



# ENQUIRY

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① *Saudi Arabia on the Status of Women Commission?*  
#SAonWomen

② *Evaluating Trump*  
#EvaluatingTrump

## Saudi Arabia on the Status of Women Commission?

By AMY ELINSKI  
STAFF WRITER

In politics today, anything is possible. Yet sometimes events occur that are so ridiculous that you sit bemused for days, wondering how this could be.

On April 25, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women voted – nearly unanimously – to make the ultra-conservative Wahhabi Islamist nation of Saudi Arabia a member for the next four years. Although it was ranked 134th worldwide out of 145 on gender equality, Saudi Arabia will join the commission’s 45 other countries.

It makes very little sense to include a nation in which

*“Women in Saudi Arabia are treated as second-class citizens.*

*The law requires them to have a male guardian, who oversees them from birth until death and makes all critical decisions.”*

women are so oppressed on a commission with the goals of “promoting women’s rights, documenting the reality of women’s lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women.”

Women in Saudi Arabia are treated as second-class citizens. The law requires them to have a male guardian, who oversees them from birth until death and makes all critical decisions. Additionally, a woman is forbidden to obtain a passport, marry, or travel abroad without the approval of her male guardian, usually a family member or spouse.

Women can even be jailed for disobeying their guardians. Last November, a Saudi woman filed a report of abuse against her brother and was arrested for disobedience. Saudi Arabia also limits women’s ability to engage in basic tasks, such as driving, that the West sees as fundamental. It is the only country in the world that will not issue driver’s licenses to women.

Why should women not drive? In 2013, a member of the Ulama, Saudi Arabia’s body of religious scholars, claimed that women’s ovaries and pelvises could be damaged by driving, thus inhibiting their reproductive abilities. He told Saudi news source sabq.org that driving “could have a reverse physiological impact. Physiological science and functional medicine ... [have found] that it automatically affects ovaries and rolls up the pelvis. This is why we find, for women who continuously drive cars, their children are born with clinical disorders of varying degrees.” Two years before, the Majlis al-Ifta’ al-A’ala – Saudi Arabia’s highest religious council – published a report in conjunction with a professor from King Fahd University which claimed that allowing women to drive would “provoke a surge in prostitution, pornography, homosexuality and divorce,” and that within ten years no virgins would be left in Saudi Arabia.

You honestly can’t make some of these things up.

At the time of Saudi Arabia’s addition, New Zealand’s prime minister said it is important for the UN commission to include countries that are beginning to make changes for women, no matter how slow the change. A Girls Council held in March in Saudi Arabia is supposed to be evidence of this “change.” The only problem – there were no girls on this council. It was composed entirely of men. Women were told to sit in a separate room.

Saudi Arabia has made small improvements by letting women to have more access to

## This Week’s News in 140 Characters

### EDITORIAL REPORT

- Mark Steyn** @MarkSteynOnline · 1h  
"What is happening now...is that the state, public universities are actually enforcing an official ideology." -@MarkSteynOnline #JudgeJeanine
- Michael Johns** @michaeljohns · 2h  
We face a party and movement that will take \$400K from #WallStreet to lecture Wall Street on the evils of Wall Street money in #politics.
- Dylan Byers** @DylanByers · 2h  
Frustrating to see liberal Twitter proving it can be as intolerant & illogical in the Trump era as conservative Twitter was in the Obama era
- Charlie Kirk** @charliekirk11 · 1h  
Would love to see Congress put an Obamacare repeal and a massive tax cut on the President's desk! Time for action this week! No more talk!
- The Associated Press** @AP · 14m  
BREAKING: Congressional Republicans and Democrats reach agreement on \$1 trillion measure to fund government until Oct. 1.

## Evaluating Trump

By DAVID FRISK \*  
GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

EVALUATING TRUMP cont.

especially high. Many Americans will consider him successful enough in foreign affairs if “the world” doesn’t seem to get worse.

For the many Americans who either hate or love Donald Trump, judging the effectiveness of his White House performance—as distinct from merely reacting to it—will be a challenge. But both opponents and supporters owe it to themselves to consider the question somewhat objectively, if only so they can better understand what’s going on in the next few years.

