KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG

Women, Policy and Political Leadership

Regional Perspectives




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Megha Sarmah

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Preface

Women's political leadership and the equal participation of women in public affairs and decision-making are key elements of democracy and prerequisites for achieving sustainable development. In the last few decades, there has been remarkable progress in this regard with more opportunities for women in leadership roles and significant steps being taken towards achieving gender equality. The world average of women in parliament has increased from 15.7% in 2004 to 22.1% in 2015 to 25.1[1]% in 2020. Nonetheless, we have still not reached the target of 30% of women in decision-making positions set by the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995.

As we marked the 25-year anniversary of this platform in 2020, we also witnessed the importance and impact of diverse leadership and the role of women leaders in high-stakes situations against the backdrop of the global Covid-19 pandemic. Countries with female leaders were hailed to be more successful in fighting the pandemic. A study published by the Centre for Economic Policy Research and the World Economic Forum, which analysed 194 countries, suggests that the difference is real and "may be explained by the proactive and coordinated policy responses" adopted by female leaders.[2]

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) has always recognised and stressed the importance of women in political leadership and the crucial roles they can play. In order to promote female political leadership training and empowerment in Asia, KAS's Political Dialogue Asia office in Singapore has always been committed to pursuing programmes to narrow the political gender gap by organising conferences and thematic meetings on issues pertaining to women's empowerment in Asia.

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[1] Accurate as of 28 December 2020.

[2] Garikipati, Supriya and Kambhampati, Uma, Leading the Fight Against the Pandemic: Does Gender 'Really' Matter? (3 June 2020). Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3617953 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3617953.

Since 2011, we have been bringing together a network of around 40 parliamentarians to promote, strengthen and develop female political leadership in their respective countries through policy discussions and capacity-building programmes. Since its inception, the Asian Women Parliamentarian Caucus (AWPC) has built on existing strategic knowledge and solidarity systems, especially for countries that lack adequate representation of women in politics. Through the Asian Women Parliamentarian Caucus initiative, KAS hopes to address the role of parliamentarians in forging the women leadership agenda and pushing it forward through best practices and shared experiences. AWPC has also helped to unite women across party lines, offer opportunities to discuss mainstream gender issues and provide oversight of government action in the work of parliament. AWPC has also been a platform to inform and encourage parliamentarians to discuss pertinent issues facing the region and to look towards the best policy approach.

It is our hope at KAS that through stronger regional cooperation, we can support women parliamentarians across the region to consolidate best practices, and to influence policy-agenda in bills passing in their respective national parliaments. As our network members take leadership roles in their countries, like Hon. Minister of Defence of Australia Senator Linda Reynolds and Hon. Minister of Education of Bangladesh Dr Dipu Moni, we hope we can support them in their efforts to bring forward a more gender-sensitive and inclusive agenda in their countries and in the region as a whole.

We are pleased to present the second edition of our book *Women, Policy and Political Leadership: Regional Perspectives*. The papers of the first edition have been updated by prominent authors from around the world to include the latest regional insights into the situation of female political leadership and prospects as well as challenges. We also present an updated overview with a) a fact sheet containing comparative data on the percentage of women in national parliaments; b) the Global Gender Gap rankings, introduced by the World Economic Forum in 2006 to assess the magnitude and scope of gender-based disparities within and across states, using economic, political, education and health as criterion; c) a world map illustrating the proportion of seats held by women in the upper house and lower house in 30 different countries around the world and d) a retrospective timeline on milestones in global female political leadership.

We hope the material compiled by our authors prove useful for politically active women. We have always believed that knowledge management is an integral part of regional network building and we hope that the contents of this book can help influence perspectives and narratives around the region.

Christian Echle
Director
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Reviewing Political Patriarchy and Women's Political Mainstreaming in Asia – Breaking Barriers, Fighting Blind Spots, Carving Opportunities

Andrea Fleschenberg

Asia represents an interesting and diverse laboratory for gender-sensitive policy-making, legislation as well as women's political mainstreaming at various levels of the political system and is home to multiple gender-specific cleavages, contestations and controversies – be it in terms of formal or informal political participation, regimes and processes. Experiences of women politicians in breaking barriers of political patriarchy and carving opportunities for women's sustainable and transversal political mainstreaming have been diverse, sometimes ambiguous or with ambivalent outcomes and implications, more often than not encouraging and continuously widening the public space for women's voice to be heard and agency to unfold.

Assessing a Heterogeneous Region and Introducing Key Concepts[1]

One characteristic feature has been the introduction of different systems of gender quotas at multiple levels of Asian polities – be it in the form of voluntary party quotas, legislative candidate quotas, or reserved seats to be contested directly via elections or to be selected by male gatekeepers. Initially, public and academic debates revolved around the documentation of women politicians' experiences and around the debate of quota designs, issues of representativeness and critical mass theorising. Current debates and analyses of women parliamentarians' experiences have moved away from questions of (descriptive) representativeness towards challenges and gains of substantiveness in participation – from quantity/number games to quality/performance and impact, one could say. This includes reviews of intervening factors such as religion and other sociocultural determinants, strength of local as well as transnational women's movements and other democratic support networks, women's machineries, and external interventions in the shape of Official Development Assistance (ODA) sponsored gender mainstreaming programmes and/or state-/institution-building processes. Bangladesh's Minister of Education Dipu Moni argues that the value of women parliamentarians is no longer debated, but their effectiveness has come increasingly into focus, making it all the more important for the respective political infrastructure to reflect the needs and concerns of women leaders as such. In her point of view, even a small number of women and their effective participation is significant as is the demonstra-

[1] See evidence drawn from comparative chapters in guest-edited special journal issues, action research papers as well as edited volumes: Andrea Fleschenberg and Farzana Bari, (2015): "*Unmaking Political Patriarchy Through Gender Quotas?*", Islamabad/Kabul: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, accessible online: https://pk.boell.org/sites/default/files/unmaking_political_patriarchy_through_gender_quotas.pdf (as of 3 August 2020); Andrea Fleschenberg, (2016): *"It's not Charity, it is a Chair of Power" – Moving Beyond Symbolic Representation in Afghanistan's Transition Politics?*, Kabul: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung (as of 3 August 2020); Andrea Fleschenberg, and Claudia Derichs (eds.) (2013): "Gender und politische Partizipation in Asien [Gender and Political Participation in Asia]", in: *Femina Politica* 22 (2), pp. 9-16; Andrea Fleschenberg and Claudia Derichs, (2011): "Women and Politics in Asia: A Springboard for Democracy? A Tentative Introduction & Reflection", in: Andrea Fleschenberg and Claudia Derichs (eds.), *Women and Politics in Asia. A Springboard for Democracy?*, Zuerich/Muenster: LITVerlag, pp. 1-17; Andrea Fleschenberg, Claudia Derichs, and Cecilia Ng, (2010): "Introduction", in: *Women in National Politics in Asia: A Springboard for Gender Democracy?*, in: *Gender, Technology and Development* 14 (3), pp. 303-312.

tive effect by having women occupy key government positions, creating the opportunities and allowing for women to imagine, have confidence in and aim for political leadership.[2]

As I have argued elsewhere, central questions which emerge are: (i) whether demands for representation and participation lead to effective political mainstreaming of women as well as a rupture, perforation or even transformation of androcentric political power structures, institutionalised political cultures as well as decision-making processes; (ii) what kind of agency and scope thereof do women politicians have for political agenda-setting as well as what kind of political performance can they display; and (iii) whether participation dividends emerge for other political arenas and public spheres and/or a gender democracy dividend for successful law- and policy-making. Or, in other words, if it is possible that recent initiatives and interventions for women's political participation in Asia have led to (i) the reproduction of structures of inequality, exclusion, and marginalisation, such as manifested by the characteristic features of elite capture of political institutions and the commonality of dynastic politics across the region of Asia; (ii) the continued exceptionalism of elite women's political participation and thus lack of political mainstreaming of women across different social strata; (iii) continued dependencies on and lack of transversal agency of women politicians from male-dominated support systems and networks due to the design of given quota provisions along with predominant, unaltered androcentric structures and institutions; as well as, in some countries, (iv) violent as well as non-violent counter-movements and discourses, most often linked with the nexus of religion and politics.[3]

In order to be able to evaluate such considerations and guiding questions, some conceptual food for thought is required, drawing from feminist political science concepts on the issue at hand in a brief overview.

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[2] Notes taken by the author of presentation held during the regional conference in Singapore, 16 October 2014, convened to formally establish the Asian Women Parliamentarian Caucus (AWPC). The AWPC has a network of 40 women MPs from across Asia and has been meeting since 2011 in Europe and Asia, using strategic networking, dialogue and capacity-building to further women's political participation (see also: https://www.kas.de/en/web/politikdialog-asien/asian-women-parliamentarian-caucus-awpc- as of 3 August 2020).

[3] Andrea Fleschenberg and Claudia Derichs, (eds.) (2013): "Gender und politische Partizipation in Asien [Gender and Political Participation in Asia]", in: *Femina Politica* 22 (2), pp. 9-16.

First, when talking about *political representation* and *political participation,* some terminological clarification and references are required. The seminal work of Pitkin[4] outlines four dimensions of *political representation* – formal, descriptive, substantive and symbolic – and coined the difference between *delegate* and *trustee* when reviewing understandings of parliamentary mandates and agency. Building on this, Mansbridge[5] adds three additional concepts of *political representation* which are of significance: (i) *gyroscopic*, i.e., interests, common sense and principles from one's own background to formulate as basis for parliamentary action; (ii) *surrogate*, i.e., representing constituents beyond one's own spatial electoral basis and those whose values and identities one shares; (iii) *anticipatory*, i.e., based on what one thinks constituents will approve at the next election and not what has been promised previously in electoral campaigns or manifestos. This links the framework of assessing quota women politicians' experiences with questions of performance, outreach, representativeness, accountability as well as transversal agency, moving the academic debate from the question of "Do women represent women?" to questions such as "Who claims to act for women?" and "Where, how and why does the SRW [substantive representation of women] occur?", and thus regarding representation as "dynamic, performative and constitutive".[6]

In addition, such an understanding opens up the concept of political representation in terms of spaces, actors, agency and manifestations, takes into consideration legislative arenas as well as other arenas of politics, a wide range of actors, sites, and goals that inform political processes, and highlights diversity in probabilities, levels, ways, strategies, locations, attempts and expressions/articulations "to act for women as a group" (or not), Celis et al.[7] argue. Substantive female political representation thus needs to be considered to take place and to be negotiated at different

[4] Hannah F. Pitkin, (1967): *The Concept of Representation*, Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press.

[5] Jane Mansbridge, (2003): "Rethinking representation", in: *American Political Science Review*, 97 (4), pp. 515-528, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055403000856.

[6] Karen Celis, Sarah Childs, Johanna Kantola, and Mona Lena Krook, (2008): "Rethinking Women's Substantive Representation", in: *Representation*, 44 (2), pp. 99-210.

[7] Karen Celis, Sarah Childs, Johanna Kantola, and Mona Lena Krook, (2008): "Rethinking Women's Substantive Representation", in: *Representation*, 44 (2), pp. 99-210.

levels – from the local via provincial, national to transnational and international, using strategies of uploading or downloading reference frameworks for policy-making, framing of agenda issues or negotiating issues through the use of various platforms and amplifiers, and not only within the confined space of national parliamentary politics. This also means to review the role of male parliamentarians, cabinet members, civil society representatives or bureaucrats, state agencies and institutions beyond the usually focussed-upon women's policy machineries, state feminism and women's movements.[8]

As I have argued elsewhere,[9] the frequent heterogeneity of women parliamentarians in terms of interests, policy priorities, support system or party obligations and dependencies, ideological differences or other societal cleavages as well as the influence of multiple institutions – be it parliamentary practices, political cultures, gender ideologies, or work cultures – and predominant political discourses shape women's substantive political representation. Consequently, Celis et al.[10] stress that we need to search for critical actors of both genders within and outside political institutions and key arenas, and to explore possibilities of competition, conflict, co-optation as well as cooperation along with multiple directionalities of reinforcement and reciprocity between different actors, sites and levels of political representation and negotiation, which shape the political behaviour and performance of women parliamentarians – be they on quota seats or not.

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Andrea Fleschenberg, (2009): *Afghanistan's Parliament in the Making. Gendered Understandings and Practices of Politics in a Transitional Country*, Berlin: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung/UNIFEM; Andrea Fleschenberg and Claudia Derichs, (eds.) (2013): "Gender und politische Partizipation in Asien [Gender and Political Participation in Asia]", in: *Femina Politica* 22 (2), pp. 9-16; Andrea Fleschenberg, and Farzana Bari, (2015): "*Unmaking Political Patriarchy Through Gender Quotas?"*, Islamabad/Kabul: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, accessible online: https://pk.boell.org/sites/default/files/unmaking_political_patriarchy_through_gender_quotas.pdf (as of 3 August 2020); Andrea Fleschenberg, (2016): *"It's not Charity, it is a Chair of Power" – Moving Beyond Symbolic Representation in Afghanistan's Transition Politics?*, Kabul: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung (as of 3 August 2020); Karen Celis, Sarah Childs, Johanna Kantola, and Mona Lena Krook, (2008): "Rethinking Women's Substantive Representation", in: *Representation*, 44 (2), pp. 99-210.

[10] Karen Celis, Sarah Childs, Johanna Kantola, and Mona Lena Krook, (2008): "Rethinking Women's Substantive Representation", in: *Representation*, 44 (2), pp. 99-210.

Having said that, an overview assessment of women's political representation – in numerical, comparative terms – is necessary and will be given in the following section in order to outline briefly patterns, trajectories and developments in recent decades in Asia. This overview is based on data provided by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU, www.ipu.org) as well as the Stockholm-based QuotaProject (www.quotaproject.org), headed by leading quota scholar Drude Dahlerup and linked with IDEA (www.idea.int).

Where Do We Stand? – Assessing Women's Political Representation and Participation

Reviewing the data on Asian women's political representation, a significant jump can be identified from the late 1990s onwards until today, outlining women's increased presence as heads of state/government and as cabinet members, parliamentarians and speakers, along with the formation of women's caucuses and the implementation of supportive gender quota systems. Having said that, this did not necessarily translate into women's political mainstreaming or to women substantially challenging political patriarchy across Asia – a region with significantly lower performance indicators in that regard in worldwide comparison in quantitative as well as qualitative terms. However, one has to outline an upward regional trend with a slight increase in numeric terms compared to 2015 or earlier.

Zooming in to the state of political patriarchy, one has to report that it is alive and kicking worldwide (albeit to varying degrees), meaning that political representation, participation and thus decision-making on public affairs is still a predominantly androcentric affair. The higher the echelon of power, the lower women's stake or its female ratio in it, it appears. Take for instance the fact that in mid-2020, only 6.2 percent of heads of government (read: 12) and 6.6 percent of presidents (read: 10) worldwide are women, among them Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh (since 2009), President Bidhya Devi Bhandari of Nepal (since 2015) and President Halimah Yacob of Singapore (since 2017). One could argue to include Myanmar as well in that list, given the powers of State Councillor Aung San Suu Kyi, comparable to those of a prime minister and leader of the ruling National League for Democracy. Hence, within those four Asian nations with women at the top by mid-2020, women's ratio among cabinet members/ministerial positions ranges from 3.8 percent (Myanmar) to

16.7 percent (Singapore). Zooming in further, women have previously held the position of head of state or government in India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka. None of those countries ranks in the top 50 when it comes to women's ministerial positions; in fact no Asian country is listed in this cohort. Among the bottom 50 ranks (out of 182), one can find twenty-one Asian countries, with percentages ranging from a maximum of 10-12 percent of female cabinet members (e.g., India, Pakistan, Laos, Nepal, Bhutan) to none (Brunei Darussalam, Thailand, Vietnam). Of those with women as previous or current head of government or state, seven can be found among the bottom 50: Bangladesh (7.7 percent), India, Pakistan, Nepal, the Philippines (8.6 percent) along with Sri Lanka (6.3 percent).[11]

While until 1997 there was only one Asian country with a female parliamentary speaker, in mid-2020, out of 57 women presiding national parliaments worldwide (20.57 percent), seven were from Asia: Bangladesh, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. Previously, diverse countries such as Japan (1993 onwards) and Pakistan (2008-2013) saw female parliamentary speakers for the first time.[12] While in mid-2020, women parliamentarians represented 25.0 percent of the world's national legislators (calculated for all chambers), the Asian regional average of 20.2 percent resides in the bottom half: Nordic Countries 43.9 percent, Americas 31.8 percent, Europe (without Nordic countries) 29.9 percent, Sub-Sahara Africa 24.7 percent, Middle East and North Africa (MENA) 16.6 percent and Pacific island countries 19.6 percent. While reviewing the top fifty as well as the bottom fifty ranks (out of 190) in terms of women's political representation, only two Asian countries with a post-conflict legacy, namely Timor-Leste (no. 30) and Nepal (no. 43), are listed among the

[11] Data accessed and compiled from the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Infographic *Women in Politics: 2020* (as of 1 January 2020), accessed online: https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/infographics/2020-03/women-in-politics-2020 (as of 3 August 2020).

[12] Three countries have vacancies for the speaker of parliament, including the Asian nations of Malaysia and Sri Lanka, at the time of writing in mid-2020. Data accessed from and calculated via the global database on national parliaments, compiled by IPU Parline on a monthly basis, accessed online: https://data.ipu.org/speakers?sort=asc&order=Country (as of 3 August 2020). In the subsequent analysis presented in this chapter, only those countries that belong to the subregions of Central Asia, East Asia, South or Southeast Asia were included while countries classified as belonging to North Asia (i.e., Russia) or Western Asia (i.e., the MENA region) were not included in the data set.

world's top 50. Diverse in terms of socioeconomic status, political system, trajectory of women's political participation as well as predominant gender regime (including religious features), a number of Asian countries can be found among the bottom 50 – Brunei Darussalam, India, Japan, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, ranging from 4.6 to 14.4 percent women MPs at the national level.[13] Returning to the issue of diffusion effects of women's political participation from one political arena to another, being a top performer with regard to women's parliamentary representation does not necessarily translate into more women in higher decision-making positions, such as within cabinet. In Timor-Leste, 81.8 percent of cabinet members are men; in Nepal, 89.5 percent.[14]

Worldwide, there are 87 women's caucuses, out of which 23 are established within parliaments across Asia. At least nine of them have been in function for at least a decade or longer, for example in Thailand since 1993, Indonesia since 2001, Timor-Leste and Sri Lanka since 2006 or in the Philippines since 2010.[15] While women's caucuses are regarded as crucial tools to address women's issues and gender equality within parliament, having such a forum in place for longer than a decade does not necessarily translate, as argued before, into women's political mainstreaming or a more substantive share in political decision-making. While in Thailand women currently hold zero ministerial positions and 83.8 percent of MPs are men, both countries which twice had women at the top (the Philippines and Sri Lanka) only have 8.6 and 6.3 percent women in cabinet positions by mid-2020. In terms of women's parliamentary representation, both countries are exemplary for the regional range with 72 percent (the Philippines) to 94.7 percent (Sri Lanka) of MPs being men. Even the top performer in regional terms with a previous female head of government/state, Indonesia,

[13] Data accessed from and calculated via the global database on national parliaments, compiled by IPU Parline on a monthly basis, accessed online: https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=6&year=2020 (as of 3 August 2020).

[14] For details see: https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/infographics/2020-03/women-in-politics-2020 9 (as of 3 August 2020).

[15] Data accessed from and calculated via the Database on Women's Caucuses, accessed online: http://w3.ipu.org/ (as of 3 August 2020). Detailed background information was not available for all twenty-three of the Asian women's caucuses in terms of date of creation, status within parliament or membership criteria, among others.

is positioned among the bottom half in worldwide comparison with 85.7 percent of cabinet members and 79.7 percent of legislators being male.[16]

In the past decades, gender-specific quota systems were the tool of choice in 127 countries, predominantly in the regions of Latin America, Europe and Africa.[17] In Asia, we can find sixteen countries with national-level gender quotas in both houses by mid-2020: (i) constitutionally codified reserved seats in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Nepal, Pakistan and Taiwan; (ii) legislative candidate quotas in Indonesia, Korea, Mongolia, Timor-Leste and Uzbekistan; (iii) voluntary political party quotas in Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand. In addition, there are subnational-level quota regimes or a combination thereof at various levels of the political system and within different electoral system designs, generating different quantitative outcomes. While, for example, Timor-Leste has 38.5 percent of female legislators within a list-based proportional representation system without explicit quota provisions, Afghanistan has 27 percent women legislators under the rare Single Non-Transferable Vote System and reserved seat provisions, which need to be directly contested in province-based constituencies. India only has subnational-level reserved seats, codified in two constitutional amendments of the early 1990s, under a majority first-past-the-post elections system, ranking 142 (out of 189) worldwide with 14.4 percent of women legislators at the national level. Indonesia combines quota systems at the subnational and national level

[16] For details see: https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/infographics/2020-03/women-in-politics-2020 9 (as of 3 August 2020).

[17] While most countries employ either legislated candidate quotas (57 out of 127 with an average percentage of 27.1 percent women MPs) or voluntary political party quotas (55 out of 127 and a total of 113 political parties worldwide), reserved seat provisions are rarer (25 out of 127 countries with an average percentage of 26.4 percent women MPs). Data accessed from and calculated via the Global Gender Quota Database, compiled by IDEA, Stockholm University and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, accessed online: https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/database (as of 3 August 2020).

within its list-based proportional representation system, generating 20.3 percent of women legislators at the national level.[18]

Putting this data on gender quota provisions and women's political representation at the national level in worldwide comparison, let us be reminded that the worldwide average of women MPs stands at 25 percent whilst the Asian average is 20.2 percent. The 57 countries with legislated candidate quotas have an average female ratio of 27.1 percent and those 25 countries with reserved seat provisions an average of 26.4 percent, thus performing slightly better than the overall worldwide average in quantitative terms (remember: currently, gender quota provisions are in place in 16 Asian countries). Four out of the five countries (Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Pakistan and Singapore) performing equal to the regional average in Asia have gender quota provisions in place. Of the nine countries performing better than the worldwide average, five also have a national gender quota (Afghanistan, Nepal, the Philippines, Timor-Leste and Uzbekistan). Thus, gender quotas can be regarded as a crucial tool in increasing and strengthening women's political representation, given that nine out of the fourteen top performers in regional and worldwide terms employ this method of positive discrimination – however, this is no indicator of the quality and scope of substantive political representation (read: participation) and women's political mainstreaming.[19]

In conclusion, while Asia has seen a number of women as presidents (in Mongolia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Singapore and India) or as prime ministers (in South Korea and repeatedly across South Asia in Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh), most stem from an elite background of political dynasties, thus cementing the pattern of exceptionalism of women's political participation instead of a cross-sectional trickle down and diffusion of women in politics, originating thus from various social strata, walks of life and societal backgrounds. Furthermore, the conquest

[18] Gender quota provisions are mostly employed within lower houses of parliament. Only four countries in Asia have codified gender quotas for the upper house of parliament – Afghanistan, Nepal and Pakistan via a reserved seat provision apart from Uzbekistan via a legislated candidate quota (data accessed from and calculated via the global database on national parliaments, compiled by IPU Parline on a monthly basis, accessed online: https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=6&year=2020 as of 3 August 2020).

[19] Data accessed and compiled from: https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/infographics/2020-03/women-in-politics-2020 9 (as of 3 August 2020).

of top political offices has not led to an increase at other levels of the polity or overall female political participation – be it in parliament, bureaucracy, government or community affairs. Having said that, women also played significant roles at the forefront of oppositional reform or democratisation movements, engaging in contentious politics within and/or outside formal political institutions, again in diverse countries such as Indonesia, Pakistan, China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Timor-Leste, among others. Since 1987, a more positive pattern of Asian women's substantive political representation has emerged at the national cabinet level with mostly increasing numbers across Asia and across the spectrum of ministerial portfolios, ranging from agriculture, foreign affairs, resources, justice, infrastructure, social welfare, health, finance, women's affairs, science and technology to defence.[20]

Women have gained inroads into Asian politics in diverse and intricate ways – via dynastic descent, quota regulations, civil society activism, or career (party) politics rising from different polity levels or arenas. While a certain number managed to capture the executive level in diverse portfolios, the overall picture is marked by ambivalence, ambiguity, contradictions and contestations, with the region of Southeast Asia showing a better performance in terms of descriptive representation.

[20] Detailed information of women's share in ministerial portfolios as well as the policy sectors can be accessed via the annual IPU/UN Women's infographic Women in Politics Data (e.g., https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/03/women-in-politics-2019-map as of 3 August 2020; see also for detailed studies: Andrea Fleschenberg, (2009): *Afghanistan's Parliament in the Making. Gendered Understandings and Practices of Politics in a Transitional Country*, Berlin: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung / UNIFEM; Andrea Fleschenberg and Claudia Derichs, (eds.) (2013): "Gender und politische Partizipation in Asien [Gender and Political Participation in Asia]", in: *Femina Politica* 22 (2), pp. 9-16; Andrea Fleschenberg and Claudia Derichs, (2011): "Women and Politics in Asia: A Springboard for Democracy? A Tentative Introduction & Reflection", in: Andrea Fleschenberg and Claudia Derichs, (eds.), (2011), *Women and Politics in Asia. A Springboard for Democracy?*, Zuerich/Muenster: LITVerlag, pp. 1-17; Andrea Fleschenberg, Claudia Derichs and Cecilia Ng, (2010): "Introduction", in: *Women in National Politics in Asia: A Springboard for Gender Democracy?*, in: *Gender, Technology and Development* 14 (3), pp. 303-312.

To Do List I - Gaps, Blind Spots, Barriers, Challenges and Tales of Political Patriarchy

In their seminal work *No Shortcuts to Power*, Goetz and Hassim[21] argue that women's political effectiveness depends on a "chain of responsibility and exchange", which relies on (i) the type of women elected, (ii) their ability to speak out on certain policy issues as well as agency to follow them through; (iii) a supportive, resourceful gender equity lobby in civil society; (iv) credibility of women politicians and policies in political competition / electoral politics; (v) coalition- and alliance-building across arenas, tiers and levels of the polity; along with (vi) the capacity of the state and the political system to respond to new policy issues, to accommodate a new set of actors and to implement (novel, transformative) women policies. Having said that, Asian women parliamentarians encounter myriad, often intersecting and interdependent challenges that need to be taken into account when discussing women's substantive political representation, which I will outline briefly in the following section. Without clearly mapping, reflecting on and discussing these challenges, it will be difficult to carve out opportunities to turn tales of political patriarchy into tales of substantive and sustainable political mainstreaming of women.

