

BOOK REVIEW

***Female Youth in Contemporary Egypt: Post-Islamism and a New Politics of Visibility.* By Dina Hosni. New York: Routledge, 2023. 240 pp. \$170.00 (cloth), ISBN: 9781032131689; \$47.65 (eBook), ISBN: 9781003227960.**

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*Female Youth in Contemporary Egypt*, written by Dina Hosni, presents an interesting discourse on the transformations of the worldviews of young Egyptian women following the 2011 Egyptian uprisings. Hosni explores how women's religious views interact with a new consciousness to produce new forms of social engagement and activism. Drawing on primary sources of data to examine the changing gender landscape in Egypt, the book is structured into four thought-provoking chapters, framed by an engaging introduction and conclusion. Hosni draws on feminist theory to analyze the impact of political and religious changes on young women. Her work considers the emergence of postbourgeois public spheres in Arabo-Islamic contexts, critiques of Islamist and feminist thought, the positioning of religion in the public versus private sphere, and novel forms of discourse and activism by Muslim women. By skillfully exploring these theoretical considerations, Hosni offers a unique empirical and conceptual perspective on forming a new generation of active young women in Egypt and their place in society.

In Chapter 1, Hosni examines the concept of dualism in Islam, which involves contrasting elements such as traditionalism and modernity, global and local, and Islamic and secular perspectives. She supports her analysis with a detailed historical context, tracing the rise of Islam on the Arabian Peninsula and exploring how the duality of Islam evolved between global and local during the 1990s, resulting in an ongoing conflict between urban and rural Islam. She also explores the concept of *da'wa*, which has been transformed to include social activities and functions as an alternative to state institutions. Hosni sheds light on the transformation of Islamic societies during the nineteenth century, leading to the emergence of Islamic reform movements in the twentieth century, which created a three-dimensional community. Precisely, she argues that Islam has become more of a personal endeavor and commitment than a collective-based traditional religion, playing a less significant role in public space and evolving

into a religion of personal belief and distinct social identity, particularly in the context of increasing secularization. This chapter is a foundation for Hosni's subsequent analysis of ex-Islamist female youth in Egypt. She explores the country's political and social context, including the 2011 revolution, the escalation of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the current authoritarian regime. She focuses on how young females in Egypt challenge traditional gender roles, employing feminist theory to examine their engagement with patriarchal norms.

In Chapter 2, Hosni argues that there is a lack of literature on the distinction between Islamism and post-Islamism. By examining young Muslim women's backgrounds, experiences, and religious observances, she explores their participation in the public sphere and the role of technology in spreading post-Islamist ideas and presents a compelling argument regarding post-Islamism and its impact on young females in Egypt. She also critically analyzes Muslim women's complex attitudes toward veiling, the relationship between religiosity and secularization, and common traits of post-Islamism, including dress code and gender mixing. Her analysis sheds light on young women's challenges in navigating their religious identities in public life. Finally, she argues that post-Islamism represents a departure from traditional Islamist ideologies, leading to significant changes for women in Egypt.

In Chapter 3, Hosni delves into the role of religion in the debate over public and private spheres in modern Arabo-Islamic society. She criticizes the Habermasian view of the public sphere, which confines religion to the private sphere, arguing that privatizing religion leads to the deprivation of religion. She also considers how counterpublics, alternative norms of public discourse developed by subaltern counterpublics, have been excluded from the bourgeois public sphere. Hosni then evaluates the interplay between Islamism and post-Islamism regarding women's participation in the public sphere, mentioning that Islamism seeks to extend Islam into the public space. In contrast, post-Islamism emphasizes the individualization and privatization of religion. The chapter deliberates on the role of the veil and its ambiguous symbolism, which can segregate or desegregate women. The importance of recent structural changes, such as growing literacy and urbanization among educated middle-class youth and women, demographic shifts, economic and social conditions, and the impact of globalization, are all highlighted as critical factors that have challenged the nature of authoritarian Arabo-Islamic states. Finally, Hosni traces the roles of the Square and the Mosque in Arabo-Islamic contexts, as well as the contribution of the online sphere in breaking down the boundaries between the private and public domains. She inspects religion's various meanings and implications in the public/private debate and women's participation in the public sphere in modern Arabo-Islamic society.

In Chapter 4, Hosni advances the argument that the visibility of post-Islamist women in Egypt is a crucial political issue affecting their personal and political power. Understanding visibility as a social category is essential, especially regarding veiling and religious markers. Hosni discusses seven entities that qualify as post-Islamist and highlights their emphasis on civil democracy, achieving secular goals such as democracy, civil rights, and fighting corruption,

and their reconciliation between the sacred and the secular. She positively views these entities' efforts toward fostering tolerance, understanding, and serenity while balancing religious and civic activism. Hosni concludes by identifying young Muslim women in Egypt engaged in political and social activities as "active Muslims" or "active citizens" and exploring the role of charity, dressing, and gender mixing as markers of activism within different religious entities. Additionally, she argues that gender segregation in post-Islamist activism is significant, and that gender equity or justice is more important than gender equality. Finally, Hosni argues that these post-Islamist female youth groups are visible as political because they meet the defining elements of the political process.

In her conclusion, Hosni underscores the transformative power of young Muslim women's activism in dismantling traditional gender roles and eroding the public/private divide. Hosni consistently critiques both Islamist and feminist thought while analyzing how Muslim women's activism can reconcile Islamic principles with contemporary issues, such as women's rights, with an emphasis on the importance of equity among genders.

The book is well crafted and meticulously researched, significantly contributing to the academic discourse on gender and politics in the Middle East, focusing mainly on Egypt. Hosni offers a nuanced analysis of the experiences of young Egyptian women who must navigate a complex political landscape following the Arab Spring and the emergence of post-Islamism.

Hosni's research reveals how young Egyptian women challenge entrenched gender norms and stereotypes while creating new public spaces for themselves. She provides an insightful portrayal of these young women's diverse and often conflicting experiences in Egypt, highlighting their active engagement with politics and utilization of emerging media and technologies to amplify their voices and advocate for transformative change. In addition, the book examines the challenges and risks that women encounter in this context, such as violence and persistent patriarchal structures.

Overall, Hosni's book contributes to understanding the complex intersections of gender and politics in the Middle East. Furthermore, it underscores the critical importance of considering young women's diverse experiences and perspectives in shaping their societies' future.

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