

Role of Gulf Women in Political Participation: Emirati Women as a Model

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Abstract

The issue of empowering women in public life and their participation in political work is one of the most important issues of great importance in recent decades. As the development of human awareness in understanding democracy as a system and as representing administrative, political and social life, has made it possible to focus on this issue. The political and electoral participation of women did not come out of a nowhere. Rather, there are theoretical ideological trends that are the cornerstone of this democratic process that many scholars in politics, society, etc. have addressed them to confirm their entitlement through charters and principles, in not only man-made laws, but also primarily in divine laws approved by all monotheistic religions. Therefore, the importance of our research on the Role Gulf Women in Political Participation (Emirati women as a model) came. In addition to the implications of the political participation of Emirati women, and what are the results of this participation.

Keywords: Role, Women, Participation, Politics, Emirati, Democracy.

Introduction:

After the development that humanity has reached in several scientific, intellectual and humanitarian fields, the issue of political reform based on the democratic assimilation approach to all forms of political behavior has been an important resource of the legal basis for the political participation of the total human existence in general. The concepts of political and economic development depended on the terms of empowerment^(1*) the right of political participation. It would not have been possible

*** - Definition of Empowerment:**

The concept of *Empowerment* is one of the concepts that has gained increasing importance since the early nineties, especially with the rise of liberal currents that aim to activate the role of civil society, as well as feminist movements seeking to support women's participation in public and political life. Rather, it has become used as an alternative concept of '*Development in Studies & Research of Women and Youth*'.

Empowerment linguistically means strengthening or enrichment.

There were also many procedural definitions of the concept of empowerment that differed according to the context and social segments in question, but they all revolved around eliminating all forms of inequality and ensuring equal opportunities for individuals, through three main axes:

to activate these aspects if it had it not been for the existence of intellectual and legal theories. They have called each other through different times, to activate and achieve the principle of gender equality in rights and duties, including laws that were aimed at ensuring the full and effective participation of women, with equal opportunities for leadership on the equality with men at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. Furthermore, those laws enable women's representation in legislative, executive and judicial authorities, and local councils.

It should be noted that the issue of women's empowerment in public life, and their participation in political work, is one of the most important issues of great importance in recent decades. As the development of human awareness in understanding democracy as a system and as representing administrative, political and social life, has made it possible to focus on this issue. It is now being raised significant on a number of levels, at the level of activating the political participation of citizens in general, and at the level of women's political participation as part of the global international discourse on women, which began with the *Mexico Conference* in 1975 and ended with the *Nairobi Conference* in 1985.

From one hand, the issue of empowering women and their role in participating in political action was represented at the *Beijing Conference* in 1995 at the end of the Second International Decade for Women. This happened after the increasing awareness of the importance of this subject, as a pillar of the reform process and political building for all the peoples of the world. It was as part of the process of empowering women in all fields including the political sphere.

On the other hand, institutional and trade union work, and women's groupings, made it possible to create a kind of unity of purpose and cause, and to rally towards specific goals in feminist movements, making the issue of women's political participation a great importance, crystallized

* Removing all obstacles that hinder the empowerment process, whether legal, legislative or social, related to customs, traditions, or other stereotypical behaviors that place marginalized groups (women, ethnic and religious minorities, the poor, etc.) or the less fortunate in lower ranks.

* Adopting policies, procedures and legislation, and establishing structures and institutions that eliminate manifestations of exclusion and marginalization, and undertake the process of empowerment.

* Providing marginalized groups with knowledge, information, skills, resources and capabilities in a manner that guarantees them effective participation and equal opportunities economically, socially and politically.

Therefore, empowerment as a concept is based on the elements of power that form its core. As power is defined as the ability to do a certain action or make a certain thing, and this ability generates a sense of responsibility and a desire to actively participate in making important decisions in society, and to employ the available sources of power in imposing its will, achieving its goals and interests, and influencing others.

As for the Arab world, the concept of empowerment came back in the nineties with strength, following the announcement of governments at *Cairo Conference on Population & Development* in 1994, and then at the *Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing* in 1995. Its links developed and its circle expanded in the nineties, where it was linked to new concepts such as: human rights, inequality, interest and self-affirmation. In addition to the issue of women and their empowerment in all fields, including the political field, was one of the biggest issues that these conferences focused on within the framework of gender culture, this last term, which will be the subject of the next demand.

See: Masoud, Amani, 'Empowerment', Concepts Magazine, October Issue, 2006, p.5.

through their discourses of different orientations. They were raising the issue of political participation for women as a priority and an entry point for the process of social change in their favour, by providing a number of mechanisms and means to support all types of participation.

Taking into account the recentness of the democratic experiment in the international community, especially the Arab countries, the interests of the active forces, the influences of cultural heritage and the masculine viewpoint. The results of this experiment may have reflected some aspects that distort the image of democratic transformations and put obstacles in the way of women's electoral political participation in the Arab world today.

The political and electoral participation of women did not come out of nowhere. Rather, there are theoretical ideological trends that are the cornerstone of this democratic process that many scholars in politics, sociology, etc. have addressed them to confirm their entitlement through charters and principles, not only in man-made laws, but also primarily in divine laws approved by all monotheistic religions.

Research Subject, Objective & Importance of Research:

This study attempts to deal with the reality of Arab women's political participation through the following problem: *What is the extent of Arab women's participation in general, and Emirati women in particular in consolidating participatory democracy?* To answer this problem, we ask the following questions:

- What are the political rights of Arab women that reflect the reality of political participation?
- What are the figures of political participation of Arab women in general and Emirati women in particular?
- Has the political participation of Emirati women facilitated the process of consolidating democratic political participation?

Importance of the Study:

The importance of this study lies in the fact that it examined the phenomenon of political and economic empowerment of Emirati women in some detail and in-depth analysis by describing its reality, evaluating it, identifying its obstacles, and searching for appropriate solutions to enhance this participation, in order to achieve sustainable political and social development.

Based on the foregoing, it becomes clear that the issue of the political participation of Arab women - the Emirati woman as a model- is an important issue in the context of openness and development to involve all citizens, including women, in political life. They can participate in choosing rulers and representatives in elected councils, as well as in the formulation of public policies in their countries ... etc. Taking into account that political participation is a right that citizens perform willingly and voluntarily, in which there is neither compulsion nor coercion, but rather determined by the level of awareness of the citizen himself.

Objectives of the Study:

- Disclosing the importance of the political participation of Arab and Emirati women in particular.
- Identifying the nature and reality of women's political participation in the Arab world.

- Identifying the positions of international institutions and Arab constitutions on the participation of women in political work.
- Searching for the implications of the political participation of Emirati women, that is, what results this participation led to.
- Knowing the extent to which this participation is directed towards achieving the principle of equality between women and men in political work in the UAE, and the extent to which it is directed towards consolidating participatory democracy.
- It also aims to contribute to spreading awareness of the importance of women's political participation as a political human right.

Study Hypothesis:

The study is based on a basic premise that there is a real progress in the political participation of women in the UAE as a result of official support for their march and their involvement in development. In addition to the future will witness a great prosperity in the participation of Emirati women in the process of increasing political and societal awareness.

First Topic

Political Participation

The concept of '*Political Participation*' is one of the most important concepts on which any democratic building is based in the world, as political participation is one of the expressive aspects of the spirit and form of democracy. Despite the multiple definitions of the concept of '*Political Participation*' as well as when we look to the diversity of its patterns, indicators and levels, there is a consensus on the inevitability of certain channels through which the political participation process is practiced. Therefore, the more these channels are available and have great effectiveness, the more political participation plays an important role in the decision-making process on more than one level within the political system.¹

First: Definition of Political Participation:

The verbal approach to the term '*Political Participation*' requires us to deconstruct the term, in order to understand its linguistic and idiomatic roots.