Gender Roles Ascriptions and Transversality of Parliamentary Mandates

Most women parliamentarians continue to operate in a predominantly androcentric, patriarchal political setting that impacts on their agency as a parliamentarian in terms of territorial and functional dimensions, which I would like to sketch out in the following section, and which need to be addressed not only by repetitive exposure, experience-gathering, networking or capacity-building, but also, and maybe even more so, by changes in the overall political culture, political dynamics and power structures.

Misogynist political cultures within political institutions as well as in other societal domains, be they private or public, result more often than not in gender biases, segregation or mobility restrictions of women

[21] Anne-Marie Goetz, and Shireen Hassim, (2003): *No Shortcuts to Power. African Women in Politics and Policy Making,* London/New York: Zed Books.

parliamentarians in interacting with fellow stakeholders, constituents and society at large. Decision-making is still considered a male prerogative at multiple levels, from community representation, conflict deliberation and mediation to provincial or national governance processes. This can lead, for example, to negative attitudes, gossiping, harassment and other forms of gender-based violence and ultimately in self-censorship of women parliamentarians, curtailing the transversality of their mandate as well as discouraging other women from following in their footsteps. With such a visible communication that politics is defined as a political *malestream*, it becomes more difficult to argue and ally against discriminatory laws and practices, and the assignment of less powerful and/or resourced portfolios and positions to women, regardless of the extent of their descriptive and substantive representation in governance structures.[22]

Women often hesitate to address women's issues in order not to alienate male colleagues and constituents. Nepalese politician and trade union activist Binda Panday explains that women politicians are challenged by the slow speed of changing attitudes and behaviour of male counterparts, who, in addition, repeatedly cite alleged non-gendered policy priorities and concerns as more significant than women's rights issues. However, she also pinpoints dominant patriarchal attitudes among female political leaders and activists along with the lack of role models as problematic. Gender biases and subsequent patriarchal attitudes shaping women's political participation are pervasive in multiple arenas and at multiple levels, from the grassroots to the top of a given polity, thus amounting not only to a glass ceiling but also to multiple glass walls that women need to circumvent. Vietnamese legislator Pham Khanh Phong Lan (in office since 2011) adds that, as pointed out by other Asian women legislators, gender biases need to be addressed from the grassroots level, the family

[22] For instance, then Malaysian legislator Chua Yee Ling reported that it was difficult to translate women's organising power at the grassroots level due to power struggles when it came to seat negotiations. Women are often assigned to remote, less developed and/or less resourced constituencies, making it difficult to advance in terms of political career steps as well as sustainable political mainstreaming. For Chua Yee Ling, the key obstacle is a male-dominated patriarchal culture, which also became visible in deliberations over the 2015 budget where the women's affairs portfolio focussed on women's welfare issues rather than, for example, on gender-sensitive education and thus changing mindsets (notes taken by the author during the AWPC conference presentation, Singapore, 16 October 2014).

and community onwards, an issue that she identifies as the biggest challenge. For her, changing communities' perceptions on women's leadership capacities and gender roles is as important as quota provisions for allowing women to be able to perform and prove themselves while performing political duties. Consequently, championing gender concerns, with or without the label of "feminist" or "womanist", might still be considered by far too many as amounting to political suicide, requiring discursive mediation and containment in a wider, hegemonic androcentric political *malestream* where more often than not women's parliamentary caucuses remain volatile or where women politicians' networking, in cooperation with civil society activists and academia, remains a scarcity or insufficient, as outlined by a number of women parliamentarians in Singapore. A rare exception is the experience of Mongolian member of parliament Erdenechimeg Luvsan within the country's post-2006 Women's Caucus. Representing five different political parties, its members, she argues, were able to work together on a range of issues, including child protection and care, women's rights, violence against women, maternal health challenges due to insufficient service delivery, a demand for changes in the gender quota provisions toward a zipper system, and support in financial and economic resources needed for women candidates to be successful. In a similar vein, Binda Panday emphasises that gender can serve as a cross-cutting issue for the whole of society, even at a rhetoric level to frame and speed up changes in women's attitudes, values and perspectives, which are changing at a faster pace than men's. For former Malaysian legislator Chua Yee Ling, this might also be an issue of adequate framing of policy approaches and agenda issues, as, in her words, "we don't talk about gender equality, women's rights, or feminism but about women's participation". Former Gabriela Women's Party Congress legislator (2007-2016) and current Social Welfare Undersecretary in the Mindanao region Luzviminda Ilagan agrees that framing is key as laws often benefit men as well, which needs to be highlighted more than that a particular law is primarily targeting or aiming for women.[23]

[23] Notes taken during proceedings and informal conversations by the author at the AWPC conference, Singapore, 15-17 October 2014.

Linked to this are two contrasting aspects. First of all, this opens the way for an elite capture or dominance of politics, including quota provisions, because the price to be paid to be part of politics, to survive political competition as well as everyday parliamentary politics, might require a higher level of resources and a solid, vast support system that women outside a specific socioeconomic class, political families or political parties cannot access or afford to maintain. Such resource differences might be one reason for the elitist nature of (electoral) politics in many countries across Asia, regardless of a parliamentarian's gender. Women parliamentarians from numerous countries across South, Southeast and East Asia[24] discussed that a quota should be evaluated with regard to which women make it into parliament, as the presence of politically strong women, which have the required capacity-building as well as are able to address women's concerns (which many do not, participants added), is crucial.

Given the predominance of dynastic politics, the current Vice-President of the Philippines and former legislator (2011-2016), Leni Gerona-Robredo, argues that feedback loops from the grassroots level are important, as is a multi-level approach to avoid elitist women's participation. In that regard, local governments can be enabling arenas to train and gain credentials for a national environment through community-based political work. Moreover, she opines that diversity is key, i.e., to move beyond the same faces and voices at the national level for more diversity in women's descriptive and subsequently substantive representation. Similarly, former Cambodian Minister for Women's and Veteran Affairs (1998-2004) and former opposition parliamentarian (1998-2003, 2013-2017) Mu Sochua questions why women are in politics and whether (elite) women politicians, which partake in a male-dominated political game, have not become part of the problem: "I used to be in the system but left it not to be caught in the system. … the

[24] Women legislators at the 2014 AWPC conference came from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Laos, Nepal, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Timor-Leste and Vietnam.

temptation was always there. That's why I joined the opposition", trying to opt out of the elite appropriation of common resources.[25]

Along those lines, Malaysian parliamentarian Kasthuri Patto refers to her experience of patriarchal mindsets and their gender impact on women politicians' participation, in nexus with the issue of corruption: in a false notion, constituents might consider that women needed to bend the rules of the system to be in power, which might also mean the need to be corrupt. However, she also observes that women politicians might be treated harsher than male colleagues by the media and the general public in case of corruption allegations or charges. Maria de Lurdes Bessa Martins de Sousa Bessa, former Treasurer of Southeast Asian Parliamentarians Against Corruption, Timorese legislator (2012-2017) and current Vice-President of the Democratic Party (PD) in Timor-Leste, provides related additional evidence from her own work in the field when she questions why Timorese women ministers have been easier targets, charged with facilitating contracts for their husbands' companies, and why only women politicians have been imprisoned so far.[26]

But the question remains about the sequencing of efforts: numbers in terms of critical mass first and then quality or not? Gerona-Robredo regards the numeric gender ratio as an inadequate measurement of gender equality and women's empowerment; however, seasoned Afghan woman politician Shukria Barakzai highlights the importance of quota provisions in ensuring women's presence as well as the fact that male legislators might also lack in expertise and experience but do not publicly talk about this lack of capacity-building. Having served her country since 2003 as parliamentarian as well as ambassador, she regards a quota as

[25] Notes taken during proceedings and informal conversations by the author at the AWPC conference, Singapore, 15-17 October 2014. Currently, seasoned politician Mu Suchoa serves a five-year ban from politics after the dissolution of the country's main opposition party, the Cambodia National Rescue Party, under the authoritarian rule of Prime Minister Hun Sen (see: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42006828 as of 3 August 2020).

[26] On a different note, Mu Sochua incriminates the complicity of wives as part of a corruption system run by male politicians, abusing their elite societal position as carte blanche for subsequent undertakings. Opposition parliamentarian Kasthuri Patto seconds with cases from Malaysia, where a number of elite women politicians have been implicated in key corruption scandals, thus demanding that "[w]omen shouldn't vote for women but for good women, not to have donkeys again in power (...)". (Notes taken during proceedings and informal conversations by the author at the AWPC conference, Singapore, 15-17 October 2014).

a first step to keeping the door open for women "to get in" and stresses that it is crucial to frame the discourse more strategically, in the sense that quota politicians need to talk about obstacles, rather than just about their own inadequacies. *Let's not question our qualities and hinder our progress*, Minister of Education Dipu Moni argues and points towards the need for mentoring, supporting gender quotas as an important, but not the only, step to be taken, as well as another necessary conditionality, namely, political parties' commitment to appointing women to leadership positions in different arenas of public affairs and its necessary demonstrative effect for society at large and women and girls in particular.[27]

This is further complicated, secondly, by (i) the lack of quota-within-quota provisions to have diverse women legislators from different socioeconomic strata as well as (ii) specific education clauses (e.g., Pakistan) which bar, for instance, community-level women politicians without tertiary education from rising up the ladder of political success.

In contrast, the case of the Philippines is interesting, where the 1986 post-transition Constitution established party lists in order to represent marginalised social groups instead of gender quota provisions. Luz Ilagan, former legislator in the Lower House for Gabriela Women's Party and herself not free from controversy given her support of current President Duterte and his misogynist, sexist leanings[28], outlines that it was founded in October 2000 as a women's party with a hundred thousand registered members country-wide, and that it has successfully contested elections since 2004 on a platform of promoting women's rights and issues of marginalised women with regard to empowerment, justice and equality, fair and non-sexist participation in all public spheres, and access to basic service delivery. Only those laws are drafted, which are approved by Gabriela's country-wide chapters, thus ensuring that the respective legislative agenda is based on grassroots women's direct input, consultation

[27] Notes taken during proceedings and informal conversations by the author at the AWPC conference, Singapore, 15-17 October 2014.

[28] In contrast to her statement from 2014 and breaking with Gabriela's feminist stance, Ilagan, who hails from Davao as does Duterte, defended his sexist behaviour and remarks as a specific cultural expression, not to be considered as sexual harassment (see for details on this controversial statement and the party's response: https://rappler.com/nation/luz-ilagan-appointed-dswd-undersecretary, https://rappler.com/nation/gabriela-clarifies-catcalling-duterte as of 3 August 2020).

and voice.[29] Among the issues addressed are controversial ones such as reproductive health, divorce, violence against women and children, and reformulation of penal code provisions on rape, along with focusing on marginalised segments of women, such as overseas workers, and females working poor in rural and urban areas.[30]

Evidence from (post-)conflict countries like Afghanistan and Timor-Leste, among others, suggest that being a novel entrant to politics can also mean that particular expectations have to be met – regardless of a more hostile environment towards women's political participation.[31] Especially in post-conflict scenarios, women might be able to convince voters that they have not been involved in conflict dynamics or human rights violations and are thus considered a symbol of change. However, international interventions – military or non-military in nature – have left an ambivalent legacy for gender mainstreaming efforts, if one reviews the cases of Afghanistan, Cambodia, Timor-Leste or Aceh, Indonesia. Key seems to be a political will and commitment to mid- to long-term resources to allow for established women's machineries to be successful and for newly codified laws and mechanisms of positive discrimination, such as gender quotas, to be internalised, implemented and sanctioned beyond the presence of international intervention actors supporting them. While one could consider the brevity of time as a key factor for limited norm diffusion, one might also charge the often-experienced overriding securitisation paradigm of international interventions as a key obstacle, overriding other civilian and gender political concerns by its prioritisation. In that regard, Vietnamese legislator Pham Khanh Phong Lan hints towards the importance of choosing the right value and policy frames to be politically successful in ensuring gender mainstreaming policies. Apart from important international documents such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of

[29] Gabriela members are now running as local and city councillors, but on a ticket with a traditional party as, she admits, it is difficult to run on a women's party ticket and muster the extensive financial and economic resources needed to run as a candidate in traditional politics (notes taken by the author during the question and answer session after Luz Ilagan's presentation, AWPC regional conference, Singapore, 16 October 2014).

[30] Notes taken by the author during the presentation of Luz Ilagan, Singapore, 16 October 2014.

[31] Andrea Fleschenberg, (2016): *"It's not Charity, it is a Chair of Power" – Moving Beyond Symbolic Representation in Afghanistan's Transition Politics?*, Kabul: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung (as of 3 August 2020).

Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), national action plans and policy frameworks are required.[32]

Irrespective of their transformative potentials and opportunities, such post-conflict contexts are not clean slates: they build on pre-existing socio-political hierarchies, gender ideologies and conflict legacies, regardless of the opportunities of a temporary power vacuum or international intervention might bring. Similar to the experiences during Latin America's transition processes, women might be at the forefront of pro-democracy and peace building struggles, but loose out when political institutions consolidate at the next stage of political change or when there is a need to re-strategise agendas, arenas and tools of political participation within and outside of key institutions such as parliament, government, ministerial bureaucracy and civil society.

Expectations and Failures to Deliver

At best, being a novel entrant into politics might mean that women parliamentarians are regarded as change agents compared to traditional (male) politicians. However, being considered a change agent, i.e., someone who will alter the way politics is done, the way the power dispensation operates, the way the socio-political culture frames means and ways of political communication among decision-makers as well as vis-à-vis the constituents, the way alliances are formed and which issues are on the agenda, often of reformatory if not transformative content and extent, raises expectations. If women are considered as change agents, they face high expectations to make a difference and to make a difference fast, within only a few legislative periods, regardless of their status of subaltern actor in terms of voice and agency within the given political institution. And this is complicated further by the fact that institutional legacies in terms of processes and work/decision-making cultures do not necessarily work in favour of women, who are rather more likely to meet with resistance from veto-actors as well as societal counter-movements within as well as outside of political institutions, and formal as well as informal power brokers, opinion makers and spoilers. Such counter-movements and discourses

[32] Notes taken during proceedings and informal conversations by the author at the AWPC conference, Singapore, 15-17 October 2014.

can also originate in gender mainstreaming interventions of external as well as internal actors, becoming part and parcel of a wider, transnational political contestation.[33]

According to Goetz and Hassim[34], the gender equity lobby and gender agenda commitment posits that institutional constraints can limit a change agent's voice and agency, especially if supportive alliance-building among colleagues and civil society as well as necessary political will from key power brokers are not formed. Women parliamentarians may end up in a position where they have to overstretch their capacities through engaging in activism at multiple fronts, sites and levels while at the same time learn on the job as novel entrants and push the boundaries of an institutional culture to become more gender-sensitive and accommodating to women's political participation and thus less androcentric. All of this is done within the temporal confines of electoral politics – be it four or five years of a legislative period when one has to face constituents and compete in electoral politics, demonstrating what has been delivered with little space to negotiate why promises have not been delivered or why change just might simply take so much longer, while the crucial, small, often less visible institutional changes are so much more difficult to communicate to a populace interested in concrete policy outcomes and impact.

Research has so far predominantly looked at the outcome and impact on women's machineries / women's policy agencies and their nexus with women's movements in Western democracies in Europe and the Americas

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[33] See evidence drawn from comparative chapters in guest-edited special journal issues, action research papers as well as edited volumes: Andrea Fleschenberg and Farzana Bari, (2015): *"Unmaking Political Patriarchy Through Gender Quotas?"*, Islamabad/Kabul: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, accessible online: https://pk.boell.org/sites/default/files/unmaking_political_patriarchy_through_gender_quotas.pdf (as of 3 August 2020); Andrea Fleschenberg, (2016): *"It's not Charity, it is a Chair of Power" – Moving Beyond Symbolic Representation in Afghanistan's Transition Politics?*, Kabul: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung (as of 3 August 2020); Andrea Fleschenberg, and Claudia Derichs (eds.) (2013): "Gender und politische Partizipation in Asien [Gender and Political Participation in Asia]", in: *Femina Politica* 22 (2), pp. 9-16; Andrea Fleschenberg and Claudia Derichs, (2011): "Women and Politics in Asia: A Springboard for Democracy? A Tentative Introduction & Reflection", in: Andrea Fleschenberg and Claudia Derichs (eds.), *Women and Politics in Asia. A Springboard for Democracy?*, Zuerich/Muenster: LITVerlag, pp. 1-17; Andrea Fleschenberg, Claudia Derichs, and Cecilia Ng, (2010): "Introduction", in: *Women in National Politics in Asia: A Springboard for Gender Democracy?*, in: *Gender, Technology and Development* 14 (3), pp. 303-312.

[34] Anne-Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim, (2003): *No Shortcuts to Power. African Women in Politics and Policy Making,* London/New York: Zed Books.

rather than in Asian contexts. Evidence suggests that such women's machineries (or so-called insider agency alliances) are important entry points, negotiation sites and allies to not only represent women as a group along with women's movements as a collective actor at the state level, but also to initiate and follow through with procedural access along with state feminist approaches to gender-sensitive policy-making.[35]

Less research has been done to highlight the experiences of parliamentary commissions on women's affairs or national commissions on the status of women in the region of Asia, which might be key bridges and alliance-building institutions between women politicians, women's activists and other policy-making stakeholders. A review of women's commissions in South Asia conducted by Pakistani gender and development expert Saba Gul Khattak led to the following assessment: a proper functioning is constantly threatened by bureaucratisation, precarious mandates, symbolic consultations and gender rhetoric, inadequate allocation of resources and lack of policy-influencing. Transformative powers / mandates for such commissions are therefore crucial. International experiences seem to indicate, says Khattak, that such commissions are more often than not crushed within the wheels of a patriarchal state machinery and system, circumventing attempts to transform dominant traditional practices and values in the field of religion and culture. In addition, the membership is also important for the commission's work performance as is the question of the selection mechanism, status position assigned, remuneration as well as power devolution model assigned. Experiences shared from representatives from the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with the first provincial commission on the status of women set up post-2008, highlight that preference was given to female district members and that female provincial assembly members were involved. However, difficulties in enacting laws were again due to the lack of technical infrastructure, eligibility criteria for members and how they were selected, i.e., the need to avoid political influences, and to ensure mixed membership from politics as well as civil society, beyond government-driven nominations. Thus, a critical distance from government departments and a rootedness in civil society

[35] Dorothy E. McBride and Amy Mazur (2012): *The Politics of State Feminism*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press; Judith Squires, (2007): *The New Politics of Gender Equality*, Houndmills: Palgrave McMillan.

were considered important by gender expert Simi Kamal (formerly of Aurat Foundation, a leading country-wide women's organisation, and now with Pakistan's Poverty Alleviation Fund). In the exemplary case of Pakistan, not only are internal factors to blame, but also the project-based approach of UN or other bilateral donor agencies, resulting in project-drivenness and funding issues instead of ensuring an adequate government endowment and a subsequent autonomous space and mandate for such commissions to operate efficiently and effectively. Given the multi-level realities of policy-making in many decentralised and/or federal political systems, former leading woman MP (2008-2018) and senior party leader of the Pakistan People's Party Nafisa Shah argues that linkages between the local, provincial, national and international levels become all the more important. "We are not able to consolidate gains", she criticises, as reporting on gender policies and women's rights issues under the CEDAW umbrella requires a coherent, streamlined planning process, a focal ministry at the federal level, parliamentary caucusing, and a national framework.[36]

Challenges of Quota Mandates and Status Ascriptions

In my research conducted in Afghanistan and Pakistan, reports of gender quota politicians being challenged over the perceived *quality* or *status* of their mandate surfaced repeatedly over the past decade, but this might be more common across various Asian countries as informal discussions with colleagues and legislators suggest.[37]

Depending on the provisions of gender quotas, women either have to compete directly in an election (Afghanistan) or are selected by a male peer college (Pakistan) for reserved seats, depending on the electoral outcome

[36] National Commission on the Status of Women, National Consultation on Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment Post-Devolution, Islamabad, 14-15 December 2011 (notes taken by the author during presentation and discussion rounds).

[37] Notes taken during proceedings and informal conversations by the author at the AWPC conference, Singapore, 15-17 October 2014; see for detailed case studies on Afghanistan and Pakistan: Andrea Fleschenberg and Farzana Bari, (2015): *"Unmaking Political Patriarchy Through Gender Quotas?"*, Islamabad/Kabul: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, accessible online: https://pk.boell.org/sites/default/files/unmaking_political_patriarchy_through_gender_quotas.pdf (as of 3 August 2020); Andrea Fleschenberg, (2016): *"It's not Charity, it is a Chair of Power" – Moving Beyond Symbolic Representation in Afghanistan's Transition Politics?*, Kabul: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung (as of 3 August 2020).

of a particular political party or parliamentary group. At the same time, the vote threshold might differ between directly contested seats and reserved seats, not to mention indirectly selected reserved seats. Some gender quota legislators subsequently faced comments and challenges from male colleagues over the status of their mandate, given that they might have needed less votes or no electoral competition at the constituency level to become a parliamentarian. Depending on the electoral design, the lack of a specific constituency base or an allegedly weaker one given the number of votes tallied might impact on a woman parliamentarian's standing with male peers.

Furthermore, having no direct constituency-based vote might impact on the necessary resources – be they financial, economic or social in nature – a parliamentarian can rely on in her/his parliamentary work. Asymmetries in access to resources and in the perceived status of the mandate might lead to a higher dependency on male support systems, such as male-dominated political parties, or in terms of political positions assigned, thus moving from allegations of window-dressing, symbolic presence and gender rhetoric to substantive representation. A constituency base is not only key for re-election, but also for a woman parliamentarian to move away from temporary quota provisions to sustainable political competition in electoral politics. Therefore, constant grassroots engagement and available feedback loops from constituents one claims and attempts to represent are crucial for a sustainable and successful parliamentary career and for gathering political experience and standing in terms of social capital.

Asymmetries in status ascriptions can also originate from the perceived nature of politics as something filthy, violent, corrupt and clientelistic, and as something detrimental and in contradiction with dominant gender roles ascriptions. Therefore, women engaging in politics might (i) lack, at least at the initial stage, role models along with the support of their families and communities; (ii) be further compartmentalised into what are considered *safe* institutions and arenas of politics, which have a different status in the wider political system but do not threaten to tarnish their reputations required to be a votable candidate; or (iii) face an uphill battle to not only learn, adjust and/or change the rules of the political game but

also the perceptions thereof in order to be able to compete and be considered capable and of *appropriate* reputation for the leadership job.[38]

Multi-Level Contestations: Gender Mainstreaming Interventions and Counter-Movements

Such asymmetries in status ascriptions and agency (perceived or actual) can also lead to women parliamentarians being hijacked or exploited by other political actors. In countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan, but not exclusively there, where gender policies crystallise wider socio-political contestations, ideological discourses and power bargaining, this hijacking or exploitation can occur on multiple levels of the polity.

In South Asian countries, in particular Bangladesh as well as Afghanistan, gender quota systems, part of a wider gender mainstreaming agenda, have been understood by male and conservative stakeholders as a ceiling rather than as a floor for women's political participation. Having said that, women politicians – be they in formal political institutions or operating within civil society – are also characterised by heterogeneity and ideological differences, which might lead to (i) political contestations over gender policy approaches, agenda-setting contents and strategies, along with (ii) a subsequent lack of dialogue as well as concerted action, such as caucusing, to bridge such divides among women politicians and activists, who are not representing a homogenous social group, but rather a socio-culturally, economically and politically clustered group of citizens.

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[38] See Andrea Fleschenberg and Farzana Bari, (2015): *"Unmaking Political Patriarchy Through Gender Quotas?"*, Islamabad/Kabul: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, accessible online: https://pk.boell.org/sites/default/files/unmaking_political_patriarchy_through_gender_quotas.pdf (as of 3 August 2020) and Andrea Fleschenberg, (2016): *"It's not Charity, it is a Chair of Power" – Moving Beyond Symbolic Representation in Afghanistan's Transition Politics?*, Kabul: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung (as of 3 August 2020). on evidence from Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as further evidence drawn from comparative chapters on cases across Asia in guest-edited special journal issues as well as edited volume: Andrea Fleschenberg and Claudia Derichs (eds.), (2013): "Gender und politische Partizipation in Asien [Gender and Political Participation in Asia]", in: *Femina Politica* 22 (2), pp. 9-16; Andrea Fleschenberg and Claudia Derichs (2011): "Women and Politics in Asia: A Springboard for Democracy? A Tentative Introduction & Reflection", in: Andrea Fleschenberg and Claudia Derichs (eds.), (2011), *Women and Politics in Asia. A Springboard for Democracy?*, Zuerich/Muenster: LITVerlag, pp. 1-17; and Fleschenberg, Andrea, Derichs, Claudia, and Ng, Cecilia (2010): "Introduction", in: *Women in National Politics in Asia: A Springboard for Gender Democracy?*, in: *Gender, Technology and Development* 14 (3), pp. 303-312.

