

Agnieszka SYLIWONIUK-WAPOWSKA

SGH Warsaw School of Economics

ORCID: 0000-0002-0055-2943

Women's political activity and leadership in the Maghreb countries. A post-Arab Spring perspective

Abstract: The Maghreb states and their societies share many similarities, nevertheless, the level of political activity of women and the scale of female political leadership is not one of them. Women's participation in political life is highly diversified and differs significantly among the countries of the region. The key aim of the article is to outline and analyse the scope and forms of women's political activity and leadership in the four Maghreb countries: Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. The paper focuses on women's presence in the parliament and in the government as well as their political leadership, including party leadership. The analysis is based on critical review of scientific literature, analytical studies and news presented by reputable media outlets. For the purpose of showing both similarities and differences between the four states comparative approach is adopted. Major changes that took place in Maghreb's political sphere during the last decade are recalled in the paper as well as social and cultural context in which they are located. Historical perspective is also taken into consideration in the course of the analysis.

Key words: political activity, political leadership, party leadership, Maghreb, women's political activity, women's political leadership

Introduction

The Maghreb states and their societies share many similarities, nevertheless, the level of political activity of women and the scale of female political leadership is not one of them. Women's participation in political life is highly diversified and differs significantly among the countries of the region. In Morocco and Tunisia certain efforts were made to promote women's presence on the political scene and they bring positive results. On the other hand, in Algeria and Libya their political activity is rather limited. It can be seen with even more clarity in terms of women's political leadership – a phenomenon that hardly takes place in the Arab world. The fact is that women are present in politics of all the Maghreb countries, but their chances and possibilities in terms of active participation vary across the region. The paper attempts at finding the answer to the question concerning the causes of such state of affairs and factors determining it. The analysis provided in this article is limited to political activity and leadership of women at national level and, hence, their presence in such institutions as governments (the executive) or parliaments (the legislative). Although important, the share of women who hold the positions of judges and their role within the judiciary is not the subject of inquiry of this paper. Certainly, women are present also in the structures of local authorities and the significance of their activity at this level cannot be underestimated, nevertheless, such explorations stay beyond the scope of this paper.

The key aim of the article is to outline and analyse the scope and forms of women's political activity and leadership in the four Maghreb countries: Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. There are many forms of political activity, but the paper focuses on women's presence on the parliamentary fora and in the government as well as their political leadership, including party leadership. The analysis is based on critical review of scientific literature and – in order to grasp the current picture of the situation – analytical studies and news presented by reputable media outlets. For the purpose of showing both similarities and differences between the four states comparative approach is adopted in the article (Chodubski, 2008, pp. 125–126). Major changes that took place in this sphere during the last decade are recalled in the paper as well as social and cultural context in which they are located. Historical perspective – perceived as cardinal methodological directive of political science (Ryszka, 1984, p. 307) – is also taken into consideration in the course of the analysis. Such stand finds its justification in the changes of the Arab Spring – including the ones that concerned the possibilities of political participation that opened for women.

It should be stressed, however, that the case of Libya is examined in less extensive way than the three remaining countries due to highly complicated and unstable internal situation¹. Moreover, the availability of openly published data concerning Libya's political issues is limited and its reliability is rather questionable. Nevertheless, the meaning of women's activity in the sphere of Libyan politics should not be downgraded.

Factors determining women's political activity and leadership in the Maghreb states

Political activity can be defined as a behaviour that is based on formulating political goals and achieving them. The goals in question are linked to roles played by individuals or groups within the framework of political system (Marciniak, Załęski, 2007, p. 201). Political activity is linked to possibility of exerting political influence. Forms of political activity depend on possibilities offered by the political system, historical momentum and values shared by a given society. The ones that are discussed in the paper are of conventional nature which means that they stay in conformity with the established constitutional order and democratic institutions (Skarżyńska, 2002, pp. 27–29).

