TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING THE CONSTRUCTION OF ISLAMIC MASCULINITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

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Introduction

The Arab Spring, a wave of pro-democracy protests, began in Tunisia, where 28 days of demonstrations ended 24 years of a dictator's rule. The protests spread throughout the region to countries including Egypt, Syria, Bahrain, Morocco, Libya, and Yemen. These events took many analysts of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) by surprise (Bayat 2011; Johansson-Nogués 2013). As I show in this chapter, some scholars and analysts of the MENA rely on problematic MENA masculinity theories, which deploy a dangerous racialized narrative of toxic Arab Muslim masculinity to understand the causes of the uprisings and their aftermath. The traditional use of MENA masculinity theories sometimes conflates Arab (the ethnicity) with Muslim (the religion) and simplifies the complexity of gender performance in the region shaped by each country's history and geopolitical context. This chapter offers a critique of the narratives. However, it also highlights progress being made in improving MENA masculinity studies. It complicates our understanding of masculinities by highlighting its roots in international and domestic historic and current power structures. Using masculinity studies to study the Arab Spring is essential. When done correctly and ethically, it can shed light on invisible dynamics such as how gender was deployed in protest spaces during and after the uprisings.

   One of the most prominent examples of how masculinity played a role in Egypt's uprisings is Asmaa Mahfouz's video blogs (vblog). Born in Egypt on February 1, 1985, Asmaa Mahfouz later graduated from Cairo University with a BA in business administration. She is an Egyptian activist and one of the founders of the April 6 Youth Movement. One week before the beginning of the revolution, Asmaa posted a vblog on YouTube asking Egyptians to join her on January 25, 2011, in Tahrir Square. This date marks the beginning of the Egyptian Revolution,

also known as the January 25 Revolution, when people took to the streets demanding the end of President Hosni Mubarak's 30-year rule. In the video, she tried to shame men into coming to Tahrir Square to join the demonstration by stating that she, a girl, would be there to try to defend their dignity and honor. She stated,

> People have some shame.
> I posted that I, a girl, am going down to Tahrir Square, and I will stand alone. And I'll hold up a banner. Perhaps people will show some honor . . . I am going down on January 25, and from now until then, I will distribute flyers in the streets . . . I will not set myself on fire! If security forces want to set me on fire, let them come and do it. If you think of yourself as a man, go with me on January 25. Whoever says women shouldn't go to protests because they will get beaten and shouldn't go down by themselves should have some honor and manhood and come with me on January 25. . . . If you have integrity and dignity as a man, go and protect other girls and me in the protest.
>
> *(Mahfuz 2011)*

Asmaa Mahfouz shamed men in another video she posted on January 26:

> If you think of yourself as a man, come with me on January 25. Whoever says women shouldn't protest because they will get beaten, let him have some honor and manhood and come with me on January 25.
>
> *(Mahfuz 2011)*

Asmaa's vblog went viral on social media sites. Various people, including Mona Eltahawy (as seen on Facebook 2011), believe her video helped mobilize more protesters to join the Tahrir Square demonstrations. The effectiveness of Asmaa's vblogs in recruiting more Egyptians to join the protests comes as a result of her emphasizing her femininity to contest the (presumably faltering) masculinity of Egyptian men, thus shaming them into joining her and her fellow protesters in Tahrir Square.

However, this chapter argues that there is a 'wrong way' to apply masculinity studies to understanding how gender interacts with society and politics in the region that reduces social problems to essentialist notions of dangerous hyper-masculinity. For example, in an article for the *New Yorker* in 2011, Krajeski claimed that Egypt's uprisings happened partly due to the dire economic situation that prevented young men from starting a family, which amongst other things stood in the way of their legitimately fulfilling their sexual desires. This is also used as an explanation for high rates of sexual harassment of women in Egypt. She states, "There is much talk about a 'marriage crisis' in Egypt—low employment rates lead to low matrimonial rates—and the protesters in Tahrir Square were, indirectly at least, marching against it" (Krajeski 2011; Hafez 2012). Additionally, analysts used discourses about ruthless masculinity to make sense of the violent crackdown on the protesters by the now-deposed leader of Libya, Muammar el Qaddafi. According to this analysis, Qaddafi chose to rely on the merciless masculinity of black African mercenaries to avoid following in the failed footsteps of the deposed presidents of Tunisia (Zine El Abidine Ben Ali) and Egypt (Hosni Mubarak) (Rawls 2011). This reliance on visions of toxic Arab Muslim masculinity and frustrated sexuality to understand politics in the MENA region is problematic and even dangerous. This reliance shapes political discourse and intervention and generalizes social, cultural, and religious norms without critically situating them in broader social and historical