Assuming women's a priori solidarity and gender difference of experiences, needs and political interests amounts to problematic essentialism, extensively discussed in the literature at hand. Molyneux highlighted already decades ago that we need to be cautious about assuming women's interests and agendas, and that we have to differentiate between strategic women's interests (read: feminist/transformative) and practical ones (read: ranging from various ideological standpoints on gender to intersectional fragmentation).[39]

This is further replicated in many heterogeneous, if not fragmented, civil societies and women's movements across Asia, with conservative fringes related to gender equity concerns, and problematised by often under-resourced and marginalised women's policy machineries, which thus need to carefully strategise in their lobbying and advocacy work as well as policy counselling. This then might lead to further contestation with civil society and its representatives, whether they are women's activists or not. Razavi and Jennichen[40] point towards a "rising political prominence of religious actors and movements", be they at the local, national or transnational level with specific gendered prescriptions and societal positioning for women, using more often than not the informal power of religion in terms of diffusing ideas and norms, thus shaping the political arena and predominant societal culture in a way which is difficult to counter-argue and counter-act. One example is provided by seasoned Afghan woman politician Shukria Barakzai on the attempt to codify the Elimination of Violence Act beyond a temporary presidential decree, linking it with the issue of religion and its interpretation, when she stresses that, in her experience, the more one tries to ally with the religious clergy for gender-specific policy issues, the less one achieves it.[41]

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[39] Susan Francheschet, (2011): "Conceptualizing the Study of Women in Public Office", unpublished conference, European Consortium on Politics and Gender, Budapest.

[40] Shahra Razavi and Anne Jenichen, (2010): "The Unhappy Marriage of Religion and Politics: Problems and Pitfalls for Gender Equality", in: *Third World Quarterly* 31 (6), pp. 833-850.

[41] Notes taken during proceedings and informal conversations by the author at the AWPC conference, Singapore, 15-17 October 2014; see also Andrea Fleschenberg, (2016): *"It's not Charity, it is a Chair of Power" – Moving Beyond Symbolic Representation in Afghanistan's Transition Politics?*, Kabul: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung (as of 3 August 2020).

The impact of unwritten constitutions – be they of a religious nature or not – on norms, discourses and practices of politics cannot be highlighted enough although research findings are scarce. Overall, the impact of informal institutions, such as, but not limited to, religiously gendered rules on mobility or dress code, on the arenas of formal politics, its key institutions and civil society are diverse and create a difficult field for women parliamentarians to navigate in:

> A crucial part of achieving gender equitable institutional change (understood here as any institutional change that contributes to lessening gender inequalities) is, therefore, to improve our understanding of not only the outputs of institutions but also the institutions themselves in both their formal and informal guises. This will, for example, help gender scholars to understand why the outcomes of institutional change, such as the creation of women's policy agencies (WPAs) and the implementation of gender mainstreaming, are often not as hoped for, or how change efforts are subverted.[42]

Subsequently, we can find women also on the move in counter-movements; women from religio-political groups and parties re-appropriating and redefining gender vocabulary and gender mainstreaming interventions for a different societal project, which is not marked by gender equity in the feminist sense but rather highlight gender differences and women's patriarchal subordination, regardless of whether it is working for safeguarding women's rights and capabilities within a larger gender conservative reference framework[43]. Examples in point are female members of conservative political parties championing the abolishment of gender quotas and/or women's domestication, as well as the recent cases of young women joining militant fighters in Syria, which drew worldwide media attention and sensationalised hype given their small numbers.

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[42] Georgina Waylen, (2013): "Informal Institutions, Institutional Change, and Gender Equality", in: *Political Research Quarterly* 20 (10), pp. 1-12.

[43] Amina Jamal, (2012): "Feminism and Fundamentalism in Pakistan", in: Tahir, Mediha R., Memon, Qalandar Bux, and Prashad Vijay (eds.), *Dispatches from Pakistan*, New Delhi: LeftWord Books, pp. 141-160; Afiya Shehrbano Zia, (2009): "The Reinvention of Feminism in Pakistan", in: *Feminist Review* 2009 (21), pp. 29-46.

Instead of Conclusions: To Do List II - Carving Opportunities for Women's Political Mainstreaming

Here I would like to remind readers again of Goetz and Hassim[44] and their seminal writing on women's political effectiveness, which they regard as being dependent on women politicians' and their allies' ability to build a "chain of responsibility and exchange", i.e., the (i) ability to speak out on policy issues and the ability to follow them through, (ii) gender equity lobby in civil society, (iii) credibility of women politicians and policies in political competition and electoral politics, (iv) coalition- and alliance-building across arenas, tiers and levels of the political system, along with (v) the capacity of the state / political system to respond to new policy issues, to accommodate a new set of actors and to implement women policies.

Many Asian parliamentarians agree that, ultimately, power relations and political cultures – thus societal and political patriarchal values, practices and discourses – have to change, and have to be transformed, apart from women using various empowerment, alliance-building and networking strategies across major sociopolitical cleavages.[45] Similarly, research findings, for example that authored by Karam and Lovenduski[46] and presented as part of a comprehensive IDEA effort on strengthening women's political, in particular parliamentary, participation, highlight the importance of networking as a crucial socialisation mechanism in terms of knowledge, for deliberating on experiences, expertise and concerns, and to enhance their own political effectiveness within their political groups and political parties as well as within the specific political arenas and institutional settings they are operating in. Both authors stress the significance of cross-party alliances for legislation and policy-making – a necessary ingredient for strengthened standing in electoral politics /

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[44] Anne-Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim, (2003): *No Shortcuts to Power. African Women in Politics and Policy Making,* London/New York: Zed Books.

[45] Notes taken during proceedings and informal conversations by the author at the AWPC conference, Singapore, 15-17 October 2014.

[46] Azza Karam and Joni Lovenduski, (2005): "Women in Parliament: Making a Difference", in: Ballington, Julie and Karam, Azza (eds.), *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, revised edition, Stockholm: IDEA, pp. 187-213.

political competition.[47] The case of the Pakistani Alliance Against Sexual Harassment (AASHA) legislation is a key example of how a network governance approach, linking parliamentarians, civil society representatives, entrepreneurs, bureaucrats and government representatives, can provide an effective platform and working mechanism for sociopolitical and legislative change. One key experience of AASHA is also the importance of framing, i.e., the need to flexibly address different policy stakeholders and audiences through adequate reference frameworks so as to be able to follow through with policy/legislative changes and also ensure proper implementation across society and polity.[48]

In the IDEA handbook *Women in Parliaments*, edited by Julie Ballington and Azza Karam,[49] key guidelines are presented for women parliamentarians' effectiveness that merit being mentioned here, distinguishing between *institutional/procedural representation* and *influence on output and discourse* and three different steps – *learning the rules, using the rules* and *changing the rules*. In those guidelines, the following measures are highlighted, to paraphrase key ideas and points:

- *training* and capacity-building on becoming effective voices, communication, lobbying and parliamentary procedures, networking, mentoring and media competence;
- *caucusing* in the sense of network governance across institutions, arenas and different types of stakeholders;
- *ensuring visibility* in key political institutions, such as committees, and in key political discourses, with a clear understanding of different framings of what women's or gender issues are;
- *establish supportive institutional structures and critical mass,* such as women's machineries, supportive policy networks across political and gender divides, and nomination campaigns for women's

[47] Ibid.

[48] Sadaf Ahmed, (2012): "AASHA's approach to instituting sexual harassment legislation in Pakistan", in: Roy, Srila (ed.), *New South Asian Feminisms. Paradoxes and Possibilities,* London/New York: Zed Books, pp. 44-65.

[49] Julie Ballington and Azza Karam (eds.), (2005): *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, revised edition, Stockholm: IDEA.

nomination to leadership positions and presence in key political institutions;

- *be proactive in framing* issues by linking them to non-gendered debates and alliances, using the public space to raise concerns and get on the parliamentary agenda – be it in debates or through the use of consultation and inquiry mechanisms;
- *change the rules of the game and of power configurations* – be it how candidates get selected, how parliamentary procedures and communication flows operate, how policy measures and legislative drafts are reviewed (or not) in terms of their compatibility with and accountability to gender mainstreaming concerns as well as how women parliamentarians and women activists in multiple political arenas, including civil society, organise and cooperate among themselves.[50]

In our own action research project *Reviewing Gender Quotas in Afghanistan and Pakistan*, leading women's activist and gender studies specialist Farzana Bari and myself have argued that there are context-specific as well as more general volatilities and vulnerabilities encountered by gender quota politicians. While we highlight that gender quotas do work, their impact and scope can be enhanced by addressing the disconnect between women's descriptive representation, and promoting and safeguarding women's citizenship rights, issues and interests through:

- *reviewing the rules of the game* as quota modalities, and thus electoral systems, matter to allow for women's sustainable political mainstreaming;
- *accompanying quota provisions within parliament with an increase in leadership positions in other areas and sectors of public affairs*, be it within government or parliamentary commissions/committees, the judiciary, ministerial bureaucracy or political parties;

[50] Azza Karam, and Joni Lovenduski, (2005): "Women in Parliament: Making a Difference", in: Ballington, Julie and Karam, Azza (eds.), *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, revised edition, Stockholm: IDEA, pp. 187-213.

- *tackling the elite capture of parliamentary politics and thus cater for intersectional concerns*, i.e., more socio-economic diversity among gender quota politicians, in particular, in terms of class and rural-urban divide, among others;
- enhancing women's political effectiveness with other support mechanisms and institutional setups – including a greater linkage with supportive social movements and civil society organisations *to develop a conducive environment and opportunity structure*;
- *shifting the focus* from individual woman politician's agency and performance towards structural and institutional constraints;
- moving beyond difference and competition within political parties/alliances/networks and state institutions via s*trategic essentialism as one key step forward.*[51]

The transformation of androcentric, undemocratic and often dynastic political parties, and gender biases in terms of values, discourses and practices in key state institutions, like the parliament or the ministerial bureaucracy, can only come through collective voice and the agency power of marginalised communities (as diverse as they may be). Gender quota politicians could lead the way by cracking, and ultimately unmaking, patriarchal political institutional structures to deliver on women's substantive representation and political mainstreaming with diffusion effects for women's empowerment across society, we argue.[52]

Having said that and in light of rising misogynist right-wing populisms as well as reemerging conservative authoritarianisms (not just in Asia, but worldwide), there is a caveat: gender quotas should not be taken for granted or treated as an inalienable right in the struggle for women's political mainstreaming and against political patriarchy.

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[51] Andrea Fleschenberg and Farzana Bari, (2015): *"Unmaking Political Patriarchy Through Gender Quotas?"*, Islamabad/Kabul: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, accessible online: https://pk.boell.org/sites/default/files/unmaking_political_patriarchy_through_gender_quotas.pdf (as of 3 August 2020).

[52] Ibid. See also Andrea Fleschenberg, with Khurshid Nighat, Jeannette Higiro and Denice Heiselbetz, (2016): "*Unseating Political Patriarchy. A Toolkit for Debate and Action"*, Islamabad: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, accessible online: https://pk.boell.org/sites/default/files/toolkit_20122016_updated-final_version.pdf (as of 3 August 2020).

> Quota for me personally, I always felt uncomfortable with the concept of quota, because they are being like a charity of right to me, just because I am a woman. My hard work, my efforts and, maybe, if I was lucky to build up some kind of skills was undermined. (...) For me, it was like mercy. For him, it was like he deserved it. He was qualified. (...) It is not charity, it is a chair of power and when you are there, you have to get tough with all the vulnerability you face.[53]

It is important to move beyond a reliance on gender quotas, as essential and indispensable as they are right now, and engage (i) in constituency-building to transform the political malestream into a gender-inclusive political mainstream, (ii) with gatekeepers and institutional constraints (thus deeper structures of gender inequality and their intersectional ramifications); apart from (iii) demonstrating and communicating (political) performance, thus the transversality of one's mandate and political credibility-cum-leverage. It is about moving from the margin to centre, it is about reconceptualising power, as argued by bell hooks[54]:

> Before women can work to reconstruct society, we must reject the notion that obtaining power in the existing social structure will necessarily advance feminist struggle to end sexist oppression. It may allow numbers of women to gain greater material privilege, control over their destiny and the destiny of others, all of which are important goals. It will not end male domination as a system. The suggestion that women must obtain power before they can effectively resist sexism is rooted in the false assumption that women have no power. Women, even the most oppressed among us, do exercise some power. (...) Failure to exercise the power of disbelief made it difficult for women to reject prevailing notions of power and envision new perspectives.

Asian women politicians have come a long way in the past decades in terms of descriptive and substantive representation across the region. Having said that, there is a continuous need for further strategising on what obstacles we are actually looking at to change the overall power of political patriarchy, to increase women's political effectiveness and

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[53] Interview with Farkhunda Zahra Naderi, Kabul, April 2015 as quoted in: Andrea Fleschenberg, (2016): *"It's not Charity, it is a Chair of Power" – Moving Beyond Symbolic Representation in Afghanistan's Transition Politics?*, Kabul: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung (as of 3 August 2020).

[54] bell hooks, (2000): *Feminist Theory. From Margin to Center*, 2nd edition, Cambridge, MA: South End Press, pp 92-93.

to carve out opportunities for substantive representation from diverse Asian women politicians, moving beyond elite politics and the challenges of counter-movements and their misogynist discourses. Caucusing across political, socioeconomic and national divides is a crucial step and might become a watershed event in the history of Asian women's political participation and performance. In addition, context-sensitive approaches and a certain degree of *strategic essentialism* (in the sense of Spivak), tailored and responsive to local geographies of political patriarchies, are key, too.

Women in Politics

Ella S. Prihatini

Women's participation in politics has increased significantly in the past 25 years. Some key indications of this progress include the overall percentage of women in parliaments and the number of women being elected or appointed as heads of state and government. A recent Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) report[1] has observed that globally the percentage of seats held by women in lower and single houses of parliament increased from 11.6 percent in 1995 to 24.9 percent in 2020. Similarly, the share of women as speakers of parliament has nearly doubled from 10.5 to 20.5 percent in the last couple of decades. Likewise, more and more female presidents and prime ministers have entered office. Between 1960 and 2017, 114 different women have governed 74 countries.[2] And almost 40 percent of countries where women have come to power have experienced the rise of two different female leaders (i.e., Finland, Bangladesh, and New Zealand).

However, it is worth noting that the advancement of women's participation in the political decision-making process is not growing at the same pace for all countries. Some regions continue to have lower or single parliamentary chambers with less than 5 percent women: three in the Pacific, three in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and one each in the Americas, Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. The growth of women's parliamentary representation in Asia, for example, is the slowest compared

[1] IPU. 2020. "Women in Parliament: 1995–2020 – 25 Years in Review." Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2020. https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2020-03/women-in-parliament-1995-2020-25-years-in-review.

[2] Amy C. Alexander and Farida Jalalzai. 2020. "Symbolic Empowerment and Female Heads of States and Government: A Global, Multilevel Analysis." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 8 (1): 24-43. https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2018.1441034.

to any other region in the world,[3] from 13.2% in 1995 to 20% in 2020. Meanwhile, Asia's share of global GDP has soared within the last 50 years, from 12% of global GDP in the 1960s to 31% in 2015. Gender inequality in political institutions also differs significantly among Asian countries.

In 1995, European countries dominated the top-10 list of lower and single houses of parliament with the highest women's participation. But in 2020, the chart is a more diverse list with five countries in the Americas, two in sub-Saharan Africa, and one in the MENA region.[4] Furthermore, women have yet to crack the executive ceiling, as 61 percent of countries throughout the world have never elected or appointed a female as president or prime minister. These countries include the most high-profile nations, such as Japan, the United States, and Russia.

The lack of women's participation in politics has multiple consequences. Haque[5] suggests that the underrepresentation of women increases the risk of causing a legitimacy crisis for the government. It is also seen as wastage of women's potential given the better education attainment among women nowadays. Others argue from a substantive representation perspective that female politicians bring forth improvement in the standards of parliamentary behaviour and responsiveness to women in the community.[6] Consequently, this representation of interest is a pivotal aspect in every attempt to improve the quality of democracy.

This book provides an excellent update as to how women's status in politics has been improving since the 1990s. Each chapter discusses the challenges and opportunities to equal representation based on regional trends, ranging from Asia to Europe. And while there is no "silver bullet" as

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[3] Ella Prihatini. 2019. "Women's Representation in Asian Parliaments: A QCA Approach." *Contemporary Politics* 25 (2): 213-35. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2018.1520057.

[4] IPU. 2020. "Women in Parliament: 1995–2020 – 25 Years in Review." Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2020. https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2020-03/women-in-parliament-1995-2020-25-years-in-review.

[5] M. Shamsul Haque. 2003. "Citizen Participation in Governance through Representation: Issue of Gender in East Asia." *International Journal of Public Administration* 26 (5): 569-90. https://doi.org/10.1081/PAD-120019236.

[6] Marian Sawer. 2000. "Parliamentary Representation of Women: From Discourses of Justice to Strategies of Accountability." *International Political Science Review* 21 (4): 361-80; Ana Catalano. 2009. "Women Acting for Women? An Analysis of Gender and Debate Participation in the British House of Commons 2005–2007." *Politics & Gender* 5 (1): 45-68. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X09000038.

a strategy to end gender disparity in politics, readers of political representation could still gain important takeaways from these observations. The introductory chapter aims to unpack the role of women in politics and the opportunities of female leadership. It argues that women's leadership in politics is positively affecting society, especially after women leaders have been seen to be more successful than their male counterparts at mitigating the current COVID-19 crisis.[7]

While most scholars agree that the introduction of gender quotas in politics has increased women's representation worldwide,[8] the results of this institutional approach are not guaranteed. Furthermore, elected female MPs are also often under double scrutiny for their political dynastic background,[9] as their participation in politics is merely seen as an extension of male politicians' interests.[10] Thus, the last section in this chapter will elaborate on some potential strategies to improve women's influence in the decision-making processes that will ensure policies become more responsive to women's interests and concerns.

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[7] Luca Coscieme, Lorenzo Fioramonti, Lars F. Mortensen, Kate E. Pickett, Ida Kubiszewski, Hunter Lovins, Jacqueline McGlade, et al. 2020. "Women in Power: Female Leadership and Public Health Outcomes during the COVID-19 Pandemic." *medRxiv*, 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.07.13.20152397; Kayla Sergent and Alexander D. Stajkovic. 2020. "Women's Leadership Is Associated with Fewer Deaths during the COVID-19 Crisis: Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses of United States Governors." *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, July 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000577.

[8] Susan Franceschet, Mona Lena Krook, and Jennifer M. Piscopo, eds. 2012. *The Impact of Gender Quotas*. New York, US: Oxford University Press; Ella Prihatini. 2019. "Islam, Parties, and Women's Political Nomination in Indonesia." *Politics & Gender*, 1-23. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X19000321.

[9] Amrita Basu. 2016. "Women, Dynasties, and Democracy in India." In *Democratic Dynasties: State, Party and Family in Contemporary Indian Politics*, edited by Khanchan Chandra, 136-72. New York: Cambridge University Press.

[10] Kanchan Chandra. 2016. *Democratic Dynasties*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chandra's book on Indian political dynasties argues that the causes of dynastic politics lie in the structure of India's contemporary institutions – the state and political parties. The large returns associated with state office ensure that the families of politicians will want to enter politics. The organisational weakness of political parties ensures that they are likely to get tickets (party nominations) when they do. Nevertheless, it is important to note that dynasty politics is not unique to democratising countries or less developed economies; instead, as Hess argues: "The Constitution states that 'no title of nobility shall be granted by the United States,' yet it seems political nobility is as American as apple pie". Stephen Hess. 2016. *America's Political Dynasties: From Adams to Clinton*. Washington DC, US: Brookings Institution Press.

Women's Role in Politics and Policy Making

During most of the nineteenth century, the right to vote was confined to adult men who owned property, earned some minimum level of income, or paid some amount of taxes. Women's access to politics and policy making were very limited as they were unable to cast their vote or to get nominated for elective office. It was not until Liberia in 1839 and Greece in 1844, that the right to vote for all adult males was granted.[11] The legal right to participate in politics and policy making on an equal basis with men is the first step in achieving equal representation. Based on this principle, women across the globe were pursuing their legal right to vote and to stand in elections. This right is also known as women's universal suffrage.

Feminist scholar Marian Sawer argues that representation matters.[12] Yet, women's political representation has multiple meanings that often drive ambiguity, indicating that the presence of women will also serve the goal of representation of women as a collective group. She elaborates that the term *political representation* can refer to at least three different meanings: (1) representation of interests, ideas or values, perspective, and experiences, (2) representativeness, which includes effects on aspirations and on the status of a group, and (3) equal right to represent, to participate in decision-making, and to increase the pool of talent. The right of women to participate in public life on an equal basis with men is regulated in Article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This right does not oblige women to make a difference to public life, it is simply allowing women to be part of the political process.

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[11] Adam Przeworski. 2009. "Conquered or Granted? A History of Suffrage Extensions." *British Journal of Political Science* 39 (2): 291-321. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123408000434.

[12] Marian Sawer. 2000. "Parliamentary Representation of Women: From Discourses of Justice to Strategies of Accountability." *International Political Science Review* 21 (4): 361-80.

Extensive research asserts that women's participation in politics has increased dramatically over the past 100 years,[13] following the success of the suffrage movements that took place in various countries around the world. The movements resulted in New Zealand, in 1893, becoming the first self-governing country to grant the vote to all adult women, followed by Australia in 1901, Finland in 1907 and Norway in 1913.[14] In 1907, Finland became the first country to elect a female member of parliament.

In 1950, only half of the countries in the world had granted women universal suffrage. However, as of today, parliaments are moving in the direction of gender parity, with women holding 50 percent or more seats in four countries: Rwanda, Cuba, Bolivia, and UAE.[15] Studies demonstrate that in the 1990s, women successfully politicised their absence from parliament and challenged the legitimacy of men's domination in the decision-making processes.[16] The strategies to increase women's presence in parliaments, such as electoral gender quotas, were adopted as part of the implementation of the United Nations Beijing Platform for Action in 1995.

Women's role as speakers of parliament has also reached a record high with an average of 20.5%.[17] Since 2015, all parliaments in four regions have

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[13] Melanie M. Hughes and Pamela Paxton. 2008. "Continuous Change, Episodes, and Critical Periods: A Framework for Understanding Women's Political Representation over Time." *Politics & Gender* 4 (2): 233-64. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X08000329; Pamela Paxton, Melanie M. Hughes, and Matthew A. Painter. 2010. "Growth in Women's Political Representation: A Longitudinal Exploration of Democracy, Electoral System and Gender Quotas." *European Journal of Political Research* 49 (1): 25-52. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2009.01886.x.

[14] Adam Przeworski. 2009. "Conquered or Granted? A History of Suffrage Extensions." *British Journal of Political Science* 39 (2): 291-321. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123408000434.

[15] IPU. 2020. "Women in Parliament: 1995–2020 – 25 Years in Review." Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2020. https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2020-03/women-in-parliament-1995-2020-25-years-in-review.

[16] Sarah Childs. 2013. "In the Absence of Electoral Sex Quotas: Regulating Political Parties for Women's Representation." *Representations* 49 (4): 401-23. https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2013.850320; Sharyn G. Davies. 2005. "Women in Politics in Indonesia in the Decade Post-Beijing." *International Social Science Journal* 57 (184): 231-42. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2451.2005.00547.x; Mona Lena Krook. 2006. "Gender Quotas, Norms, and Politics." *Politics & Gender* 2 (1): 110-18. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X06061010; Mona Lena Krook. 2009. *Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide*. New York: Oxford University Press.

[17] IPU. 2020. "Women in Parliament: 1995–2020 – 25 Years in Review." Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2020. https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2020-03/women-in-parliament-1995-2020-25-years-in-review.

appointed their first woman speaker, and Asia tops the list with five representatives: Nepal, Viet Nam, Philippines, Indonesia and Kazakhstan. The only region that has yet to have a female speaker is the Pacific. This condition reflects the fact that the Pacific is the only region with zero female MPs in some countries, such as Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea (PNG). Women's political role in parliament is also measured by leadership at the committee level. IPU also reports that the gender gap remains an issue, with women chairing 73% of gender equality committees and only 10% of defence committees. In line with the global trend, a study on Indonesia suggests that women continue to occupy feminine and less prestigious committees regardless of party ideology.[18]

Moreover, women's share in the executive branch has improved since 1960, when Sirimavo Bandaranaike first cracked through the glass ceiling in Sri Lanka.[19] Alexander and Jalalzai's study[20] shows that up until February 2017, 114 women have served as executives in 74 countries: 49 presidents and 65 prime ministers. As many as 26 of the 114 women served in the capacities of "Acting" or "Provisional" leaders. This makes only 88 women non-interim: 36 presidents and 52 prime ministers. As of 1 January 2020, women comprise 6.6% of elected heads of state (10 out of 152) and 6.2% of heads of government (12 out of 193) – the head of state and government is the same in two countries: Bolivia and Switzerland.[21] However, it is important to highlight that more than half of female top executives are in Europe, with nearly all governments in the Nordic countries being headed by a woman, except Sweden. This condition indicates how difficult it is

[18] Ella Prihatini. 2019. "Explaining Gender Gaps in Indonesian Legislative Committees." *Parliamentary Affairs*, December 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsz047.

[19] Farida Jalalzai. 2018. "Women Heads of State and Government." In *Measuring Women's Political Empowerment across the Globe: Strategies, Challenges and Future Research*, edited by Amy C. Alexander, Catherine Bolzendahl, and Farida Jalalzai, 257-82. Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

[20] Amy C. Alexander and Farida Jalalzai. 2020. "Symbolic Empowerment and Female Heads of States and Government: A Global, Multilevel Analysis." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 8 (1): 24-43. https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2018.1441034.

[21] IPU. 2020. "In 2020, World 'cannot Afford' so Few Women in Power." Inter-Parliamentary Union. March 10, 2020.

for women to climb the political ladder and to crack the executive glass ceiling.[22]

Also, from the executive branch is women's share in cabinet ministerial positions. Overall, the proportion of women ministers is at an all-time high at 21.3 per cent (851 out of 4,003), or 7.1% higher than in 2005.[23] However, men continue to dominate high prestige and masculine portfolios[24] whilst ministerial recruitment is often determined by informal rules.[25] A prime example for this is: there are only 25 female finance/budget ministers and 22 female defence ministers. On the other hand, women tend to oversee family and social affairs, environment and energy portfolios – in what some refer to as "pink" portfolios.[26]

Effects of Women's Political Leadership

In her seminal book, Anne Phillips[27] introduces the politics of presence theory, which suggests that female politicians are best equipped to represent

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[22] Farida Jalalzai. 2016. "Shattered Not Cracked: The Effect of Women's Executive Leadership." *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 37 (4): 439-63. https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2016.1192430; Andrew Reynolds. 1999. "Women in the Legislatures and Executives of the World: Knocking at the Highest Glass Ceiling." *World Politics* 51 (4): 547-72. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887100009254; Tania Verge and Javier Astudillo. 2019. "The Gender Politics of Executive Candidate Selection and Reselection." *European Journal of Political Research* 58: 720-40. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12312.