'*Participation*' in language means: contribution, while idiomatically it means “any voluntary action that does not aim for profit and interest on the part of the citizen, to influence the selection of public policies and the management of public affairs or the selection of political leaders at any governmental, local or national level.”²

The word “*Participation*” is derived from the Latin word “*Parscompar*” and this term consists of two parts, “*pars*” meaning “part” and the second “*compar*” meaning “to take part”, in which means to

¹See: Hashem, Azza Jalal, *Political Participation of Iranian Women*, Abu Dhabi - Emirates Center for Strategic Studies & Research, 2007, p. 11.

² Nabi, Sarbst, *Concept of Political Participation in Modern Countries*, an article published on the following link, http://www.welateme.net/erebi/modules.php?name=News*file=article*sid=886#.YIF19Dgza03

do a role.¹ *Participation* in language means that the individual gets a share of something, and it means that the participant has a share in the political affairs. As the citizen's political participation means playing a role in political life. Therefore, this participation takes several forms such as voting, referendum and participation in parties and community civil organizations, demonstrations, sit-ins and civil disobedience.²

Political Participation is defined, in political science, as "the practice associated with giving the constitutional democratic right to all rational, adult members of society to participate in an organized manner in making political decisions related to their lives together in a community. It provided that political participation is not limited to giving this right an actual practice, which is away from the factors of pressure, compulsion and obligation. As it must remain within a democratic framework consistent with the framework of social responsibility feeling towards general societal goals and within the framework of freedom feeling of thought, action and expression."³

By comparison with Western political thought, there are many important and original definitions of this term, but the most important of which is what Huntington mentioned. As Huntington's political participation, represents the activities of individuals that aim to influence government decision-making, and are individually or collectively organized or spontaneous, continuous or seasonal, peaceful or violent, effective or ineffective, legal or illegal.⁴

Moreover, *Political participation*, in sociology, goes to defining as "the process through which the individual can play a role in the political life of his society with the aim of achieving the goals of social and economic development. It provided that every citizen has the opportunity to contribute in making and identifying these goals and to identify the best means and methods to achieve them." The involvement of citizens in these efforts should be based on self-motivation and voluntary work that translates citizens' sense of social responsibility towards their goals and the common problems of their society.⁵

As for Muhammad Al-Suwaidi, he defines *Political Participation* as "a socio-political process through which the individual plays a role in the political life of his community, so that he has the opportunity to participate in setting and formulating the general goals of the community, as well as finding the best means to achieve and accomplish these goals."⁶

As for Mr. Abdel Halim Al-Zayat, he defines *Political Participation* as "an official voluntary process that reflects an organized, legitimate and continuous behavior that expresses a rational trend,

¹Abdel-Wahab, Tariq, *Psychology of Political Participation in the Arab Environment*, Dar Al-Gharib, Cairo, 1st edition, 1999, p. 109.

²Abrash, Ibrahim, *Political Sociology*, Dar Al-Shorouk Publishing, Amman, Jordan, 1998, p. 38.

³Kaddouri, Houria, *Political Participation of Female Students in Algeria - A Field Study on the Political Participation of Female Students of the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, Algeria*, a memorandum for obtaining a master's degree in political sociology - Department of Sociology, University of Algiers, 2007, p. 46.

⁴Tharwat, Makki, *Media & Politics - Media & Political Participant*, Alam Al-Kitab, Cairo, 2001, p. 13.

⁵Kaddouri, Houria, *Political Participation of Female Students in Algeria*, a previously mentioned source, p. 48.

⁶Al-Suwaidi, Muhammad, *Sociology - Its Field & Issues* - Diwan of University Publications, 1990, p.60.

stemming from a deep awareness of the rights and duties of citizenship, through the effective and influential roles that citizens play in political life.¹

Political Participation is one of the most important manifestations of democracy, through which the citizen can express his will. From here, we find many democracies in the world seeking to expand the scope of participation for citizens to support their legitimacy and to provide citizens with the opportunity to choose their representatives freely. Because the concept of sound democracy is based on the tasks of citizens, and thus generates a feeling among individuals the importance of their participation, thus enhancing their culture and political behavior.²

Second: Political Participation as a Democratic Representation:

The act of political participation is the most important foundation upon which democracy is based. In fact, the growth and development of democracy depends on providing opportunities for political participation in front of groups and classes of the people, and making them rights enjoyed by every human in society. Thus, it helps to consolidate and establish democratic practice and turn it into a daily practice.³

The term *Political Participation* is a newly emerging term, and it is directly related to the term democracy, despite the comprehensiveness of the term democracy to (political democracy) which means the right to vote, while (social democracy) which means equal opportunities, until the West developed the concept of democracy to mean political pluralism according to the specific regulations.⁴ Some have considered that political participation is the practical democratic expression of the voluntary social contract, not only as a concept, but in a practical reality as well. Because in this, the individual becomes an equal member with his peers in all basic rights, duties and freedoms in the body of the state to which he belongs. However, what is sometimes done on the ground, as a result of the overlapping and intertwining of interests between individuals, is to bypass this supposed equality and thus limit participation.⁵ Therefore, it departs from its supposed democratic framework, to turn into a kind of systemic fluctuation.

The democratic participation of the individual in political life is affected by the amount of his civic and political knowledge acquired through multiple sources, such as the visual, print and broadcast media, political seminars, electoral campaigns.....etc.

The more and more diversified his civil and political knowledge, the greater the likelihood of his political participation. The form of the social and political system, in which he lives, also affects the individual's political participation. Open liberal democracies enhance individuals' desire for political

¹Al-Zayyat, El-Sayed Abdel Halim, *Political Development, Epistemological & Methodological Dimensions*, Vol. 2, Dar Al-Marefa University, Alexandria, 2002, p.28.

²Al-Sharaa, Firas, *Political Participation in Jordanian Countryside – A field Study in the villages of theLawa Bani Obaid*, Master's Thesis, Al Al-Bayt University, Mafrq - Jordan, 1999, p.20.

³Abdel Wahab, Tariq, *Psychology of Political Participation in the Arab Environment*, a previously mentioned source, p.16.

⁴Dajani, Ahmed Sidqi, *Political Pluralism & Democracy in the Arab World*, Arab Thought Forum, Amman, 1989, p.27.

⁵Shabar, Saeed, *In the Concept of the Elite*, Al-Kalima Magazine, Beirut - Lebanon, Issue No. 25, 1999, p.74.

participation, while closed systems, that are dominated by the executive legacy, work the opposite, as they enhance the feeling of frustration and indifference among members of their societies.

Therefore, talking about political participation has historically been linked to talking about democracy, each of which refers to the other and vice versa. Rather, the formulation of the democratic mentality came to describe a situation that prevailed in the direct participation of citizens in the formulation of political decisions and the management of state affairs. Political participation is the link that links between the individual as a member of the group and the individual as a political citizen. The individual, by participating in the activities of political life related to his society, has achieved, if not proven, his presence as a positive citizen in his society.¹

Free and voluntary political participation of citizens is a prerequisite for any modern political system that has ceased to be tyrannical and outdated. The historical experience of many societies has shown that the vitality of newest ones, their cohesion and stability depend on the degree of political contribution and initiative of the citizens. While the fragility, instability of the political system and the weakness of civil society are explained by the reluctance of individuals or their prevention of political participation and their avoidance of participation and not vice versa.

Therefore, talking about political participation takes place only within the framework of a democratic atmosphere of a modern civil society, a modern national state, which appears to its citizens from the inside as a state of right and law, not a state of a party, elite, class. Because the first is to open the door wide for the participation of all. While, the second case makes participation is restricted to members of the party, the elite, rank or class, whatever the name is, not at this point. It may resort to canceling the other's duty in political participation and expression, and making itself the axis and center but the rest are margins.²

Political participation crystallizes in all political systems of all kinds, although of course it seems more clear and frank in expressing itself in the light of democracy. This democracy allows greater areas of freedom for individuals and respect for the human rights system, and free and competitive periodic elections. Therefore it allows a great deal of citizen active participation in the political life, making the refinement of these decisions more related to the real needs of the participants, and thus more acceptable on their part, as the higher the degree of participation, the higher the level of legitimacy as a result.