Over the last decade people across the Middle East and North Africa have expressed anxiety concerning potential challenges associated with democratic governance such as

¹ In Libya the popular unrest started in mid-February 2011 and soon took the form of a revolt against the long-standing dictator, Mu'ammar Qaddafi (in power since 1969). The government's violent response to protesters made the upheaval turn into a devastating civil war. The use of armed forces against the Libyans was condemned by the international community. The United Nations Security Council, the European Union and a number of states imposed sanctions against Qaddafi's regime. As the situation in Libya worsened, the United Nations approved military actions against the regime. The operations started in March and were initially led by the United States, France and the United Kingdom, yet soon the North Atlantic Treaty Organization took command. In October Qaddafi was killed by the rebel fighters, nevertheless, it did not end the civil war (see: Murthy, 2018; Niziński, 2014). After over a decade, however, the state was far from functioning properly. At the time of preparation of this article (June 2023) two bodies – internationally recognised Government of National Unity and Government of National Stability – express claims to legitimacy.

poor economic performance, indecision or difficulties with maintaining stability. Concerns of this kind are pronounced especially in the states that have the most extensive democratic experience, Tunisia being at the forefront (Robbins, 2022). To put it in other words, Maghreb is experiencing three interconnected crises: of values, political structures and form of action (Lahbib, 2022, p. 211). Nevertheless, people across the region believe that democratic systems – notwithstanding numerous problems they face – are better than other systems (Robbins, 2022).

Dilemmas concerning various aspects of political life and concerns about economic situation and its impact on the daily life influence women's political attitudes and behaviours which, in turn, have an impact on their decisions concerning political activity. Yet, there are also other factors that determine their choices, including these of social, cultural and historical nature.

First of all, the majority of the inhabitants of the Maghreb countries are Muslims and Islam is the religion supported by the state in all the Maghreb countries. In Islam there is no division between *sacrum* and *profanum* and theology is intertwined with law, state and politics (Danecki, 2007, pp. 148). The impact of religion on the state can be noticed in each of the Maghreb countries and it is reflected i.a. in their political institutions, legal systems and programmes of political parties. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the Arab Spring political parties that pronounced their attachment to Islam won parliamentary elections in Tunisia and Morocco, whereas in Algeria the rule of such political forces was historically very strong. It should be said that Islam as such does not exclude women from political activity, nevertheless, certain interpretations of religious content (expressed i.a. by Islamic jurists or representatives of political parties) may limit their participation in public affairs – especially when they are followed by legal regulations.

Secondly, Maghreb societies vary in terms of ethnic structure. The populations of Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia are composed of both Arab and Amazigh (Berber) people. The status of women varies among different Arab and Berber communities.

Thirdly, one should have in mind that tribalism forms an important basis for social bonds in the Maghreb societies, yet its significance is not equally strong in all of them and it is changing over time (see: Gómbár, 2008). It should be stressed, however, that in the Arab countries women's political activity is sometimes viewed through the lens of traditional values and patterns of behaviour – not infrequently of tribal origin – and, hence, it is perceived as inappropriate or even shameful. One of such values is honour which is a rather complicated concept. First of all, there are at least three Arabic terms that denote honour in its various shades: *murū'a*, *ird* and *šaraf*. To explain it roughly: *murū'a* can be compared to the Latin *virtus*, *ird* is linked to dignity and unblemished reputation whereas *šaraf* refers to prestige and respect for a given person (Sławek, 2011, pp. 87–94). Secondly, honour can be understood “individually” or “collectively”, as it is linked to closeness and kinship (see: Horden, Purcell, 2000, pp. 485–523). What is more, women's honour is viewed as intertwined with the honour of their family and the closest male relatives. Thirdly, honour has different meaning for women and for men which impacts their lifestyles and political participation. Political activity (often) and leadership (always) demand certain level of popularity and public visibility which is linked to exposure to verbal and non-verbal behaviours that may harm or even damage a person's reputation and, at the same time, the good name of their family. Such argument may dis-

courage women and prevent them from being politically active, especially if women feel pressure from members of their families or members of local communities.

Political domain is by nature public. Political activity of women in the Arab countries is strictly connected with the act of transgressing the boundaries of traditional perception of space in Muslim societies – public space is defined as the field of men's activity whereas private space is seen as the domain of women's activity. It is also strictly connected with the need to overcome multiple hurdles that result from ascribing specific social roles to women, especially the ones that situate them within the family context. Examples of many female politicians in Maghreb reveal that linking family life and political activity – hence, being present in both private and public sphere – can be done successfully.