[23] IPU. 2020. "In 2020, World 'cannot Afford' so Few Women in Power." Inter-Parliamentary Union. March 10, 2020.

[24] Silvia S. Claveria. 2014. "Still a 'Male Business'? Explaining Women's Presence in Executive Office." *West European Politics* 37 (5): 1156-76. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2014.9114 79; S. Jacob, J. A. Scherpereel, and M. Adams. 2014. "Gender Norms and Women's Political Representation: A Global Analysis of Cabinets, 1979–2009." *Governance* 27 (2): 321-45. https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12044; Mona Lena Krook, and Diana Z. O'Brien. 2012. "All the President's Men? The Appointment of Female Cabinet Ministers Worldwide." *The Journal of Politics* 74 (3): 840-55.

[25] Claire Annesley. 2015. "Rules of Ministerial Recruitment." *Politics & Gender* 11 (4): 618-42. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X15000434.

[26] Kendall D. Funk, Magda Hinojosa, and Jennifer M. Piscopo. 2017. "Still Left Behind: Gender, Political Parties, and Latin America's Pink Tide." *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 24 (4): 399-424. https://academic.oup.com/sp/article-abstract/24/4/399/4775165; M. Tremblay and D. Stockemer. 2013. "Women's Ministerial Careers in Cabinet, 1921–2010: A Look at Socio-demographic Traits and Career Experiences." *Canadian Public Administration* 56 (4): 523-41. https://doi.org/10.1111/capa.12038.

[27] Anne Phillips. 1995. *The Politics of Presence*. Oxford, US: Oxford University Press.

the interests of women; hence, descriptive representation will lead to substantive representation. Most studies argue that women in parliament do make a difference, although the safest position is to say that empirical support for this conclusion is rather "mixed".[28] Some scholars find that women are more likely to sponsor and vote for bills related to women's issues,[29] are more effective as legislators,[30] are more inclined to promote women's autonomy,[31] are more likely to mention the words "women" and "gender" during hearings than male MPs,[32] and display less interruption during debates or hearings.[33] Others suggest descriptive representation does not always lead to a rise in substantive representation. In their comparative study of legislative debates in seven European countries, Back and Debus

[28] Lena Wängnerud. 2009. "Women in Parliaments: Descriptive and Substantive Representation." *Annual Review of Political Science* 12(1) (1): 51-69. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.053106.123839.

[29] Eda Bektas and Esra Issever-Ekinci. 2019. "Who Represents Women in Turkey? An Analysis of Gender Difference in Private Bill Sponsorship in the 2011–15 Turkish Parliament." *Politics & Gender* 15 (4): 851-81. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X18000363; Michele L. Swers. 2016. "Pursuing Women's Interests in Partisan Times: Explaining Gender Differences in Legislative Activity on Health, Education, and Women's Health Issues." *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 37 (3): 249-73. https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2016.1188599.

[30] Craig Volden, Alan E. Wiseman, and Dana E. Wittmer. 2013. "When Are Women More Effective Lawmakers Than Men?" *American Journal of Political Science* 57 (2). https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12010.

[31] Sarah Childs, Paul Webb, and Sally Marthaler. 2010. "Constituting and Substantively Representing Women: Applying New Approaches to a UK Case Study." *Politics & Gender* 6 (2): 199-223. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X10000048; Joni Lovenduski and Pippa Norris. 2003. "Westminster Women: The Politics of Presence." *Political Studies* 51 (1): 84-102. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00414.

[32] Karen Bird. 2005. "Gendering Parliamentary Questions." *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 7 (3): 353-70. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2005.00196.x; Tali Mendelberg, Christopher F. Karpowitz, and Nicholas Goedert. 2014. "Does Descriptive Representation Facilitate Women's Distinctive Voice? How Gender Composition and Decision Rules Affect Deliberation." *American Journal of Political Science* 58 (2): 291-306. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12077.

[33] Ana Catalano. 2009. "Women Acting for Women? An Analysis of Gender and Debate Participation in the British House of Commons 2005–2007." *Politics & Gender* 5 (1): 45-68. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X09000038; Lotte Hargrave and Tone Langengen. 2020. "The Gendered Debate: Do Men and Women Communicate Differently in the House of Commons?" *Politics & Gender*, 1-27. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X20000100.

assert that women are more underrepresented in legislative debates when they represent parties with many female MPs.[34]

In terms of public policy, cross-national analyses have shown that more female lawmakers in parliaments are associated with higher welfare state spending,[35] lesser infant death and better measles vaccination status.[36] Swiss et al. also assert that an increase in women's parliamentary seats was followed by improved child health status, especially in developing countries.[37] Similarly, a study on 139 nations during 1995-2012 found that gender quotas are associated with large increased government expenditure toward public health.[38]

Public health policy outcomes became the central interest of the public with the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. As of 6 August 2020, there have been more than 18 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 702,642 deaths.[39] The pandemic has gendered impact, which makes women

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[34] Hanna Bäck and Marc Debus. "When do women speak? A comparative analysis of the role of gender in legislative debates." *Political Studies* 67, no. 3 (2019): 576-596.

[35] Catherine Bolzendahl. 2011. "Beyond the Big Picture: Gender Influences on Disaggregated and Domain-Specific Measures of Social Spending, 1980–1999." *Politics & Gender* 7 (1): 35-70. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X10000553; Park Soon Seok. 2017. "Gendered Representation and Critical Mass: Women's Legislative Representation and Social Spending in 22 OECD Countries." *Sociological Perspectives* 60 (6): 1097-1114; Frances Rosenbluth, Rob Salmond, and Michael F. Thies. 2006. "Welfare Works: Explaining Female Legislative Representation." *Politics & Gender* 2 (2): 165-92. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X06060065.

[36] Amm Quamruzzaman and Matthew Lange. 2016. "Female Political Representation and Child Health: Evidence from a Multilevel Analysis." *Social Science & Medicine* 171 (October): 48-57. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.10.025.

[37] Liam Swiss, Kathleen M. Fallon, and Giovani Burgos. 2012. "Does Critical Mass Matter?: Women's Political Representation and Child Health in Developing Countries." *Social Forces* 91 (2): 531-57. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/491192/summary.

[38] Amanda Clayton and Pär Zetterberg. 2018. "Quota Shocks: Electoral Gender Quotas and Government Spending Priorities Worldwide." *The Journal of Politics* 80 (3): 916-32. https://doi.org/10.1086/697251.

[39] World Health Organization. 2020. "Coronavirus." 2020. https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus.

experience double and often triple burden.[40] A report published by the United Nations suggests that women's lives are affected by the pandemic disproportionately and differently from men.[41] ILO reports that women globally comprise over 70% of workers in the health sector, including those working in care institutions.[42] In some countries, COVID-19 infections among female health workers are twice that of their male counterparts.[43] Women are confronting increases in domestic violence, care duties, unemployment, and poverty. The closure of schools, daycare, and other public facilities to control COVID-19 transmission in various countries might have a differential effect on women, who provide care within families, which will limit their work and economic opportunities. Experts further predict that the longer-term impact of the pandemic will not be equal for men and women; hence COVID-19 is throwing away decades of hard-won battles both in terms of gender equality and women's economic rights.[44]

Experience from past outbreaks suggest the importance of incorporating women in response teams and plans to improve the effectiveness of health interventions whilst promoting gender equity.[45] Despite these calls, women continue to have low representation in COVID-19 national response

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[40] Helen Jaqueline McLaren, Karen Rosalind Wong, Kieu Nga Nguyen, and Komalee Nadeeka Damayanthi Mahamadachchi. 2020. "Covid-19 and Women's Triple Burden: Vignettes from Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Vietnam and Australia." *Social Sciences* 9 (5): 87.

[41] United Nations. 2020. "Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women." United Nations. https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/policy_brief_on_covid_impact_on_women_9_apr_2020_updated.pdf.

[42] Emanuela Pozzan and Umberto Cattaneo. 2020. "Women Health Workers: Working Relentlessly in Hospitals and at Home." International Labour Organization. April 7, 2020. http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_741060/lang--en/index.htm.

[43] UN Women. 2020. "COVID-19: Emerging Gender Data and Why It Matters." UN Women. 2020. https://data.unwomen.org/resources/covid-19-emerging-gender-data-and-why-it-matters.

[44] Jenna Norman. 2020. "Gender and Covid-19: The Immediate Impact the Crisis Is Having on Women." *British Politics and Policy at LSE* (blog). London School of Economics and Political Science. April 23, 2020. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/gender-and-covid19/; Sofia Sprechmann. 2020. "COVID-19 Is the Biggest Setback to Gender Equality in a Decade." World Economic Forum. 2020. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/07/gender-equality-women-employment-covid19/.

[45] Sophie Harman. 2016. "Ebola, Gender and Conspicuously Invisible Women in Global Health Governance." *Third World Quarterly* 37 (3): 524-41. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1108827; Clare Wenham, Julia Smith, and Rosemary Morgan. 2020. "COVID-19: The Gendered Impacts of the Outbreak." *The Lancet* 395 (10227): 846-48. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30526-2.

teams.[46] One prime example of this absence of women's participation is the White House Coronavirus Task Force where women only comprise 8.7% of members. This percentage is staggeringly low compared to women's share in the healthcare sector (80%) and in healthcare leadership positions (11%).[47] As a result, women's interests and concerns are far from being met. A survey of 30 countries and their response plans suggests that only a quarter of countries had made funding or policy commitments for gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, or women-specific economic assistance. More than half (54%) of countries have taken no action on GBV, despite clear evidence of the impact of the crisis on these issues.

Despite the lack of representation, the media reports that a few female state leaders are managing this pandemic in their respective countries better than their male counterparts.[48] Women heads of government in Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, New Zealand, and Slovakia, for example, are being recognised for the strategic and rapid response they are leading that includes lockdown, widespread testing, and social distancing measures.

The empirical data further suggests that countries led by women had 1.6-times fewer deaths per capita and managed to "flatten the curve" more effectively and faster than male-led governments.[49] Female leaders are also recognised for their transparent and compassionate communication

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[46] CARE. 2020. "Where Are the Women? The Conspicuous Absence of Women in COVID-19 Response Teams and Plans, and Why We Need Them." https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/media/k2/attachments/CARE_COVID-19-womens-leadership-report_June-2020.pdf.

[47] Anushka Kalyanpur, Dannielle Thomas, Diana Wu, Laura Tashjian, May D. Sifuentes, and Rachel Hall. 2020. "Rapid Gender Analysis: COVID-19 in the United States." CARE. http://www.careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/7.8.2020-USA-RGA.pdf.

[48] Anne-Marie Croteau and Louise Champoux-Paillé. 2020. "Why Women Leaders Are Excelling during the Coronavirus Pandemic." *The Conversation*, May 13, 2020. http://theconversation.com/why-women-leaders-are-excelling-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic-138098; Jennifer Hassan and Siobhán O'Grady. 2020. "Female World Leaders Hailed as Voices of Reason amid the Coronavirus Chaos." *The Washington Post*, April 20, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/04/20/female-world-leaders-hailed-voices-reason-amid-coronavirus-chaos/.

[49] Luca Coscieme, Lorenzo Fioramonti, Lars F. Mortensen, Kate E. Pickett, Ida Kubiszewski, Hunter Lovins, Jacqueline McGlade, et al. 2020. "Women in Power: Female Leadership and Public Health Outcomes during the COVID-19 Pandemic." *medRxiv*, 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.07.13.20152397.

when disseminating their government's policies. This aspect of gender stereotype and political communication during the COVID-19 pandemic has been identified as an interesting development by Johnson and Williams.[50] They argue that the pandemic has opened up particular opportunities for female leaders' everyday feminine traits to be embraced and seen as a strength instead of a weakness. German Chancellor Angela Merkel nicknamed "Mutti" (mommy) and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, for example, had been portrayed metaphorically by the media as the maternal protector of their respective countries.

Scholars suggest that this perception benefits female leaders because the health nature of the crisis combined with the lockdown approach that brought people to stay at home – often considered as a feminine sphere. As leaders, women are more effective in advising their citizens on how to survive these challenging times and continue to run things from where people live. In particular, Ardern, Merkel, Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen and Sint Maarten Prime Minister Silveria Jacobs have been praised for their "effective messaging and decisive action", unlike "the bombastic approaches of several of the world's most prominent male leaders".[51] Their instructions about COVID-19 response policies, published in video or live Facebook chats, were clear and effective.

Women are also leading the way in response efforts at the sub-national government levels. Kayla Sergent and Alexander Stajkovic found that American states with women governors had fewer COVID-19 deaths than states with male governors.[52] Women governors who issued early stay-at-home orders had fewer COVID-19 deaths in their states compared to men governors who issued the same instructions. Meanwhile, their observation of psychological mechanisms linking women to leadership effectiveness, drawn on 251 briefings by 38 governors, suggests that women governors

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[50] Carol Johnson and Blair Williams. 2020. "Gender and Political Leadership in a Time of COVID." *Politics & Gender*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X2000029X.

[51] Jennifer Hassan and Siobhán O'Grady. 2020. "Female World Leaders Hailed as Voices of Reason amid the Coronavirus Chaos." *The Washington Post*, April 20, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/04/20/female-world-leaders-hailed-voices-reason-amid-coronavirus-chaos/.

[52] Kayla Sergent and Alexander D. Stajkovic. 2020. "Women's Leadership Is Associated with Fewer Deaths during the COVID-19 Crisis: Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses of United States Governors." *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, July 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000577.

expressed more empathy and confidence than men. Another study finds that US black women mayors displayed four key strategic approaches: proactive leadership, advocating transparent and evidence-based decision-making, protecting vulnerable communities, and sharing advice on best practices and lessons learned.[53]

Potential Strategies to Improve Women's Influence in Politics

Women's increased representation in politics, especially in parliament, in the last few decades has been made possible because of the implementation of electoral reforms, which include gender quota as a positive affirmative action.[54] Although the first electoral gender quotas were adopted in the 1930s, these approaches became increasingly trendy in the 1990s and 2000s.[55] Today, elections in 81 countries are held under legislation that provides for gender quotas. Krook's conceptual analysis on electoral gender quotas discusses some caveats in gauging the impacts of quotas.[56] She highlights the frequent mismatch (positive and negative) with the proportion mandated by the quota. Basically, different models of quota adoption result in different impacts; therefore, quota alone is not sufficient.

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[53] Kendall D. Funk. 2020. "Local Responses to a Global Pandemic: Women Mayors Lead the Way." *Politics & Gender*, 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X20000410.

[54] Drude Dahlerup and Lenita Freidenvall. 2005. "Quotas as a 'fast Track' to Equal Representation for Women: Why Scandinavia Is No Longer the Model." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 7 (1): 26-48. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461674042000324673.

[55] Drude Dahlerup, ed. 2006. *Women, Politics, and Quotas*. New York, US: Routledge; Mona Lena Krook. 2009. *Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide*. New York: Oxford University Press.

[56] Mona Lena Krook. 2014. "Electoral Gender Quotas: A Conceptual Analysis." *Comparative Political Studies* 47 (9): 1268–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414013495359.

Using original survey data from Uttar Pradesh, India's largest state, Iyer and Mani[57] documented that women lag behind men on supply-side[58] factors that may hinder their political participation: knowledge about political institutions and processes, self-perception as leaders, beliefs in the ability of citizens to affect government functioning and empowerment in terms of being able to influence household decisions or to be mobile outside the home. They assert that controlling these determinants reduces the gender gap in electoral political participation by 73% and in non-electoral political participation by 40%. Another study drawn on field and survey experiments in the US suggests that party leaders can help to improve the supply and demand side by taking simple steps to encourage local recruitment efforts and emphasise the importance of women's representation.[59]

The spread of COVID-19 and the crises that followed reiterate the importance of women's presence in politics, as female leaders have shown better leadership performance compared to their male counterparts. Hence, the investigation of potential strategies to improve women's access to politics and decision-making needs to be a higher priority in the post-COVID era. The United Nations urges all governments to recognise and remove barriers to women's political participation. All parties should acknowledge pre-existing inequalities and social norms that are discriminatory, and to consider measures to minimise these practices. One practical approach is to initiate flexible working arrangements and other

[57] Lakshmi Iyer and Anandi Mani. 2019. "The Road Not Taken: Gender Gaps along Paths to Political Power." *World Development* 119 (July): 68-80. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.03.004.

[58] Understanding why there are so few women in office requires thinking about both the supply of female candidates and demand for women on the ballot (Joni Lovenduski. 2016. "The Supply and Demand Model of Candidate Selection: Some Reflections." *Government and Opposition* 51 (3): 513-28. https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2016.7). While each of these likely influences women's representation, it is also possible that the combination of the two is especially powerful (Christopher F. Karpowitz, J. Quin Monson, and Jessica Robinson Preece. 2017. "How to Elect More Women: Gender and Candidate Success in a Field Experiment." *American Journal of Political Science* 61 (4): 927-43. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12300).

[59] Christopher F. Karpowitz, J. Quin Monson, and Jessica Robinson Preece. 2017. "How to Elect More Women: Gender and Candidate Success in a Field Experiment." *American Journal of Political Science* 61 (4): 927-43. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12300.

measures to ensure that women are not excluded from key governance processes due to extra care and domestic work responsibilities.[60]

[60] Sabine Freizer, Ginette Azcona, Ionica Berevoescu, and Tara Patricia Cookson. 2020. "COVID-19 and Women's Leadership: From an Effective Response to Building Back Better." 18. UN Women. https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/policy-brief-covid-19-and-womens-leadership.

Overview

Women's participation in politics and their secure access to political life is very important for democratic development and sustainability. After overcoming stiff resistance, women all over the world have mobilised across political lines and from the standpoints of different social and cultural status and ethnic affiliations to work towards the goal of gender equality. The hard work has paid off and there have indeed been positive changes in most regions of the world: the average proportion of women in parliament has increased from 15.7 percent in 2004 to nearly 25.1 percent in 2020; but we still need to reach the Beijing Platform for Action target of 30 percent women in decision-making positions.

In this part of the book, we will present data on the political representation of women, a historical timeline of women's participation in politics, and a world map showing the percentage of women in national parliaments in selected countries.

A. Fact Sheet

The fact sheet contains comparative data on the percentage of women in national parliaments. The data was compiled by the Inter-Parliamentary Union on the basis of information provided by national parliaments, and is updated as of 1 June 2020. More information can be found at this link: https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=6&year=2020.

B. Global Gender Gap Index 2020

The Global gender gap index 2020 introduced by the World Economic framework in 2006 is a framework to assess the magnitude and scope of gender based disparities and track their progress across most countries in the world. This Index acts as a benchmark for national gender gaps based on economic, political, education and health criteria, and provides country rankings that allow for effective comparisons across regions and income groups, as well as over time. We present the average of the gender gap

closed so far in the various regions of the world. The graph is based on the data provided from the World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Index, 2020.

C. World Map and Timeline – Women in Politics

The world map illustrates the proportion of seats held by women in the upper house and lower house in 30 different countries. We have only selected the data of countries that broadly represent the respective geographical regions to present in this map.

The timeline illustrates significant milestones in history achieved by female leaders who have been elected into political office since 1893. The second part of the timeline highlights the landmark years in which women were first elected to the highest office in a country.

With political and technological tools increasingly available to women, it is imperative that we continue to study into and act on increasing women's political participation. We need to not only increase the proportion of women in parliaments but also go beyond numbers to look for ways to increase the effectiveness and impact of women elected to political positions.

Global averages of women in national parliaments

	Lower chamber and unicameral	Upper chamber	All chambers
Total MPs	38,720	7,197	45,917
Gender breakdown known for	38,651	6,957	45,608
Men	28,928	5,201	34,129
Women	9,723	1,756	11,479
Percentage of women	25.1%	24.4%	25.0%

Source: Parline database on national parliaments (https://data.ipu.org).
Reference period: as of 1 August 2020.

Regional averages of women in national parliaments

Region	Sub region	Lower chamber and unicameral	Upper chamber	All chambers
Americas		31.7%	32.5%	31.8%
	Caribbean	40.3%	30.8%	39.0%
	North America	34.7%	42.0%	36.2%
	Central America	27.9%	21.4%	27.8%
	South America	25.9%	26.1%	25.9%
Europe		30.2%	29.2%	30.0%
	Nordic countries	43.9%	0.0%	43.9%
	Western Europe	34.7%	30.9%	33.4%
	Southern Europe	29.7%	36.5%	31.1%
	Central and Eastern Europe	24.4%	17.8%	23.6%
Sub-Saharan Africa		24.8%	23.9%	24.7%
	East Africa	31.7%	27.4%	31.2%
	Southern Africa	30.6%	31.4%	30.7%
	Central Africa	19.9%	22.9%	20.6%
	West Africa	15.3%	11.8%	14.9%
Asia		20.6%	18.5%	20.4%
	Central Asia	25.9%	20.9%	24.7%
	East Asia	21.7%	22.9%	21.8%
	South East Asia	20.5%	13.2%	19.3%
	South Asia	17.4%	25.5%	18.2%
Middle East and North Africa		17.5%	10.5%	16.6%
	North Africa	22.3%	8.4%	20.1%
	Middle East	14.5%	12.3%	14.3%
Pacific		16.7%	43.8%	19.6%
	Australia and New Zealand	35.1%	48.7%	38.0%
	Pacific Islands	6.4%	15.4%	6.7%

Source: Parline database on national parliaments (https://data.ipu.org).
Reference period: as of 1 August 2020.

Ranking of women in national parliaments

Rank	Country	Lower or Single House				Upper Chamber			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
1	Rwanda	09.2018	80	49	61.3	09.2019	26	10	38.5
2	Cuba	03.2018	605	322	53.2	-	-	-	-
3	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	10.2019	130	69	53.1	10.2019	36	17	47.2
4	United Arab Emirates	10.2019	40	20	50	-	-	-	-
5	Mexico	07.2018	500	241	48.2	07.2018	128	63	49.2
6	Nicaragua	11.2016	91	43	47.3	-	-	-	-
7	Sweden	09.2018	349	164	47	-	-	-	-
8	Grenada	03.2018	15	7	46.7	04.2018	13	4	30.8
9	South Africa	05.2019	395	184	46.6	05.2019	53	20	37.7
10	Andorra	04.2019	28	13	46.4	-	-	-	-
11	Finland	04.2019	200	92	46	-	-	-	-
12	Costa Rica	02.2018	57	26	45.6	-	-	-	-
13	Spain	11.2019	350	154	44	11.2019	264	103	39
14	Namibia	11.2019	104	45	43.3	12.2015	42	8	19.1
15	Senegal	07.2017	165	71	43	-	-	-	-
16	Switzerland	10.2019	200	83	41.5	11.2019	46	12	26.1
17	Norway	09.2017	169	70	41.4	-	-	-	-
18	Mozambique	10.2019	250	103	41.2	-	-	-	-
19	Argentina	10.2019	257	105	40.9	10.2019	72	29	40.3
20	New Zealand	09.2017	120	49	40.8	-	-	-	-
21	Belgium	05.2019	150	61	40.7	07.2019	60	27	45
22	Belarus	11.2019	110	44	40	11.2019	60	15	25
"	North Macedonia	12.2016	120	48	40	-	-	-	-
"	Portugal	10.2019	230	92	40	-	-	-	-
25	Denmark	06.2019	179	71	39.7	-	-	-	-
26	France	06.2017	577	228	39.5	09.2017	348	116	33.3
27	Ecuador	02.2017	137	54	39.4	-	-	-	-
28	Austria	09.2019	183	72	39.3	-	61	22	36.1
29	Ethiopia	05.2015	547	212	38.8	10.2015	153	49	32
30	Timor-Leste	05.2018	65	25	38.5	-	-	-	-
31	Burundi	05.2020	123	47	38.2	07.2015	39	18	46.2
32	Iceland	10.2017	63	24	38.1	-	-	-	-
33	Serbia	04.2016	247	93	37.7	-	-	-	-
34	United Republic of Tanzania	10.2015	393	145	36.9	-	-	-	-
35	Italy	03.2018	630	225	35.7	03.2018	320	110	34.4
36	Uganda	02.2016	459	160	34.9	-	-	-	-
37	Dominica	12.2019	32	11	34.4	-	-	-	-

Rank	Country	Lower or Single House				Upper Chamber			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
38	Cameroon	03.2020	180	61	33.9	03.2018	100	26	26
"	United Kingdom	12.2019	650	220	33.9	-	795	216	27.2
40	El Salvador	03.2018	84	28	33.3	-	-	-	-
"	Monaco	02.2018	24	8	33.3	-	-	-	-
"	Netherlands	03.2017	150	50	33.3	05.2019	75	29	38.7
43	Nepal	12.2017	275	90	32.7	01.2020	58	22	37.9
44	Uzbekistan	01.2020	150	48	32	01.2020	97	24	24.7
45	Zimbabwe	07.2018	270	86	31.9	07.2018	80	35	43.8
46	San Marino	12.2019	60	19	31.7	-	-	-	-
47	Germany	09.2017	709	221	31.2	-	69	25	36.2
48	Trinidad and Tobago	09.2015	42	13	31	09.2015	31	12	38.7
49	Australia	05.2019	151	46	30.5	05.2019	76	37	48.7
50	Angola	08.2017	220	66	30	-	-	-	-
"	Latvia	10.2018	100	30	30	-	-	-	-
"	Luxembourg	10.2018	60	18	30	-	-	-	-
53	Montenegro	10.2016	81	24	29.6	-	-	-	-
54	Albania	06.2017	122	36	29.5	-	-	-	-
55	Suriname	05.2020	51	15	29.4	-	-	-	-
56	Canada	10.2019	338	98	29	-	96	48	50
57	Estonia	03.2019	101	29	28.7	-	-	-	-
"	Poland	10.2019	460	132	28.7	10.2019	100	24	24
59	South Sudan	08.2016	383	109	28.5	08.2011	50	6	12
60	Philippines	05.2019	304	85	28	05.2019	24	7	29.2
61	Dominican Republic	05.2016	190	53	27.9	05.2016	32	3	9.4
"	Mali	04.2020	147	41	27.9	-	-	-	-
63	Slovenia	06.2018	90	25	27.8	11.2017	40	4	10
64	Lao People's Democratic Republic	03.2016	149	41	27.5	-	-	-	-
65	Kazakhstan	03.2016	107	29	27.1	06.2017	49	6	12.2
66	Afghanistan	10.2018	248	67	27	01.2015	68	19	27.9
67	Bulgaria	03.2017	240	64	26.7	-	-	-	-
"	Viet Nam	05.2016	494	132	26.7	-	-	-	-
69	Iraq	05.2018	329	87	26.4	-	-	-	-
70	Djibouti	02.2018	65	17	26.2	-	-	-	-
"	Peru	01.2020	130	34	26.2	-	-	-	-
72	Algeria	05.2017	462	119	25.8	12.2018	132	9	6.8
73	Cabo Verde	03.2016	72	18	25	-	-	-	-
"	Turkmenistan	03.2018	124	31	25	-	-	-	-
75	China	03.2018	2975	742	24.9	-	-	-	-
"	Tunisia	10.2019	217	54	24.9	-	-	-	-