Political participation represents the engine of the comprehensive and sustainable development process by focusing on the human factor and activating its role and activating it as a basic link supporting development circles, by involving it in the decision-making process, its implementation and control. It allows the citizen to know the problems and ways to raise them and present their solutions and present programs for this, and from here, it becomes a safety valve for the political decision taken as a result of the citizen's involvement in it, and with him, the individual becomes ready to bear its negative or positive consequences. Broad political participation enhances the legitimacy of the regime. Nevertheless, in return, it may lead to the introduction of complications in

¹Kaddouri, Houria, *Political Participation of Female Students in Algeria*, a previously mentioned source, p. 55.

²Kaddouri, Houria, *Political Participation of Female Students in Algeria*, previous source, p: 75.

the decision-making process, and this would reduce the efficiency and importance of the decision and thus reduce its legitimacy. Political participation may create conditions that reflect satisfaction or conflict, which does not appear clear and evident in other forms of participation.¹

Political participation is a democratic principle of the most important principles of the modern national state. It is a principle in the light of which we can distinguish democratic national systems that are based on citizenship and equality in rights and duties, from authoritarian, totalitarian or authoritarian regimes, which are based on monopoly, monopolizing power and its corrupting privileges, and using them in a way that preserves its interests.²

Third: Characteristics & Figures of Political Participation:

With a large number of semantic and verbal definitions, which indicate the disintegration of the concept of political participation, we find, on the other hand, that there are three characteristics of political participation, which are as follows:³

A - **Action**: It means the active movement, and the positive activities of the masses to achieve one or several specific goals.

B- **Volunteering**: It means that citizens undertake the process of participation willingly and voluntarily, in appreciation of the responsibility that they must bear in relation to the issues of society – this determination is incompatible with every type of crowd or mobilization that leads the masses to participate under pressure or coercion. This means that if the custom has been taken on the assumption that the participation takes place in a proper manner, then this consideration ignores the theory of conflict and the reality of human life, which does not limit participation to voluntary but may take place by force.

C - **Choice**: It means giving the participants the right to back-up and support political action and political leaders in the event that political action and government efforts conflict with their legitimate interests and goals.

Fourth: Figures of Political Participation:

What is noticed is the existence of a hierarchical hierarchy of the levels of political participation, as they are hierarchically hierarchical from top to bottom. From this point of view, their figures were varied and different. They can be divided as follows:

¹Zakaria, Harizi, *Political Participation of Arab Women & their Role to Consolidate Participatory Democracy - Algeria as a Model*, Master's Thesis in Political Science, Hajj Lakhdar University - Batna, Faculty of Law & Political Science - Department of Political Science, 2010-2011, p. 22.

²Al-Masry, Rafiq Mahmoud, *Palestinian Women's Political Participation - Levels & Obstacles*, Sharjah Journal of Social and Human Sciences, Issue 1, 2000, p. 210.

³Ghanem, Sayed Abdel Muttalib, *Political Participation in Egypt*, Al-Ahram Foundation, Center for Political & Strategic Studies, 1979, p.: 14.

1- Institutional or Official Participation:

It is carried out by those in official positions based on the reality of preserving their interests through the achievement of permanence, continuity and coordinated stability that they dominate. They face through this process difficulties and conflicts with others with interests from members of society, and these official participants are:

- Holders of high political positions where they constitute the first level of official political participation and come at the top of the hierarchy, where the right to unite or make political decisions that affects society as a whole.
- Senior bureaucrats who come in the second level of participation, for example, deputy ministers.

2-Organized Participation (*informal*):

And they are within the framework of existing institutions or organizations that form a link between the political citizen and the political system, that is, they are the organs that carry out the task of collecting and integrating individual demands, expressing them and transforming them into general political choices, and from these organized organs are 'political parties, unions, pressure groups'. They have been called '*informal*' despite the important role they play in political life because they do not participate in an official capacity. It means that, they do not have legal authority that gives them the right to make binding decisions, and this form of political participation is the most common in democratic societies whose political structure is based to institutionalize society and activate the role of civil society.

3- Independent Participation:

It is the participation of the citizen on an individually so that he enjoys here absolute freedom in determining the type and degree of participation, and he is free to participate or not. This participation is on occasions, and it often includes the non-politically active members of the public, and those who are not politically framed, and its manifestation are manifested in voting in elections and referendums, for example but not limited to.¹

Political participation, here, does not mean the participation of all citizens in all activities and different political fields and at all times. As much as it means the participation of the largest number of residents of the community in the largest possible number of these activities and fields as permitted by the preparations, capabilities and tendencies of these individuals. Participation Political is one of the basic elements that create a rally around any political system, with its many methods and different levels.

Though the above, we can conclude that political participation is free will of citizens, through which they exercise effective and influential roles in political live, driven by the spirit of citizenship and framed political awareness. The media, schools, groups and political and civic organizations, to contribute to finding solutions to the issues raised, grew it. Thus, it forms, here; the importance of political participation is evident. Despite all the advantages of political participation, in reality in the Arab world (known as a *Crisis!*). It is linked to political backwardness, where citizens are directed

¹Kaddouri, Houria, *Political Participation of Female Students in Algeria*, previously mentioned source, p.: 23-24.

towards practicing political participation with a kind of imbalance. In addition, we find it either non-existent or formal participation, caused by the tendency of political leaders to concentrate power in their grip, establishing authoritarian regimes and restricting the participation of the masses in political life.¹

Second Topic

Women's Political Participation

First: Definition of the Concept

The concept of '*Women's Political Participation*' and the problems involved in this concept because it is linked to many concepts of solidarity, partnership, equality, empowerment and political behavior. Hence, the importance of defining a clear and specific concept of this participation. This requires the development of indicators that enable the measurement of the effectiveness of women's political participation. Women participation in political life is not limited to women assuming political positions only, but also in organizing themselves into movements and organizations aimed at influencing the decision-making process and policy-making.²

'Ross', the researcher, defines *Women's Political Participation* as women's participation in political activities in all its forms and shapes, according to what the law allows to give women political rights that qualify them to participate in the political process. McIlind, defines *Women's Political Participation* as 'the extent of women's participation in political behavior and electoral behavior is one of the most important types of participation, which includes voting, nomination, participation in the electoral campaigns of candidates and other forms of political participation in which women directly participate.'³

Most of the definitions that dealt with the concept of *Women's Political Participation* revolve around a main idea that is embodied in that it is a process through which women seek to influence power in order to obtain some political gains. The most important of which is their right to have a role in the political process, and here it can be said that such a right is not limited to the individual level, but rather they trade it to achieve the right of different societies to social construction. Therefore, since women represent a large group in society, this right must extend to their right to representation and election to ensure the achievement of their interests.

The concept of *Women's Political Participation* has been linked to the concept of *Political Empowerment* in its general meaning is the removal of all processes, trends and stereotypical behaviors in society and institutions that stereotype women and marginalized groups and place them in lower ranks.⁴

¹Al-Amri, Salha Suhail, *Role of Emirati Women in Political Participation*, Master's Thesis in Political Science, College of Arts, Department of Political Science - Middle East University, 2013, p. 43.

²Al-Amiri, Salha Suhail, *Role of Emirati Women in Political Participation*, previous source, p. 32.

³Abdel Wahab, Tariq, *Psychology of Political Participation in the Arab Environment*, a previously mentioned source, p. 91.

⁴Ismail, Farida Ghulam, *Political Empowerment of Women*, Journal of Civil Society Issues, September 4, Issue No. 25, 2005, p.64.