power locations such as colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism. This is not to say sexism and patriarchal structures do not exist in social, political, and religious institutions in the region. However, I will argue that they are not the primary driver of inequality. Instead, these practices and toxic gender norms resulting in asymmetric power structures are shaped by global structural factors causing inequality.

I begin this chapter by first discussing the historical roots of the instrumentalization of Arab masculinities to account for social problems in the MENA region and to justify foreign intervention. Following this, I look at new trends in the study of masculinities in the MENA region in general. Then I move to outline recent trends in the study of Islamic masculinities while highlighting research areas requiring improvements and further research.

The historical roots of the instrumentalization of Islamic MENA masculinities

The instrumentalization of toxic Arab Muslim masculinity and frustrated sexuality to understand politics in the MENA region did not begin with the 2011 protests. Racialized narratives of hegemonic MENA masculinities that often draw on essentialized notions of Islam and Muslims serve as one of the main instruments for analyzing political change and conflict in the area (Amar 2011a). Edward Said's seminal work, *Orientalism* (1978), outlined the power and influence of false European stereotypes about the MENA region. These stereotypes, he argued, reproduced prejudiced, narrow, and limited views of the Arab world. His work inspired additional work (Ahmed 1982; Jamal 2005; Isom-Verhaaren 2006; Eltantawy 2008; Helms 2008) examining how orientalist ideas of hyper-sexuality have played out in the Euro-American traditions and the Arab and Muslim worlds. The orientalist view of the hyper-sexual Arab and the oppression of women continue to dominate the Western imagination of the MENA region, especially since 9/11 and the rise of ISIS. Various sources used such descriptions to explain why brown men join terrorist groups. Amar (2011a) draws attention to how the *New York Times* has deployed such narratives about Arab toxic masculinity as one of the motives for men in the MENA region joining terrorist groups and abiding by radical Islamist ideologies. For instance, the essay 'Where Boys Grow Up to Be Jihadis' (Elliot 2007) describes how 'frustrated' young men in Morocco join terrorist groups to make up for their disappointment in life. And the 2002 *New York Times* documentary, *Portrait of a Terrorist: Mohamed Atta*, traces the motivations of the lead September 11th hijacker back to his awkwardness with girls and wounded male pride (Coombes and O'Connor 2002).

It was 9/11 that resulted in the spread of stereotypes in the West associated with MENA men as terrorists, extremists, religious fanatics, aggressively militaristic, and hyper-masculine (Inhorn and Fakih 2006; Massad 2008; Myntti et al. 2002; Ouzgane 2006; Shaheen 2012). This also fueled depictions of MENA men as abusive to their wives and other women. These stereotypes of Islamic MENA masculinity are propagated not only by Western media but also by Western scholars (Massad 2008). Various entities have also deployed these stereotypes to undermine Muslim communities in minority Muslim states. For instance, in India, these stereotypes have been essential for the discursive construction of militant Hindu masculinity, which is justified in the name of protecting the Hindu motherland and its daughters from violent, fanatical, intolerant, untrustworthy, and lustful Muslim men (Kasim 2020, see Banerjee, Chapter 33 in this volume). It also has been used by authoritarian leaders in MENA Muslim majority states, such as in Egypt, to undermine the opposition (Amar 2011c).