Rank	Country	Lower or Single House				Upper Chamber			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
77	Republic of Moldova	02.2019	101	25	24.8	-	-	-	-
78	Somalia	02.2017	275	67	24.4	02.2017	54	13	24.1
79	Israel	03.2020	120	29	24.2	-	-	-	-
80	Lithuania	10.2016	141	34	24.1	-	-	-	-
81	Singapore	09.2015	100	24	24	-	-	-	-
82	Tajikistan	03.2020	63	15	23.8	03.2020	31	7	22.6
83	United States of America	11.2018	432	102	23.6	11.2018	100	25	25
84	Armenia	12.2018	132	31	23.5	-	-	-	-
85	Lesotho	06.2017	120	28	23.3	07.2017	32	7	21.9
86	Malawi	05.2019	192	44	22.9	-	-	-	-
87	Chile	11.2017	155	35	22.6	11.2017	43	10	23.3
88	Czech Republic	10.2017	200	45	22.5	10.2018	81	12	14.8
"	Ireland	02.2020	160	36	22.5	03.2020	49	15	30.6
"	Panama	05.2019	71	16	22.5	-	-	-	-
91	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	12.2015	167	37	22.2	-	-	-	-
92	Romania	12.2016	329	72	21.9	12.2016	136	20	14.7
93	Kenya	08.2017	349	76	21.8	08.2017	68	21	30.9
94	Bosnia and Herzegovina	10.2018	42	9	21.4	02.2019	15	3	20
95	Seychelles	09.2016	33	7	21.2	-	-	-	-
"	Uruguay	10.2019	99	21	21.2	10.2019	31	9	29
97	Honduras	11.2017	128	27	21.1	-	-	-	-
98	Equatorial Guinea	11.2017	100	21	21	11.2017	72	12	16.7
99	Bangladesh	12.2018	349	73	20.9	-	-	-	-
100	Ukraine	07.2019	423	88	20.8	-	-	-	-
101	Greece	07.2019	300	62	20.7	-	-	-	-
102	Morocco	10.2016	395	81	20.5	10.2015	120	14	11.7
103	Indonesia	04.2019	575	117	20.4	-	-	-	-
104	Mauritania	09.2018	153	31	20.3	-	-	-	-
105	Pakistan	07.2018	342	69	20.2	03.2018	104	20	19.2
106	Barbados	05.2018	30	6	20	06.2018	21	9	42.9
"	Cambodia	07.2018	125	25	20	02.2018	62	10	16.1
"	Mauritius	11.2019	70	14	20	-	-	-	-
"	Saint Kitts and Nevis	02.2015	15	3	20	-	-	-	-
"	Slovakia	02.2020	150	30	20	-	-	-	-
111	Saudi Arabia	12.2016	151	30	19.9	-	-	-	-
112	Cyprus	05.2016	56	11	19.6	-	-	-	-
"	Fiji	11.2018	51	10	19.6	-	-	-	-

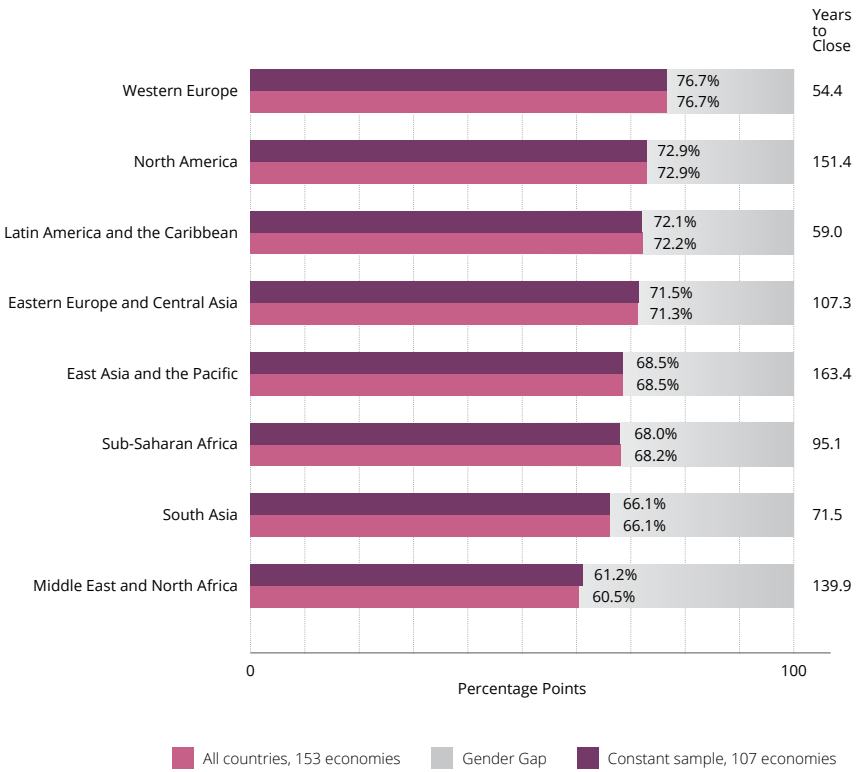
Rank	Country	Lower or Single House				Upper Chamber			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
114	Guatemala	06.2019	160	31	19.4	-	-	-	-
115	Croatia	09.2016	151	29	19.2	-	-	-	-
"	Kyrgyzstan	10.2015	120	23	19.2	-	-	-	-
117	Republic of Korea	04.2020	300	57	19	-	-	-	-
118	Togo	12.2018	91	17	18.7	-	-	-	-
119	Colombia	03.2018	169	31	18.3	03.2018	106	23	21.7
120	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	03.2019	687	121	17.6	-	-	-	-
121	Jamaica	02.2016	63	11	17.5	03.2016	21	5	23.8
122	Azerbaijan	02.2020	121	21	17.4	-	-	-	-
123	Mongolia	06.2016	75	13	17.3	-	-	-	-
"	Turkey	06.2018	589	102	17.3	-	-	-	-
125	Niger	02.2016	171	29	17	-	-	-	-
126	Zambia	08.2016	167	28	16.8	-	-	-	-
127	Comoros	02.2020	24	4	16.7	-	-	-	-
"	Guinea	03.2020	114	19	16.7	-	-	-	-
"	Saint Lucia	06.2016	18	3	16.7	07.2016	11	3	27.3
130	Paraguay	04.2018	80	13	16.3	04.2018	45	9	20
131	Libya	06.2014	188	30	16	-	-	-	-
132	Madagascar	05.2019	151	24	15.9	12.2015	62	12	19.4
133	Russian Federation	09.2016	450	71	15.8	-	170	29	17.1
"	Thailand	03.2019	489	77	15.8	05.2019	250	26	10.4
135	Chad	05.2011	162	25	15.4	-	-	-	-
"	Jordan	09.2016	130	20	15.4	09.2016	65	10	15.4
137	Egypt	12.2015	596	90	15.1	-	-	-	-
138	Bahrain	12.2018	40	6	15	12.2018	40	9	22.5
139	Bhutan	10.2018	47	7	14.9	04.2018	25	4	16
140	Gabon	10.2018	142	21	14.8	12.2014	100	18	18
141	Brazil	10.2018	513	75	14.6	10.2018	81	11	13.6
"	Sao Tome and Principe	10.2018	55	8	14.6	-	-	-	-
143	India	05.2019	543	78	14.4	07.2018	240	25	10.4
"	Malaysia	05.2018	222	32	14.4	-	68	13	19.1
145	Georgia	10.2016	149	21	14.1	-	-	-	-
146	Guinea-Bissau	03.2019	102	14	13.7	-	-	-	-
147	Burkina Faso	11.2015	127	17	13.4	-	-	-	-
"	Malta	06.2017	67	9	13.4	-	-	-	-
149	Ghana	12.2016	275	36	13.1	-	-	-	-

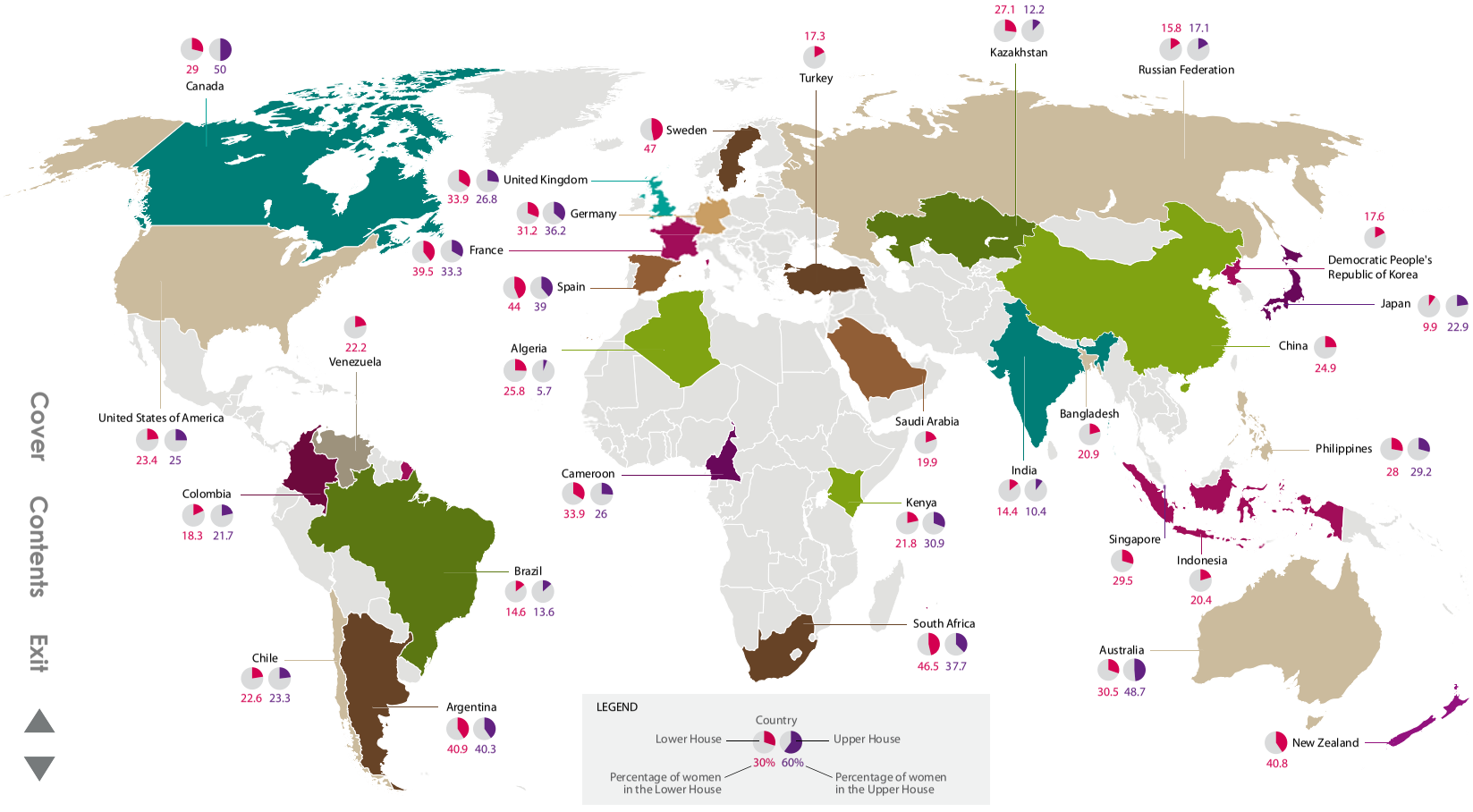
Rank	Country	Lower or Single House				Upper Chamber			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
150	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	12.2015	23	3	13	-	-	-	-
151	Bahamas	05.2017	39	5	12.8	05.2017	16	7	43.8
"	Democratic Republic of the Congo	03.2019	500	64	12.8	03.2019	109	23	21.1
153	Palau	11.2016	16	2	12.5	11.2016	13	2	15.4
154	Syrian Arab Republic	04.2016	250	31	12.4	-	-	-	-
155	Liberia	10.2017	73	9	12.3	12.2014	30	1	3.3
"	Sierra Leone	03.2018	146	18	12.3	-	-	-	-
157	Hungary	04.2018	199	24	12.1	-	-	-	-
158	Liechtenstein	02.2017	25	3	12	-	-	-	-
159	Côte d'Ivoire	12.2016	255	29	11.4	03.2018	99	19	19.2
160	Congo	07.2017	151	17	11.3	08.2017	69	13	18.8
161	Antigua and Barbuda	03.2018	18	2	11.1	03.2018	17	9	52.9
"	Myanmar	11.2015	432	48	11.1	11.2015	223	27	12.1
163	Botswana	10.2019	65	7	10.8	-	-	-	-
164	Nauru	08.2019	19	2	10.5	-	-	-	-
165	Samoa	03.2016	50	5	10	-	-	-	-
166	Japan	10.2017	464	46	9.9	07.2019	245	56	22.9
167	Qatar	06.2016	41	4	9.8	-	-	-	-
168	Eswatini	09.2018	73	7	9.6	10.2018	30	12	40
169	Belize	11.2015	32	3	9.4	11.2015	14	3	21.4
170	Brunei Darussalam	01.2017	33	3	9.1	-	-	-	-
171	Kiribati	04.2020	45	4	8.9	-	-	-	-
172	Central African Republic	03.2016	140	12	8.6	-	-	-	-
"	Gambia (The)	04.2017	58	5	8.6	-	-	-	-
174	Tonga	11.2017	27	2	7.4	-	-	-	-
175	Benin	04.2019	83	6	7.2	-	-	-	-
176	Kuwait	11.2016	63	4	6.4	-	-	-	-
177	Tuvalu	09.2019	16	1	6.3	-	-	-	-
178	Marshall Islands	11.2019	33	2	6.1	-	-	-	-
"	Solomon Islands	04.2019	49	3	6.1	-	-	-	-
180	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	04.2016	276	16	5.8	-	-	-	-
181	Sri Lanka	08.2015	225	12	5.3	-	-	-	-
182	Lebanon	05.2018	128	6	4.7	-	-	-	-
183	Maldives	04.2019	87	4	4.6	-	-	-	-

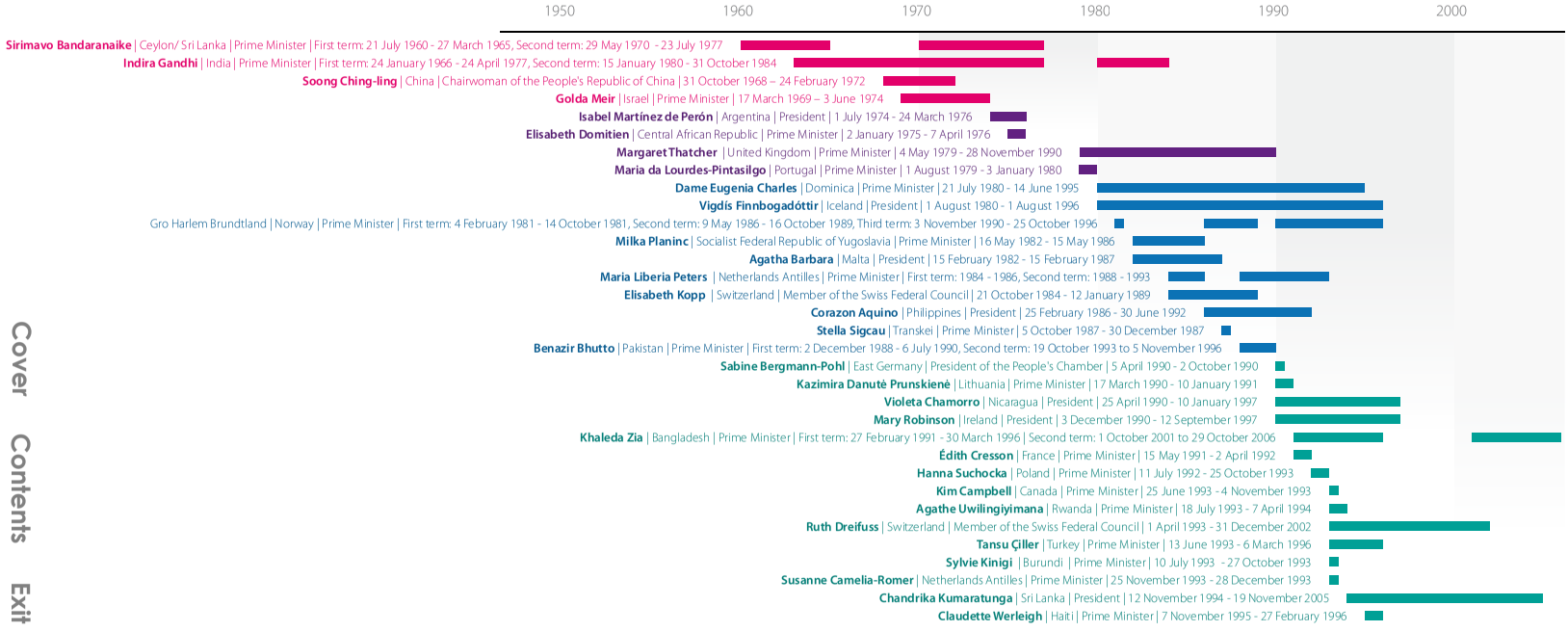
Rank	Country	Lower or Single House				Upper Chamber			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
184	Nigeria	02.2019	358	13	3.6	02.2019	109	8	7.3
185	Oman	10.2019	86	2	2.3	11.2019	86	15	17.4
186	Yemen	04.2003	301	1	0.3	04.2001	111	3	2.7
187	Micronesia (Federated States of)	03.2019	14	0	0	-	-	-	-
"	Papua New Guinea	07.2017	111	0	0	-	-	-	-
"	Vanuatu	03.2020	52	0	0	-	-	-	-
190	Eritrea	02.1994	-			-	-	-	-
"	Guyana	03.2020	69			-	-	-	-
"	Haiti	10.2015	0	0		01.2017	10	0	0
"	Sudan	04.2015	481	133		06.2015	71	19	

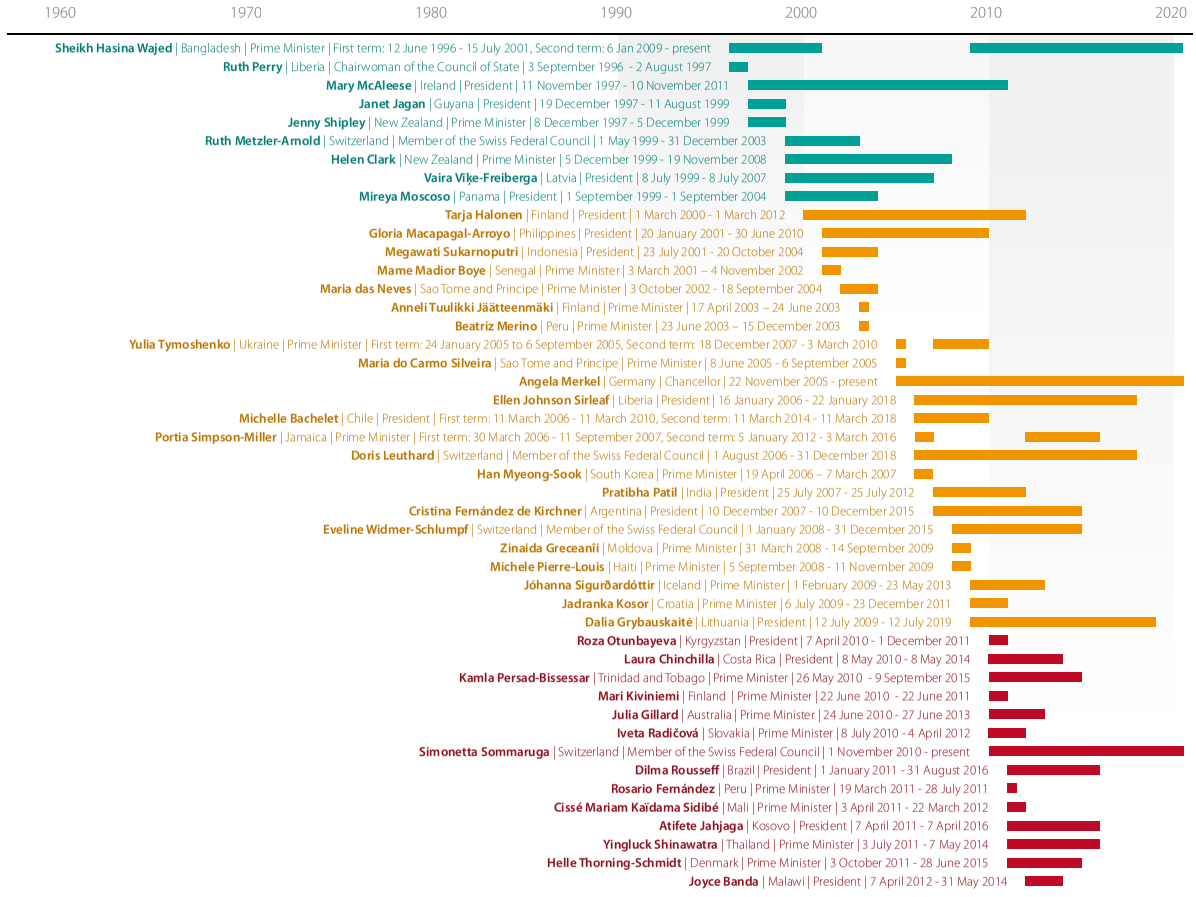
Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union Open Data.
Ranking as of 1 June 2020.

