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Empowering women in China:

The Role of Women's Organizations and Civil Society

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Abstract: - Egypt and china share cultural, constitutional and historical similarities make it possible for Egypt to benefit from the Chinese Model of women empowerment. The ALL-China Women Federation (ACWF) has succeeded to negotiate an effective and instrumental role in the development of the status of women and their empowerment in China through its collaborative efforts with both the Party and the Government. The Egyptian National Council for Women (NCW) can follow in its foot-steps and adopt similar approaches to develop incremental long-term empowerment achievement programs.

Key words: - The All-China Women Federation, Egyptian National Council for Women, Women Organizations, empowerment.

China, a superpower in the making, is the fastest growing economy in the world. With a population exceeding 1.390 billion people driving such economy¹, it is likely that China will indeed become the next global superpower. According to the World Bank, women account for 48.19%² of the general population in China, as last measured in 2013. As such, the status of women in China will undoubtedly play an influential role in determining the current as well as the future status of women world-wide.

Egypt and China, two of the world's earliest and greatest civilizations are considered the cradle of human civilization. It is not surprising, therefore, that both countries would have so much in common. Both ancient civilizations relied on agriculture as a basis for their development. In Egypt as well as in China, people began to settle in fertile river valleys,

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¹ <http://www.worldpopulationstatistics.com/population-of-china-2014/>

² <http://wbl.worldbank.org/Data/ExploreEconomies/China/2013>

the River Nile in Egypt and the Huang He, or Yellow River, in China, where farming activities allowed them to found permanent communities. As farming ensured a large and reliable food supply, populations increased and these primitive settlement communities grew and developed into more complex social structures where villages and ultimately cities were built and governments emerged to control and rule them. Unfortunately, because most agricultural civilizations were characteristically patriarchal, they relegated the status and potential of women. Paradoxically, as these civilizations further developed, became more elaborately organized and achieved greater prosperity with time, women's status further deteriorated. This continues to our current day.

Egypt and China have also paralleled one another with regards to many social features and political events, in modern history. The emergence of the People's Republic of China, on October 1st, 1949³, was almost coincidental with the rise of the July 23rd, 1952 revolution in Egypt, the abolishment of the monarchy rule and declaration of the Republic on June 18th, 1953. Both revolutions called for social and political reform and stood for gender equality and women empowerment. Both countries witnessed an early post-revolutionary era of elevation of women status and surge in political participation of women. Similarly, both countries have gone through a subsequent period of regress in women rights achievements. China however was able to experience a recent reemergence of women's status which started in the mid-1990s and continues to date.

As such, we have chosen to study the Sino model for empowering women in a bid to present Egyptian Women with a model which they may benefit from embracing its values and adopting its methods. In doing so, the paper analyzes different policies adopted by various political actors in China which, resulted in promoting the political status of the

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³ Chang, Gordon G. "China's Third Era." *World Affairs* 177, no. 3 (September 2014), p.41.

Chinese women. It also examines the roles of women organizations in influencing the promotion of such status.

Historically, in Imperial China, women played a submissive role. If they escaped smothering at birth, Chinese women traditionally were either silenced, marginalized or both. Since its founding on October 1st, 1949 the People's Republic of China denounced gender inequality and set out to abolish such injustice through enacting legislation, hence officially committing itself to gender equality⁴.

Indeed, one of the first laws enacted by the Communist Party (Mao's China) in 1950 was the Marriage law⁵. Under the umbrella of this law, women were granted unprecedented rights, including the right to divorce and the right to own property. Since then, women have played a largely active and progressive role both during the Mao era as well as during the post-Mao era and have continued to do so till the present time. Unfortunately, however, many of the earlier achievements in women empowerment and advancements in the elevation of the status of women have been eroded in the 1980s and through the early 1990s by the gradual recurrence of traditional patriarchal attitudes in what has been perceived as a resurgence of gender inequality, a serious setback to women's rights in China⁶.

Women's political participation in China still remains largely symbolic due to complicated social, cultural and political factors. Although a huge leap was achieved when Liu Yandong, second vice premier of the People's Republic of China became the first female member of the 18th Politburo* which was elected at the 18th National Congress of the Chinese

⁴ DONG, LIMIN. "Historicizing Gender: A Study of Chinese Women's Liberation from 1949 to 1966." *Differences: A Journal Of Feminist Cultural Studies* 24, no. 2 (Summer 2013), p.93.