Family background, education and relative economic independence are also cardinal factors that shape women's political activity. Female politicians often (yet not always) possess considerable social and cultural capital: they come from families in which various forms of political engagement could be traced. Not infrequently they demonstrate high level of formal education, including academic level, and build impressive professional careers before or at the same time they join the political circles.

Attitudes towards political activity and leadership of women were shaped gradually and differences that are visible among the Maghreb countries often result from their history. To back it with an example, Tunisia under Habib Bourgiba experienced secularization and an improvement of status of women whereas Algeria was ragged by civil war and was under radical Islamist rule that limited possibilities of women in terms of their participation in public affairs. All the four countries – Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia – experienced/experience authoritarian rule, although of different kind.

Women's political leadership in the Maghreb states

The Arab Spring – the wave of popular protests that rolled along the Arab world in 2010/2011 – made people hope for a better future, defined especially in terms of improvement of living conditions and quality of life, freedom, democratization, stability and security. For Tunisia – the country where the protests started – at first outcomes of the upheaval were promising as in mid-January 2011 Zine El Abidine Ben Ali who ruled the country since 1987 fled to Saudi Arabia (Zdanowski, 2011, pp. 12–13). In October 2011 elections for National Constituent Assembly were held. The turnout was 49.2% and the highest score was won by Ennahda (37% which translated into 89 seats in the 217-member assembly). The elections were evaluated as free and raised expectations of political transformation (Tavana, 2014, pp. 10–11).

Nevertheless, it soon became clearly visible that sharp divisions plague Tunisian political scene, leading to stalemates and endangering the democratization processes. In order to find a peaceful solution and normalize the situation, Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet – a coalition of four civil society organizations – was formed. The Quartet organized roundtable talks, brokered compromise and launched a constructive dialogue between the key actors on the Tunisian political scene. In 2015 Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize “for its decisive contribution to the building of a pluralistic democracy in Tunisia in the wake of the Jasmine Revolution of

2011” (*The Nobel...*). The example of the Quartet is worth mentioning not only in the context of its achievements but also women’s leadership. One of the leaders of the coalition was Ouided Bouchamaoui – a prominent Tunisian businesswoman who from May 2011 to January 2018 was the president of the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (*Ouided...*).

Political leadership in the Arab world remains a sphere which is reserved (almost) exclusively for men. In the modern history of the Arab countries, not a single woman has ever assumed the post of head of state and only one – the prime minister of Tunisia, Najla Bouden – has been entrusted the post of head of the government. Such situation is linked to the way gender equality is perceived by inhabitants of the Middle East and North Africa: women and men do not play equal roles in public life, including its political dimension. Nevertheless, in the Maghreb countries opinions concerning that issue are divided. To support it with an example: according to survey conducted by Arab Barometer in 2021/2022, percentage of respondents that agree or strongly agree with the statement: “In general, men are better at political leadership than women” is the highest in Algeria (76%) and Libya (69%). In Morocco this opinion was shared by 49% of respondents and in Tunisia – by 40%. Nevertheless, such perception is changing gradually in favour of women’s leadership not only due to the fact that young people with more liberal worldview and more flexible mindset are becoming older but also thanks to a shift in attitudes and opinions that takes place across generations. Furthermore, women are the driving force behind the change in opinions concerning female leadership, although the scale of this change differs from one country to another (Roche, 2022). It appears that women feel more confidence concerning their leadership capabilities, yet still it is not easy for them to play a significant role in politics.