According to Hasso (2018), "Arab and Muslim masculinities are often ahistorically naturalized based on biological, psychic, or racial/cultural differences . . . Such 'culture knowledge' about masculinities is reductive and ahistorical, although powerful in feeding racism and imperialism". These narratives are problematic and even dangerous because they shape political discourse and intervention. They are also used to garner public support for war, occupation, and repression in the region (Amar 2011a). In his critique of MENA masculinity studies, Amar (2011a) highlights how discourses of "masculinity in crisis" play crucial roles in "misrecognizing, racializing, moralistically–depoliticizing, and class–displacing emergent social forces" (39). He claims that MENA masculinity studies "do so by invoking the rescue or cultivation of securitized human subjects, particularly those of sexualized gender and racialized class, as informed by both colonial legacies and new imperatives of transnational humanitarian discourses and parastatal security industries" (Amar 2011a, 39). For example, in her radio address in 2001, Laura Bush, the wife of the US president at that time, George W. Bush, used women's oppression by the Taliban to justify US military action in the country. She stated,

> I am delivering this week's radio address to kick off a worldwide effort to focus on the brutality against women and children by the Al Qaeda terrorist network and the regime it supports in Afghanistan, the Taliban. That regime is now in retreat across much of the country, and the people of Afghanistan, especially women, are rejoicing . . . Life under the Taliban is so hard and repressive, even small displays of joy are outlawed. Children aren't allowed to fly kites. Their mothers face beatings for laughing out loud. Women cannot work outside the home or even leave their homes by themselves . . . Because of our recent military gains, in much of Afghanistan women are no longer imprisoned in their homes. They can listen to music and teach their daughters without fear of punishment.
>
> *(As cited in* The Washington Post *2001)*

While the Taliban's rule of Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001 was the darkest time for Afghan women (Allen and Felbab-Brown 2021), this statement misrepresents and omits critical information about the Cold War context leading to the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan (Berry 2003). The Taliban is an extension of the Mujaheddin (holy warriors), who emerged to fight the Soviets after they invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and received funding from the United States (Berry 2003). More recently, we see evidence of the devastating impact of the war in Afghanistan on women. Instead of empowerment, "Afghan women in rural areas—where an estimated 76 percent of the country's women live—experience the devastation of bloody and intensifying fighting between the Taliban and government forces and local militias" (Allen and Felbab-Brown 202 1). Additionally, the peace negotiations between the United States and the Taliban, which started in 2020 and are continuing, as I write this chapter, threaten women's rights because it gives legitimacy and authority to the Taliban. Moreover, as Oxfam observed, women had been consistently excluded from peace talks since 2005 (*The Guardian* 2014).

Studies on masculinities from the MENA region still tend to problematize and highlight "deviant, working-class, youth, colonized and racialized masculinities" (Amar 2011a, 45). The field is mainly focused on outlining social norms that promote violence, including gender–based violence, membership in criminal organizations, homophobia, terrorism, and militarism (Amar 2011a). This makes critical approaches to masculinity vulnerable to exploitation and instrumentalization by liberal, colonial, or punitive state initiatives (Amar 2011a). For instance, the state

could use explanations relying on cultural constructions of masculinities as a driver of domestic violence to design flawed interventions in disadvantaged communities in ways that increase gendered violence and economic marginality (Amar 2011a).

New trends in the study of masculinities in the MENA region

To address these issues with Western-influenced masculinities studies, as well as popular representations of MENA masculinities, Amar (2011a) proposes that scholars "adopt a more materialist approach that focuses on industries and institutions that are producing the particular subjects of masculinity who are seen as animating these crises" (40) in order to overcome simplistic approaches to masculinities that instrumentalize and essentialize Arab masculinities as a product of culture or religion. He groups these 'masculinity industries' into three categories which produce three types of masculinity: "security masculinities", "paternafare masculinities", and "workerist masculinities". These, he argues, are the product of a "new humanized security model" for governance that operates in the region where a range of state and non-state organizations, both national and international, operate projects for "gendered public morality, sexual regulation, family constitution, and suppression of trafficking in bodies" (2011a, 43).