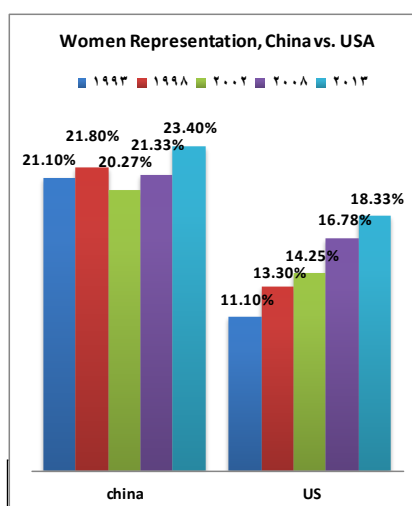
⁵ *Ibid*, p.97.

*(Political Bureaus) Politburo of the Communist Party in China: -25 people who oversee the Communist Party of China. Noteworthy, that the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party is the most powerful Political body in the country.

⁶ Xiaojiang Li and Xiaodan Zhang, *Creating a Space for Women: Women's Studies in China in the 1980s*, *Chicago Journals*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Autumn, 1994), p.

Communist Party (CCP) in November 2012.⁷ However, it is not clear yet whether or not this achievement will improve the status of Women in China, This is because Liu is part of the "Princeling class", (the sons or daughters of revolutionary veterans who now number among the nation's elite). Liu Yandon is the daughter of Liu Ruilong⁸, the former vice minister of agriculture and 10th CPPCC National Committee; Politburo member. But, choosing her for the membership of the Politburo of the CCP could come as an indicator that the Chinese Government is ready to place a woman in a position of genuine power and that this in of itself is an accomplishment with regards to the empowerment of women in China.

Indeed, such move alone would not necessarily lead to an improvement in the overall status of Women. According to the third survey on Chinese Women's social status 2011, only 2.2% of working women were in charge of state offices, party organizations or at the top of any other institution in China (governmental or private). However, this seems to be rapidly changing. For example, Figure 1, shows that the percentage of female national leaders in China has ranged between 20- 22% over the past two decades, compared



to only 11-18% in the USA (Figure 1), during the same time period Another example is that women in the USA still only fill around 4% of all CEO positions in the top 1,000 listed companies, while in China this figure hovers around 5.5%⁹. This could be traced to the

⁷ BRODSGAARD, KJELD ERIK, and NIS GRÜNBERG. "Leadership Changes and Structural Reform After the 18th Party Congress in China." *Copenhagen Journal Of Asian Studies* 31, no. 1 (June 2013): p.82.

⁸ <http://www.chinavitae.com/library/prominent-families>.

⁹ Lam, Kevin C.K., Paul B. McGuinness, and João Paulo Vieito. "CEO gender, executive compensation and firm performance in Chinese-listed enterprises." *Pacific-Basin Finance Journal* 21, (January 1, 2013), p.1137.

improved education in China, as Chinese women currently receive an average of 8.8% years of education compared to only 2.7% years in 2000. Furthermore, in China, women outperform men in education, especially higher education, fact that Egypt shares with China. Ironically, this is not transformed into political influence in either country. A third example is that according to IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union) reports, China (ranks 62nd-23.4%) precedes the UK (ranks 64th-22.6%) and the USA (ranks 85th-18.3%) in women representation in national parliaments¹⁰.

Beyond, governmental support, gender equality is protected constitutionally in China. The 1954 Constitution states that "All citizens of the People's Republic of China have the right to vote and stand for election". In another article of the constitution, it is stated that "Women in the People's Republic of China have equal rights with men in all spheres of life including the political, economic, cultural, social and family spheres." Furthermore, in yet another article of the 1954 constitution, it is stated that "People's Republic of China abolishes the feudal system and constraints of women." In all constitutions that followed, women rights continued to be clearly affirmed.

This is evident if we examine Article 3 of the 1954 constitution (that became article 4 in the 1982 constitution)¹¹, which states that "all citizens are equal". Article 48 also asserts "Women in the People's Republic of China enjoy equal rights with men in all spheres of life; political, economic, cultural, social and family life. The State protects the rights and interests of women, applies the principle of equal pay for equal work for men and women alike and trains and selects cadres from among women", while Article 85 (which became 33 in 1982) maintains that "citizens of the people's Republic of China are equal before law" as well as Article 86 which states that "Women have equal rights with men to vote and stand for

¹⁰ <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/classif011014.htm>

¹¹ Yang Cheng, *Women's Organizations in China from Affiliation to Autonomy*, Lund University Center for East and South-East Asian Studies, Fall semester, 2004, p.23.