The idea of equality between men and women has two dimension.¹ The first dimension is the formal treatment or procedural equality between individuals. While the second dimension is real equality. Nevertheless, since the first dimension is always violated despite its presence in all laws and procedures, the concept of actual or real equality has emerged recently through distinct and overlapping approaches. Many countries are convinced that in order to achieve truly equal results, they must apply positive measures or impose protection or provide certain assistance to achieve justice and compensate the less fortunate groups for societal imbalances. Thus, this paves opportunities for the choice, which is in front of them to access community resources as others without discrimination; it is the concept of fair participation or fair opportunities.²

Second: Importance of Women's Political Participation

The issue of women's participation in political work is considered one of the most important issues of great importance in recent decades. This issue has become increasingly raised on a number of levels. On the one hand, it is posed in the context of talking about activating the political participation of citizen, in general. On the other hand, it is posing the political participation of women as a part of the global international discourse on women, which began with a conference in Mexico in 1975, and ended with the Nairobi Conference in 1985.

Given the importance of the subject, this issue was re-posed at the Beijing Conference in 1995 at the end of the Second International Decade for Women, as part of the process of empowering women in most fields, including the political sphere. On the other hand, the feminist movement, through its discourses of different orientations, raises the issue of women's political participation as a priority and an entry point for the process of social change in favor of women, by imitating a number of mechanisms and means to support participation.

The degree of women's political participation is the outcome of the interaction between these types of discourse on the one hand; while the culture of the society in which they live, and the amount of freedom and democracy they enjoy, especially participatory democracy, and the degree of development of their awareness on the other hand. Therefore, it is not possible to talk about women's political participation independent of the social and political conditions that exist in society.³

In most of the studies that covered the political participation of Arab women, the focus was on the percentage of women voting and the percentage of candidacy, in addition to the percentage of women winning parliamentary seats, local councils, or the so-called decision-making centers.

¹Feminist trends calling for the realization of the *Principle of Equality*: Feminism emerged as a result of the conflict between the different trends. A reaction tries to root the status of women and their right to enjoy the benefits of the ordinary citizen and achieve the value of gender equality. It is trying to disengage with the prevailing traditional roles. Trends of Feminist thought share the adherence to the principle of equal rights for all human beings, including the right to political participation for women.

See: Saleh, Samia Khader, *Political Participation & Democracy - Modern Theoretical & Methodological Trends that Contribute to Understanding the World Around Us*, 2005, p. 88.

²Saleh, Samia Khader, *Political Participation & Democracy*, previous source, p. 34.

³Zakaria, Harizi, *Political Participation of Arab Women & their Role to Consolidate Participatory Democracy*, a previously mentioned source, p. 5.

According to the criteria of the United Nations Human Development Report, the percentage of women participation in seats Arab parliaments is (4%), and this percentage ranges from zero to (8.10%). While for the studies that have been conducted on the political participation of Arab women, many of them show a low percentage of women's participation in voting (30%), for example, in northern Egypt as well as with regard to (78%) regarding candidacy and winning - except for the percentage of Palestinian women, which reached (7.87%) in 1976 and reached (87%) in the last legislative elections.¹

The importance of women's political participation is highlighted by the size and level of women's influence in the political process and the nature of the role they play in the political process in the event of their participation. In addition, their role is highlighted through their ability to achieve the interests associated with them, highlight their issues, defend their rights and accelerate giving them a real role in the development process in society in general. The presence of women in these positions should not be understood as serving women only (in some cases this goal may not be achieved), but it will have a greater positive impact on all aspects of society, and not only in the aspects related to women.

From a historical perspective, human societies have resisted giving women their political rights, or allowing their political participation, with stronger degrees of opposition from these societies to women's entry into other areas of public life, and the main reason for this is that women's rights were considered identical to the rights of the husband or the father.²

Political participation has a moral and positive value in and of itself. At the same time, the gender differences in political participation reflect the power relationship between men and women, and the main issue - if it is the distribution of power between the sexes, which tends towards equality in the case of increased participation of women in political life. Although there is no theoretical framework that explains the factors that affect women's participation in political life, there are a number of factors that are believed to affect the extent of women's participation in life.

The differences between the sexes in political activity and political orientation go back to the early stages. In the early years of life, males are better at knowing political information than females, more willing to change in their political orientations, and more eager to evaluate political figures. This is due to the influence and authority of the father, in the family where males initially encourage aggression and boldness, while the tendency towards females is that their main function is to take care of the housework. Some researchers believe that these early practices are gradually decreasing, and that there is a disparity in the differences between the sexes in political activity according to the degree of women's education and culture. Substantial differences have been found between the sexes - in particular - in decisions related to war and the use of force, as a result of females to be more

¹Islah, Gad, *Towards Demonstrating the Political Participation of Arab Women*, Dar Al-Sinbad Publishing, Amman - Jordan, 2000, p.21.

²Islah, Gad, *Towards Demonstrating the Political Participation of Arab Women*, previous source, p.: 30.

peaceful than males. Some studies have shown that countries such as (USA, Japan, Austria, India, and Nigeria) have males more politically active than females.¹

In the Arab environment, the world of politics in its formal sense is still the world of men, and that women are characterized by their subordination and negativity, so it is necessary to pay attention to the informal political roles of women.

Some researchers attribute the absence of women from participating and running for elections to the following reasons:²

1. Their confrontation with the bad will of the political apparatuses that are controlled by men.
2. The popular ground from which preferred candidates are recruited or chosen, which excludes women politically
3. Women face the difficulties of political connection in particular, because the traditional division of roles for each gender emphasizes that women's job is in the home.
4. Women have less desire than men do to be associated with the political scene, because the compensation offered seems less attractive to them.

Third: Figures of Women's Political Participation:

After talking about the concept of *Political Participation*, we will now address the forms of this political participation of women, and they are limited to the following:

1. Holding a political or administrative position.
2. Attempting to obtain a political or administrative position.
3. Active membership in political organizations.
4. Active membership in quasi-political organizations.
5. Participation in public meetings.
6. Supporting Al-Yasmia Organization (inactive membership).
7. Supporting a quasi-political organization (inactive membership).
8. Participation in public political discussions.
9. Interesting in politics.
10. Voting.

While some specialized scholars, distinguish between two figures of political participation:

First Figure: which includes the organized activities, which are:

- Registration in the electoral lists.
- Voting.
- Civil society organizations.
- Attending meetings and political meetings.
- Organized participation in electoral campaigns.¹

¹Al Ameri, Salha Suhail, *Role of Emirati Women in Political Participation*, Master's Thesis in Political Science, College of Arts, Department of Political Science - Middle East University, 2013, p.38.

²Al-Wahhab, Tariq, *Psychology of Political Participation in the Arab Environment*, a previously mentioned source, p.13

Second Figure: It includes temporary activities, which express a position on an issue or event. They are embodied by the temporary political activities in force, and these figures are not necessarily illegal, but may include what is legitimate and legal, such as peaceful demonstration, for example.