The case of Tunisia’s prime minister Najla Bouden is exceptional and so are the circumstances in which she was appointed to the post of prime minister by the president of the republic, Kais Saied. It has to be stressed that after the Arab Spring Tunisia experienced severe political crises that weakened the state dramatically both internally and on the international forum. After legislative and presidential elections of 2019 it turned out to be impossible to retain fragile balance in internal politics due to continuous rifts that appeared between the president and the prime minister/government supported by the parliament. Growing constantly since the elections, the tension reached its peak on 25 July 2021 and took on the form of a self-coup. Breaching provisions of the 2014 Tunisian Constitution, president Saied dismissed the prime minister, suspended the parliament and stripped all its members of their immunity, assuming the executive authority himself. At the same time, state of emergency was introduced and extraordinary measures were declared, i.a. ban on gatherings of more than three people and a month-long curfew. The decisions announced by the president met with strong opposition from almost all (except for two) political parties, major non-governmental organizations and a great number of lawyers (*Context...*, 2021). Saied’s actions met with negative response of Tunisia’s international partners, especially the European Union and the United States of America as they were perceived as a potential drift toward authoritarianism. The situation was aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic and other socio-economic challenges. Moreover, the crisis resulted in polarization of the Tunisian society which poses a threat of outbursts of violence (*La Tunisie...*, 2022).

In such circumstances – of multifaceted crisis, political stalemate and deepening social divisions – Najla Bouden Romdhane was appointed by the president to the post of prime minister. Engineer by profession, she holds a doctoral degree from École des Mines de Paris, specializing in earthquake engineering. Before assuming the post of the head of government, she developed an academic career as a geology professor and held senior positions at Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (*Najla...*). Bouden's professional background is her strong asset and together with the fact of becoming the first woman in the Arab world to assume the position of head of government it creates a positive impression – not only of the prime minister herself but also of Tunisia as a country. Nevertheless, it has to be stressed that her possibilities of acting as the head of government are restricted by circumstances. First of all, she took office during the state of emergency declared by the president as a consequence of his breach of Constitution which may raise questions concerning the legitimacy of her appointment. Secondly, after Saïed's coup d'état the competencies of prime minister were limited as his goal was to widen the scope of presidential power at the expense of other actors. Both the facts may lead to the conclusion that the prime minister's role is rather to coordinate the works of ministers appointed by the president than to play an active and influential role in Tunisian politics (*La Tunisie...*, 2022). Nevertheless, it should be noticed that Bouden's appointment was acceptable for major political forces in the country. After the 2022/2023 parliamentary elections Najla Bouden stayed in office. Taking into account the overall situation in which she carries out her duties as the head of government, her performance is rather difficult to assess at this moment. Nevertheless, what goes to the fore is relatively high level of trust in the prime minister: 54 percent of Tunisians express the opinion that they have quite a lot or a great deal of trust in Najla Bouden (Roche, 2022).

The premiership of Najla Bouden has an important symbolic significance as she is the first woman to lead the government. Political leadership should also be analysed at the level of party leadership. In this respect examples of two Maghrebi female leaders of political parties – Abir Moussi and Nabila Mounib – should be mentioned.

Abir Moussi is a Tunisian lawyer and a former official in the regime of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali which – in certain aspects – she openly lauds, claiming that the Jasmine Revolution was actually a plot against the then-ruling elite. In 2016 she took over the leadership of Free Destourian Party, which is referred to as extremely right party. She stood for parliamentary elections in 2014 but turned out to be unsuccessful. In 2019 she gained a seat in the Assembly of the Representatives of the People, becoming a strong voice of opposition and gaining support across the Tunisian society. Moreover, she was one of two female candidates in the 2019 presidential elections (Wolf, 2020), the second one being Selma Elloumi Rekik, a businesswoman and then member of Nidaa Tounes party.

Nabila Mounib is the first woman in Morocco to lead a political party. She earned her doctorate in endocrinology at Université de Montpellier and followed a career path in academia, lecturing at University of Hassan II in Casablanca. In 2012 she took the position of General Secretary of the Unified Socialist Party, for which she was re-elected in 2018. She ran parliamentary elections several times and in 2021 she gained a seat in the House of Representatives, the lower chamber of the Moroccan parliament, for the first

time (*Nabila...*). At the same time, she became the sole member of the Unified Socialist Party in the chamber. Nevertheless, Mounib's party leadership and her presence in the parliament is of much significance for at least two reasons. First of all, socialist ideas have never gained much popularity within the Moroccan society and those who pronounce such views stay in opposition to the majority in the parliament and government. Secondly, she was the first woman to break the pattern of political leadership as attributed to men amid patriarchal views that are strongly present within the Moroccan society. Therefore, she transgressed two boundaries: the one of ideology and the one of gender.