election" (this was replaced with Article 34 in the 1982 constitution but the word women was changed into all citizens). Again, Article 96, "women in the People's Republic of China enjoy equal rights with men in all spheres of political, economic, cultural, social and domestic life", voices equal rights for Chinese women. Recent constitutional amendments include "the State respects and preserves human rights"(4th amendment, 2004). Noteworthy is that the latest constitution of China; (December.4, 1982) was revised four times, in 1988, 1993, 1999 and 2004¹². The issuance of the 1982 constitution had its influence on the 12th CCP congress, which in turn lead to the revision of the party constitution as well (specifically article #34). This paved the way to the issuance of the 1st women's rights law in China¹³, as well as the introduction of the China unique party system¹⁴.

The role of women organizations in empowering Chinese women

Women organizations in china can be classified into three basic types: the first, party-state initiated organizations such as the ACWF and the Women Workers' Department of the Trade Union; second, academic women's studies institutes; and the third class includes more free organizations such as the Women's Research Institute and the Women's Health Network. But the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) remains without doubt the main representative and coordinator of women in China¹⁵.

The ACWF was established on 24 March 1949 as China's first country-wide women's organization, but carried the name "All-China Democratic Women's Federation (ACDWF)". There ACWF has two main characteristics: - It is a federation composed of several women

¹² <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/cw/140980.htm>

¹³ <http://www.china.org.cn/english/government/207405.htm#>, Law of protection of Woman.

¹⁴ <http://www.china.org.cn/english/news/231852.htm>

¹⁵ Milwertz, Cecilia Nathansen, and Studies Nordic Institute of Asian. *Beijing Women Organizing for Change : A New Wave of the Chinese Women's Movement*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2002.pp.22.

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organizations and its dual role in disseminating state-party policy as well as the representation of Chinese women¹⁶.

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ACWF began as a federation of several regional women's groups and by 1997 it had 19 national level group members of organizations that operated under its leadership. Currently, the federation performs the communicating party policy downwards via maintaining strong connections to the CCP through the women's committees in the government and many affiliated organizations that help ACWF in conveying information through 49 ACWF owned newspapers and magazines. It also accomplishes women empowerment through seven functional departments: the Department for Children, the International Liaison Department, the Department for Women's Development, the Publicity Department, the Department for Women's Rights and Interests, the Human Resources Development Department and the General Office¹⁷.

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In recent years, ACWF became less concerned with mobilizing grass roots organization, and focused on its role in setting the public policy related to empowering women. i.e.- In 2000, ACWF developed jobs for one million unemployed women by creating small economic (for profit) entities in which women can work as family service aides or in women's service groups¹⁸.

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On Political Parties in China: China's multi-party cooperation system:-

During the Mao era (1950s-1970s), the CCP played a major role in empowering women in politics by taking regulatory measures to emphasize and protect women's rights. This was realized by China's cadre management system through which all Party cadres as

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¹⁶ Ibid, p.21.

¹⁷ Howell, Jude. "Women's Organizations and Civil Society in China Making a Difference." *International Feminist Journal Of Politics* 5, no. 2 (July 2003), p.201.

¹⁸ Ibid, 1993.

well as government officials were appointed by the State Party. In doing so, gender factors were taken into account when appointments to the various positions were made. This, in turn, served to significantly boost the proportion of women appointees to positions in both the Party and the Government. The proportion of women at top levels of power members of the CCP's Central Committee increased from 4.1% in 1956 to a peak of 10.3% in 1973¹⁹. This percentage of women appointees reached unsurpassed levels, which constituted a breakthrough in women's political participation in China²⁰.

In September of 1982 the CCP 12th Congress, held in Beijing witnessed the revision of the Party Constitution. This further favored the advancement of women's as well as minorities' political rights. For example, article 34 of the revised Party Constitution emphasizes the role of the Party in cultivating and selecting women and minority cadres as well as stressing the criteria upon which such selection is based, most importantly, integrity and ability.

Moreover, the 1982 State Constitution highlighted the responsibility of the State in the selection and training of women cadres as stated in article 48 of the constitution. Thus, together, the State as well as the Party Constitutions endorsed the enhancement of women's political rights by mandating an increase in women's political participation and instituting a structured expansion in the proportion of women appointed to key positions in both the Party and the Government. Collectively, these reform measures are equivalent to what is known in the Western World as the Affirmative Action, positive discrimination or the quota system.