'Security masculinities' refers to the ways that domestic and international public and private security industries/institutions produce images of Arab masculinities that reinforce roles such as the sex predator, the thug/gang member, the trafficker, and the terrorist. As I show later in this chapter, these institutions are not exclusive to Western states; MENA states and entities have also instrumentalized notions of hegemonic masculinities in order to serve their interests. Studies in feminist international relations (IR) also draw attention to Amar's notion of 'security masculinities'. The work of feminist IR scholars such as Wendy Brown (1997), V. Spike Peterson (1994, 1997), and Cynthia Enloe (1980, 1993) are examples of scholarship that, like Amar's, critically reflects on the links between the construction of masculinities and the emergence of state military and security apparatus. Therefore, they are critical of attempts to solely tie the formation of violent masculine identity to the cultures, identities, and religiosity of racialized and working-class communities (Amar 2011a). This work sheds light on how militarization, the rise of nationalism, humanitarian interventions, and the heightened security state created a masculinity crisis (Enloe 1980, 1993, 2000; Peterson 1994, 1997; Shepherd 2007, 2008; Zalewski and Parpart 1998). Feminist IR scholars have also paid attention to the making and presentation of masculine and feminine identities in specific security communities, where a 'security community' is a group of countries sharing common values and committing to peaceful conflict resolution (Basham 2008; Henry 2007; Higate 2003, 2007; Henry and Higate 2004). For example, Higate (2007) explored peacekeepers' sexual exploitation of local women in sub-Saharan Africa, while Basham (2008) discussed the impact of deployment stress on the relationships between soldiers and their partners during and following a tour of duty.

Feminist IR studies critically assess the connection between the formation of gender identities and the perception of deviant masculinities as being linked to postcolonial state institutions' internationalization (Amar 2011a; Goodale and Merry 2007). For example, Amar's (2011c) work helps us understand why the Egyptian state used sexual violence in protest spaces. Due to women's visibility during the uprisings in the region, the state and non-state actors strategically used sexual violence to quell opposition. In a response to the Arab uprisings in Egypt, which started on January 25, 2011, President Hosni Mubarak relied on sexual violence as a tactic against demonstrators in protest spaces until he was ousted in February 11, 2012. By using sexual violence, Mubarak managed to represent Tahrir Square to the international and national community as "a hyper-masculine mob where Orientalist tropes of the 'Arab street'

were bottled-up and concentrated, a space constantly bursting with predatory sexuality and not disciplined enough to articulate either coherent leadership or policy" (Amar 2011c, 301.). This representation was challenged "after plain-clothes police and Mubarak-allied thugs viciously attacked CNN journalist Anderson Cooper" (Amar 2011c, 301). As a result of this attack, journalists articulated a different discourse in which "brutality in Egypt, including sexualized brutality, was seen as an instrument of state terror deployed tactically by the police state, rather than as a cultural attribute shared by all male Arabs" (Amar 2011c, 301). This discourse, however, was altered after a similar attack on CBS correspondent Lara Logan. Her Western femininity was "incessantly underlined, and the discourse of the 'frenzied' Arab mob and its uncontrollable sexuality returned with a vengeance" (Amar 2011c, 301).

The strategy of the Mubarak government, to deploy criminals during protests, has been called the "baltagiya-effect" by Amar (2011c) and has been used since the 2000s. As Amar writes, the *baltagiya*—"the gangs of 'thugs' and networks of violent extortion rackets seen as emanating from the informal settlements surrounding downtown Cairo"—were deployed to join in with the protests to engage in violence and shout extremist slogans, in order to make the protestors look like 'terrorists' to delegitimize any protest against the government (2011c, 308). This in turn produced "new images for domestic and international media and criminological narratives for international security agencies and local law enforcement" (Amar 2011c, 308) to re-signify the protesters "as crazed mobs of brutal men, vaguely 'Islamist' and fiercely irrational, depicted according to the conventions of nineteenth-century colonial–Orientalist figurations of the savage 'Arab street' and protesters became targeted as assemblages of hyper-sexualized terrorist masculinities" (Amar 2011c, 308). Similarly, Tadros (2016) unpacks men's experience of gender-based violence in protest spaces in Egypt. She argues the Egyptian authorities, like other oppressive regimes, have long deployed sexual violence to terrorize political protestors, regardless of their gender. Sexual violence against male protesters was used to emasculate men from the opposition, where any admission of sexual assault is an admission of political conquest.