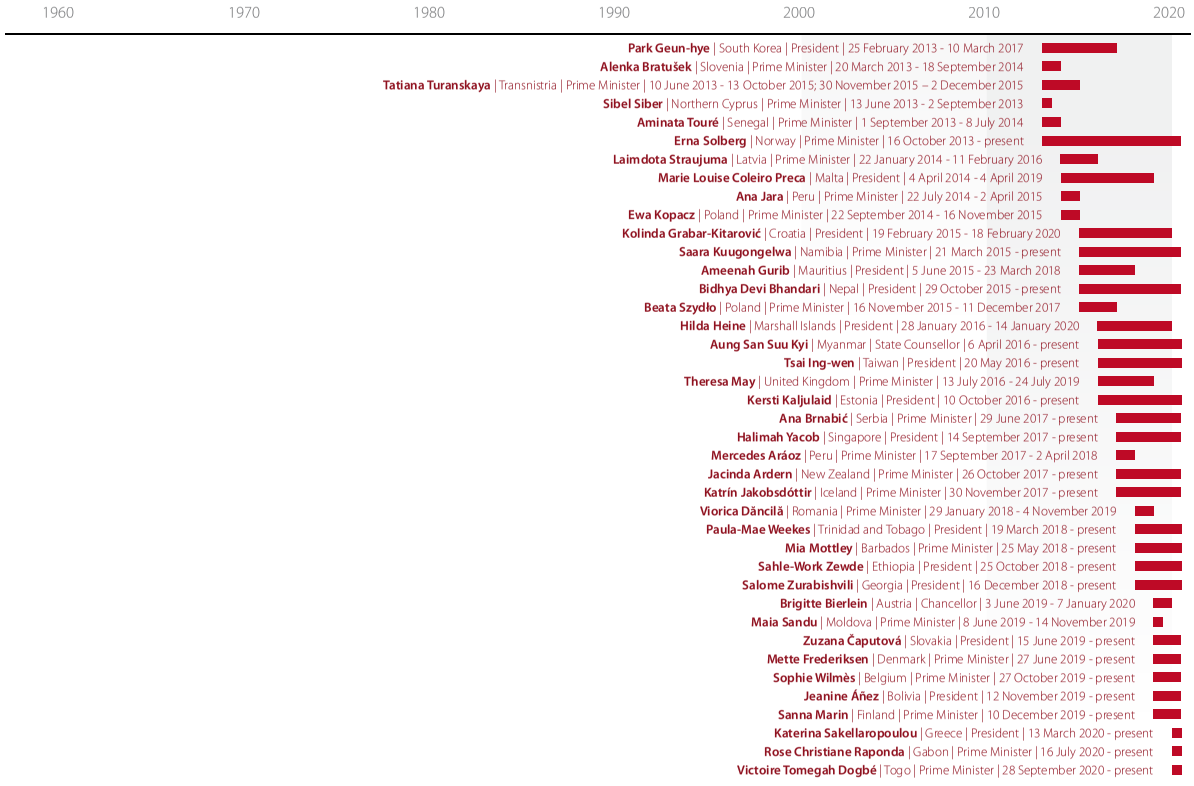
Global Gender Gap Index 2020

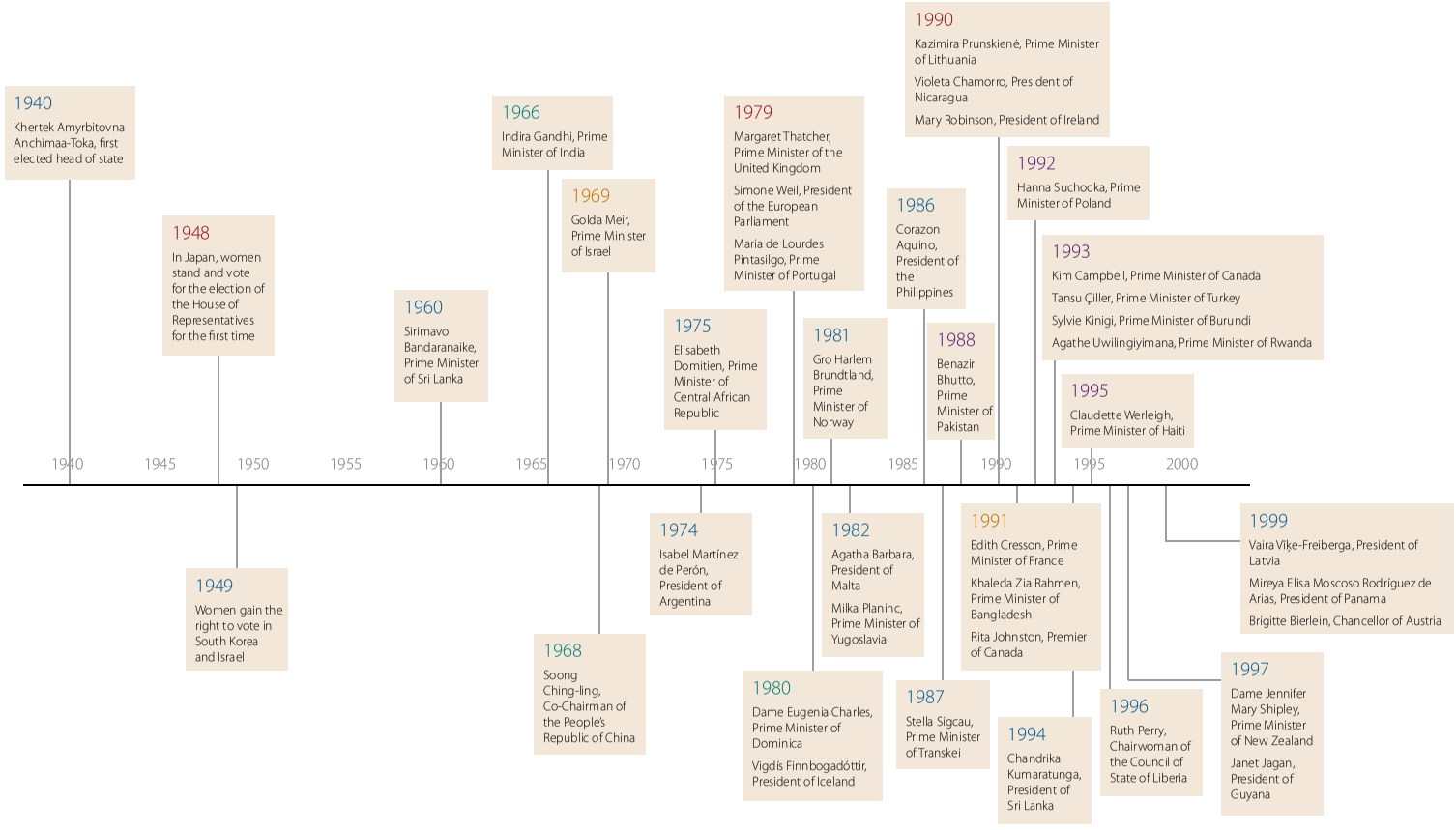



Canada
29 50
United States of America
23.4 25
Venezuela
22.2
Colombia
18.3 21.7
Brazil
14.6 13.6
Chile
22.6 23.3
Argentina
40.9 40.3
Sweden
47
United Kingdom
33.9 26.8
Germany
31.2 36.2
France
39.5 33.3
Spain
44 39
Algeria
25.8 5.7
Cameroon
33.9 26
Turkey
17.3
Saudi Arabia
19.9
Kenya
21.8 30.9
South Africa
46.5 37.7
Kazakhstan
27.1 12.2
Russian Federation
15.8 17.1
India
14.4 10.4
Bangladesh
20.9
China
24.9
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
17.6
Japan
9.9 22.9
Philippines
28 29.2
Singapore
29.5
Indonesia
20.4
Australia
30.5 48.7
New Zealand
40.8
LEGEND
Country
Lower House
Upper House
30%
60%
Percentage of women in the Lower House
Percentage of women in the Upper House


1950
1960
1970
1980
1990
2000
Sirimavo Bandaranaike | Ceylon/ Sri Lanka | Prime Minister | First term: 21 July 1960 - 27 March 1965, Second term: 29 May 1970 - 23 July 1977
Indira Gandhi | India | Prime Minister | First term: 24 January 1966 - 24 April 1977, Second term: 15 January 1980 - 31 October 1984
Soong Ching-ling | China | Chairwoman of the People's Republic of China | 31 October 1968 – 24 February 1972
Golda Meir | Israel | Prime Minister | 17 March 1969 – 3 June 1974
Isabel Martínez de Perón | Argentina | President | 1 July 1974 - 24 March 1976
Elisabeth Domitien | Central African Republic | Prime Minister | 2 January 1975 - 7 April 1976
Margaret Thatcher | United Kingdom | Prime Minister | 4 May 1979 - 28 November 1990
Maria da Lourdes-Pintasilgo | Portugal | Prime Minister | 1 August 1979 - 3 January 1980
Dame Eugenia Charles | Dominica | Prime Minister | 21 July 1980 - 14 June 1995
Vigdís Finnbogadóttir | Iceland | President | 1 August 1980 - 1 August 1996
Gro Harlem Brundtland | Norway | Prime Minister | First term: 4 February 1981 - 14 October 1981, Second term: 9 May 1986 - 16 October 1989, Third term: 3 November 1990 - 25 October 1996
Milka Planinc | Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia | Prime Minister | 16 May 1982 - 15 May 1986
Agatha Barbara | Malta | President | 15 February 1982 - 15 February 1987
Maria Liberia Peters | Netherlands Antilles | Prime Minister | First term: 1984 - 1986, Second term: 1988 - 1993
Elisabeth Kopp | Switzerland | Member of the Swiss Federal Council | 21 October 1984 - 12 January 1989
Corazon Aquino | Philippines | President | 25 February 1986 - 30 June 1992
Stella Sigcau | Transkei | Prime Minister | 5 October 1987 - 30 December 1987
Benazir Bhutto | Pakistan | Prime Minister | First term: 2 December 1988 - 6 July 1990, Second term: 19 October 1993 to 5 November 1996
Sabine Bergmann-Pohl | East Germany | President of the People's Chamber | 5 April 1990 - 2 October 1990
Kazimira Danutė Prunskienė | Lithuania | Prime Minister | 17 March 1990 - 10 January 1991
Violeta Chamorro | Nicaragua | President | 25 April 1990 - 10 January 1997
Mary Robinson | Ireland | President | 3 December 1990 - 12 September 1997
Khaleda Zia | Bangladesh | Prime Minister | First term: 27 February 1991 - 30 March 1996 | Second term: 1 October 2001 to 29 October 2006
Édith Cresson | France | Prime Minister | 15 May 1991 - 2 April 1992
Hanna Suchocka | Poland | Prime Minister | 11 July 1992 - 25 October 1993
Kim Campbell | Canada | Prime Minister | 25 June 1993 - 4 November 1993
Agathe Uwilingiyimana | Rwanda | Prime Minister | 18 July 1993 - 7 April 1994
Ruth Dreifuss | Switzerland | Member of the Swiss Federal Council | 1 April 1993 - 31 December 2002
Tansu Çiller | Turkey | Prime Minister | 13 June 1993 - 6 March 1996
Sylvie Kinigi | Burundi | Prime Minister | 10 July 1993 - 27 October 1993
Susanne Camelia-Romer | Netherlands Antilles | Prime Minister | 25 November 1993 - 28 December 1993
Chandrika Kumaratunga | Sri Lanka | President | 12 November 1994 - 19 November 2005
Claudette Werleigh | Haiti | Prime Minister | 7 November 1995 - 27 February 1996


1960
1970
1980
1990
2000
2010
2020
Sheikh Hasina Wajed | Bangladesh | Prime Minister | First term: 12 June 1996 - 15 July 2001, Second term: 6 Jan 2009 - present
Ruth Perry | Liberia | Chairwoman of the Council of State | 3 September 1996 - 2 August 1997
Mary McAleese | Ireland | President | 11 November 1997 - 10 November 2011
Janet Jagan | Guyana | President | 19 December 1997 - 11 August 1999
Jenny Shipley | New Zealand | Prime Minister | 8 December 1997 - 5 December 1999
Ruth Metzler-Arnold | Switzerland | Member of the Swiss Federal Council | 1 May 1999 - 31 December 2003
Helen Clark | New Zealand | Prime Minister | 5 December 1999 - 19 November 2008
Vaira Viķe-Freiberga | Latvia | President | 8 July 1999 - 8 July 2007
Mireya Moscoso | Panama | President | 1 September 1999 - 1 September 2004
Tarja Halonen | Finland | President | 1 March 2000 - 1 March 2012
Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo | Philippines | President | 20 January 2001 - 30 June 2010
Megawati Sukarnoputri | Indonesia | President | 23 July 2001 - 20 October 2004
Mame Madior Boye | Senegal | Prime Minister | 3 March 2001 – 4 November 2002
Maria das Neves | Sao Tome and Principe | Prime Minister | 3 October 2002 - 18 September 2004
Anneli Tuulikki Jäätteenmäki | Finland | Prime Minister | 17 April 2003 – 24 June 2003
Beatriz Merino | Peru | Prime Minister | 23 June 2003 – 15 December 2003
Yulia Tymoshenko | Ukraine | Prime Minister | First term: 24 January 2005 to 6 September 2005, Second term: 18 December 2007 - 3 March 2010
Maria do Carmo Silveira | Sao Tome and Principe | Prime Minister | 8 June 2005 - 6 September 2005
Angela Merkel | Germany | Chancellor | 22 November 2005 - present
Ellen Johnson Sirleaf | Liberia | President | 16 January 2006 - 22 January 2018
Michelle Bachelet | Chile | President | First term: 11 March 2006 - 11 March 2010, Second term: 11 March 2014 - 11 March 2018
Portia Simpson-Miller | Jamaica | Prime Minister | First term: 30 March 2006 - 11 September 2007, Second term: 5 January 2012 - 3 March 2016
Doris Leuthard | Switzerland | Member of the Swiss Federal Council | 1 August 2006 - 31 December 2018
Han Myeong-Sook | South Korea | Prime Minister | 19 April 2006 – 7 March 2007
Pratibha Patil | India | President | 25 July 2007 - 25 July 2012
Cristina Fernández de Kirchner | Argentina | President | 10 December 2007 - 10 December 2015
Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf | Switzerland | Member of the Swiss Federal Council | 1 January 2008 - 31 December 2015
Zinaida Greceanîi | Moldova | Prime Minister | 31 March 2008 - 14 September 2009
Michele Pierre-Louis | Haiti | Prime Minister | 5 September 2008 - 11 November 2009
Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir | Iceland | Prime Minister | 1 February 2009 - 23 May 2013
Jadranka Kosor | Croatia | Prime Minister | 6 July 2009 - 23 December 2011
Dalia Grybauskaitė | Lithuania | President | 12 July 2009 - 12 July 2019
Roza Otunbayeva | Kyrgyzstan | President | 7 April 2010 - 1 December 2011
Laura Chinchilla | Costa Rica | President | 8 May 2010 - 8 May 2014
Kamla Persad-Bissessar | Trinidad and Tobago | Prime Minister | 26 May 2010 - 9 September 2015
Mari Kiviniemi | Finland | Prime Minister | 22 June 2010 - 22 June 2011
Julia Gillard | Australia | Prime Minister | 24 June 2010 - 27 June 2013
Iveta Radičová | Slovakia | Prime Minister | 8 July 2010 - 4 April 2012
Simonetta Sommaruga | Switzerland | Member of the Swiss Federal Council | 1 November 2010 - present
Dilma Rousseff | Brazil | President | 1 January 2011 - 31 August 2016
Rosario Fernández | Peru | Prime Minister | 19 March 2011 - 28 July 2011
Cissé Mariam Kaïdama Sidibé | Mali | Prime Minister | 3 April 2011 - 22 March 2012
Atifete Jahjaga | Kosovo | President | 7 April 2011 - 7 April 2016
Yingluck Shinawatra | Thailand | Prime Minister | 3 July 2011 - 7 May 2014
Helle Thorning-Schmidt | Denmark | Prime Minister | 3 October 2011 - 28 June 2015
Joyce Banda | Malawi | President | 7 April 2012 - 31 May 2014


1960
1970
1980
1990
2000
2010
2020
Park Geun-hye | South Korea | President | 25 February 2013 - 10 March 2017
Alenka Bratušek | Slovenia | Prime Minister | 20 March 2013 - 18 September 2014
Tatiana Turanskaya | Transnistria | Prime Minister | 10 June 2013 - 13 October 2015; 30 November 2015 – 2 December 2015
Sibel Siber | Northern Cyprus | Prime Minister | 13 June 2013 - 2 September 2013
Aminata Touré | Senegal | Prime Minister | 1 September 2013 - 8 July 2014
Erna Solberg | Norway | Prime Minister | 16 October 2013 - present
Laimdota Straujuma | Latvia | Prime Minister | 22 January 2014 - 11 February 2016
Marie Louise Coleiro Preca | Malta | President | 4 April 2014 - 4 April 2019
Ana Jara | Peru | Prime Minister | 22 July 2014 - 2 April 2015
Ewa Kopacz | Poland | Prime Minister | 22 September 2014 - 16 November 2015
Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović | Croatia | President | 19 February 2015 - 18 February 2020
Saara Kuugongelwa | Namibia | Prime Minister | 21 March 2015 - present
Ameenah Gurib | Mauritius | President | 5 June 2015 - 23 March 2018
Bidhya Devi Bhandari | Nepal | President | 29 October 2015 - present
Beata Szydło | Poland | Prime Minister | 16 November 2015 - 11 December 2017
Hilda Heine | Marshall Islands | President | 28 January 2016 - 14 January 2020
Aung San Suu Kyi | Myanmar | State Counsellor | 6 April 2016 - present
Tsai Ing-wen | Taiwan | President | 20 May 2016 - present
Theresa May | United Kingdom | Prime Minister | 13 July 2016 - 24 July 2019
Kersti Kaljulaid | Estonia | President | 10 October 2016 - present
Ana Brnabić | Serbia | Prime Minister | 29 June 2017 - present
Halimah Yacob | Singapore | President | 14 September 2017 - present
Mercedes Aráoz | Peru | Prime Minister | 17 September 2017 - 2 April 2018
Jacinda Ardern | New Zealand | Prime Minister | 26 October 2017 - present
Katrín Jakobsdóttir | Iceland | Prime Minister | 30 November 2017 - present
Viorica Dăncilă | Romania | Prime Minister | 29 January 2018 - 4 November 2019
Paula-Mae Weekes | Trinidad and Tobago | President | 19 March 2018 - present
Mia Mottley | Barbados | Prime Minister | 25 May 2018 - present
Sahle-Work Zewde | Ethiopia | President | 25 October 2018 - present
Salome Zurabishvili | Georgia | President | 16 December 2018 - present
Brigitte Bierlein | Austria | Chancellor | 3 June 2019 - 7 January 2020
Maia Sandu | Moldova | Prime Minister | 8 June 2019 - 14 November 2019
Zuzana Čaputová | Slovakia | President | 15 June 2019 - present
Mette Frederiksen | Denmark | Prime Minister | 27 June 2019 - present
Sophie Wilmès | Belgium | Prime Minister | 27 October 2019 - present
Jeanine Áñez | Bolivia | President | 12 November 2019 - present
Sanna Marin | Finland | Prime Minister | 10 December 2019 - present
Katerina Sakellaropoulou | Greece | President | 13 March 2020 - present
Rose Christiane Raponda | Gabon | Prime Minister | 16 July 2020 - present
Victoire Tomegah Dogbé | Togo | Prime Minister | 28 September 2020 - present


1940
Khertek Amyrbitovna Anchimaa-Toka, first elected head of state
1948
In Japan, women stand and vote for the election of the House of Representatives for the first time
1949
Women gain the right to vote in South Korea and Israel
1960
Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka
1966
Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India
1968
Soong Ching-ling, Co-Chairman of the People's Republic of China
1969
Golda Meir, Prime Minister of Israel
1974
Isabel Martínez de Perón, President of Argentina
1975
Elisabeth Domitien, Prime Minister of Central African Republic
1979
Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
Simone Weil, President of the European Parliament
Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, Prime Minister of Portugal
1980
Dame Eugenia Charles, Prime Minister of Dominica
Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, President of Iceland
1981
Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway
1982
Agatha Barbara, President of Malta
Milka Planinc, Prime Minister of Yugoslavia
1986
Corazon Aquino, President of the Philippines
1987
Stella Sigcau, Prime Minister of Transkei
1988
Benazir Bhutto, Prime Minister of Pakistan
1990
Kazimira Prunskienė, Prime Minister of Lithuania
Violeta Chamorro, President of Nicaragua
Mary Robinson, President of Ireland
1991
Edith Cresson, Prime Minister of France
Khaleda Zia Rahmen, Prime Minister of Bangladesh
Rita Johnston, Premier of Canada
1992
Hanna Suchocka, Prime Minister of Poland
1993
Kim Campbell, Prime Minister of Canada
Tansu Çiller, Prime Minister of Turkey
Sylvie Kinigi, Prime Minister of Burundi
Agathe Uwilingiyimana, Prime Minister of Rwanda
1994
Chandrika Kumaratunga, President of Sri Lanka
1995
Claudette Werleigh, Prime Minister of Haiti
1996
Ruth Perry, Chairwoman of the Council of State of Liberia
1997
Dame Jennifer Mary Shipley, Prime Minister of New Zealand
Janet Jagan, President of Guyana
1999
Vaira Viķe-Freiberga, President of Latvia
Mireya Elisa Moscoso Rodríguez de Arias, President of Panama
Brigitte Bierlein, Chancellor of Austria
1940
1945
1950
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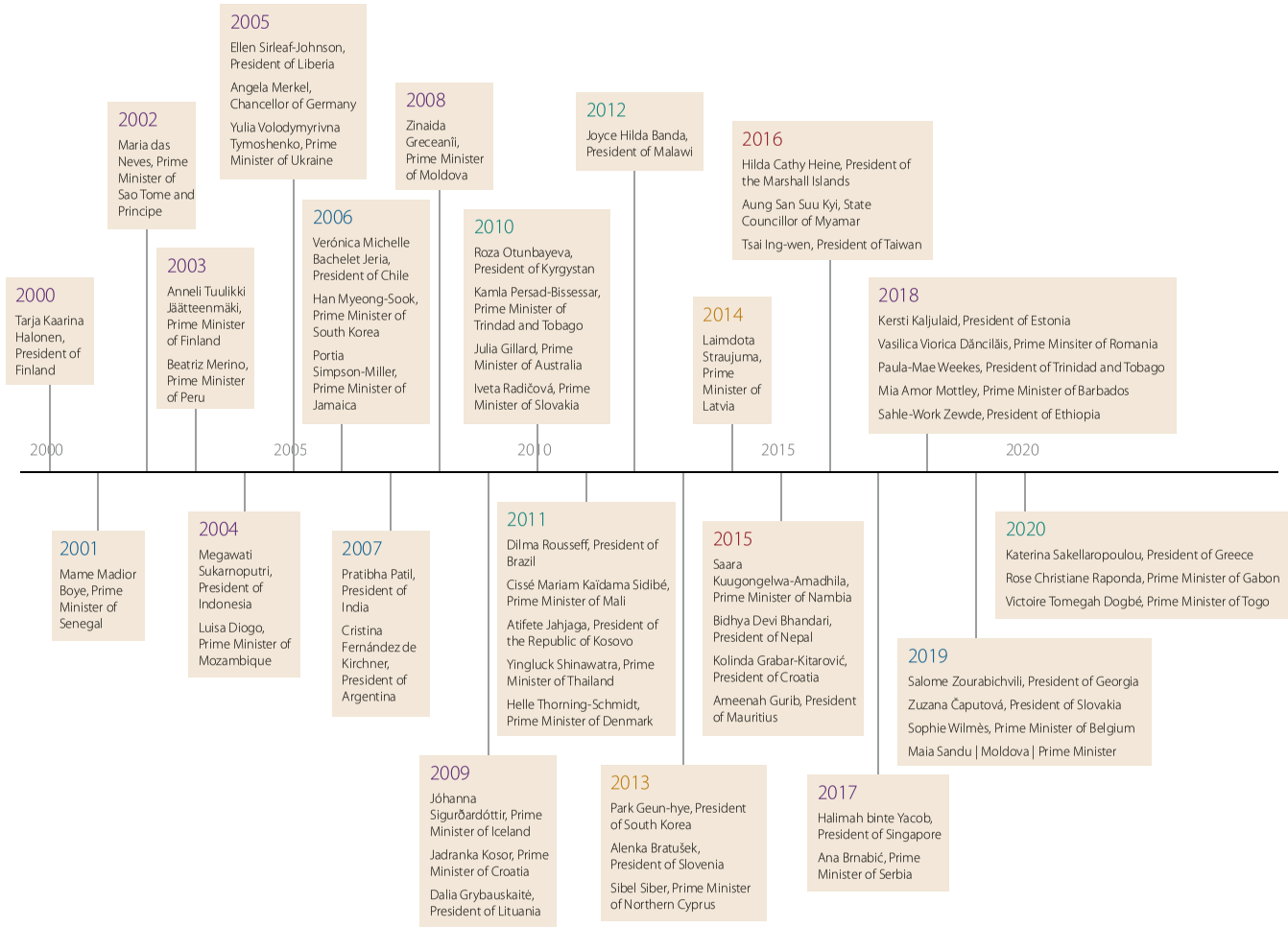
2000


2000
Tarja Kaarina Halonen, President of Finland
2001
Mame Madior Boye, Prime Minister of Senegal
2002
Maria das Neves, Prime Minister of Sao Tome and Principe
2003
Anneli Tuulikki Jäätteenmäki, Prime Minister of Finland
Beatriz Merino, Prime Minister of Peru
2004
Megawati Sukarnoputri, President of Indonesia
Luisa Diogo, Prime Minister of Mozambique
2005
Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson, President of Liberia
Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany
Yulia Volodymyrivna Tymoshenko, Prime Minister of Ukraine
2006
Verónica Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of Chile
Han Myeong-Sook, Prime Minister of South Korea
Portia Simpson-Miller, Prime Minister of Jamaica
2007
Pratibha Patil, President of India
Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, President of Argentina
2008
Zinaida Greceanîi, Prime Minister of Moldova
2009
Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, Prime Minister of Iceland
Jadranka Kosor, Prime Minister of Croatia
Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of Lituania
2010
Roza Otunbayeva, President of Kyrgystan
Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of Trindad and Tobago
Julia Gillard, Prime Minister of Australia
Iveta Radičová, Prime Minister of Slovakia
2011
Dilma Rousseff, President of Brazil
Cissé Mariam Kaïdama Sidibé, Prime Minister of Mali
Atifete Jahjaga, President of the Republic of Kosovo
Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand
Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Prime Minister of Denmark
2012
Joyce Hilda Banda, President of Malawi
2013
Park Geun-hye, President of South Korea
Alenka Bratušek, President of Slovenia
Sibel Siber, Prime Minister of Northern Cyprus
2014
Laimdota Straujuma, Prime Minister of Latvia
2015
Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Prime Minister of Nambia
Bidhya Devi Bhandari, President of Nepal
Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, President of Croatia
Ameenah Gurib, President of Mauritius
2016
Hilda Cathy Heine, President of the Marshall Islands
Aung San Suu Kyi, State Councillor of Myamar
Tsai Ing-wen, President of Taiwan
2017
Halimah binte Yacob, President of Singapore
Ana Brnabić, Prime Minister of Serbia
2018
Kersti Kaljulaid, President of Estonia
Vasilica Viorica Dăncilăis, Prime Minsiter of Romania
Paula-Mae Weekes, President of Trinidad and Tobago
Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados
Sahle-Work Zewde, President of Ethiopia
2019
Salome Zourabichvili, President of Georgia
Zuzana Čaputová, President of Slovakia
Sophie Wilmès, Prime Minister of Belgium
Maia Sandu | Moldova | Prime Minister
2020
Katerina Sakellaropoulou, President of Greece
Rose Christiane Raponda, Prime Minister of Gabon
Victoire Tomegah Dogbé, Prime Minister of Togo
2000
2005
2010
2015
2020

African Women in Political Decision-Making – "A Voice that Still Remains a Whisper"

Yolanda Sadie

The international drive for the inclusion of women in political decision-making as manifested in protocols and instruments such as The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action has also resonated on the African continent in, for example, the *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa* (commonly known as the Maputo Protocol),[1] a binding legal framework, adopted in 2003. Among other things, the Protocol specifically includes combating all forms of discrimination against women and specifically requires states to "ensure increased and effective representation and participation of women at all levels of decision-making" (Article. 9[2]). This was followed by the equally legally binding regional *SADC Protocol on Gender and Development,* adopted in 2008,[2] which goes further in requiring the equal representation of women in all areas of decision-making, both public and private, through constitutional and other legislative provisions that include affirmative action (Articles 12-13). More importantly, it stipulates that states shall

[1] Of the 55 African countries that are members of the African Union, 13 countries (by mid-2019) are yet to ratify it, which include three that have not signed nor ratified it. The latter are Botswana, Egypt and Morocco. Equality Now. 2019. "Ratify the Maputo Protocol: Protect the Rights of African Women and Girls". At: https://www.equalitynow.org/ratify_the_maputo_protocol.

[2] The SADC (the Southern African Development Community) consists of 15 countries (Angola, Botswana, DRC, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe).

endeavour, by 2015, to have at least 50% of decision-making positions be held by women in the public and private sectors.