In pursuing to implement these new measures, several Party memoranda and State policies involved with the selection and training of women cadres were issued. The Party

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¹⁹Jacka, Tamara. "INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN VILLAGE GOVERNMENT IN CHINA." *Critical Asian Studies* 40, no. 4 (December 2008), 502. Retrieved from:- *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 30, 2014).

²⁰ Ibid, p.503.

actively engaged in recruiting women for the process of selection and training of new cadres. Moreover, several amendments to State legislation and public policies were introduced to secure women's newly acquired rights and benefits and to ensure their inclusion in the various governmental hierarchies of power and centers of decision-making.

In November 15, 2007 the Chinese staff council information office published what they called "China's Political Party System". The document which is composed of seven chapters and one appendix explains; how China's unique multi-party cooperation and political consultation works under the leadership of the CCP.

Under China multi-party cooperation system²¹, there are the CCP and eight other political parties. The eight democratic parties are; Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang, China Democratic League, China National Democratic Construction Association, China Association for promoting Democracy, Chinese Peasants and workers Democratic Party, China Zhi Gong Dang, Jiu San Society and Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League. These parties are collectively known as The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

The CPPCC* is an important institution of multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CCP. Based on the principle of "long-term coexistence, mutual supervision, treating each other with sincerity and sharing each other weal and woe, "the CCP and the eight democratic parties work hand in hand in developing socialism with Chinese characteristics, thus giving rise to the basic feature of "multi-party

²¹ <http://www.china.org.cn/english/news/231852.htm>, China's political party system.

* EVERY March, participants from all walks of life and political parties gather in Beijing to take part in China's two most important events of the year. At the annual sessions of the National People's Congress (NPC), its highest legislative body, and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), its top political advisory body, deputies to the NPC and members of the CPPCC National Committee pool their experiences, knowledge and opinions to review the work of government over the previous year and plan for the coming months.

cooperation system under the leadership of the CCP, with the CCP holding power and the other eight parties participating fully in state affairs."²²

Steps of cooperation between political parties in China

The multi-party cooperation system shows unique political advantage and strong vitality, and plays an irreplaceable role in China's political and social life. This mode of cooperation is undertaken through six steps:-

First, the CCP consults the democratic parties on major principles, policies and issues, and they supervise each other. Then, members of democratic parties²³ hold an appropriate number of posts in state power organs and they can perform their duties according to Law. The third step maintains that members of democratic parties hold leading posts in Central and local governments and Judicial organs; the peoples government at various levels keep contacts with, through diverse means, the democratic parties to bring into play their role of participation in and deliberation on state affairs.

The fourth step enables the democratic parties to participate in consultation on major state issues through the CPPCC (The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference). The CCP then supports the democratic parties to participate in the country's reform, opening up and socialist modernization drive. To serve economic and social development is the main function of the democratic parties as participating parties, and also a distinctive feature of China's multi-party cooperation system²⁴.

²² YAO, BEI. "Political Consultation, Democracy China Style -- An Interview with Li Junru, Member of the CPPCC National Committee." *China Today* no. 4 (2012): 44. *China Science & Technology Journal Database*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 1, 2014).

²³ Bangarth, Stephanie. "Bringing China In: The New Democratic Party, China, and Multilateralism, 1949-68." *Journal Of American-East Asian Relations* 20, no. 2/3 (June 2013), p.207.

²⁴ By staff reporter YAO, BEI. "Political Consultation, Democracy China Style -- An Interview with Li Junru, Member of the CPPCC National Committee.", *China Today* no. 4 (2012), p.44-45.

Last not least, the CCP and the other eight democratic parties supervise each other. Such supervision is political supervision exercised through exchanging views and airing criticisms and suggestions. Since the CCP is the leading and ruling party, it needs particularly supervision from the democratic parties more than the other way around.

“Law on the protection of women's rights in China”²⁵

The People’s Republic of China Law on the Protection of Women, the first law on women’s rights was enacted in 1992 and amended in 2005²⁶. The provisions of the law emphasize the role of the State in actively selecting and training women cadres and that all State organizations as well as civil organizations, institutions and enterprises shall uphold the principle of gender equality when selecting and appointing cadres and shall endorse women cadres in leadership positions. The enactment of this law and the enforcement of its provisions have greatly enhanced women’s political participation in China.

This 1st law on "the protection of women's rights in China which helped China to focus on the states responsibility towards training and selecting female cadres to fulfill gender equality was enacted on April 3, 1992.

