender equality, there is weak state-level implementation of policies that support these norms (Gunes-Ayata and Ergun 2009). These policies often contradict customary law, and for women to seek protection under civil law can mean the ostracism or retribution of their communities against themselves or their families (Corcoran-Nantes 2005). For example, legal codes protect women's property but often are not enforced, and domestic violence continues to be a problem across Central Asian countries (OECD 2009). In Uzbekistan, for instance, Human Rights Watch considered domestic violence to be such a serious problem that it conducted an investigation that led to a report entitled "Sacrificing Women to Save the Family?" (Corcoran-Nantes 2005: 153). Overall, a kind of geopolitical isomorphism generated enlightened family codes across Central Asia, but these codes are not necessarily good indicators of women's rights. Therefore, Charrad's measure of women's rights, family law codes, is not adequate for understanding women's experiences or the impact of kin groups in Central Asia.

Despite the relative uniformity of legal codes, other indicators suggest that women enjoy different levels of rights in each country. One important dataset for comparing women's rights cross-nationally is the OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), which provides a composite measure of gender inequality based on the OECD's Gender, Institutions, and Development Database for 124 non-OECD countries. The SIGI

ranking focuses on “the root causes behind inequalities” rather than inequality outcomes (<http://www.genderindex.org>), and takes into account not only the existence of legal protections for women, but also to what extent they are enforced in each country. The SIGI measures inequality in five areas: Family Code, Physical Integrity, Son Preference, Civil Liberties and Ownership Rights. Central Asian countries that share the common Soviet experience have the following rankings:

Table 1: Rankings of Gender Inequality in Central Asia

Ranking*	Country	SIGI Score**
3	Kazakhstan	.00
30	Kyrgyz Republic	.03
35	Tajikistan	.03
49	Uzbekistan	.04
59	Turkmenistan	.10

*Among non-OECD countries. The lower the ranking, the higher the level of gender equality. The highest score (.68) is for Sudan, with 100 of 102 countries falling in the range between .00 and .34.

**The lower the score, the higher the level of gender equality

The table rankings reveals that countries in the same region, with similar levels of kin involvement as well as the same Islamic and colonial heritage, do exhibit different levels of discrimination. The range of scores is narrow, so they show little variation: While they technically range from 0 (low/no discrimination) to 1 (high discrimination), in fact the highest score is .68 (Sudan); for Europe and Central Asia the scores range only from .00 to .12. Therefore the actual range of the index is much narrower than the theoretical range, so the low level of variation in Central Asian scores should be interpreted in that context. We therefore believe it is more useful to focus on the relative rankings of these countries, and these rankings reveal a large disparity in women’s rights.

Qualitative evidence also reveals a discrepancy between the group of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan on one hand, and Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on the other. For instance, Gunes-Ayata and Ergun (2009) found that declining divorce rates, increase in school dropouts for girls, the reinstatement of male favoritism in agricultural labor, and low female labor rates are more serious in Uzbekistan than in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. They also argue that in Uzbekistan “reconsolidation of traditional gender roles became a part of the new national identity” (2009: 215).

Similarly, a comparative ethnography of gender relations in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan found that in Uzbekistan there was a much clearer gender differentiation such that “men should be household heads and represent the family in public” and that husbands “should explicitly exercise dominance over their wives” (Sancak and Finke 2007: 171). In addition to representing their families in public, men have the final say in all domestic affairs (Sancak and Finke 2007). By contrast, in Kazakhstan, “gender relations tended to be of a rather egalitarian nature,” with women taking part in all family decisions (Sancak and Finke 2007; 165). It is common for women to become the main breadwinner of the household, and men and women talk to one another freely and both appear in public, sometimes in mixed groups (Sancak and Finke 2007).