So far we have just looked at Amar's first type of masculinity industry/institution that gives rise to 'security masculinities', the depiction by security services of Arab males as oversexualized, often Islamized, thugs (2011b). His second type of masculinities, which he calls "paternafare[1] masculinities", promotes rigid and patriarchal norms about men's role in the family (and of femininity and women's role) and where any deviation of this feeds "the notion that the region is hungry for authoritarian father-figures—be they military officers or religious leaders" (Amar 2011b, 41). The final type, which Amar terms "workerist masculinities," describes 'insurgent' forms of masculinities emerging from labor confederations, particularly in Egypt, which gave rise to the radical movements that opposed the state during the Arab Spring and beyond (2011a, 41). This type of masculinity also challenges the inclination to tie masculinities to just male bodies by encompassing female masculinities as well, where females can also exhibit apparently masculine behavior. In terms of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, women factory workers played a key role and were described positively as "mu'alima and jada'a (courageous, macho, masterful)" (2011a, 42; Honeywil 2016; Halberstam 1998).

Amar's three types of masculinities offer essential conceptual alternatives for challenging problematic narratives of Islamic MENA toxic masculinities. Amar's final category of 'workerist masculinities' also challenges the use of the problematic concept of 'hegemonic masculinity', first developed by the Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell (1987) and widely used to denote the dominant form of masculinity within a particular society and a way of accounting for certain social problems that seem to be linked to male privilege and power. As Inhorn writes, "Hegemonic masculinity often concentrates attributes such as wealth, professional success, the power to dominate and control others, physical strength, virility, and paternity, and

is often contrasted to subordinated or marginalized masculine forms" (Inhorn 2015, 3). She suggests that, influenced by this scholarly trend, scholars of the MENA region in their search for hegemonic masculinities there have tended to showcase the region as especially disposed to violent behavior because the men there are ruthless and authoritarian and whose extremist religion fuels their inclinations toward violence, conforming to hegemonic visions of masculinity (Inhorn 2015). These depictions are not only problematic because they perpetuate orientalist stereotypes; they also cloud our understandings of the rapid social changes, including to gender norms sweeping the regions.

To move the debate away from a focus on 'hegemonic masculinities', Marcia Inhorn (2012) uses the concept of "emergent masculinities" to study the MENA region. Emerging MENA masculinities are a product of constant negotiations between tradition, religion, and modernity. For example, Jennifer de Groot (2015) demonstrates how rapidly norms of masculinities transform across generations in Iran, molded by anti-colonial, nationalist, and state dynamics. Work by Farha Ghannam (2013) embraces MENA masculinities' hybridity because such an approach looks at men as both the subjects and objects of systems of power by also examining their vulnerabilities, dependencies, and disempowerments.

New trends in the study of Islamic masculinities in the MENA region

A new body of work on Islamic masculinities, which acknowledges that Muslims occupy diverse historical, geopolitical, and socioeconomic contexts extending beyond the MENA region, emerged in 2013, a couple of years after the start of the Arab Spring in 2011. This work counters the problematic constructions of masculinities in the MENA region, often associated with Islam, the specific topic of this chapter. This new work also helped push the boundaries of the study of masculinities in the region to expose its multiple expressions, dynamism, and fluidity (Al-Rasheed 2013; Ahmad 2013; Amar 2011a, 2013; Ghannam 2013; Inhorn 2012). The Muslim world is diverse, with an estimated 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide, making it the second-largest religion after Christianity. Challenging Western assumptions, most Muslims (62%) live in the Asia–Pacific region, not in the MENA region (DeSilver and Masci 2017). More Muslims reside in India and Pakistan (344 million combined) than in the Middle East–North Africa region (317 million) (DeSilver and Masci 2017) and live in various cultural, linguistic, historical, and socioeconomic contexts. It is also important to note that Islam accounts for a less significant proportion of men's and women's experiences than is often taken to be the case. It is misleading to anchor it as the leading factor for understanding gender identities without considering others that shape those experiences (Ouzgane 2003). Taking this diversity into account is essential for countering orientalist constructs of Muslim subjects.