The law amended on 2005; consists of 10 chapters. The first states the general provisions followed by 6 chapters on rights related to education, employment and social security, property, family and marriage as well as political rights. Chapters 9 and 10 constitute legal responsibilities & supplementary provisions²⁷.

The status of women in China has gone through significant changes as reforms took place during the late Qing Dynasty (the last imperial dynasty of China, 1644-1912),

²⁵ Walter, Lynn. *Women's Rights: A Global View*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2001, p.35

²⁶ <http://www.china.org.cn/english/government/207405.htm#>, Law of protection of Woman.

²⁷ <https://www.wcwonline.org/.../lawcompilation/TheRevised>, CHINA’S REVISED LAW ON THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN’S RIGHTS AND INTERESTS.

followed by the Chinese Civil war and eventually the emergence of the People's Republic of China in 1948, which undertook the task of establishing gender equality ever since.

Although equal opportunity for men and women has been a declared policy in China, as previously noted, since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the coining of its constitution in 1954²⁸, there has been no substantial impact on women empowerment. This task was not met without resistance in a traditionally male-dominated Chinese society which continues to place obstacles in the path of the women's rights movement seeking to achieve equality in China.

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It wasn't until the hosting of the 4th world conference on women in Beijing in 1995, that women in china were able to accomplish some achievement in this respect. It was considered a key turning point in China's commitment toward women empowerment²⁹.

Despite a government publicly committed to gender equality and the relentless efforts of women's rights movements, women's status in general, and specifically their political participation, part taking in leadership and sharing of power have experienced periods of great achievement and regression along the years³⁰. Focusing on the period since the rise of the People's Republic of China in 1949-1954 to the present day, the progress in women's status and political participation can be divided into four major phases.

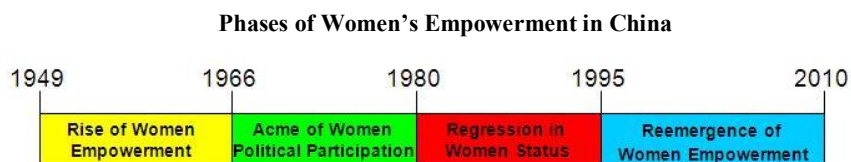
The first phase starts with the establishment of the people's republic of china and extends through the 1960's, the second starts with a noticeable improvement in gender equality in the 1970's, the third phase runs through the 1980's till early 1990's basically

²⁸ Cohen, Jerome Alan. "THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY AND 'JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE': 1949-1959." *Harvard Law Review* 82, no. 5 (March 1969), p.967

²⁹ http://news.xinhuanet.com/zhengfu/2002-11/18/content_633184.htm

³⁰ MIN Dongchao, From Men-Women Equality to Gender Equality: The Zigzag Road of Women's Political Participation in China, *Asian Journal for Women Studies*, 2011.

known as the regression period, and the fourth started in the mid-1990s when the three long term governmental programs were introduced (Figure 2).



(Figure 2)

China's first phase for women empowerment and gender equality (1949-1966):-

During this period, the Party and Governmental measures taken to enforce gender equality as part of positive discrimination towards women and minorities, analogous to Affirmative Action in the West, greatly enabled women to achieve unprecedented proportions in political participation and to ascend in the ranks of power.

One measure which constituted a considerable driving force in accomplishing such achievement was the quota measure, as part of what is known as the top-down appointment system. In this system, appointments are decided by the CCP leaders at each level for the leading positions in both the Party and the Government at the next level down within their jurisdiction. For example, the leaders of each municipality determine who will head both the Party and the Government in every county that falls within the municipality. In doing so, these leaders assign a certain predetermined quota for women and minorities who will fill such positions. This guaranteed women inclusion in the political process at increasing rates.

As a result, women representation in the Party and Government expanded significantly at all levels³¹.

Indeed, during this period, the proportion of women in the National People's Congress (NPC) has steadily risen over the years. The first NPC held in 1954, had 147 female representatives, 12% of the total body of representatives³². This number continued to grow in subsequent years. During the second NPC, held in 1959, the female representatives were 150, 12.2% and during the third NPC, held in 1964, the number had risen to 542 representing 17.9% of the total body of representatives. Similarly, during the first Chinese People's Political Consultant Conference (CPPCC) held in 1954, only 12 female representatives, 6.6% of the total number of representatives were present. In the second CPPCC held in 1959³³, the number of female representatives had risen to 83, 11.4% of all representatives. Political participation of women was also represented by the proportion of women in social administrative sectors. Traditionally, people in these positions are called cadres. As the ruling party, the CCP took charge of the cadres. Therefore, political participation of women is basically about selection of female cadres. During this period, there were only two women who took part as members in Central Government committees, representing 3.1% of the total number of members. In addition, there were six vice presidents, only one of whom was a woman. Furthermore, there were 20 women occupying posts at or above the level of Vice Minister³⁴, which constituted only 4% of the total number of such ranks. During this first phase which extended through the entire 1950s, women cadres occupied positions at all levels

³¹ Hiniker, Paul J., and R. Vincent Farace. "Approaches to National Development in China: 1949-1958." *Economic Development & Cultural Change* 18, no. 1 (October 1969), p.53.