To some degree, women’s rights have eroded since the fall of the Soviet regime (Constantine 2007; Sahadeo and Zanca 2007; Corcoran-Nantes 2005; Kamp 2004). While polygamy is officially outlawed in all Central Asian countries, there is evidence for its re-emergence across Central Asia (Abashin 2000; Kasymova 2006). In some cases son preference leads husbands to take second or third wives – after a first has already been

forced to have multiple births (Abashin 2000; Kasymova 2006). In Tajikistan women face extreme pressure to remain virgins until they marry and shame when they do not (Temkina 2006), and across Central Asia non-consensual bride-kidnapping has become a problem, in some cases resulting in suicide.² Many observers have commented on the erosion of women's rights since the fall of the Soviet Union; girls and women "face newer restrictions and demands in relation to their socializing, potential marriage partners, reproductive choices, and household work burdens" (Sahadeo and Zanca 2007, 86).

However, when we consider the uniformly high level of clan involvement in state formation (Collins 2010; Edgar 2004), we see two inconsistencies with Charrad's findings for North Africa. First, despite the severity of the problems described above, as compared to other non-OECD countries, all of these countries (except, arguably, Turkmenistan) achieve relatively low levels of discrimination. Indeed, the SIGI website notes that "overall women in... Central Asia enjoy high levels of equality in all aspects of society." The uniformly high degree of clan involvement in state formation and the relatively low level of gender inequality seems inconsistent with Charrad's (2001) major finding that clan involvement is associated with a restriction of women's rights. In addition, there is within-region variation in women's rights – for example, Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic are relatively gender egalitarian, compared to the other three Central Asian countries – despite consistently high clan involvement in state formation. If

² In some cases brides conspire in their own kidnapping, either because the couple fear parents' opposition to the match or because the man's family is too poor to pay the bridewealth. However, one study in Kyrgyzstan found that women consented in only one-fourth of the kidnappings (Amsler and Kleinbach 1999).

clan involvement in state formation stifles women's rights, why does Kazakhstan, for instance, fare so well?

How Do Kin Groups Influence Gender Equality in Central Asia?

The Central Asian cases raise two interesting questions about Charrad's argument about kin groups and state formation. First, why is the level of actual equality in Central Asian countries relatively high, given the preponderance of clan involvement in state formation? Second, if both clan involvement and rights under family law are relatively constant, how then do we account for variation in women's actual experience? These questions taken together raise a third: how might the case of Central Asia add nuance to Charrad's ideas of states and women's rights in a way that will form a foundation of theorizing the relationship between kin groups and state formation?

Colonial Experience and Identity Formation

Institutions Fostering Gender Equality

One major distinguishing factor between the North African cases and the Central Asian ones is geopolitical: the nature of the colonial experience. Unlike the French in North Africa, Soviet policies aimed at fostering gender equality. The Soviets saw women as the "keystone of a closed family system which operated as a screen to block the ideological and cultural influence of the Russian model" and hence were motivated to liberate women to advance their agenda (Roy 2000: 79). Indeed, Massell (1974) famously argued that Central Asian women constituted a "surrogate proletariat" in a region where a

Marxist-defined proletariat did not exist. As a result, the Soviet effort to draw women into political and economic life and to redefine the relationship of the family to society was “perhaps the most far-reaching attempt to transform the status and role of women” (Lapidus 1978: 3). Although some scholars are skeptical about the degree to which Soviet policies actually achieved women’s integration into public life (e.g., Lapidus 1978), “one cannot deny the social and economic benefits the Soviet system provided to women, such as education, participation in the labor force, and political representation through a quota system that increased women’s participation in public life” (Gunes-Ayata and Ergun 2009).

A close eye was also kept over private life to promote women’s rights, in order to stamp out “backwards” practices. According to Gunes-Ayata and Ergun (2009: 213) during the Soviet period “men would not dare” commit domestic violence for fear of being punished by the local Party branch. Similarly, polygamy was not only morally unacceptable but also carried a potential jail sentence of up to five years (Abashin 2000; Temkina 2006). It would have been impossible to keep girls home from school; divorces were settled so that men had obligatory financial duties to their children, and battles were waged against polygamy, bride price and underage marriage (Gunes-Ayata and Ergun 2009; Werner 2004).