In fact, this figure of participation is an expression of discontent and resentment on the part of a group of people towards a certain policy pursued by the government. If individuals engage in the process of participation through agreed activities without fulfilling their desire, the only alternative left before them is this type of participation, whereby these individuals have a set options and possible tactics available to influence the government. It is possible for temporary participation to fall and take the form of organized participation when the voter leads by vote the extreme and most violent candidates, and these manifestations are among the most common activities within this category of political participation.²

The issue of Arab women and their participation in the political life in the Arab world remains the focus of follow-up, attention and monitoring. Not only as a topic related to the political scene and the prospects for transformation, but also because the dividing line that existed between the issue of women's liberation and enabling them to exercise their role in political life. In addition to their actual ability to break through the barriers of disruption and marginalization, has become day after day too easy to prevent a decisive breakthrough under the matter. Talking about women's freedom is no longer a topic in itself. An alternative discourse has gone beyond that problem in the Arab world, to enter into the details of the role and its data. The beginning of the last century, according to the researcher's diligence, witnessed the keenness of the majority of Arab countries to improve the conditions of women in power structures and political parties by including her in Parliament, giving her ministerial portfolios and giving her the right to diplomatic representation for her country.³

Third Topic

Emirati Women's Political Participation

First: Political Participation in the Arab world

In our Arab region, the roles played by international organizations working in the field of community development are growing day by day. These organizations, even if they distance themselves from any declared political activity, represent a factor of strong cultural influence on Arab society. This influence is manifested through a set of concepts, the most important of which are the concepts of (*Empowerment* and *Gender*). In addition to the above, one of the most important features of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is a tidal wave of growing global awareness of the issue of democracy, and what accompanies it from concepts such as democratic transformation and democratic dedication that interest the researcher.

¹Al-Amiri, Salha Suhail, *Role of Emirati Women in Political Participation*, a previously mentioned source, p.43.

²The same source, p. 44.

³Zakaria, Harizi, *Political Participation of Arab Women & their Role to Consolidate Participatory Democracy*, a previously mentioned source, p.72

Despite all the advantages of political participation, in reality, in the Arab world, there is a crisis associated with political backwardness, where citizens are directed towards practicing political participation with a kind of imbalance. As we find it either non-existent or formal participation, which causes the political leaders to concentrate their grip with the establishment of authoritarian regimes and restrict the masses in political life.

Abd al-Hadi Johari sees the causes of the crisis of political participation in the Arab world as a result of illiteracy, poverty and political indifference, and the negativity of the citizen and his convictions of the futility of political participation.¹

The constitution of the United Arab Emirates guarantees equal rights for all citizens, men and women. Under the constitution, female citizens enjoy the same legal status of educational opportunities and the right to practice professions on an equal basis with male citizens. Emirati women also enjoy equal opportunities in employment and assuming senior positions and candidacy and election, health care and other benefits that ensure the protection and well-being of the family. According to the constitution and legislation, there is no discriminatory treatment between women and men in terms of rights in general, as the Constitution of the United Arab Emirates states in Article No (25) of Part (3) that: *“All individuals are equal in front of the law. It does not apply between citizens of the Union because of origin and domicile or religious belief or social status.”* In addition to women enjoying many freedoms, as Emirati women benefited from constitutional, political and societal support, achieving many great gains not only at the state level but also at the regional level, and evidence of these gains.²

Second: Political Participation of Arab & Gulf Women:

The majority of countries in the Arab region witnessed an increase in the representation of women in parliaments between 2010 and 2017. In 2013, 30 women were appointed for the first time to Saudi Arabia's Shura Council (the advisory body), representing 20% of the seats until 2016. In Algeria, the proportion of women members of parliament increased from 8% to 32%, three times what it was (and this was the highest percentage in the region), in line with the quota system established in 2012. This percentage declined to 26% in the 2017 elections. Nevertheless, since quotas were set at the constituency level rather than the national level, fluctuations occurred in the national total. The percentage of female members of parliament has more than doubled in Bahrain (from 3% to 8%). In Morocco, this percentage doubled from 11% to 21%, and in Somalia, it increased from 7% to 14%.

The increases were modest in other countries. The proportion of women members of parliament in Djibouti decreased slightly from 14% to 13%. It also declined more noticeably in Kuwait, where its participation rate fell from 8% to 2%.³

¹Al-Amri, Salha Suhail, *Role of Emirati Women in Political Participation*/ a previously mentioned source, p: 21.

²Zakaria, Harizi, *Political Participation of Arab Women & their Role to Consolidate Participatory Democracy*, a previously mentioned source, p.50.

³ Al-Awadi, Mehrinaz, *Women's Political Representation in the Arab Region*, Center for Women's Affairs of the Economic & Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), 3/2017, p. 10.

Arab countries differ in their legalization of women's political participation, and they can be classified into three major groups, which are as follows:

- * A section that does not have constitutions or laws governing the political participation of citizens, such as Saudi Arabia.
- * A section that has constitutions, but whose laws do not clearly provide for the granting of women the right to political participation, such as Kuwait and UAE.
- * A third section has constitutions and laws that explicitly state the right of women to political participation, such as Algeria, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Yemen, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon and Palestine.¹

Article (11) of the 1971 Constitution of Egypt states that: '*the state guarantees reconciliation in the duties of women towards the family and her work in society, and their equality with men in the fields of political, economic, social and cultural life without prejudice to the provisions of Islamic Sharia*'.²

The state of Djibouti was the first Arab country to grant women the political right and this was in 1946, but in return, it did not grant her the right to vote in elections until 1986. As for Algeria, Algerian women have entered politics since they entered the field of resistance during the liberation revolution, and women have gained on the right to vote in 1958, that is, before independence. In the independent state of Algeria, she obtained it in 1962 and exercised it in the same year. In Egypt, women obtained their right to vote in the first constitution issued after the revolution (i.e. the constitution of 16 January 1956). In Syria, women obtained the right to vote in 1953, on condition that the woman hold at least an elementary education certificate as a condition of sufficiency. While in Lebanon, she obtained the right to vote in 1952. In 1959, Tunisian women obtained the right to political action by a vote, followed by Moroccan women in obtaining this right two years later (1963), and then came the turn of the Libyan woman who obtained her right to vote in 1964 as well as the Palestinian woman. In addition to the actual recognition of the right of Yemeni women to vote with the Unity State in 1990, and the Jordanian woman's right to vote dates back to the year 1974. As for the Gulf countries and with the recent political experience of Gulf women, in Qatar, in 18/07/1998, the Emir issued Decree No. (17) on the system of voting and candidacy for Qatari citizens, providing for the granting of the right to vote to every Qatari male or female aged 18 years-old in 1996.³

As can be seen from the statistics, most of the Arab countries recognized the right to vote and run for women in the late fifties or sixties, which in itself is a positive thing, especially if we compare it with what happened in European countries. As the election was generalized to men in France, for example, in 1848, it was not granted to women until 1945. However, the adoption of such rights is

¹Zakaria, Harizi, *Political Participation of Arab Women & their Role to Consolidate Participatory Democracy*, a previously mentioned source, p. 56.

²Tarboush, Qaid Muhammad, *Legislative Authority & Women in the Arab Countries - A Comparative Legal Analysis*, Modern University Office, Alexandria, 2008, p.209.

³Kiwan, Fadia, *Regional Report on Survey Studies of Projects Directed to Arab Women in Politics*, Arab Women Organization, Cairo, 2007, p.7. Also, 'American Study: Moroccan Women Achieve First Places on Arab Women's Rights' The study was prepared by the Freedom Foundation House'.

not a criterion from a practical point of view, as it is important how to implement it. It is lacking in most Arab countries - with the exception of some countries that are keen to implement women's political rights strictly. Despite, these countries' use of political malice in dealing with women's issues, in order to legitimize its rule, and to give a strong impetus to the fake participatory democracy. As these regimes promote to conceal the truth from citizens, which is that women have the right to participate in political work constitutionally, but the practice is prohibited for them in important issues that do not affect the elite as with the right to imitate public office.