³² http://news.xinhuanet.com/zhengfu/2002-11/18/content_633184.htm

³³ <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/chinesewoman/11-5.htm>.

³⁴ <http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/China.htm>

in local governments. Approximately, 70% of municipalities nationwide were run by female directors or deputy directors³⁵.

In this phase the ACWF was formally incorporated in the party structure. It entered the administrative hierarchy of the state, and declared itself a mass organization. By 1957, the ACWF was now responsible for spreading political propaganda among women, guaranteeing the inclusion of women in political campaigns, marketing the campaigns to Chinese women, and organizing parades, meetings and demonstrations to encourage female participation in campaigning. The CPC sought to use the ACWF to promote its gender-specific ideas and create a formal channel to mobilize women. In addition to this, the ACWF played an important role internationally for the CPC. As a communist country in the Cold War, China had difficulty establishing diplomatic connections. ACWF was able to reach out to women's movements abroad and even hosted 23 delegations from other parts of the world for the Asia Women's Representative Conference in December 1949. This enabled the PRC to go around the diplomatic blockade and forge connections with other countries³⁶.

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The second phase, the acme of women empowerment and gender equality in China (1966-1975):-

The second phase which extended through the 1970s marked the pinnacle of women's political participation in modern China. This was the period where women reaped the benefits of adopting the top-down appointment system, which ensured the growth of female cadre rate. During this period, gender equality was finally coming to fruition in China. In 1975, the

³⁵ Bedeski, Robert E. "The Formation of National Society in Communist China: The Convergence of Traditions." *Review Of Politics* 33, no. 4 (October 1971), p.481.

³⁶ HONGGANG, TAN, and WANG LUOZHONG. "The Policy Influence of Women's Organizations in China." *Women's Policy Journal Of Harvard* 9, (March 2012), p.43.

percentage of female representatives in the fourth NPC reached its peak at 22, 6%³⁷ of the total number of representatives³⁸. In government sectors, female cadres holding key positions at both the central and provincial levels increased significantly during this period. Approximately, one in every four of the NPC's Standing Committee members, in 1975, was female. It is noteworthy to mention that members of the NPC Standing Committees were usually selected from high ranking, governmental officials holding key positions in different government sectors³⁹. This strongly indicates the rise in the proportion of females holding such positions to considerable levels during this period.

Following the Cultural Revolution, in 1966, the ACWF began to prioritize protecting women's rights and promoting equality over its responsibilities as an organ of the party. The ACWF increasingly studied women's movements in other countries, and held debates that transcended the parameters set by the CPC. ACWF campaigns became more diverse as they attempted to meet the disparate needs of the urban population and the rural population. While the ACWF continues to toe the party line, it is no longer involved in mass political campaigns⁴⁰.

The Third Phase, the regression of women status in China (1980's - early 1990's):-

The third phase witnessed a relapse in women's status and political participation in China. This decline which the 1980s and early 1990s⁴¹ witnessed could be largely attributed

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³⁷ GUO Xiajuan and ZHAO Litao, Women's Political Participation in China, *East Asian Policy*, 2010. P.54. Retrieved from: www.eai.nus.edu.sg/Vol1No3_GuoXiaojuanZhaoLitao

³⁸ Rosen, Stanley. Women and Political Participation in China, *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 3 (Autumn, 1995), p.319.

³⁹ http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/Organization/node_2847.htm.

⁴⁰ Honggang Tan and Luozhong Wang. 2012. "Policy Influence of Women's Organizations in China," *Women's Policy Journal of Harvard* Vol.9 (Spring 2012), p.43.

⁴¹ Tong, J. The gender gap in political culture and participation in China, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 36 (2003), p.134.

to abandoning the top-down appointment system and other mandates analogous to Affirmative Action in the selection of cadres. During this period, selection of cadres adopted a system of multi-candidate election as well as the competitive appointment system. Therefore, the policies which endorsed women empowerment and ensured the expansion of women's political participation were abolished. Consequently, the percentage of women's political participation dropped both significantly and rapidly⁴².