In the West African region the ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States) leaders adopted the Supplementary Act on Equality of Rights between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in 2015, which commits ECOWAS member states[3] to the promotion of gender equality and equity in all sectors. It specifically stipulates (Article 11:1) that member states "shall institute affirmative action to ensure effective gender equality in decision-making positions in public and private sectors". In 2017, the Council of Ministers of the East African Community[4] adopted the Gender Policy, which provides for "the representation of at least one third gender at all levels of government". The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCA)[5] as well as the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA)[6] have no gender equality/women's rights frameworks, protocols or strategies.[7]

Achievements and Lack of Progress

At the 25th anniversary of the Beijing *Platform for Action* in 2020, the African continent showed that it had made slow progress in increasing women's participation in political decision-making. This is despite all the above African instruments calling for gender equality since 1995. Large gaps still remain in women's representation at different levels of governance and leadership – women's voices still remain a whisper. The struggle of women to gain a fair share of political power remains a work in progress, but the achievements should nevertheless not be ignored.

Certainly one of the most acclaimed is the election in 2005 (and re-election in 2011, until 2017) of the first female head of government in

[3] The 15 member states are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

[4] The six member states of the EAC are: Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania.

[5] The 11 member states are: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, the DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and São Tomé and Príncipe.

[6] The member states are: Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

[7] The State of African Women. 2018. "The Regional Economic Communities and women and girl's rights" (chapter 4). At: https://rightbyher.org/the-state-of-the-african-women/.

Africa, Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Of further note was the appointment of Joyce Banda (former vice president) as president of Malawi in 2012 following the death of her predecessor. However, she lost this position after the general elections in Malawi in 2014. Also important to the region is the fact that in the African Union's 49th year of existence (2012) it elected Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma from South Africa as its first female chairperson. In Mauritius, Ameenah Gurib-Fakim was president (with ceremonial powers) from 2015 to 2018, while Saleh-Work Zewde has been head of state of Ethiopia since 2018.

The importance of women in leadership positions in enhancing the rise of women in other political decision-making positions has clearly been illustrated in the case of Liberia. Under President George Weah, Sirleaf's successor, little has been done to increase or even maintain the level of political input and leadership that women had enjoyed under Sirleaf. During her tenure she appointed various women to several high-level positions, including the ministers of commerce, administration and finance. Her successor appointed only two women to his cabinet of 17 ministers (less than 12% representation).[8] Despite the decade-long leadership of a female president, a broader culture of women in political positions of political authority never developed in a society that is largely male dominated. In the 2017 elections, 21 of the 22 presidential candidates were male – and most surprising was the absence of a woman on the presidential ballot of the party that birthed Sirleaf's ascent to power. The end of Sirleaf's tenure seems to indicate a reversal of the progress made.[9]

Over the past 25 years Sub-Saharan Africa has registered a modest increase in the proportion of women in political decision-making, from 9.8% in 1995 to 24.7% in 2020. Rwanda is the world leader with 61.25% female representation in parliament, followed by South Africa in ninth place (46.58%). Only three other states have passed the 40% mark: Namibia (43.27%), Senegal (43.03%) and Mozambique (41.2%).

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[8] G. Senah, 2018. "Women's Appointment in Weah's Cabinet Under 12 Percent". *The Bush Chicken*, 2 March. At: https://bushchicken.com/womens-appointment-in-weahs-cabinet-under-12-persent/.

[9] N. Tulay-Solanke, 2018. "Where are the women in George Weah's Liberia?". *World Policy*, 30 May. At: http://worldpolicy.org/2018/05/30/where-are-the-women-in-george-weahs-liberia/.

In addition to the above states, a further seven[10] have reached the 30% minimum requirement by 2020. Five states have below 10% female representation – these include Benin (7.23%) and Nigeria, with the lowest percentage on the continent (3.63%). Women's representation in half of the African countries as of 2020 was still below 20%.[11]

Although women's representation in some countries such as Egypt increased substantially from 1.8% in the 2012 elections to 15.1% in its last election in 2015, in others, like the Seychelles, the proportion of women dropped from a high of 43.8% in 2012 to a mere 21.21% in the 2016 election.

While great emphasis is put on women's representation in parliaments, their appointment to cabinet positions is even more significant given the policy-making power of cabinet. However, the number of women appointed in cabinets is generally low. Only 11 countries reached the 30% mark at the beginning of 2019, with Rwanda (51.9%) and South Africa (50%) reaching parity. The cabinets of more than half of the states (31) consist of less than 20% women. However, of significance is the fact that leaders in some countries with low representation of women in their parliaments (below 15%) have compensated by appointing 30% (or more) women to their cabinets (for example, Mali [34.3%], Mauritania [31.8%], Zambia [30%] and São Tomé and Príncipe [33.3%]).[12]

Utilising Gender Quotas[13]

The representation of women would not have even reached the levels mentioned above if it had not been for the use of quotas in more than half

[10] These are: Ethiopia (38.76%), Tanzania (36.9%), Burundi (36.36%), Uganda (34.86%), Cameroon (33.89), Zimbabwe (31.85%) and Angola (30%).

[11] Inter-Parliamentary Union. 1 May 2020. At: https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=5&year=2020.

[12] Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2019. "Women in Politics". At: https://www.ipu.org/file/7167/download.

[13] Three main quota types can be identified: **Party candidate quotas** – i.e., quota provisions adopted by individual political parties to regulate the gender composition of their own candidate lists; **Legislated quotas** – quota provisions by law, regulating the gender composition of all candidate lists, and binding for all parties; and **Reserved seats** – a specified number of seats reserved for women (International IDEA – Gender Quotas Database. 2020. At: https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/database.

of African countries (28) – 13 countries have legislated quotas in the form of reserved seats for women in their parliaments, while 15 have constitutional and/or legislated candidate quotas.[14] These generally range between 20% and 30%. However, in a number of countries, such as Liberia, the quota is much lower – only five parliamentary seats have been reserved for women in terms of the Equal Representation and Participation Act passed in 2016.

Countries with legislated candidate quotas include Algeria, Lesotho, Mauritania, Angola and Tunisia, while reserved seats for women have, for example, been legislated in Uganda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Morocco, Rwanda and Senegal, though they each use different mechanisms to elect reserved-seat members of parliament (MPs). In Tanzania, for example, 113 of 393 seats (i.e., nearly 30% of all parliamentary seats)[15] are reserved for women (allocated to political parties in proportion to their share of the electoral vote). Women also contest in the open seats, and only 25 were elected from the 264 constituency seats in the last election, in 2015. Therefore, without special seats, women would occupy less than 10% of parliamentary seats.[16] In Zimbabwe women can compete freely at the national level, but an additional 30% of the seats in parliament (91 seats) are reserved for women and are distributed among parties on a proportional basis. When the quota was introduced in 2013, the representation of women in parliament increased from 15% (in 2008) to 33%.

An additional 10 African countries have voluntary party quotas, where one or more parties commit themselves to either a 30% representation of women on their party lists or a zebra system on party lists.[17] This has contributed to the large presence of women in parliament in some countries: the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa, the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo) in Mozambique and the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) in Namibia have been the dominant

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[14] International IDEA – Ibid.

[15] When the quota was introduced in 1995 only 15% of the parliamentary seats were reserved for women. Over the years this percentage progressively increased.

[16] Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015. "Women in Parliament in 2015 – The year in review", pp. 4-5. At: https://oig.cepal.org/sites/default/files/wip2015-e.pdf.

[17] International IDEA, 2020. Op. cit. "Zebra lists" means that women's and men's names are alternated like the black and white stripes of a zebra.

parties in the elections for the past 20 years. The problem, however, is that when these parties start to lose support, women's overall representation in parliament also drops, as opposition parties do not necessarily follow a quota system.

Critics of the adoption of quotas – particularly reserved seats for women – have argued, for example, that women elected to reserved seats lack an independent electoral or organisational base, and that this may reinforce the continued dependence of women on quota provisions;[18] that reserved seats are just a way to appease and ultimately sideline women;[19] or that quotas can create a glass ceiling and prevent women from being elected beyond the quota or being considered for non-reserved/general seats.[20]

However, in countries such as Rwanda in particular, reserved seats did not prevent women from being elected to "general" seats too. In addition, Burnet[21] found that in Rwanda, "gender quotas have made a significant impact on gendered ideas about the public sphere". This is especially pertinent considering the country's history of a deeply engrained system of patrimonial politics.

On the other hand, the special-seat system has created a stigma against special-seat MPs, and voters tend to look down on these MPs. Wang and Yoon[22] have, for example, also found that quota women in parliament in Uganda are not treated on par with other MPs, whereas winning a constituency in Tanzania seems to present additional political opportunities: women are more easily appointed to higher-level political positions compared to those women who entered parliament through the special

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[18] I. Tinkner, 2004. "Quotas for women in elected legislatures: do they really empower women?", *Women's Studies International Forum*, 27(5-6), pp. 531-546.

[19] P. Norris, 2006. "The impact of electoral reform on women's representation", p. 209. *Palgrave and Macmillan Journal*, 41(2), pp. 197-213.

[20] D. Dhalerup, and Freidenvall, L. 2010. "Judging gender quotas – Predictions and results", p. 415. *Policy and Politics*, 38(3), pp. 407-425.

[21] J. Burnet, 2012. "Women's empowerment and cultural change in Rwanda", p. 204, in S. Franceschet, M. Krook and J. Piscopo (eds.). *The impact of gender quotas*. New York: Oxford University Press.

[22] V. Wang, and Mi Yung Yoon. 2018. "Recruitment mechanisms for reserved seats and switches to non-quota seats: a comparative study of Tanzania and Uganda", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 56(2), pp. 299-324.

seats.[23] Nonetheless, the number of switches to open seats over the years have been small in both countries due to common obstacles to women's political participation discussed below.

Furthermore, it has been argued that the reserved-seat system "ghettoise" quotas MPs. It has created a gendered perception that constituency seats are for men and quota seats are for women. The two separate avenues to parliament resulted in the reluctance of parties in both Uganda and Tanzania to field female candidates for open seats.[24] In Zimbabwe, the quota system is also stigmatised. Women's participation is viewed by many as "a token or a privilege granted by men".[25]

However, in strong patriarchal societies reserved seats may be the only practical way of starting to incorporate women into political leadership positions.[26] Generally speaking, countries in Africa where women account for less than 15% of members of parliament do not apply quotas.

Substantive and Symbolic Representation

Although the number of women in decision-making positions still remains an important topic among scholars, the focus on women's substantive representation – for example, their impact on policy-making and legislative diversity – has characterised the work of a "second generation" of scholars. Scholars have shown that women's representation has enhanced the influence of female MPs in various ways. These include a change in the parliamentary culture (e.g., Tanzania, South Africa and Uganda), and a change of face of parliamentary structures such as parliamentary committees. In South Africa, more "masculine" portfolio committees such as Safety and

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[23] R. Meena, M. Rusimbi, and C. Israel. 2018. "Women and Political Leadership: Facilitating Factors in Tanzania". Research Report 17(1), p. 44. Tanzania: UONGOZI Institute. At: https://www.africaportal.org/documents/18149/Women-in-Leadership-17.1_1.pdf.

[24] V. Wang, and Mi Yung Yoon. 2018. Op. cit., p. 301.

[25] IFES (International Foundation for Electoral Systems). 2018. "Violence Against Women in Zimbabwe: An IFES Assessment", p. 12. Full Report. July. At: https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/vawie_in_Zimbabwe_july_2018.pdf.

[26] H. Darhour, and Dhalerup, D. 2013. "Sustainable representation of women through gender quotas: A decade's experience in Morocco", p. 133. *Women's Studies International Forum,* 41, pp.132-142. At: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2013.04.008.

Security and Justice and Constitutional Development were, for example, chaired by women after the second democratic elections in 2000.

The increase in women's numbers has also led to the advocacy and adoption of new laws and new amendments. In Tanzania, these include the Labour Act of 1997, the Sexual Offences Act of 1998, the Land Amendment Act of 2004 and the repeal, in 1996, of the law that expelled pregnant girls from school;[27] in Kenya, they include the Sexual Offences Act of 2006 and Amendments to the Employment Act of 2007 to provide for paid maternity and paternity leave; and in Uganda, legislation in the areas of, for example, domestic violence, rape and female genital mutilation.[28] In South Africa, the Domestic Violence Act (1998), the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act (1996), improvements to the Child Maintenance Act resulting in the Child Care Amendment Act (1996) and the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (1998) can all be attributed to female parliamentarians.[29]

Also important is the symbolic role of women's representation in breaking down patriarchal attitudes and creating a new political culture in which politics is no longer a "man's world". For example, in both Uganda[30] and Tanzania[31] it is acknowledged that the increased presence of women in parliament has slowly been changing people's attitudes to women in politics.

What Keeps Women Out of Politics?

The persistent resistance to women in politics takes many forms across Africa. Several factors reinforce each other to prevent or hamper women's political participation.

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[27] Mi Yung Yoon, 2013. "Special seats for women in parliament and democratisation: The case of Tanzania", p. 147. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 41, pp. 143-149. At: http://dx.doi.org./10.1016/j.wsif.2013.05.005.

[28] A. Clayton, C. Josefsson, and V. Wang. 2016. "Quotas and Women's Substantive Representation: Evidence from a Content Analysis of Ugandan Plenary Debates". Politics and Gender, Vol. 13 (2). pp. 276-304 . At: Doi: https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X16000453.

[29] P. Govender, 2005. "Women and Democracy: Are there signs yet of substantive equality?", in Calland, R. and P. Graham. *Democracy in the Time of Mbeki*. Cape Town: IDASA.

[30] K. Juma, 2011. "Women in the Parliament of Uganda, 2001-2011: Striving to Influence Legislations to Improve the Status of Women". *The Ahfad Journal*, Vol. 28(2), pp. 44-66.

[31] R. Meena, et al. 2018. Op. cit.

- The single major barrier remains the deeply rooted cultural, religious and traditional stereotypes around the role of women in society. Women's identity is still predominantly conceived as being domestic in nature, and this continues to act as a barrier to women's entry into formal politics. The cultural beliefs based on the concept of male supremacy are perpetuated by socialisation that conceives of politics as male territory. Unfortunately, the constitutional and legal gains supporting gender equality have not affected entrenched gender roles and stereotyping in many African countries.

- The lack of political will from governments. Despite the fact that most states are signatories to the various regional, continental and international instruments that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, little progress has been made in domesticating these commitments. Also, the enforcement of quotas in many countries is undermined by the absence of sanctions for non-compliance and a lack of statutory compliance.

- Political parties, which are the key gateway for women's successful participation in elections, are the most serious obstructers. They replicate gender relations of male supremacy and female subordination. Party leadership is controlled by men, and it is difficult for women to reach the top positions in party hierarchies where decisions are taken. The patriarchal nature of political parties often restricts women from competing in elections. In many cases women lack party backing and, in some instances, women experience active exclusion, discrimination and open hostility.

- Women often lack the necessary financial resources, which limits their capacity to participate in elections. The amount of money required for elections is often large – ranging from campaign expenses to considerable amounts that have to be paid to be consid-

ered in the candidate nomination/selection process (for example, in Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria[32]).

- Electoral systems also play an important role in facilitating the political representation of women. The first-past-the-post (FPTP) single-constituency electoral system in particular makes it difficult for women to be elected. Political parties generally do not nominate women as candidates for "winnable" constituencies. The low representation of women in parliament in Ghana (13.09%), Nigeria (3.63%) and Botswana (10.77%), for example, can (along with other reasons) be attributed to the FPTP electoral system.

- The increasing violence (physical or verbal abuse) in public against women in many African countries restricts their political activities or deters them from standing for elections. Given the zero-sum nature of the political contest in countries with the FPTP electoral system, where competition is a do-or-die affair, violence against female candidates seems to be more prominent.[33]

- A practical manifestation of the patriarchal nature of most African countries (where statistics are available) is the fact that women candidates have been far less visible in election-related media coverage than male candidates during the election campaign period. Gender stereotypes and stigma also characterise the coverage of female candidates.

Conclusion – The Way Forward

The African continent is certainly not short of protocols and policies initiated by the African Union and other regional bodies (and signed by many member states) that commit members to women's equal rights. Generally,

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[32] In Nigeria, for example, the candidate nomination fee ranges between US$2,300 and US$13,000 – depending on the level of representation. Onah, E. and U. Nwali. 2018. "Monetisation of electoral politics and the challenge of political exclusion in Nigeria". *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. 56(3), pp. 318-339. At: https://doi.org/10.1080/14662043.2017.1368157.

[33] For example, Ghana, Uganda, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

little progress has been made in domesticating these commitments. Much needs to be done to translate these strong commitments to women's equality into concrete actions and change. The pace of progress has been slow and the path tortuous. There is still a gross under-representation of women in political decision-making positions on the continent – in short, politics remains a hostile terrain for women in many countries. Legislated quotas (specifically reserved seats) seems to be the only practical way of increasing the number of women in decision-making positions, particularly in strong patriarchal societies.

In conclusion, the actualisation of gender equality and of women's rights lies in the implementation of evidence-based interventions and the constant monitoring and evaluation of progress – above all, it also requires the commitment of government leaders.

Women in Politics in Latin America[1]

Jennifer M. Piscopo

Introduction

Women's participation in national-level politics in Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking Latin America has increased steadily since the 1980s, when most countries in the region democratised. As of June 2020, women comprised about 30 percent of the region's legislatures. Countries with statutory gender quotas elect more women in general, and all Latin American countries save Guatemala and Venezuela use quota laws for congressional elections. Eight countries currently enforce gender parity, meaning that parties must nominate men and women in equal numbers for all legislative positions. In Mexico, Bolivia, and Ecuador, gender parity governs the composition of the entire government, meaning the executive, legislative, and judicial branches at the national and subnational levels, including in the indigenous territories. Overall, gender quota laws' popularity reflects the consolidation of norms that demand governments take positive action to increase women's political presence.[2]

Women's growing presence in power has translated into greater legislative activity on women's rights, leading to policy changes that combat violence against women, expand reproductive rights, improve social

[1] An earlier version of this brief was co-authored with Mala Htun and Sophia von Bergen. Elizabeth Brewer provided research assistance for this version.

[2] Jennifer M. Piscopo, "States as Gender Equality Activists: The Evolution of Quota Laws in Latin America," *Latin American Politics and Society* 57, no. 3 (2015): 27-49.

services, and extend the reach of gender quotas.[3] Notwithstanding these gains, women politicians continue to report sexist practices within political parties, recently calling attention to the gender-based harassment faced by women on the campaign trail and in elected office. To combat these and other obstacles and to increase their political clout, women legislators in many Latin American countries have formed women's caucuses in parliament and forged links with feminist organisations and civil society groups.

Women in the Executive

A significant number of Latin American countries have elected women chief executives. Latin America's first elected female presidents – both widows of prominent political figures – emerged in Central America: Violeta Chamorro in Nicaragua (1990-1994) and Mireya Moscoso in Panama (1999-2004). A more recent wave of women presidents attained office through their own professional and political credentials, including Michelle Bachelet of Chile (2006-2010 and 2014-2018), Cristina Fernández de Kirchner of Argentina (2007-2015), Laura Chinchilla of Costa Rica (2010-2014), and Dilma Rousseff of Brazil (2011-2016). Rousseff was the most recent woman to win a presidential contest, when she secured reelection in 2014 – only to be impeached two years later for corruption. In fact, women presidents have faced greater censure for corruption when compared to men presidents, even when their performances have been similar.[4] Higher standards remain one of the significant headwinds Latin American women face when seeking executive office.

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[3] Merike Blofield, Christina Ewig, and Jennifer M. Piscopo, "The Reactive Left: Gender Equality and the Latin American Pink Tide," *Social Politics* 24, no. 4 (2017): 345-369; Susan Franceschet and Jennifer M. Piscopo, "Quotas and Women's Substantive Representation: Lessons from Argentina," *Politics and Gender* 4, no. 3 (2008): 393-425; Mala Htun, Marina Lacalle, and Juan Pablo Micozzi, "Does Women's Presence Change Legislative Behavior? Evidence from Argentina, 1983-2007," *Journal of Politics in Latin America* 5, no. 1 (2013): 95-125; Mala Htun, Cheryl O'Brien, and S. Laurel Weldon, "Movilización feminista y políticas sobre violencia contra las mujeres" [Violence against women: Feminist mobilization and politics], *Foreign Affairs Latinoamérica* 14, no. 1 (2014): 2-13; Leslie Schwindt-Bayer, *Gender and Representation in Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[4] Catherine Reyes-Housholder, "A Theory of Gender's Role on Presidential Approval Ratings in Corrupt Times," *Political Research Quarterly* (2019): https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912919838626.

Women's share of cabinet positions keeps growing. In 2000, women composed 10 percent of ministers in South America and 16 percent in Mexico and Central America; by 2010, these figures increased to 22 percent and 21 percent, respectively.[5] In 2020, women held 28 percent of all ministerial portfolios in the region, though this average obscures significant national variation.[6] Women comprised over half the cabinet in Nicaragua, and over 40 percent of the cabinets in Costa Rica, Colombia, and Mexico. By contrast, Argentina, Brazil, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama had 20 percent or fewer women (usually two or three women). The Dominican Republic had only one, and she held the portfolio of Minister of Women.

Current cabinet appointments have occurred under men presidents, given the absence of women presidents. However, back when women held the presidencies, they did not always do better. For example, during their first terms, Chile's Bachelet appointed a parity cabinet, but Argentina's Fernández de Kirchner appointed a mere 20 percent women. An emerging trend is presidents promising parity cabinets, from Bachelet in Chile to, more recently, the men presidents of Costa Rica, Colombia, and Nicaragua. Generally, regional norms now prevent presidents from having all-male cabinets, though male dominance of cabinet persists.[7]

When women presidents do increase women's appointment to cabinet, they tend to appoint women to stereotypically feminine portfolios.[8] This gendered distribution of cabinet portfolios occurs with men selectors as well. In other words, women ministers' increased access to cabinet largely occurs via the less prestigious, "soft" portfolios, such as social

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[5] Mala Htun and Jennifer M. Piscopo, "Women in Politics and Policy in Latin America and the Caribbean," Working Paper Series No. 2, Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum (Social Sciences and Research Council, 2014).

[6] 2020 data from the United States Central Intelligence Agency World Leaders Database (https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/world-leaders-1/). Cabinet counts include attorney generals and chiefs of staff. Note that, in November 2019, a political crisis forced out the Evo Morales government in Bolivia and interim leaders came to power. Cabinet counts refer to the deposed Morales cabinet.

[7] Michelle M. Taylor Robinson and Meredith P. Gletiz, "Women in Presidential Cabinets: Getting into the Elite Club?" in *Gender and Representation in Latin America*, ed. Leslie Schwindt-Bayer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 39-55.

[8] Catherine Reyes-Housholder, "Presidentas Rise: Consequences for Women in Cabinets?" *Latin American Politics and Society* 58, no. 3 (2018): 3-25.

services, education, tourism, culture, and housing.[9] Women are less likely to administer the "hard" domains of economy, finance, justice, defence, security, and foreign affairs. In 2020, two women served as ministers of defence or security, four as ministers of foreign relations, five as ministers of finance or the economy, and seven as ministers of justice or as their country's attorney general. Notably, some countries with few women in cabinet – Argentina, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama – all had at least one woman holding a hard portfolio. Honduras had three women in these prestigious posts, with women managing justice, foreign affairs, and finance.

These trends show that women are gaining ground in the executive branch, and slowly conquering spaces typically reserved for men leaders. Though no women occupied the presidency in 2020, women have been viable contenders in many recent presidential elections.[10] For instance, Sandra Torres of Guatemala finished in second place in the 2019 elections. Ten women served as vice president in 2020, including the first Afro-descendant woman, Costa Rica's Epsy Campbell Barr. Costa Rican women actually enjoy a long tradition of holding the vice presidency: Costa Rica has two vice-presidents and the gender parity law for nominating legislative candidates also applies to nominating the two vice presidential candidates (one must be a man and one must be a woman).

Finally, other mechanisms exist to promote women within the executive branch. As noted, gender parity governs the composition of the executive branch in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Mexico. In Colombia, a 30 percent gender quota has been applied to the highest positions in the executive branch at all government levels since 2000.

Women in National Legislatures

Women's presence in national office shows similar increases in recent decades. In the 1990s, women's seat share in the region's lower or unicameral

[9] Maria C. Escobar-Lemmon and Michelle M. Taylor-Robinson, *Women in Presidential Cabinets: Power Players or Abundant Tokens* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[10] Catherine Reyes-Housholder and Gwynn Thomas, "Latin America's *Presidentas:* Overcoming Challenges, Forging New Pathways," in *Gender and Representation in Latin America*, ed. Leslie Schwindt-Bayer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 19-38.

houses averaged below 10 percent; in 2005, it neared 20 percent and by 2015, it had climbed to 30 percent.[11] As of June 2020, women's presence averaged 30 percent in the lower or unicameral house and 28 percent in the Senate. These strong numbers are driven by the adoption of gender quotas, statutory mechanisms – constitutional amendments or laws – requiring that women make up a certain percentage of each political party's candidates in the legislative elections.

In 1991, Argentina adopted the world's first contemporary quota law, requiring that political parties run 30 percent women for the lower house. By 2020, all Latin American countries – save Guatemala and Venezuela – had adopted quota laws for their national legislatures.[12] Nine countries in the region have now adopted gender parity, either raising their quota threshold to 50 percent or adopting parity outright: Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru. Initially, Peru's parity law was progressive, beginning with 40 percent in the 2021 elections, increasing to 45 percent in 2026 and finally to 50 percent in 2031, but women lawmakers successfully lobbied to eliminate the gradual implementation, securing gender parity rules for the 2021 elections. The remaining countries apply thresholds below parity: 20 percent in Paraguay; 30 percent in Brazil, Colombia, and El Salvador; 33 percent in Uruguay; and 40 percent in Chile and the Dominican Republic.

Quotas' numerical effects are uneven across countries. In addition to the variation in thresholds, quotas' ability to translate nominations into seats depends on the electoral system. Gender quotas combine best with closed-list proportional representation electoral systems. In these systems, political parties present rank-ordered slates of candidates that voters cannot reorder. Candidates are elected from this closed list in proportion to the percentage of votes received by the party, following their order on the list. The higher a candidate places on the list, the more likely she is to win a seat. Since parties usually seek to comply minimally with quotas, rules are needed that prevent parties from filling quotas but

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[11] Leslie Schwindt-Bayer and Santiago Alles, "Women in Legislatures: Gender, Institutions, and Democracy," in *Gender and Representation in Latin America*, ed. Leslie Schwindt-Bayer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 56-73.