Third: Representative Political Situation of Emirati Women (*)

In the Gulf, the Article (35) of the interim constitution of the UAE issued in 1976 states that 'the door to jobs is open to all citizens on the basis of equality between them in circumstances and in accordance with the provisions of the law (6)'. Nevertheless, women's access to public jobs remained absent until November 2004, when women gained the Emirati woman held a ministerial position in the Ministry of Economy & Planning, and it was related to Lubna Al Qasimi, and in February 2006, Maryam Al Roumi was appointed as a Minister of Social Affairs. Although Emirati women have not entered the political work and entered the Federal National Council, the various ministries and institutions of the Emirates included many brilliant and successful women in their positions as agents, assistants or managers. In 2004, the number of female diplomats working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reached 23, including women ministers. Talks began about the creation of a Ministry of State for Women's Affairs to be led by an Emirati woman with experience, expertise and competence, within the framework of the state's appreciation of women's liberalities, and its constant endeavor to deepen awareness of the issues of Women and the family, and the development

(*)- The objective of studying the experience of Emirati women's first participation in the Federal National Council Elections Process that was held in 2006 is to investigate the success achieved by women and the challenges they faced in these elections, in addition to providing studied political recommendations on how to develop gender equality in the system of government in the Emirates .

The importance of these goals is not limited to improving the country's reputation and image at the international level, but also to the real need to involve women in the rapid development process that the country is witnessing, especially in the field of politics and decision-making.

The march of Emirati women has witnessed qualitative transformations in various areas of life. Her giving flourished and her achievements increased during the era of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may Allah have mercy on him, which called on His Highness to say: *"The achievements of women in the UAE in such a short time make me happy and convinced that what we planned yesterday will bear fruit today."*

Many of the gains made by women were a result of the great efforts made by Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, wife of the late Sheikh Zayed, to enhance the role of women. Her Highness, with the encouragement of the late Sheikh Zayed, played a major role in establishing the Women's Union in the Emirates in 1975, one of its first goals was to support female education and eliminate illiteracy among them.

After these basic goals were satisfactorily achieved, Sheikha Fatima began strongly calling for Emirati women to become members of the Federal National Council, and these efforts received the support of the late Sheikh Zayed, who always declared that women are equal partners with men in all areas of life. Moreover, she has the full right to participate in political life and decision-making. Her Highness Sheikha Fatima also emphasized this by saying: *"The society as a whole will benefit greatly if the UAE enters the twenty-first century, and it is enhanced by the participation of women in all aspects of life, especially at the political level."*

of their contribution to public work. The Emirati woman was able to achieve a shift in her position in society in 2001, by representing her in the National Consultative Council of one of the emirates of the state, the Emirate of Sharjah, with five women, in the first women's participation in parliamentary work in the state and her attendance at the council's sessions.¹

As for the Emirati woman, she was able to achieve a change in her status. As Lubna Al Qasimi, who was appointed in November 2004 as Minister of Economy & Planning, as well as Maryam Al Roumi who was appointed in February 2006, as a Minister of Social Affairs.² In 2008, Emirati women held four ministerial portfolios: the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and a Minister of State. This was confirmed by Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, President of the General Women's Union in the UAE on the 38th anniversary of the establishment of the union, that Emirati women hold 04 portfolios Minister in the Council of Ministers.³

In early 2003, Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, President of the General Women's Union, launched the strategy for the development of Emirati women with the aim of activating and developing their role and preparing them to enter the political field. Therefore, it remains only for them to continue improving the images of the participation and performance in various fields, and for Emirati women's movement to produce pioneers who are able to stand up the work of parliamentary representation, bearing the burden of responsibility for participating in the management and direction of national action. The state has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Forms of Discrimination against Women on 17/08/2004. (The United Nations Women's Committee Center website).⁴

Emirati women constituted 62% of the total national workforce in the federal government, and there are no laws preventing women from occupying senior government positions, but a small number of women occupied these positions. Indeed, two ministers hold the portfolio of Economy and Social Affairs. The first ministerial position given to women was in 2004. There are also 1 female undersecretary, 8 women with the rank of assistant undersecretary, nearly 50 women with the rank of director of administration, and women with the rank of diplomat in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The number of women working in the diplomatic field reached about 45 diplomats in 2006, 10 of whom work in the country's embassies abroad.⁵

Emirati women occupy 22.5% of the seats in the Federal National Council, in addition to 10% of the foreign services, while 30% occupy leadership positions related to decision-making and 66% of jobs in the government sector. The current federal government includes four women as members of the Council of Ministers:⁶

¹Al-Amiri, Salha Suhail, *Role of Emirati Women in Political Participation*, a previously mentioned source, p. 73.

²Jaber, Ahmed, et al, *Arab Women in Struggle Confrontation & Public Participation*, Arab Unity Studies Center, Beirut, 2006, p. 165.

³Zakaria, Harizi, *Political Participation of Arab Women & their Role to Consolidate Participatory Democracy*, a previously mentioned source, p. 83.

⁴Al-Amiri, Salha Suhail, *Role of Emirati Women in Political Participation*, a previously mentioned source, p. 73.

⁵Al-Amiri, Salha Suhail, *Role of Emirati Women in Political Participation*, a previously mentioned source, p. 74.

⁶Lootah, FaddaAbdullah, *Contribution of Emirati Women in the Labor Market*, a paper submitted to the Arab Labor Organization at the Damascus Chamber of Industry, Syrian Arab Republic, 2009, p.50

- The current federal government includes four women as members of the Council of Ministers.
- In 2003, for the first time, the Abu Dhabi Police trained 32 female citizens to work in the Special Security Forces.
- In October 2008, she took the oath as the first female citizen to work in the field of justice.
- Four women work as a commander of war fighters, as the first batch of female citizens to join the armed forces in this capacity.

These gains did not come from nowhere. Rather, they were the result of great efforts by the state. At the political level, the status of Emirati women has witnessed a remarkable development in recent years as a result of the keenness of the political leadership in the country to involve them in decision-making centers. As the percentage of their representation in the last ministerial formation that was announced in February 2008 increased by two to four ministerial seats, which is one of the highest percentages of ministerial representation at the Arab level. They also obtained their full rights to vote and be nominated in the first parliamentary elections that the country witnessed in December 2006, where women actively participated in these elections. They had a distinguished presence in the electoral bodies, which reached 1189 female citizens out of 6,689 members, or 17% of the total number of members.

Dr. Amal Al Qubaisi set a precedent in the Gulf region after the first Emirati woman won the National Council elections. That was in the elections of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, before the rulers of the Emirates appointed eight other women in the Council, bringing the total of women in the National Council to 9 out of 40 Member. A rate of about 22%, which is also one of the highest percentages of women's representation in legislative institutions in the region. Recently, the country's first ambassadors were appointed abroad in Sweden and Spain. The gains of Emirati women did not stop at this point, but reached the judiciary and the Public Prosecution office.¹

Since its inception, the UAE has realized that supporting the development process in all its aspects will not be achieved by the presence of men only. Therefore, women must be involved in all aspects. It has been keen on making women a full partner in the duties imposed on them and in the rights that they have, integrating them into the human force of the state and developing their skills to benefit from them. The state has endeavored to provide the appropriate conditions for women as much as possible to achieve their developmental participation, thus it has put in place many laws and legislations that preserve their rights.²

Fourth: Images & Figures of Political Participation for Women in the UAE

The 2009 annual book indicates that women in the UAE have achieved many gains within the framework of women's empowerment plans, as they held positions in all fields and positions in the sovereign, executive and legislative authorities. They confirmed their presence in Arab and international regional work institutions. For example, it was the first representation of women in The UAE government had two ministries in 2004, and then rose to 4 female ministers in the government

¹Al Ameri, Salha Suhail, *Role of Emirati Women in Political Participation*, Source mentioned above, p. 51.

²Shamsi, Mitha, *Role of Gulf Women to Where?* Arab Future Magazine, Issue 273, Lebanon, Center for Arab Unity Studies, 2000, p. 61.

formation in 2008, or 22%, which is the highest percentage of representation in the Arab countries. Two female ambassadors were also appointed abroad, and the first female trial judge was appointed. In international organizations, Dr. Fawzia Khalfan was chosen in 2008 from the Ministry of Health as the first female citizen to be a goodwill ambassador. In addition to the presence of women in other local institutions such as security, airlines, the Union of Women and the Business Women's Council.¹ Emirati women have played a role through their participation in many conferences, leadership positions, and membership of legislative and executive councils in countries.