In this phase the only change ACWF witnessed was the establishment of a vertical hierarchy from the national to the provincial, municipal and township levels. At each tier of administration, a women's federation essentially served as government department in women's affairs.

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The Fourth Phase, the reemergence of women empowerment (1995-2010)

China's hosting of the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 triggered an uprising against the regression of women's status which took place over the preceding decade and a half. This ensued as the Chinese government responded to pressures from the international community due to the attention the Fourth World Conference brought to the deteriorating women's status in China in conjunction with the reform efforts of the Chinese National Women's Federation⁴³.

Indeed the reaffirmation of the commitment of the Chinese government to the principle of gender equality publicly declared by then Chinese President and Secretary General of the ruling CCP, Jian Zeming during the closing address of the Fourth World

⁴² Howell, Jude. Women's Political Participation in China: Struggling to Hold Up Half the Sky, *Parliamentary affairs*, Vol.55, Issue 1, 2002, p.43.

⁴³ Kaufman, Joan. "The Global Women's Movement and Chinese Women's Rights." *Journal Of Contemporary China* 21, no. 76 (July 2012), p.586.

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Conference in conjunction with the following meetings held by the Central Organization Department and the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) spearheaded the initiative to restore women's status in China to its pristine years in the 1970. This initiative led to the reinstatement of policies and compulsory measures, which mandated gender equality, securing the fair share of women in political participation among restoring other status-elevating women rights. Among the key measures reinstated was the ratio-guarantee or quota system in cadre selection, which played a fundamental role in increasing the proportion of selected female cadres in the political (the Communist Party Organization), legislative (representatives of people's congress) and executive (government) sectors⁴⁴.

In 1995, the ACWF that had over 68,000 branches and somewhere between 80,000* and 90,000 cadres was declared by the party, a non-governmental organization in response to criticism from women's groups abroad. While the federation expanded in size, it became increasingly difficult to continue to reach all Chinese women through traditional channels. Other NGOs appeared to fill some of the void, but many of those became incorporated within the federation to gain legitimacy. By the end of the 1990s there were 6,386 women's associations working under ACWF umbrella. The ACWF continues to struggle to reach an increasingly diverse female population in China, to incorporate groups outside the ACWF umbrella, and to defend its NGO status⁴⁵.

This fourth phase of women empowerment and gender equality in China is characterized by the launching of three governmental action programs for the empowerment of Chinese women, during which "the Chinese model for women empowerment" was introduced.

⁴⁴ Honggang Tan, p.43-44.

⁴⁵ Bohong, Liu. The All-China Women's Federation and Women's NGOs, Women Studies in China: Mapping the Social, Economic, and Policy Challenges in Chinese Women's Lives, *Ewha Woman's University Press*, 2005, p.257. Retrieved from: http://books.google.com/eg/books?id=uz_F_QLckecC&pg=PA257&lpg=PA257&dq.

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The first program for development of Chinese Women (1st PDCW, 1995-2000), followed the convening of the 4th World Conference on Women in 1995⁴⁶. This first action program aimed to 1) strengthen women's participation in decision-making and management of public affairs; 2) promote the organizing of women and their active participation in reforms so as to build a modern society and develop their competitiveness; 3) guarantee women's right to work; 4) promote women's education and improve their scientific and cultural levels; 5) improve women's health with guaranteed access to family planning; 6) promote "harmonious" and egalitarian families; 7) eradicate violence against women; 8) help promote women from the poorest regions and minorities; 9) improve women's social environment and quality of life; 10) foster exchanges with women of all countries to promote world peace; 11) set up a data collection system to chart changes in women's status⁴⁷.

The 2nd program was published by the state council of the People's Republic of China on May 22nd, 2001 and ended in the year 2010. The program for development of Chinese Women (2nd PDCW, 2001-2010) was formulated in order to better protect women's rights and interests, enhance women's overall competence, speed up the process of equality between men and women, and to bring into full play the role of women in China's socialist modernization drive⁴⁸.

In the 2nd PDCW, general and major objectives have been set forth for women's development in 2001-2010, based on women's situation after the implementation of the 1st PDCW (1995-2000), periodic and long term goals of women's development, and China basic

⁴⁶ Gao, Xiaoxian. "Women and Development in China." *Chinese Sociology & Anthropology* 40, no. 4 (Summer 2008), p.22.