What deserves to be noticed in terms of women's political leadership in the Maghreb countries – and what stems from the examples given above – is that female politicians who became political leaders have developed successful careers in other fields – in academia, business, legal professions – that are dominated by men. Therefore, before paving their ways to politics they had to do it in other spheres of professional life.

Women in governments of the Maghreb states

Public sphere in the Arab world is highly masculinized and this remains true also in terms of politics. Female politicians are present, nevertheless, they are outnumbered by male politicians. Composition of governments of the Maghreb countries can serve as an illustration of this regularity. Algerian government is characterized by the most elevated level of masculinization as women constitute only slightly over 15% of its members. Since June 2021 it is led by Aïmene Benabderrahmane. His cabinet consists of thirty-two members, out of whom five are women: Soraya Mouloudji – Minister of Culture and Arts, Meriem Benmouloud – Minister of Digitization and Statistics, Kaouter Krikou – Minister of National Solidarity, the Family and the Status of Women, Basma Azouar – Minister of Relations with the Parliament and Fazia Dahleb – Minister of Environment and Renewable Energies (*Taškīla...*).

Women occupy 24% of ministerial positions in the Moroccan government which since September 2021 is headed by Aziz Akhannouch. Currently the government is composed of twenty-five members out of whom six are female: Nadia Fettah – Minister of Economy and Finances, Fatima Ezzahra El Mansouri – Minister of National Territory Planning, Land Planning, Housing and City Policy, Fatima Zahra Ammor – Minister of Tourism, Traditional Crafts and Social and Solidarity Economy, Leila Benali – Minister of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development, Aawatif Hayar – Minister of Solidarity, Social Integration and Family and Ghita Mezzour – Minister Delegate to the Head of Government in charge of Digital Transition and Administrative Reform (*A 'dā' al-ḥukūma*, Al-Mamlaka al-Mağribiyya).

Women's presence at the governmental level is the most intensive in Tunisia where they form 36% of the cabinet. The government of Tunisia is composed of twenty-five members, out of whom nine are female. Moreover, Tunisia is the first and (until now) only country in the Arab world to have a female prime minister. The remaining eight female members of Tunisian government are: Leila Jaffel – Minister of Justice, Sihem Boughdiri Nemsia – Minister of Finances, Neila Nouira Gongi – Minister of Industry, Mining and Energy, Kalthoum Ben Rejeb – Minister of Trade and Export Development,

Sarra Zaafrani Zenzri – Minister of Equipment and Housing, Leila Chikhaoui – Minister of Environment, Amel Bel Haj – Minister of Family, Women, Children and the Eldery and Hayet Ketat Guermazi – Minister of Cultural Affairs (*A'ḍā' al-ḥukūma*, Al-Ġumhūriyya at-Tūnisiyya).

Apart from the number of women in government and the share they constitute in the total number of cabinet members, the above description leads to conclusions concerning the importance of ministerial portfolios entrusted to women. In Algeria strategic – and therefore the most prestigious – ministries are headed by men. Women are appointed to lead less affluent ministries. In Morocco and Tunisia the situation appears slightly different as female ministers are responsible for economy and finances (in both the states) or justice (in Tunisia). Nevertheless, there are still areas of public life that are often viewed as more “feminine” than the others and it finds its illustration in the composition of cabinets. In all the three countries women take on the positions of ministers responsible for family, cultural affairs (including arts and crafts) and social solidarity.

Women in parliaments of the Maghreb states

The most recent parliamentary elections were held in 2022 in Tunisia and in 2021 in Morocco and Algeria. According to data presented by the World Bank, the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments in 2022 was 8% in Algeria, 16% in Libya, 21% in Morocco and 26% in Tunisia. Ten years earlier – in the aftermath of the Arab Spring – the share of feminine members of parliament in Algeria was 32%, in Libya – 17%, in Morocco – 17% and in Tunisia – 27% (*Proportion...*). Changes in share of women in the total number of members of parliaments can be explained in terms of amendments of electoral law, especially removal of quota as it happened in Algeria and Tunisia.