Women's roles in the political establishment include all political activities, from nomination and voting in elections, holding political positions and party membership, civil society organizations, participating in electoral propaganda, attending seminars and participating in public protests and demonstrations, and other forms of expression of political participation. Therefore, those form a link between society and the state, through which women can play a role in achieving the proper construction of the political and community institution, because of the human and social weight that women represent that cannot be overlooked or dispensed with, and the political and social development of the components of the social structure of society.²

Lubna Al Qasimi was appointed as the first Emirati minister in 2004, the Minister of Economy & Planning, and granting Emirati women a ministerial position is not a formal but rather a key position, and they proved their successful during the ministry's renewal of Minister Al Qasimi in 2006.³

Furthermore, nearly 10 women in foreign affairs and Foreign Service have been appointed to work in state embassies abroad, many increased in 2006 to 45 diplomatic women, and they have proved their success, giving and superiority by confirming their ambassadors working with them in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

On the military side, Emirati women entered military action until they reached the position of Brigadier General in the Army, where Salma Ali Hareb reached the position of Executive Director of the most important free zone in the UAE, Jebel Ali. She is the first woman who reached such a position in the Arab Gulf region and the Middle East.⁴

Recent years have seen Emirati women enter sectors previously considered the exclusive domain of men, with 23 female diplomats serving in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2004, including women commissioners. In 2001, Emirati women were able to make a shift in their status in society, representing them on the National Advisory Council of the Emirate of Sharjah; with five women in

¹Yearbook, 2009.

²Zamil, Youssef Anad & Sun Hammoudi Hanawi, *Women's Political & Electoral Participation*, Lark Journal of Philosophy & Linguistics Social Sciences, Issue 7, 4thYear, 2012, p. 13.

³Ghabash, Moza, *Sheikh Zayed Al Nahyan - Attitudes & Achievements*, Social Studies Series, Dubai, AoshBint Hussein Cultural Gallery Center, 2005, p. 27.

⁴Economic Union Newspaper, Issue 19, 2005.

the first women's participation in parliamentary work in the UAE; attending federal national council sessions and discussing all national issues to highlight the political role of Emirati women.¹

Fifth: Emirati Women's Participation in the Collective Movement (Civil Society) & Membership of the Businesswomen's Council

Political and economic empowerment is a necessary prelude to empowerment in other areas, which makes women's economic empowerment of great interest because of the many benefits, which empowerment brings to women and society.

For women, economic empowerment leads to women's sense of value, their right to make choices after they are given choices, their right to access resources, and the control of their lives at home and abroad. In addition to their ability for influence in economic and social changes to create a more equitable economic and social situation at the national and global levels. Thereby enhancing women's economic and social rights is providing social insurance such as social insurance, retirement, sickness insurance, poverty, old age, unemployment, incapacity to work, paid leave, health care and decent work. Therefore, women move from marginalization and vulnerability to equality and equal opportunities between the sexes.²

The collective movement has become an important figure in the process of supporting democracy in general and participatory democracy in particular, considering that, many civil community organizations are schools of political upbringing. So that they train their members in necessary skills to build a democratic society, including but not limited to adherence to the conditions of membership and participation in activity, participation in elections and acceptance of their results ... etc.

Within this framework, these organizations are an important pillar of any democratic system and are among the important and necessary conditions for the establishment or pre-establishment of a democratic system.³

Emirati women stormed efficiently and competently business field after the establishment of the Businesswomen's Council, which includes about 12,000 women, who manage 11,000 investment projects with, in which the volume of investments in it amounted to about 12.5 billion dirhams. The number of women working in the banking sector, which is the most important economic sectors in the country's most, was about 37.5%.⁴

The Businesswomen's Council of Abu Dhabi was established in March 2002 to implement the national strategy in developing the work of Emirati women and supporting them in the economic

¹Al Ameri, Salha Suhail, *Political Reform in the UAE & its Role in Political Change*, Master's Thesis in Political Science, Faculty of Arts & Sciences - Middle East University, 2011, p. 183.

²Al-Daljawi, Ahmed Abdul Saboor, *Economic Empowerment of Emirati Women - Reality & Outlook*, Sharjah University journal of legal sciences, Volume 17, Issue 1, 2020, p. 170.

³Ziani, Saleh, *Reality & Prospects of Civil Society as a Mechanism for Building & Consolidating Pluralism in the Arab World*, Journal of Social and Human Sciences, Issue 9, 2003, p. 72.

⁴Women's General Union website.

<https://gwu.ae/news/details/?id=LQHMWDLBBLEFSBHAANREDOCNYCOCVPar>

field. From the beginning of its establishment, it received support from His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, President of the State and her Highness Sheikha Fatima Bint Mubarak, President of the General Women's Union, Honorary President of the Council of Business Women. As the Council sponsored citizens of businesswomen in Abu Dhabi, and activated their role in the overall movement of economic development in the country, addressing the march of businesswomen.

The General Women's Union, under its 1975 law, is the official representative of women in the UAE. Therefore, it is, in light of this, the body involved in drawing up strategies and programs for the advancement, empowerment and leadership of women in the UAE. The General Women's Union operates in a participatory approach with federal and local institutions, civil society institutions and the private sector. In order to strengthen the mandate of the General Women's Union, the National Strategy for the Empowerment and Leadership of Women has been adopted by the State Council of Ministers and is implemented by state institutions. The special Cabinet session, held at the Headquarters of the General Women's Union on 4 December 2018, underscored the status of the General Women's Union and the importance of its role in Emirati society.

The General Women's Union follows up on the implementation and monitoring of the efforts of institutions in implementing the strategy through portal as well as holding regular meetings with follow-up institutions. It should be noted here that the Council of Ministers has commissioned its office in direct coordination with the General Women's Union to implement and accelerate women's empowerment initiatives. The Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs has also been commissioned by the Ministry of State for The Affairs of the National Council for coordination with the General Women's Union to raise the women's participation index in the Federal National Council. It also has assign the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for International Cooperation to the General Women's Union to head the state reporting team for the SEDAO Convention, which confirms the status of the General Women's Union in the State as the official representative of women in the State.¹

Sixth: Policies & Strategies for Women's Empowerment in the UAE

The National Strategy for Women's Empowerment and Entrepreneurship 2015-2021 is the reference framework for government and civil society institutions in applying best practices to empower women. The extraordinary session of the Council Ministers, which was held at the headquarters of the General Women's Union on 4 December 2018 came to confirm this by launching a package of women's initiatives based on three main axes: legislation, policies and services. The international representation aims to at raise women's participation and representation in all areas locally, regionally and internationally. An office at the Presidency of the Council Ministers has been assigned to work to expedite the implementation of these initiatives in coordination with the General Women's Union, which included the following:

- A. Studying to increase their participation in diplomatic representation and in state missions to international organizations.

¹General Women's Union; <https://www.uaew.ae/#page5>

- B. Studying the increased involvement of the female component in judicial work at the level of federal courts in the state.
- C. Proposal to pass the Federal Law on Combating Domestic Violence, in compliance with the Cabinet's decision to adopt mechanisms for implementing the State Human Rights Action Plan, which recommends the drafting of a law on domestic violence against women and children.
- D. Studying a range of incentives to increase women's participation in business, including the development of a national policy on entrepreneurship for Emirati women that provides special facilities for entrepreneurship and self-employment licenses for women, and a review of the sponsorship law to allow women to issue licenses and employment visas in order to encourage the launch of private projects.
- E. Developing the Emirati women's participation policy in the labor market to take advantage of the capabilities of non-working women and address the challenges and reasons for not joining the labor market.
- F. Studying of the 'Gender Equilibrium Balance Policy' proposal aimed at promoting global gender balance in collaboration with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to develop best global standards and practices.
- G. Promoting women's participation in advanced science.
- H. Providing specialized compulsory health care services to women who have been accepted during and after childbirth, including: follow-up and postnatal care services, and the provision of an electronic platform for postpartum mothers to provide the necessary information on concern for their health and the health of the child after birth and at all stages of life.¹

The UAE's National Strategy for the Empowerment and Leadership of Women pays close attention to highlighting the leading models of Emirati women with the aim of changing stereotypes related to women's roles in society. The General Women's Union has established the Emirati Women's Encyclopedia and a media observatory for Emirati women's achievements and posted them on social media.