Although Soviet modernization strategies penetrated Central Asia violently and unevenly, the Soviets created institutions that set a precedent for governmental sponsorship of gender equality (even if this was never fully realized). This may account

for the relatively low level of gender inequality in Central Asia, as compared to other non-OECD countries.

Within-Region Variation

The Soviet impact on women's rights was a double-edged sword, as fostering gender equality aimed partly at destroying Islam, and Central Asians seemed cognizant of the connection (Northrop 2004; Kamp 2006; Corcoran-Nantes 2005; Kasymova 2006). For the Soviets, emancipating Central Asian women would "constitute the linchpin of first the repression and later the destruction of Islam in the region" by replacing shariat and customary law with civil law (Corcoran-Nantes 2005: 39, Abashin 2000; Kasymova 2006).

The double project of emancipating Central Asians from patriarchy and religion was experienced differently across the region, and this was due to the interaction between colonizer and colonized. Like the French in North Africa, the Soviets pursued different policies in different colonies, and we argue that the different policies and different pre-colonial characteristics that underlay them, are key for understanding contemporary regional variation in the enforcement of women's rights. We focus on two cases for comparison: Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

As distinct from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan had a long history of settlement, urbanization, and a tradition of female seclusion and veiling. As a result, Uzbek cities became the target of a massive campaign that propelled the veil to a symbol of cultural and national identity that continued post-Independence (Northrop 2005). The violent

outry from Uzbeks, however, led the Soviets to back away from this policy and made them reluctant to penetrate local networks any further. As a result, local kin-based networks were left intact.

The seat of Soviet governance was Tashkent in Uzbekistan, and it was here that female seclusion was most entrenched. As a result, this was where the massive, brutal campaign against veiling was centered (Corcoran-Nantes 2005; Northrop 2004; Kamp 2006). This campaign resulted in waves of reactionary violence that left some thousand unveiled women dead, murdered by relatives or rebels (Corcoran-Nantes 2005; Akiner 1997). The unveiling campaign, which sometimes resulted in women being intimidated or forced into unveiling, “was a definitive episode in the social transformation of the region,” which for Central Asians constituted “a defeat and a brutal rape: the honour and dignity of the community was suddenly and monstrously violated” (Akiner 1997: 271). The backlash against the unveiling campaign was greater than any resistance the Soviets had encountered in Central Asia to this point (Corcoran-Nantes 2005). According to one scholar (Akiner 1997: 271), no other measure of Soviet policy – not the closure of the mosques, the sedentarisation of the nomads, collectivization or the purges – provoked such violent and outspoken resistance.

By contrast, Kazakh women, like many nomads, did not have a tradition of veiling (Corcoran-Nantes 2005), so the Soviets did not pursue this campaign in Kazakhstan, and conservative gender practices have never become the same marker of identity for Kazakhs as they have for Uzbeks (Gunes-Ayata and Ergun 2009).

Instead, a major Soviet initiative in Kazakhstan was a land collectivization campaign that forced nomads into a sedentary lifestyle. As a result, as distinct from centuries-old Uzbek cities in which clans were entrenched in neighborhoods, in Kazakhstan cities were created anew. Kazakh networks fundamentally changed, becoming much more diverse than in pre-Soviet times, encompassing school, military, and Party ties and including a high degree of ethnic diversity (Akiner 1995). Since Independence, kin-based networks have further diminished in their importance; beyond the circle of immediate family, solidarity is weak (Akiner 1995:77). Instead, peer group loyalties and commercial ties are gaining priority, and networks are sex-integrated (Akiner 1995; Sancak and Finke 2007).

