

Understanding Asia: Gender and Power

Anti-Feminism and Authoritarianism in the Middle East: The Case of Turkey



(Scan for registration)

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(Philipps-University,
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16:15 – 17:45
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Hybrid event

Antifeminism, understood as an ideological stance that denigrates, resists, and mobilizes against the equality demands and emancipatory practices of feminist activists and women's movements, has long been a part of the transformative processes affecting gender orders in the diverse societies located in the Middle East. However, the rise of state antifeminism, in conjunction with organized anti-gender groups targeting feminist legal gains, is a more recent phenomenon. At first glance, this appears to represent a significant retrogressive shift within the already ambivalent tradition of state feminism in the region.

This lecture will examine the factors shaping this apparent-but-real shift in the case of Turkey. Particular attention will be paid to the feminization of knowledge work, which destabilizes persistent patriarchal gender arrangements and imaginaries; the socio-economic dynamics profoundly affecting low- to middle-income household structures and their livelihood strategies; and the neoliberal-authoritarian changes in the political-ethical sphere that contribute to the emergence of an aggrieved and nihilistic masculinity. The central argument is that a sui generis state antifeminism, relying on a combination of pacifying and displacing mechanisms of conflict management, helps the incumbent political regime navigate the deepening rifts in the gender order—albeit at the cost of instigating new social wrongs and exacerbating conflicts.

Dr. Funda Hülagü is a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Political Science at Philipps-Universität Marburg. Her research focuses on the political and ideological governance of late capitalist social formations, with a particular emphasis on shifting gender orders. Her most recent publications explore the interplay between the rise of organized anti-feminism, socio-economic transformations, and authoritarian rule, with a particular focus on Turkey. Currently, she teaches two seminars: one on gender politics in the Middle East and North Africa, and the other on the politics of "the family" under neoliberal capitalism.