An important guideline in evaluating any president is the distinction between the two quite different sides of the office, the “two presidencies” analysis credited to political scientist Aaron Wildavsky. The president can, of course, act more freely in foreign policy, which mostly doesn’t require legislation and therefore is less limited by congressional opposition. (For this reason, Wildavsky noted, presidents tend to be drawn disproportionately toward foreign policy activity, whatever that might mean concretely to a particular president.) Furthermore, foreign policy expectations among Trump’s voters, and others, are not

In domestic policy, though, President Trump faces high congressional hurdles due not only to the presence of 48 Democrats (nearly all of them, so far, essentially uncooperative with him) in the Senate, but also to House Republicans’ reasonable fear of losing their majority in the 2018 election. It is hard to see how Obamacare as a whole will be repealed and replaced, because of the issue’s complexity and its great personal relevance to so many Americans—a situation that makes it very difficult to satisfy all congressional Republicans, whether in policy terms or in terms of their political self-interest. It also seems doubtful that Trump will succeed in enacting major tax cuts or building a wall on the border.

It isn’t even safe to assume that effectiveness in the sense of getting things out of Congress will always help him politically. Tax cuts weren’t at the heart of his campaign, and they wouldn’t necessarily be a net political benefit to him unless key groups of voters think they have improved the economy for average Americans—

education and jobs, but they still lack many basic rights that we take for granted here in America.

Belgium's prime minister has since stated that he regrets his country's vote to include Saudi Arabia. (He claims that the vote came unexpectedly, forcing diplomats to choose without consulting colleagues.)

Hopefully the inclusion of Saudi Arabia in the commission will improve the situation for

*“Saudi Arabia has made small improvements by letting women to have more access to education and jobs, but they still lack many basic rights that we take for granted here in America.”*

women there, but I doubt it will. The government's and much of society's policy toward women draws from Wahhabism – an extremely conservative form of Islam – and the Ulama, who play a large role in influencing governance. It is unlikely that the Ulama that enforced policies which, in 2002, forced girls back into a burning school because their heads were not covered will accept a fundamental shift in beliefs on women's rights.

We can only hope that Saudi Arabia's inclusion on the commission will persuade it to relax its policies against women.

*EVALUATING TRUMP cont.*

which depends on the economy's unpredictable performance and especially on more jobs, which Trump conspicuously promised. A border wall, or major steps toward one, would please most of his backers but could also spark even more anger, and thus motivation, than ever among the anti-Trump base. Repeal of Obamacare, no matter what it's replaced with, might well make the president even less popular than he is.

On the other hand, a lack of legislative results in major domestic policy would leave him vulnerable to a charge from disgruntled supporters that he “hasn't done anything.” They already see Washington, not altogether wrongly, as a place where little change is made. For Trump to be coupled in many of their minds with that situation, following an insurgent campaign in which he blasted Washington and made such grandiose promises, could be fatal.

In judging Trump's domestic effectiveness—again, his ability to reshape government policy, not whether he does things we like—the most important arena may well be the bureaucracy. How much will he change the government's relationship to our society and economy by means of direct and indirect administrative action? Sophisticated friends and foes alike will watch that at least as closely as they monitor the congressional developments.

It's worth remembering that even with a polarizing figure like Donald Trump, some people are of two minds, or in the middle, or persuadable in either direction. A segment of the electorate seems to end up supporting incumbent presidents who appear adequate, or slightly preferable to their challengers, even if they previously voted for the other party's candidate and aren't enthused about the president. If only for that reason, it's conceivable that Trump could win the popular vote, not just the electoral vote, if he runs again. But he will lose re-election, or perhaps not even seek it, if his popularity tanks among his base in the next couple of years and doesn't strongly rebound.

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Although this hasn't begun to happen yet, Trump and people close to him should remain keenly aware that many in his base like him mainly for his enemies. Anger is a powerful force in politics, but also a double-edged sword. Trump more than most presidents will need to remain visibly and audibly an outsider, even while achieving certain things by conventional standards and, if possible, getting a few more Americans to like him. That won't be easy.

*\* Dr. David Frisk has been a Resident Fellow at the Alexander Hamilton Institute (theahi.org) since 2013. The author of If Not Us, Who? William Rusher, National Review, and the Conservative Movement, he will teach “Modern Conservative Politics” in the Government department this fall.*

## The Road Not Taken

BY ROBERT FROST (1874-1963)

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

## CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

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