The colonial experience, which was based on the interaction between the colonizer's agenda and pre-colonial characteristics, is associated with present-day variations in women's rights. In Uzbekistan, where the Soviet presence was felt most heavily, this experience seems to have given rise to a "national mentality" that values the control of women, a mentality which is based on distancing itself from the Soviet past (Gunes-Ayata and Ergun 2009). Consistent with this, Uzbek women have experienced a sharp decline in rights after the formation of the new state of Uzbekistan. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of dropouts from the education system, and by secondary school there is already an increase in the number of girls dropping out, as compared to Kazakhstan, where there is a slightly greater tendency for girls to attend schools than boys (Gunes-Ayata and Ergun 2009, 219). In a similar vein, divorce rates among Uzbek women have plummeted (from 14.9% to 5%), as compared to Kazakhstan where divorce rates have actually increased after Independence (from 27% in 1989 to 29% in 1999)

(Gunes-Ayata and Ergun 2009, 218). Because kin involvement in state formation has been uniformly high across Central Asian countries, variations in women's rights on a daily basis may relate more to each country's relationship to its colonial past.

Conclusion

States and Women's Rights provides a useful departure point for sketching a more general theory of the impact of kin group involvement in state formation on women's rights. This paper attempted to take a first step in this direction by applying the mechanisms important for explaining outcomes in North Africa to Central Asian cases.

Our analysis underscores the importance of geopolitical factors in understanding state formation and women's rights. First, globalization complicates our ability to use legal codes as a measure of women's rights. Because legitimacy and foreign aid may be tied to human rights issues, including issues of gender equality, there are powerful incentives to erect legal codes that enshrine the rights of women, regardless of what happens "on the ground." Therefore, while Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan all have legal codes that protect women, implementation of these rights is uneven (Gunes-Ayata and Ergun 2009). Particularly for those states that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, scholars will need to identify other measures that come closer to capturing women's lived experiences. This paper used the OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) supplemented with other, qualitative sources of data.

Second, this paper raised the need for more comparative work on the role of colonial history in shaping the relationships among kin groups, states, and women's rights. In

Central Asia, the Soviets established institutions promoting gender equality, the effects of which are still felt today and may be responsible for the relatively low level of gender inequality in Central Asia, as compared to other non-OECD countries (OECD 2009).

The Soviet colonial legacy may also contribute to the current variations in gender equality across the Central Asian cases. While in North Africa the level of kin group involvement in state formation shaped the level of rights women enjoyed (Charrad 2001), in Central Asia kin group involvement was uniformly high across the region (Collins 2006), but women in Kazakhstan enjoy more rights than do women in Uzbekistan. This variation corresponds to the colonial histories of these countries as well as pre-colonial characteristics. Uzbek women were the most likely to live in seclusion, veiling when they ventured outside the home; Uzbekistan was also the seat of colonial control and became the target of an unveiling campaign that left many Uzbeks particularly embittered and elevated the veil to a marker of cultural identity (Northrop 2005; Kamp 2006). The deep hostility to colonialization seems to have provoked a reactionary stance in post-Independence Uzbekistan against the more egalitarian gender norms of the Soviet period which are now associated with being colonized (Gunes-Ayata and Ergun 2009).

By contrast, Kazakh women – who did not veil anyway – were not the target of an unveiling campaign. Instead, Kazakhs were subject to a massive land collectivization campaign that forced them into sedentary life. The Soviets created cities, which for at least some, became the basis for networks with a greater diversity of ties and less reliance on kin. These findings suggest the need to compare more systematically the interaction

between colonial institutions and Islamic societies to better understand the relationship among kin groups, state formation, and women's rights.

What implications might there be for women's rights in the Arab world? Based on the Central Asian cases, we expect that the Family Codes in countries that adopt a new constitution will be liberal. We think that geopolitical pressure is such that emerging states must have liberal family codes to acquire legitimacy. (In addition, even when Muslims express conservative gender attitudes in opinion polls, they tend to believe that most gendered practices should not be dictated by the state (Kurzman 2011).) Liberal family codes are not trivial; they represent an important first step. The next step is enforcement, however, and women's ability and willingness to turn to the civil law system. Based on our analysis of Central Asian cases, we believe that colonial history and kin dominance of micro-level networks will play a role in that willingness.

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