In 2015, for the first time, the UAE adopted The Emirati Women's Day, 28 August each year, with the aim of highlighting Emirati women's achievements in various fields, supporting the Emirati women's empowerment strategy in the development process, and highlighting their important community role and achievements under the support of good leadership.

The UAE has moved beyond stereotypes of women, and Emirati women have become non-traditional leadership positions and here are some facts:

Emirati women oversee non-traditional and important Cabinet files such as Minister of State for International Cooperation, Minister of State in Charge of Food Security, Minister of State in Charge of Advanced Science and Minister of State for Happiness & Quality of Life.²

¹Al-Bayan Newspaper; <https://www.albayan.ae/across-the-uae/news-and-reports/2018-12-04-1.3426091>

² The portal of the Emirati Women's Encyclopedia <https://www.uaew.ae/#page1> and its Instagram account <https://www.instagram.com/euaew/>

Seventh: Empowering Emirati Women after the Arab Spring Revolutions in 2011:

The so-called revolutions of the Arab Spring formed an important time break, such as a societal factional coup over most of the social contexts that governed and controlled Arab societies, whether in politics, morality, values or dealing with religion.

Women's broad participation in the Arab Spring revolutions shocked political societies and systems, which expected women to remain within the framework of maintaining their moral hierarchical existence, which characterized Arab and Muslim societies, in terms of being half of society in the upbringing of their generations. Therefore, there were attempts at cultural westernization that were practiced on our Arab peoples, in addition to the great failures that the authoritarian regimes suffered, with the development of awareness of acquisition and tradition that characterized out eastern societies that are trying to imitate the West. As, Arab women in popular demonstrations have taken up a clear space unprecedented in the history of these societies. This strange involvement in these activities revealed the important role that women can play in challenging resistance to change, if mobilized with clear intent, to achieve certain changing or subversive political objectives, so political and cultural elites did not expect women to participate in popular uprisings, in this carefully and literally drawn way.

Although women are at the forefront of the Arab Spring demonstrations, it is frustrating that women are ignored in political arrangements and that they are too low to be present at the highest levels of government. The very low participation of women and young people in transitional governments is the result of incomplete revolutions. Subsequent events, however, have proved in their interest to remain outside these Governments, as this has enabled them to play the role of observers and to highlight the shortcomings and failures of the authorities. They were able to contribute dissenting votes during the transition period and criticized government shortcomings. Since then, women have done their utmost to support democratic transitions and have participated in large numbers in all elections. However, the political process and efforts to promote women, which peaked during the Arab Spring, have since lost momentum.¹

In the UAE, the Arab spring revolutions have resonated with a large number of political and societal confusion. Although the Gulf States, including the UAE, have not suffered from the repercussions of these revolutions and uprisings, the fear of their fire reaching that country has prompted those responsible to take measures that will achieve the highest cases of political coordination representation of Emirati women.

The Federal National Council was established for an annual celebration of Emirati Women's Day, which falls on 28 August of each year. It was established for such a celebration, to provide a framework of reassurance to Western countries that the UAE is on the path of Western modernization based on the concepts of human rights, women's empowerment and the dissemination of freedoms. The UAE government has raised a special slogan for this day under the title '*Planning for the Fifty: Women is a Support for the Homeland*'. All of which enabled the UAE to achieve

¹Karman, Tawakol, *Women & the Arab Spring*, an article published by the author on the UN website under the section: Facts of the United Nations, through the following link: <https://www.un.org/ar/chronicle/article/20072>

global leadership by ranking first in the world in the index of representation of women in parliament, after the decision of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the State, to raise the percentage of women's membership in the Council to '50%'.

According to a report by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the world's oldest parliamentary institution, founded in 1889 with nearly 170 parliamentary institutions, the UAE has led four countries worldwide with about 50% or more women represented in parliament.

Parliamentary work under Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, was sponsored, interested and translated into the political program announced in 2005 to enable the Federal National Council. It included a number of pillars, including, Constitutional Amendment No. (1) for 2009; the promotion of Women's participation as members and voter; organization of elections for council members held during 2006, 2011, 2015 and 2019, during which the number of electoral bodies was increased from nearly 7,000 in 2006 in the first an electoral experience, to 337,738 members in 2019, to witness an increase of up to 50.58%. In addition to the decision of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, to increase the representation of women in the Council to '50%' since the 17th legislative term.

The formation of the Council in its 15th legislative chapter, which began on 15 November 2011, included seven members, one of whom won the elections. Women also obtained the position of first vice president of the Council, and the decree to form the Council in its 16th legislative chapter, which began on 18 November 2015, nine women, one of whom won the election, and women won the position of speaker of the Council.

The decree forming the Council in the current 17th legislative chapter included '20' women, seven of whom won in October 2019 elections, and women in this chapter won the position of second vice-president of the Council.

Through their political and social mobility after the Arab revolutions, Emirati women succeeded in obtaining recognition of "*the Arab Document on Women's Rights*". The Arab Parliament passed it on 18 February 2015, as the first legislation to enact it, as an Arab legislative framework and reference in the enactment of laws on Arab women, and a charter that enjoys Arab consensus.¹

As part of the evolutionary political movement led by Emirati women's participation in political and legislative life, the age of members of electoral bodies has been reviewed, allowing the 18-under-21 age group to participate in the voting process and select members of the Federal National Council. Emirati officials have attributed this to the fact that UAE legislation and laws have set puberty with the arrival of a male or female aged 18, and therefore the age reduction of electoral bodies must be re-examined, allowing young people aged 18 to under 21 to participate in the electoral process and choose who they represent.²

¹See: *Emirati Women in Parliamentary Work. Leadership & Empowerment*, report published on the website of the newspaper Al-Ain News, Thursday, 2020/8/27, and at the following link: <https://al-ain.com/article/participation-women-parliamentary>

²Naeem, Wael et al., *Political Empowerment - The Pulse of Comprehensive Development*, study published in Al Bayan across the UAE, November 12, 2020, at: <https://www.albayan.ae/across-the-uae/uaenext50/2020-11-12-1.4011049>

Conclusion:

1. The social and political evolutionary pattern that has begun to dominate all lifestyles and public events can no longer be overcome, reshaping community awareness in a way that tends to accept the principle of gender equality in rights and duties, including political rights.
2. Although humanity, in general, is lagging behind in achieving this framework of equality, we find that the reform situation in the Arab political system, particularly at the point where Arab and Gulf women are specifically empowered to engage in political action, has made advanced and rapid steps. This especially since the heritage of this region has included many historical situations and models that women have played a leading role in many situations and events.
3. Emirati women have made great and clear strides in the creative application of the uniqueness of political empowerment, representing them in political, administrative and judicial positions. A qualitative leap has characterized Emirati women. It was helped by the presence of an open and understanding political leadership in the state of rapid development that has dominated all aspects of life.
4. Although Emirati women have good standing in political representation, this is not enough yet, especially in the midst of a modern Bedouin society with the principles of urbanization and urbanization. Therefore, the process of harmonizing between the authenticity of community values and customs in Emirati society, and the disciplined and rational openness to the patterns of rights and privileges of the modern women's model, remains. All of which remains the subject of an ongoing dialectical struggle, which needs to achieve societal acceptability, within new value frameworks that accept a new form that fits with two extremes..

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