

REVIEW

of the review Oksana Kanienberg-Sandul, PhD in Law, Associate Professor of Department of International and European Law National University «Odesa Law Academy» on the doctoral thesis by Taylor Alla Valeriivna «Legal basis for the transformation of the legal status of women in Islamic states» submitted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the specialty 293 – International Law

The issue of human rights, particularly women's rights, has acquired increasing importance within the context of intercultural interaction, international law, and domestic legal transformations. Islamic states, whose legal systems harmonize religious, traditional, and secular elements, provide a unique legal environment in which various aspects of the evolution of women's legal status can be examined. The study of the legal foundations underlying changes in this status makes it possible not only to trace the evolution of women's rights in states where Islam constitutes the dominant religious and legal tradition, but also to identify contemporary trends shaped by globalization, the development of international human rights standards, and domestic legal reforms.

The comprehensive nature of the dissertation, which combines theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of the legal status of women in Islamic states with an assessment of the current state of scholarly research in this field, contributes to a thorough understanding of the specific features of legal regulation. The proposed classification of Islamic states according to the level of development of women's rights enables the identification of common patterns and differences among their legal systems and, consequently, establishes a sound foundation for further comparative legal research.

The relevance of the research is further reinforced by its analysis of the normative and institutional mechanisms for the protection of women's rights, taking into account the influence of international legal norms and principles on

the national legal systems of the states concerned. The interaction between international standards, regional legal instruments, and domestic legislation illustrates the process of adapting universal human rights principles to the specific legal, cultural, and religious characteristics of individual subjects of international law. Furthermore, the legal analysis of the role played by international and regional institutions provides an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of their contribution to promoting gender equality and strengthening the protection of women's rights in Islamic states.

Within the context of the practical implementation of women's rights in Islamic states, the dissertation identifies both significant achievements and substantial obstacles that continue to hinder the transformation and expansion of women's rights. The legal analysis of institutional mechanisms, social barriers, and the role of civil society provides a comprehensive understanding of the actual legal framework governing the protection of women's rights. Particular scholarly value is attached to the examination of prospective legal developments at the international, regional, and national levels, which are increasingly directed towards the approximation of domestic legislation with international human rights standards.

It should be emphasized that the relevance of the selected research topic is closely connected with contemporary global, regional, and local challenges associated with the promotion of gender equality, which constitutes one of the fundamental principles of sustainable development and international law. In the context of the ongoing international dialogue on human rights and the increasing recognition of women's role in political, economic, and social life, a comprehensive study of the legal foundations underlying the transformation of women's status in states where Islam constitutes the dominant legal and cultural tradition possesses not only theoretical but also considerable practical significance. The findings of the dissertation contribute to the formulation of

recommendations aimed at improving legal systems, strengthening international cooperation, and ensuring effective and comprehensive protection of women's rights across diverse legal, cultural, and socio-economic environments.

Having examined the content of the dissertation, it should be noted that the submitted work constitutes a completed and independent scholarly study devoted to a highly relevant research problem, which is of considerable importance both for the science of international law and for legal practice within national legal systems. The research objective and the tasks formulated by the author are clearly defined, logically interconnected, and fully consistent with the object and subject of the study. Throughout the research, the author has employed contemporary methodological approaches, thereby ensuring the validity, reliability, and scientific soundness of the findings.

The first chapter examines the genesis of women's rights in Islamic states and identifies the theoretical and methodological foundations for studying women's legal status. This chapter establishes a solid conceptual basis for the subsequent analysis presented in the dissertation. Particular attention should be paid to the systematization of approaches to the classification of Islamic states according to the level of development of women's rights, which contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the specific features of legal regulation in different regions.

The second chapter examines the normative and institutional mechanisms for the protection of women's rights in states where Islam constitutes the dominant legal and cultural tradition. In particular, it analyses the influence of international legal norms on domestic legislation, explores the role of regional human rights standards, and assesses the activities of international and regional institutions in promoting and safeguarding women's rights.

The third chapter focuses on the practical implementation of women's rights in Islamic states, with particular emphasis on the legal mechanisms for their protection, the principal challenges to the advancement of women's rights, and the role of civil society in this process. Considerable attention is also devoted to analysing the prospects for future legal reforms in this field.