Gender quota are present in Morocco at the level of parliament (introduced in the aftermath of the Arab Spring) and local government bodies (applied for the first time in 2009). As a mechanism that aims at minimizing gender gap they facilitate women's participation in elective bodies and in Morocco such means are often seen as having positive impact on women's political participation (Sobhani, 2021). Yet, there are voices that express the opinion that political parties use female candidates only for electoral purposes (Tadlaoui et al., 2021, p. 6). The solution is, however, perceived as beneficial as in 2021 the parliament adopted a new amended law on public limited companies to promote balanced representation of women and men in corporate governance bodies and one of its provisions concerns establishing quota for women on the boards of publicly traded companies (Mouline, Ozlu, Herzog, 2022). Number of female deputies gives an idea of women's presence in the parliament but, at the same time, it is also important to look at their activity in parliamentary bodies and committees. In the 2021–2026 Legislature, four female deputies are members of the Board of the House of Representatives (which is composed of thirteen members) (*Board...*). Also, out of nine Standing Committees in the House of Representatives two are chaired by women: Foreign Affairs, National Defense, Islamic Affairs, and Moroccan Expatriates Committee and Public Finance Control Committee (*Standing...*).

In Algeria, the post-Arab Spring elections law introduced gender quota, reserving one-third of seats in parliament and in local government for female candidates. Such solution opened the door for female representatives, however, it turned out to be superficial as many of them did not have any experience in the sphere of politics or civil society organizations. Consequently, their performance in the parliament was assessed as rather poor and shaped a negative image of women in politics. Together with patriarchal features of the Algerian society and negative attitudes towards women's activity in the public sphere that prevail in certain communities in Algeria, this led to worsening the situation of women in politics. In March 2021 electoral law was changed and quotas were replaced by gender parity that required half of the candidates on party lists to be women (Marwane, 2021). This led to a sharp decrease in the share of female representatives in the parliament, making Algeria reach the same level (i.e. 8%) as before the Arab Spring (*Proportion...*). The example of Algeria shows clearly that it is not enough to create legal conditions to make political sphere more inclusive for women. In order to achieve this goal profound social changes are required.

In Tunisia, in December 2021 the president announced that the 2014 Constitution will be amended. It turned out, however, that the aim of the amendment is actually the change of Constitution. Albeit the text of the document was criticized for legitimizing autocracy and expanding the power of the president and constitution-making process was assessed as lacking "legal basis, democratic legitimacy, inclusivity, accountability and transparency" (*Codifying...*, 2022), the new Constitution was adopted on 25 July 2022.

In December 2022 and January 2023 parliamentary elections were held under the revised Constitution and changed electoral law. The new legal framework introduced bicameralism, reduced the number of seats to 161 (previously: 217 seats), changed electoral system and modified delimitation of electoral constituencies (*Elections...*).

The results of elections showed another change, namely masculinization of parliament. Only 11,5% of candidates who ran in the elections were women. Moreover, in the newly-elected parliament feminine candidates gained only 25 seats (Farouk, 2023). It translates into 15,53% and in comparison to 26% of women members of parliament in the previous assembly can be assessed as a sharp decrease. The results revealed exclusion of female politicians from the political arena and – at the same time – undermined women's achievements in the sphere of national politics.

The low proportion of female members of parliament after the most recent elections can be explained (at least partially) in terms of changes introduced to electoral system by president Kais Saied and his administration. First of all, the principles of parity and alternation between men and women on candidate lists (vertical parity) were removed from the electoral law (*New...*). The two abovementioned mechanisms were perceived as significant achievements of the Jasmine Revolution of 2010/2011 and important steps towards empowerment of women. Secondly, electoral system introduced in the last elections moved away from party lists and toward individual elections, and abolished public funding for elections. It means that the candidates must find funding themselves (self-funding or outside sponsorship) (*Election for...*). Such condition may be especially difficult to fulfil for women as a significant number of them does not pursue professional career – although the presence of Tunisian women in labour market is more visible than in the other countries of the Middle East and North Africa (*What's...*, 2016). According to

the World Bank's data, in 2022 women constituted 29,4% of total labour force in Tunisia (*Labor force...*). Moreover, traditional model of family – in which it is the obligation of a man to earn a living for his family and a woman is not demanded to perform professional activity – not infrequently prevents women from having an independent source of income and, therefore, making them dependent upon their husbands, fathers or sons and their political views.