⁴⁷ ANGELOFF, TANIA, and MARYLÉNE LIEBER. "Equality, Did You Say?." *China Perspectives* 2012, no. 4 (December 2012), p.19.

⁴⁸ <http://www.china-un.org/eng/hyyfy/t517733.htm>.

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conditions, and in line with the general requirements of the Tenth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China.

In consideration of the 12 critical areas of concern covered by the platform for action adopted at the fourth World Conference on Women and approaches taken by other countries in drawing up their programs for women's development⁴⁹, On the basis of the implementation of the 1st PDCW, in view of the problems that needed to be addressed with urgency in the development of Chinese Women, and for purpose of sustainable development in 2001-2010, six areas are defined in the 2nd PDCW as priorities for development, namely; women and the economy, women in decision-making and management, education of women, women and health, women and law, and women and the environment, with the promotion of women's development as the main theme throughout the document⁵⁰.

The 2nd PDCW aimed to strengthen the relevant functions of the government, mobilize all social forces, and create a better social environment for women's advancement and development, and at the same time, to encourage women to work harder and strive for their achievement and development through participation in economic and social development processes⁵¹.

The 3rd or current program referred to as The National Program on the Development of Chinese Women-**NPDCW** (2011-2020) covers the seven fields of *health, education, economy, political participation, social security, environment and Law*. Fifty-seven main objectives and eight-eight strategies and measures, were announced by Song Xiuyan, Deputy Director of the National Working Committee on Children and Women under the state

⁴⁹ <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/cw/140979.htm>.

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⁵¹ *Making Gender Equality a reality: UNDP and Gender*, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2010.

Council, and Vice President and First Member of the Secretariat of the All-China Women's Federation, at a press conference held August 9th, 2011⁵².

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- 1- **Women and Health:** - This section pays attention to women's health in a more comprehensive manner. It focuses on women's life quality, aims to narrow gaps in access among different groups of women and between urban and rural women residents to basic public health resources.
- 2- **Women and Education:** - Its objective is to realize gender equality in education, this section highlights equal opportunities for men and women in the educational process, raising women's educational level, and controlling and reducing the rate of illiteracy among young and middle-aged women.
- 3- **Women and Economy:** - This section aims at eliminating gender discrimination in employment, promoting women's full employment, raising the level of women's employment in urban units, narrowing the income gap between men and women, and protecting rural women's land rights and interests.
- 4- **Women in Decision-Making and Management:** - The emphasis of this section is on strengthening women's influence in management decision-making, increasing the proportion of women deputies to People Congresses and of women CPPCC members at all levels; also on increasing women's participation in administration and in enterprise management decision-making and grassroots democratic management.
- 5- **Women and Social Security:** - This is a new aspect of the outline on the Development of Chinese Women. It proposes promoting women's full participation in social insurance in the areas of maternity, health care, pension, unemployment, and work

⁵² <http://www.chinahumanrights.org/Messages/feature/104/>, Details on Development of Chinese Women Program (2011-2020).

injury. As beneficiaries of maternity insurance are mainly women, this type of insurance takes priority among the five.

- 6- **Women and the Environment:** - The focus in this section is on optimizing the social, cultural and natural environment to achieve women's development. It emphasizes gender equality and harmonious family relations and improvements of capabilities to prevent and respond to disasters.
- 7- **Women and the Law:** - This part focuses on legal protection of women's development and interests, the strengthening of gender equality awareness in legislation, justice and Law enforcement, improving the legal system so as to promote gender equality and women's development, and raising legal awareness to safeguard women's legitimate rights throughout society.

Conclusion

Although Egypt and china have different political parties, other cultural, constitutional and historical similarities make it possible for Egypt to benefit from the Chinese Model of women empowerment. Since in both countries the government together with the ruling party unequivocally control the social and political structures, it becomes incumbent upon women's organizations to develop enough power and gain leverage which enables them to equally partner with the governments and ruling parties in determining the status of women in their countries. The ALL-China Women Federation (ACWF) has succeeded to negotiate an effective and instrumental role in the development of the status of women and their empowerment in China through its collaborative efforts with both the Party and the Government. The Egyptian National Council for Women (NCW), a body analogous to the ACWF in China can follow in its foot-steps and adopt similar approaches to develop incremental long-term empowerment achievement programs in collaboration with the

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Egyptian government and various other politically and socially influential bodies in the country such as political parties and other NGOs. As has been accomplished in China, these programs can develop momentum and bring about success to the process of women empowerment and hopefully achieve gender equality in Egypt.

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