The conclusions, recommendations, and proposals formulated by the author are well-reasoned, logically structured, and fully consistent with the requirements applicable to scholarly research at the doctoral level. The dissertation constitutes a completed and original piece of academic research prepared in accordance with the established academic standards. The findings obtained collectively contribute to addressing significant scientific issues of considerable importance both for the further development of the theory of international law and for improving the practical protection and promotion of women's rights in Islamic states.

An analysis of the dissertation demonstrates that all elements of scientific novelty formulated by the author are properly substantiated, systematically developed, and comprise significant theoretical generalizations as well as practical recommendations. The findings of the research make a valuable contribution to the further development of international human rights law. Among the most significant scientific achievements of the dissertation, the following should be highlighted:

- the author proposes an original definition of the concept of "**women's rights**," interpreting it as a comprehensive set of legal, social, economic, and cultural rights aimed at ensuring gender equality and creating conditions for the full participation of women in public life, including access to education, employment, property ownership, participation in political processes, and the protection of personal autonomy;

- a theoretical framework for the classification of Islamic states according to the level of development and implementation of women's rights has been developed. The proposed classification distinguishes between leading, progressive, developing, and underdeveloped states on the basis of a combination of legal, institutional, and empirical criteria;
- a comprehensive legal model for analysing the transformation of the legal status of women in Islamic states has been formulated through the interaction of international, regional, and national legal norms, taking into account the influence of Sharia and the activities of relevant institutions. This interaction is examined, for the first time, as an integrated legal system;
- recommendations for improving the legal mechanisms for the protection of women's rights in Islamic states have been substantiated. These recommendations may serve as practical guidance for future legal reforms in this field;
- the scholarly understanding of regional legal mechanisms for the protection of women's rights has been further developed through an analysis of such instruments as the **Arab Charter on Human Rights**, the **Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam**, the **Maputo Protocol**, and the **ASEAN Human Rights Declaration**, thereby identifying common trends as well as existing gaps in legal regulation;
- the concept of the "**expansion of women's legal rights**" in the context of Islamic states has been developed to encompass not only the formal legal dimension but also institutional, procedural, and socio-cultural aspects, with particular emphasis on effective access to justice, participation in decision-making processes, and the principle of non-discrimination.

In light of the foregoing, it may be concluded that the dissertation possesses genuine scientific novelty that fully satisfies the established academic

requirements. Furthermore, the research demonstrates the author's ability to formulate original scholarly approaches to addressing contemporary issues in international law.

The conclusions and recommendations formulated in the dissertation are of both scholarly and practical value and may be applied in a variety of fields.

In academic research, the findings contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the international legal aspects of the protection of women's rights in Islamic states, thereby providing a foundation for further research, the development of new conceptual approaches, and the refinement of existing theoretical frameworks. The results may also serve as a valuable resource for researchers, academic staff, and specialists in international law engaged in the study of gender-related issues.

In legislative and law-making activities, the research findings may be employed in the formulation of public legal policy and in the drafting, amendment, and improvement of legal acts governing the legal status of women. The conclusions and recommendations proposed by the author have the potential to enhance the effectiveness of legislation, strengthen its consistency with international human rights standards, and improve the protection of women's rights at the national, regional, and international levels.

In legal practice, the findings may contribute to improving the mechanisms for implementing international legal standards relating to the protection of women's rights, increasing the effectiveness of their practical application, and promoting the harmonization of domestic legislation with international standards in this field.

In professional practice, the research materials may be useful for public authorities, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations

whose activities are aimed at promoting gender equality and protecting women's rights, particularly in the preparation of programmes, strategies, public policies, and draft legal acts.

In scientific and methodological work, the results of the dissertation may serve as a source of analytical material for the preparation of methodological guidelines, teaching materials, and academic manuals, as well as for the further development of research methodologies in the field of human rights within different legal systems, including Islamic law.

In the educational process, the provisions of the dissertation may be incorporated into the teaching of such academic disciplines as **Public International Law, International Human Rights Law, Comparative Law, and Islamic Law**. The findings may also be used in the preparation of textbooks, teaching manuals, educational programmes, and methodological materials, thereby contributing to the training of highly qualified specialists in the field of international law.