A key trend within studies of Islamic masculinities is to view them as constructed within particular social and historical contexts, where Muslim men's masculinities are a product of their positioning within a variety of national and international social, political, and economic structures (<Apex-Under> Ouzgane 200 3</Apex-Under>). According to Islamic masculinities studies, particular local contexts such as colonialism, natural resources, geopolitical dynamics, the Cold War, and Western intervention shape the construction of gendered identities. Overall, studies on Islamic masculinities do not push for an essentialist definition of Muslim manhood, as we see in the concept of 'hegemonic masculinities'. Work on Islamic masculinities builds on queer theory as the center of masculinity studies by moving beyond focusing merely on the intersection of sexuality and masculinities to examining how these identities intersect with religion, rituals, and social practices. For instance, some of the scholarship on Islamic masculinities highlights how Islamophobia shapes the experiences of racialized and queer masculinities

among immigrant Muslim communities in the West and influences their activism (Fatima El-Tayeb 2004; Paola Bacchetta 2009; Sunaina Maira 2009).

Islamic masculinity studies also tend to view militarization and modernization inspired by (neo)colonialism and nationalist authoritarianism as the leading causes of religious and gender fundamentalism rather than innate cultural or religious factors (Amar 2011b). Ahmed (1992) shows how the Western conquest of Muslim majorities intensified their use of the language of 'rape of the motherland' by a penetrating foreign power. This made the protection of women's honor a symbol of national honor (Adibi 2006). Also, Sivan Balslev's (2017) study of masculinity and nationalism during Iran's Constitutional Revolution, which took place between 1905 and 1911 and led to the founding of a parliament in Persia during the Qajar dynasty, shows how nationalist male elites often depicted their homeland as feminine in need of protection from outside aggressors. They understood their subordination as 'emasculating'.

Liberation struggles against colonization resulted in the proliferation of Islamist movements in the MENA region. In the late 20th century, fundamentalist movements spread across the Middle East led by people such as Ayatollah Ruhollah Mussavi Khomeini from Iran, Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb from Egypt, Abul Ala Maududi from Pakistan, and Mustafa as-Siba'i, Abbasi Madani, Shaikh Nahnah, and Ali Belhaj from Algeria (Adibi 2006). These groups call for establishing an earlier 'pure' Islamic society based on an idealization of such societies before Western intervention in the region.

Additional work on Islamic masculinities highlights the connections between oil imperialism, the state, and so-called religious fundamentalist movements. Madawi al-Rasheed (2013) pays attention to the historical roots of masculinity in modern state institutions in Saudi Arabia. She examines the deep connections between state masculinity and oil, arguing that the Wahabi movement, an ultraconservative revivalist movement emerging in Saudi Arabia in the 18th century, "reflected the fears and agony of men in the oases where population density and diversity created conditions required greater control of women" (al-Rasheed 2013, 23). In the 20th century, due to the formation of the Saudi state and the oil boom 1970s, these fears transformed from "private patriarchy exercised by ordinary men" to "a religiously sanctioned state duty" (al-Rasheed 2013, 24). The surplus from oil was used to build gender-segregated schools, hospitals, and other institutions. Also, the oil wealth meant that women were not needed in the labor force.

Moreover, regional and international conditions have a crucial impact on women in Saudi Arabia. To prevent the spillover of the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the state affirmed its control over women to enhance its image as a pious Islamic country. These factors transformed a marginal conservative Wahabi ideology into a significant force in the Arabian Peninsula. However, after 9/11, the state attempted to promote women's participation and loosen restrictions without antagonizing religious leaders to promote a moderate image of Saudi Arabia to the West. These domestic and regional power dynamics significantly impacted shaping gendered identities in Saudi Arabia, which goes beyond merely religious or cultural factors.