Conclusions

During the last decade the states of Maghreb experienced crucial political changes, including the ones in the sphere of political activity and leadership of women. Female politicians marked their presence in politics and paved their way to leadership positions. It is an important step that has already been taken.

The mechanism of quota raised the level of female presence in elected bodies. Nevertheless, such change is quantitative in nature and in order to need to be followed by qualitative change – the one that not only enables women to be present on electoral lists or in the parliaments but also to have a meaningful impact on political processes. Women need to gain more experience in politics and this demands time.

Women's leadership remains is a rare phenomenon at both state and party level. The last years, however, brought important advancements in this respect and the symbolic dimension of women's leadership cannot be underestimated. The power of female political leaders in the Arab world is that they become inspiration for other women.

Political attitudes towards women's political participation and leadership are an important factor that limits the presence of women on the political scene. These attitudes are often conditioned by traditional values and behaviours linked to religion and, hence, it is not easy to change them. Nevertheless, such change can be supported by civil education based on gender equality and by granting women wider access to education. Moreover, perhaps a more inclusive political approach of the state authorities towards women would improve their position in national politics.

Amid significant changes, gender equality in politics is far from achieved and patriarchal stereotypes remain substantial barrier that women have to overcome on their way to political power. Unfortunately, breaking stereotypes demands profound changes in the mindset – and it is a complicated and gradual process. It is conditioned also by the way women view themselves and their capabilities. Women's political participation is not only limited by how men see the role of women in politics but also how women themselves view their own potential and the potential of other women. A question arises whether a woman is open to support another woman in her political career and sees her as a trustworthy politician and a skilful player who is able to win in the game of politics.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization (Konceptualizacja): Agnieszka Syliwoniuk-Wapowska

Data curation (Zestawienie danych): Agnieszka Syliwoniuk-Wapowska

Formal analysis (Analiza formalna): Agnieszka Syliwoniuk-Wapowska

Writing – original draft (Piśmiennictwo – oryginalny projekt): Agnieszka Syliwoniuk-Wapowska

Writing – review & editing (Piśmiennictwo – sprawdzenie i edytowanie): Agnieszka Syliwoniuk-Wapowska

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Aktywność polityczna i przywództwo kobiet w krajach Maghrebu. Perspektywa po arabskiej wiosnie

Streszczenie

Państwa Maghrebu oraz ich społeczeństwa wykazują wiele podobieństw, jednak nie zaliczają się do nich poziom aktywności politycznej kobiet oraz skala przywództwa politycznego kobiet. Partycypacja kobiet w życiu politycznym jest wysoce zdywersyfikowana i różni się znacząco w zależności od państwa regionu. Głównym celem artykułu jest zarysowanie i poddanie analizie zakresu oraz form aktywności politycznej kobiet oraz przywództwa politycznego kobiet w czterech państwach Maghrebu: Algierii, Libii, Maroku oraz Tunezji. W artykule uwaga została skupiona na obecności kobiet w parlamentach i rządach państw regionu oraz ich przywództwie politycznym, w tym także przywództwie partyjnym. Krytycznej analizie poddana została literatura przedmiotu, analizy oraz informacje przedstawione w cieszących się dobrą opinią serwisach informacyjnych. W celu ukazania zarówno podobieństw, jak i różnic pomiędzy państwami w artykule zastosowano podejście porównawcze. Kluczowe zmiany, które zaszły w Maghrebie na przestrzeni ostatniej dekady zostały przywołane w artykule i usytuowane w kontekście społecznym i kulturowym. W pracy uwzględniona została także perspektywa historyczna.

Słowa kluczowe: aktywność polityczna, przywództwo polityczne, przywództwo partyjne, Maghreb, aktywność polityczna kobiet, przywództwo polityczne kobiet