The author has ensured an appropriate level of approbation of the research findings. The principal provisions and conclusions of the dissertation have been reflected in **13 scientific publications**, including **three articles** published in peer-reviewed academic journals recognized by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, **two articles** published in foreign scholarly journals, and **eight publications** included in the proceedings of international and national scientific and practical conferences. This level of dissemination demonstrates the sound scientific substantiation of the research findings, confirms their relevance and recognition within the academic community, and indicates that the principal results of the dissertation have been adequately presented and discussed in scholarly publications.

Structurally, the dissertation consists of an abstract in Ukrainian and English, a list of abbreviations, an introduction, three chapters comprising ten subsections, conclusions, a list of references, and appendices.

While emphasizing the overall high quality of the dissertation, it is important to point out certain aspects that require further clarification during the defense and may also serve as directions for subsequent research:

1. In your dissertation, you examine the reforms concerning women's rights that are being discussed and implemented in Islamic states. You also identify the obstacles these reforms encounter and outline the prospects for the future development of women's rights. However, during your defense, I would like to hear more specific legislative and regulatory proposals for overcoming the existing barriers to the expansion of women's rights and opportunities. Furthermore, what is your position regarding the differences in the implementation and development of these reforms across various Islamic states?
2. In the conclusions of your dissertation, you state that, from the perspective of international law, international treaties and conventions acquire practical significance only when their provisions are incorporated into domestic legislation and effectively implemented. However, the issue of whether it is possible, through legal and regulatory mechanisms, to influence the formulation of reservations to international treaties or objections to such reservations made by Islamic states remains insufficiently explored. These reservations often directly limit the domestic effect of international human rights obligations, particularly those concerning women's rights. I would appreciate your opinion on the current legal possibilities for addressing this issue.
3. In the conclusions of your dissertation, you argue that regional legal norms function as a bridge between international and national legal systems, while international legal norms establish the universal foundation for achieving gender

equality. Nevertheless, the dissertation does not sufficiently examine the specific features of regional accountability mechanisms or explain the limitations of the legal protection of women's rights across different Islamic countries. Could you elaborate on these issues during your defense?

4. In Chapters 2 and 3 of your dissertation, you devote particular attention to the analysis of the legal and regulatory mechanisms through which Islamic states implement international and regional legal standards concerning the protection of women's rights, the obstacles they encounter, the current state of this process, and the practical outcomes of fulfilling the relevant obligations. However, the current state of the legal framework governing women's access to justice and legal aid services in Islamic countries has not been sufficiently examined. What is the author's opinion on this issue?

At the same time, certain aspects of the scientific work require further consideration, but this does not diminish the overall scientific value of the research presented for defense. The dissertation is complete, the stated research objective has been fully explored, and the main theses of the dissertation have been properly substantiated. The research fully complies with the requirements and scope of the academic specialty 293 – International Law.

The principal provisions of the dissertation have been adequately reflected in the author's scientific publications, the number and academic quality of which satisfy the established requirements for doctoral-level research. In particular, the findings have been published in recognized national and international peer-reviewed academic journals and have been presented and discussed at scientific and practical conferences. The topic of the dissertation is highly relevant and makes a significant contribution to the development of contemporary international law scholarship. The conclusions and recommendations formulated by the author are sufficiently reasoned, demonstrate scientific novelty, and

possess both theoretical and practical significance, particularly with regard to improving the legal mechanisms for the protection of women's rights in Islamic states. The proposed approaches are logically developed and convincingly substantiated.

The dissertation complies with the established formal requirements concerning the scope and structure of doctoral dissertations. The research is presented in a logical, coherent, and well-structured manner, adheres to the standards of academic writing, and contains conclusions that are comprehensive, internally consistent, and clearly articulated.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The dissertation submitted for defense by Taylor Alla Valeriivna, entitled «Legal basis for the transformation of the legal status of women in Islamic states», corresponds to the specialty 293 «International Law» and meets the requirements of the Procedure for the training of applicants for higher education degrees of doctor of philosophy and doctor of sciences in higher education institutions (scientific institutions), approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 261 of March 23, 2016 (as amended), Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine «On approval of the requirements for the formatting of a dissertation» No. 40 of January 12, 2017 (as amended), as well as the Procedure for awarding the degree of doctor of philosophy and revoking the decision of a one-time specialized academic council of a higher education institution or scientific institution on the award of the degree of doctor of philosophy, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 44 of January 12, 2022 (as amended). The author, Taylor Alla Valeriivna,

merits the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the field of study 29
«International Relations», specialty 293 «International Law».

Reviewer

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