In the context of the formation of Egyptian masculinities, Jacob (2011) shows how nationalist movements of self-determination reacted to British colonial discourses of adequate masculinities. While exemplifying how power relations in the form of imperialism and colonialism are central to constructions of masculinities, he states, "Caught in the colonizer's gaze, the typical Egyptian male body was weaker, less disciplined, and insufficiently male" (Jacob 2011, 46). Jacob argues that this pushed nationalist groups to focus on challenging these colonial perceptions of "native inadequacies" (2011, 47) so that by the 1920s, masculine "physical culture formed a critical element in the discourse of national progress" (2011, 48). Similarly, Achim Rohde (2016) studies cultural representations of masculinity and femininity in Iraq during the

war with Iran in the 1980s. He sees Iraqi masculinities as a product of recent 'top–down' militarization and modernization, not as a tradition's perseverance. Rather than attributing cultural or religious factors for the formation of gender identities in Egypt and in Iraq, Jacob's and Achim's work highlights colonialism and colonial discourses of native masculinities as essential in shaping these gender identities.

Islamic masculinities studies go far beyond the traditional notion that Islam and MENA cultures are inseparable from the control of women and show how these identities are embedded and shaped by capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism, alongside 'local' power structures.

Conclusion

Gendered identities are shaped by colonialism and imperialism, as much as by religion. It is impossible to ignore how these structural forces shape gendered scripts and undermine poor, racialized, or resistant individuals. Any analysis of Islamic masculinities that does not address these factors is incomplete. However, as demonstrated by the work on Islamic masculinities and emergent masculinities in the Islamic world, individuals continue to negotiate with domestic and foreign structures to construct new forms of masculinities. Therefore, when studying the emergence of masculinities in the MENA, we should avoid viewing it in binaries contrasting traditional versus modern, civilized versus uncivilized, West versus East. Instead, we should examine identity formation as a continually evolving process with individuals as agents who are not merely responding to structures beyond their comprehension and control.

Additionally, the scripts for gender performance available for men and women in the region are rapidly shifting due to globalization's economic and social implications combined with demographic transformations. The number of Muslims in the world is increasing. According to the Pew Research Center (2015), the number of Muslims worldwide is projected to increase from about 1.6 billion in 2010 to nearly 2.8 billion in 2050. This constitutes a rise from 23% of the world's population in 2010 to 30% in 2050 (Pew Research Center 2015). Muslims are generally younger (median age of 23) than the overall population (median age of 28), and 34% of the global Muslim population was under age 15, compared with 27% of the general world population as of 2010 (Pew Research Center 2015). Usually, the younger generations are more open to the West, use technology, and are more educated than their parents (see Janmohamed 2016).

While both men and women contribute to these gains, women have been gaining at a faster rate. According to the Pew Research Center's comprehensive 2016 study on academic accomplishment among the world's major religious groups, Muslim women have made more significant educational gains than Muslim men in most regions of the world. The study found "the youngest generation of Muslim adults analyzed (born 1976 to 1985) have far more formal education than those in the oldest generation analyzed (born 1936 to 1955)" (Pew Research Center 2016). The rise of the number of women receiving education and joining the workforce challenges men's role as the sole breadwinners in the family. It also challenges patriarchal control over women by their male family members because they no longer rely on them for economic survival. Moreover, the movement and migration of Muslims to non-Muslim states add another layer of complexity for gender identity construction and performance.

The prior highlighted changes will strongly influence the reconstruction of MENA masculinity and gender roles. Future studies on masculinities in the Arab and Muslim world need to build on the new approaches and consider the aforementioned factors when attempting to understand gender identity formation and their links to socioeconomic and political contexts. A comprehensive approach to understanding masculinity formation in the MENA requires

moving beyond using problematic global hegemonic narratives of masculinities tying local religions and cultures to women's oppression to acknowledging the larger international, national, and local hierarchies influencing these identities, identifying the complexity, flexibility, and reactivity of these identities to their ever-changing context, and avoiding generalizing about the region from studying a few cases. The Islamic world is larger and more complex than the Arab world.

Note

1 'Paternafare' was a term coined by Anna Marie Smith (2007) to describe federal welfare rules in the US requiring mothers to identify their children's' biological fathers to qualify for state assistance. In the US case, access to state resources was tied to the monitoring of failed fathers and the emphasis on heteronormative family structures.

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