[12] In Venezuela, the electoral management body does apply a fifty percent quota when evaluating party lists.

placing women in the unelectable positions.[13] The most numerically successful quota laws therefore contain placement mandates for electoral lists. For a thirty percent quota, a typical placement mandate requires that one woman has to appear every three names; for gender parity, the standard is alternating men and women down the list (called vertical parity).

In addition to placement mandates, effective quota laws need other rules that eliminate parties' ability to nominate, but not actually elect, women. In Mexico, for instance, the electoral law prohibits parties from sending women exclusively to losing districts.[14] In Brazil, by contrast, the fact that parties can nominate more candidates than winnable seats works against the quota's effectiveness, allowing parties to run numerous non-viable candidates.[15] Countries must also empower their electoral management bodies to enforce quotas, imposing sanctions on political parties for non-compliance. Typically, parties submitting candidate lists that do not comply with quota rules must resubmit, or not compete in the election.

Countries with the strongest quota laws – meaning those that have gender parity combined with placement mandates and additional enforcement mechanisms – elect the most women. Comparing those with the strongest quotas (Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, and Nicaragua) to the remainder (weak quota or no quota) reveals a significant difference in women's election to the unicameral or lower chamber: 42 percent in the strong quota cases, and 22 percent in the weak quota or no quota cases.

Overall, gender quota laws have become increasing popular ways to increase women's access to political power in Latin America, as evidenced by application of quotas to the legislative and the executive branches. Additionally, some countries have adopted gender quotas for civil society associations. Argentina has applied a 30 percent quota for trade union directorates since 2001. Costa Rica has enforced gender parity for the

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[13] Htun and Piscopo, "Women in Politics and Policy," 2014.

[14] Jennifer M. Piscopo, "Leveraging Informality, Rewriting Formal Rules: The Implementation of Gender Parity in Mexico," in *Gender and Informal Institutions*, ed. Georgina Waylen (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 137-160.

[15] Kristin Wylie, *Party Institutionalization and Women's Representation in Democratic Brazil* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

boards of all registered non-profits since 2011, from traditionally feminine organisations such as charities to traditionally masculine groups such as sports leagues. Overall, gender quotas are popular policy tools used to gender public space and facilitate women's access to government, from legislatures to other types of public offices.[16]

From Presence to Power

Does women's greater presence in power lead to policy outcomes more favourable to women's rights? Women's inclusion does not automatically change the substantive activity of representation. While women presidents may enjoy more concentrated and unilateral policy authority, women legislators engage in the complex and often collaborative tasks of raising consciousness, introducing bills and amendments, lobbying, and voting.

Among women presidents, Bachelet of Chile stands out as the most vocal supporter of women's rights. During her first term, she expanded Chilean women's access to contraception, passed laws that protected working mothers from employment discrimination, and strengthened the executive branch's women's policy agency.[17] In her second term, she spearheaded an ambitious electoral reform that included a 40 percent gender quota and oversaw the liberalisation of abortion in cases of sexual assault, fetal impairment, or danger to the mother's health or life.[18] Even women presidents who eschewed the "feminist" label, such as Fernández in Argentina and Chinchilla in Costa Rica, still implemented policies that benefited women. Chinchilla's signature programme established elder and childcare centres throughout the country, which facilitated women's ability

[16] Piscopo, "States as Gender Equality Activists," 2015.

[17] Susan Franceschet, "Informal Institutions and Women's Representation in Chile (1990-2015)," in *Gender and Representation in Latin America*, ed. Leslie Schwindt-Bayer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 140-155.

[18] Franceschet, "Informal Institutions and Women's Representation in Chile, 2018.

to pursue paid employment.[19] Fernández likewise implemented many policies that benefited working-class and poor women.[20]

Whether women change policies to benefit women is a question more commonly studied with respect to the legislative branch. Latin American women legislators indeed influence policy. For instance, women's increased presence in the Argentine Congress led to increased bill introduction activity on women's rights from both women and men.[21] Women in the Costa Rican assembly have introduced women's perspectives on a range of issues, from discussing how fighting crime and combating corruption benefits mothers and families, to pushing for more women judicial nominees.[22]

Women lawmakers still face obstacles transforming their initiatives and their agendas into policy, however. Women's rights advocates in the Argentine Congress report having their efforts diminished by men party leaders, and bills related to women's rights are more than twice as likely to fail as other types of bills.[23] Importantly, policy change depends not just on women legislators and their cultivation of male allies in the chamber, but on presidential support, party organisations, and pressure from civil groups.[24]

Earlier studies on women legislators' influence documented their diminished presence on important legislative committees and their near-absence among presidents and vice-presidents of the chamber itself.[25] However, these patterns are slowly changing, thanks largely to increases in quota laws' thresholds: as women legislators become more numerous,

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[19] Farida Jalalzai, *Women Presidents of Latin America: Beyond Family Ties* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 233-235.

[20] Tiffany D. Barnes and Mark P. Jones, "Women's Political Representation in Argentina," in *Gender and Representation in Latin America*, ed. Leslie Schwindt-Bayer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 121-139.

[21] Htun, Lacalle, and Miccozi, "Does Women's Presence Change Legislative Behavior," 2013.

[22] Magda Hinojosa, Jill Carle, and Gina Serignese Woodall, "Speaking as a Woman: Descriptive Representation and Representation in Costa Rica's Legislative Assembly," *Journal of Women, Politics, and Policy* 39, no. 4 (2018): 407-429.

[23] Franceschet and Piscopo, "Quotas and Women's Substantive Representation," 2008.

[24] Blofield, Ewig, and Piscopo, "The Reactive Left," 2017.

[25] Leslie Schwindt-Bayer, *Political Power and Women's Representation in Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

party leaders cannot isolate them all on the low status, feminised committees, like housing and health. Mexico recently modified its internal rules to require that all legislative committees also have gender parity. In the past decade, women have presided over the assembly in Costa Rica and in Ecuador.

Overall, women's ascendance to political office in Latin America coincided with a period of progressive legal change. Eleven of the eighteen Latin American countries elected left-wing governments to power between 1998 and 2015. Latin American countries also expressed their commitment to women's rights through international treaties and agreements, including the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (1994), and the Quito Consensus on gender parity (2007). These international conventions help feminist activists fight for stronger laws in all areas, from violence against women to gender quotas. Equally important are regional networks and conferences that allow Latin American feminists to meet and strategise across national boundaries.[26]

Still, much work remains to make gender equality the reality in law and in practice. Gender-based violence is a serious problem throughout the region. Most countries have strong laws to prevent and punish offenders, but they are not usually enforced, leading to underreporting and impunity.[27] Gender-based violence follows women into political office, with increasing numbers of women candidates and women legislators coming forward to denounce sexual harassment and even physical assaults from their male co-partisans.[28] Race and class also affect all aspects of women's lives, from living free of violence to running for and holding office. Indigenous women and Afro-descendant women face not just sexism, but racism. They are

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[26] Elisabeth Jay Freidman, "Re(gion)alizing Women's Human Rights in Latin America," *Politics & Gender* 5, no. 3 (2009): 349-375; Conny Roggeband, "Ending Violence against Women in Latin America: Feminist Norm Setting in a Multilevel Context," *Politics & Gender* 12, no. 1 (2016): 143-167.

[27] Htun, O'Brien, and Weldon, "Movilización feminista," 2014.

[28] Edmé R. Domínguez and Marcia Pacheco O., "Beyond Parity in Figures: The Challenges and Reality of Municipal Women Councilors in Bolivia", *Iberoamericana* 47, no. 1 (2018): 1-12; Mona Lena Krook and Juliana Restrepo Sanín, "Gender and Political Violence in Latin America: Concepts, Debates, and Solutions," *Política y Goberino* 32, no. 1 (2016): 129-164.

dramatically underrepresented in elected office relative to their presence in the population, even though their voices are urgently needed.[29] In Bolivia, for example, it was indigenous women legislators who ensured that the pension reform included informal workers, many of whom are women and indigenous.[30]

Strengthening Women's Political Power

Scholars and activists have focused their attention on two institutions that can improve women lawmakers' access, voice, and power: standing committees with policy remits addressing women or gender and women's caucuses or other forms of women's networks.[31] Other initiatives include incentives, like candidate training programmes for women, designed to reduce party leaders' bias against women candidates.

Legislative standing committees participate in the policymaking process by revising and amending legislation and by monitoring the executive. Most Latin American legislatures have a standing committee charged with reviewing policy proposals that affect women. An inverse correlation exists between these gender equality committees and the participation of men legislators: when the committee name uses the words "women" or "gender" rather than "family" and "children", fewer men are members (though norms about gender parity in committee appointments are gradually shifting this balance).[32]

Unlike standing committees, women's caucuses do not have formal policy roles. Caucuses are cross-partisan networks of female legislators

[29] Jennifer M. Piscopo and Kristin Wylie, "Gender, Race, and Political Representation in Latin America," in *Encyclopedia of Latin American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.ORE_POL-01745.R1; Wylie, *Party Institutionalization,* 2018.

[30] Christina Ewig, "Forging Women's Substantive Representation: Intersectional Interests, Political Parity, and Pensions in Bolivia," *Politics & Gender* 14, no. 3 (2018): 433-459.

[31] Keila Gonzalez and Kirsten Sample, "One Size Does Not Fit All: Lessons Learned from Legislative Gender Commissions and Caucuses," (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2010); Jennifer M. Piscopo, "Committees and Caucuses: How Legislative Institutions Shape Substantive Representation in Latin America," (International Political Science Association: Montreal, 2014); Piscopo, "Leveraging Informality," 2017.

[32] Piscopo, "Committees and Caucuses," 2014.

that unite women based on their identity and serve as important institutional spaces in otherwise male-dominated legislatures.[33] In 2015, Chile, Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Uruguay all had women's caucuses. Though caucuses vary in terms of their profile, organisation, and resources, all have a policy agenda that expresses progressive policy goals.[34]

Caucuses are only one type of network formed by women politicians. Other networks draw former and current legislators together, like Panama's National Forum of Women in Political Parties, which successfully lobbied the electoral management body for better quota enforcement.[35] Gender equality observatories are another type of network, in which elected officials, state officials, lawyers, journalists, and feminist activists unite to monitor state compliance with particular gender equality laws. Observatories can mobilise quickly to denounce violations and abuse. Usually, they focus on violence against women or women's political rights. The latter are found in Mexico, Bolivia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, and Paraguay. Mexico's Observatory for the Promotion of Women's Political Rights helped the National Electoral Institute monitor parties' compliance with the gender parity mandate in the 2015 and 2018 elections, and Bolivia's Observatory of Parity Democracy has documented and denounced gender-based violence against women candidates.[36]

Beyond the legislature, Latin American countries have adopted other policy tools designed to promote women within the political parties and to facilitate their political careers.[37] Most gender quotas also apply to parties' governing boards. More recently, Latin America's election laws have

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[33] Niki Johnson and Cecilia Josefsson, "A New Way of Doing Politics? Cross-Party Women's Caucuses as Critical Actors in Uganda and Uruguay," *Representation* 69, no. 4 (2016): 845-859.

[34] Piscopo, "Committees and Caucuses," 2014.

[35] Jennifer M. Piscopo, "Cómo los observatorios promueven el cumplimiento de los derechos políticos de las mujeres" [How Observatories Promote the Fulfillment of Women's Political Rights], *Oraculos Blog*, March 28, 2019.

[36] Piscopo, "Cómo los observatorios promueven," 2019.

[37] Jana Morgan and Magda Hinojosa, "Women in Political Parties; Seen But Not Heard," in *Gender and Representation in Latin America*, ed. Leslie Schwindt-Bayer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 74-98.

tackled the question of money. In Latin America, political parties are publicly financed, and parties distribute state funds to candidates. In Chile, the electoral law gives parties a financial bonus for each woman elected, and reimburses women candidates for their expenses at higher rates than men candidates. Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, and Panama require that parties set aside portions of their budget to train women candidates. Many private or civil society organisations also offer candidate training for women, with the stated purpose of combating party leaders' oft-heard lament that "there are no women" to nominate.[38] Taken together, these initiatives are additional mechanisms designed to help women gain office and to govern effectively once elected.

Conclusion

In Latin America, the adoption and implementation of effective gender quota laws at the national level has increased women's political representation and deepened women's access to political power. Quotas and parity demonstrate and reinforce norms that emphasise the importance of women's presence in government, from the legislature to the cabinet. Indeed, countries throughout Latin America have expanded quotas and parity to the executive branch, the judiciary, the political parties, and civil society. Additionally, women are designing institutions, forming networks, and changing practices, all to influence the passage and implementation of better and stronger gender equality reforms. Women politicians and activists are also raising their voices to denounce the practices that still keep women out of politics, such as gender-based harassment and assault.

The connection between women's presence and their empowerment ultimately depends not only on increasing the proportions of women in political office, but on changing the beliefs, institutions, and practices that structure women politicians' opportunities to act effectively. Policies have changed when domestic and international actors worked together to hold political leaders – whether men or women – accountable for advancing women's rights.

[38] Jennifer M. Piscopo, "The Limits of Leaning in: Ambition, Recruitment, and Candidate Training in Comparative Perspective," *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 7, no. 4 (2019): 817-828.

Women in Political Office in North America

Farida Jalalzai

Introduction

This chapter examines women's progress in obtaining positions of political leadership in North America. While making some comparisons to its northern and southern neighbours, this chapter mainly concentrates on the United States. It provides an overview of patterns of office-holding and identifies opportunities for improvements. It concludes by offering insights into how women can influence the political agenda and help women better articulate and further advance their political interests. Women's political incorporation varies throughout the region. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Mexico has the highest level of women in the national legislature in North America and ranks fifth overall in the world: 49% of the seats in both the Chamber of Deputies and Senate are held by women. Women occupy 29% percent of seats in the House of Commons and 49% of the Senate in Canada. Finally, women make up 23% of members of the House of Representatives and account for 25% of senators in the United States.[1] The United States places near the middle of the pack globally, ahead of Croatia and Brazil but behind the United Arab Emirates and South Africa. This is in spite of the fact that women in the US outpace men in degree attainment and benefit from more progressive attitudes regarding gender and political leadership.

[1] https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=3&year=2020. Accessed 13 April 2020.

Trends

After a very slow start, women started making inroads in the US Congress during the 1990s. By 2000, they still only comprised 13% and 9% of the House and Senate respectively. Twenty years later, women made gains in both chambers, more than doubling their percentages in the Senate. Though enjoying record numbers compared to previous decades, women, however, still remain grossly under-represented in Congress. This chapter explains why the US still lags behind many countries worldwide in this regard and why it matters.

Explanations for Women's Political Under-Representation

A main explanation for women's under-representation in legislative positions centres on institutions. Parliamentary systems have greater percentages of women legislators and countries using proportional representation (PR) electoral systems tend to see a higher share of women in parliament.[2] Generally, countries with PR systems promote women at a higher rate, followed by mixed systems, and finally, single-member majoritarian systems.[3]

In multi-member districts, having a greater number of seats at stake (higher district magnitude) is generally considered better for women. Many argue that closed lists, where the party exerts control over the order of candidates on the ballot, enhances women's presence.[4] Others, however, find that open lists, where the public is able to register a preference, may

[2] "The Proportion of Women in Legislatures and Cabinets: What is the Empirical Link?" *Polity* 49, no. 3 (2017): 434-460; Rainbow Murray, "French Lesson: What the UK can Learn from the French Experiment with Gender Parity." *Political Quarterly,* 83, no 4 (2012): 735-741; Rob Salmond, "Proportional Representation and Female Parliamentarians." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (2006): 175-204.

[3] Manon Tremblay, "The Substantive Representation of Women and PR: Some Reflections on the Role of Surrogate Representation and Critical Mass." *Politics & Gender,* 2 no. 4 (2006): 502-511.

[4] Miki Caul Kittilson, "Women's Representation in Parliament: The Role of Political Parties." *Party Politics* 5, no. 1 (1999): 79-98; Maarja Luhiste, "Party Gatekeepers' Support for Viable Female Candidacy in PR-List Systems." *Politics & Gender* 11 no 1 (2015): 89-116.

be better for women, depending on the context.[5] Whether the party or the general public in a particular country proves receptive to women in power should therefore be considered.

Countries increasingly adopted legislative quotas in the 1990s. Quota effectiveness is highly dependent on many factors, including the strength of enforcement mechanisms and electoral system type. While the ultimate impact of quotas on women's legislative incorporation varies, many countries with the greatest percentages of women parliamentarians use quotas.[6]

The United States utilises single member majoritarian districts and lacks quotas. The incumbency advantage (there are no federal term limits) further constrains women since they are less likely to hold seats in the first place.[7] In comparison, Canada has quotas at the party level. While women's percentages in the Canadian Senate appear impressive, it should be noted that it is an appointed body that is substantially weaker than the House of Commons. That Canada also utilises single member districts may explain why it is only slightly ahead of the United States in terms of women's percentage in the lower house (29% versus 25%).

Mexico uses a mixed electoral system (a combination of both single districts and PR seats in each chamber). A legislative quota was enacted in 2003. A series of reforms, including a constitutional measure passed in 2014, strengthened the quota mandate and enforcement mechanisms. This enabled women to gain about nearly half the seats in the Chamber of Deputies and Senate in 2018. Crucially, not only did the quota require

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[5] Sona N. Golder, Laura B. Stephenson, Karine Van Der Straeten, André Blais, Damien Bol, Philipp Harfst, and Jean François Laslier, "Votes for Women: Electoral Systems and Support for Female Candidates." *Politics and Gender* 13, no. 1 (2017): 107-131.

[6] Susan Franceschet, Mona Lena Krook, and Jennifer M. Piscopo, *The Impact of Gender Quotas*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012; Mona Lena Krook, *Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

[7] Sue Thomas and Clyde Wilcox (editors), *Women and Elective Office*, 2nd edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

equal numbers of men and women candidates, parties could also no longer relegate women to just unwinnable districts.[8]

Other explanations for women's lack of progress in obtaining legislative positions centre on structural conditions. Evidence from US congressional elections largely demonstrate that women can and do win when they run and downplay gender discrimination as a hindrance.[9] Research also suggests, however, that women invest much time troubleshooting for sexist or gendered treatment coming from the public, political elites, and the mass media and have to work twice as long to secure the same funding as their male counterparts.[10]

Women's lack of confidence in their own credentials contributes to the leaky political pipeline. Highly educated women and those from professions considered springboards to political careers are also less prone to view themselves as eligible for office and are less likely to be recruited as candidates compared to their male counterparts.[11]

Family duties have kept political careers out of women's reach.[12] Others, however, do not point to this as a leading factor hindering women.[13] Yet, both political elites and the general public prefer "traditional"

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[8] Magda Hinojosa and Jennifer Piscopo, "Women Won Big in Mexico's Elections Taking Nearly Half of the Legislature's Seats. Here's Why." Washington Post, Monkey Cage. July 11, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/07/11/women-won-big-in mexicos-elections-taking-nearly-half-the-legislatures-seats-heres-why/.

[9] Danny Hayes and Jennifer Lawless, *Women on the Run: Gender, Media, and Political Campaigns in a Polarized Era.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016; Kathleen Dolan, *When Does Gender Matter? Women Candidates and Gender Stereotypes in American Elections*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

[10] Shauna L. Shames, Rachel I. Bernhard, Mirya R. Holman, and Dawn Langan Teele (editors), *Good Reasons to Run: Women and Political Candidacy.* Philadelphia, PA. Temple University Press, 2020.

[11] David Niven, "Party Elites and Women Candidates: The Shape of Bias." In *Women, Gender and Politics: A Reader*, edited by Mona Lena Krook and Sarah Childs, 151-58. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010; Kelly Dittmar, *Navigating Gendered Terrain: Stereotypes and Strategy in Political Campaigns*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015.

[12] Barbara C. Burrell, *A Woman's Place Is in the House: Campaigning for Congress in the Feminist Era*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994.

[13] Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox, *It Still Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010; Richard L. Fox, and Jennifer L. Lawless, "Reconciling Family Roles with Political Ambition: The New Normal for Women in Twenty-First Century U.S. Politics." *The Journal of Politics* 76, no. 2 (2014): 398-414.

candidates – ones that are married and with children.[14] This preference unduly burdens women given the difficulty of balancing family responsibilities with full-time political careers.

Impacts of Women in Office

The dearth of women in politics matters in a democracy. Women in politics send important messages to the public about the accessibility of institutions to women. Recognition of this enhanced legitimacy makes women (and men) more confident in their ability to affect the political system, heightens their interest in politics, and increases their likelihood of participating in the public sphere. This context creates a more active, vibrant, and representative political context from which all can benefit. Prominent women role models may also generate greater public support for female leadership and may inspire women and girls to enter the political fray.[15] Several studies confirm that women legislators do act more on behalf of women's policy interests, even after controlling for other relevant factors such as party.[16] For these reasons and more, women's political incorporation is imperative.

Strategies and Opportunities

Women's presence will not increase absent significant structural, cultural, and institutional shifts. Women need resources to wage effective political

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[14] Dawn L. Teele, Joshua Kalla, and Frances Rosenbluth, "The Ties That Double Bind: Social Roles and Women's Underrepresentation in Politics." *American Political Science Review, 112*, no .3 (2018): 525-541.

[15] Amy C. Alexander and Farida Jalalzai, "Symbolic Empowerment and Female Heads of States and Government: A Global, Multilevel Analysis." *Politics, Groups, and Identities,* 8: no 1, 2020: 24-43; Christina Wolbrecht and David E. Campbell, "Leading by Example: Female Members of Parliament as Political Role Models." *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 4 (2007): 921-39; Christina Wolbrecht and David E. Campbell, "Role Models Revisited: Youth, Novelty, and the Impact of Female Candidates." *Politics, Groups, & Identities* 5 no 3 (2017): 418-34.

[16] Sarah Childs, "Hitting the Target: Are Labour Women MPs 'Acting for' Women?" *Parliamentary Affairs* 55 (2002):143-53; Debra L. Dodson, *The Impact of Women in Congress*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006; Kelly Dittmar, Kira Sanbonmatsu, and Susan J. Carroll, *A Seat at the Table Congresswomen's Perspectives on Why Their Presence Matters*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

campaigns. A number of organisations aim to spur women's confidence, efficacy, and ambition. Affiliated programmes help build financial support for women candidates. Parties must actively recruit a diverse array of women candidates. Through a host of virtual networks, women share successful electoral strategies and advocate on behalf of issues important to them. Such linkages build mentoring systems between seasoned and up-and-coming women leaders.

Individually, women can pursue issues that they are passionate about and use that as their starting point, not power itself. Women are more likely to pursue office when they identify a specific goal. They can focus on making a difference overall but also concentrate on advancing policies empowering women. Expansions of paid family leave across states and on the national stage are necessary to address work/life balance. Identifying the personal, cultural and professional barriers to advancement or leadership and determining potential opportunities for overcoming challenges is also key.

Women can also work to build a trusted team of personal and professional advisors, develop a base of supporters from within their specific communities and build relationships with those who can help them attain power, including party members, leaders, government colleagues, and civil society. Again, the motivation is not power for its own sake, but for empowering marginalised groups, including women. That women in the US have surpassed men in their attainment of college and Masters degrees also presents an opportunity for women's political empowerment. Networks of alumni together can help bring change and support women's bids for office. Educational settings are ideal for transmitting political aspirations to future women leaders.

Since 1980, the proportion of women voting in US presidential elections is higher than men. Women's turnout could make a substantial difference on politics especially since they more often vote for the Democratic Party, which generally takes more liberal positions on gender issues. Activists need to recognise women as an even stronger force in politics and send messages to political candidates and politicians that they will not gain election or retain power without women's support.

But the responsibility cannot just be placed on the shoulders of individual women and women as a group. Candidate training, networking, active recruitment, and even running for office can only go so far toward

the goal of empowering women. Absent larger institutional and cultural change, women will not gain political footholds or be able to empower women through their work.[17] While there is truth underpinning the mantra that "when women run, they win," the literature outlined throughout this chapter also confirm that women still navigate a highly gendered political terrain. Society as a whole must acknowledge these inequities, confront them and work to dismantle them. Women still must exert much effort counteracting negative perceptions of women's leadership. Sexism among the public, the political establishment, and the media should be called out rather than ignored if there is to be any hope of changing attitudes and behaviours. Highlighting the difference women can make as political actors can be used to press for changes in the electoral laws. As mentioned, quotas matter. Actors committed to women's empowerment in the United States can take advantage of the many resources available that provide information on how to best design quotas.

Conclusions

Women in North America are gaining ground in politics. The reality is, however, much more work must be done. There has never been a better opportunity to develop strategies for political empowerment. With more women at the helm, women as a group will attain a greater sense of efficacy and have greater willingness to participate in the political system. As suggested, women legislators are also more likely to work on behalf of issues important to women. Even in spite of differing ideological and partisan considerations, women can caucus together to identify issues and employ strategies that empower women. This is not only better for women but for democracy overall.

[17] Kelly Dittmar, "Encouragement is not Enough: Addressing Social and Structural Barriers to Female Recruitment." *Politics & Gender, 11*(4) 2015b: 759-765.

Women in Politics in Northeast Asia: South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan

Young-Im Lee

Introduction

As of May 2020, the average proportion of women in Asia's national parliaments in lower and upper houses is 20.3%, which is slightly lower than the world average of 25%.[1] Even though the number of female members of parliament (MPs) has grown since 1999, the share of women in the national parliaments in the three Northeast Asian democracies varies: 10% in Japan (lower house), 19% in South Korea, and 42% in Taiwan.[2] The current share would have ranked Taiwan as the 15th highest in the world, if the Inter-Parliamentary Union were to count Taiwan as a country. In contrast, the growth has been slow and the share still relatively low in South Korea (ranked the 117th) and Japan (the 166th).[3]

Once elected, women MPs have made efforts to represent women's interests. For example, female MPs in Taiwan and South Korea proposed more bills on feminist issues, childcare, education, and social welfare is-

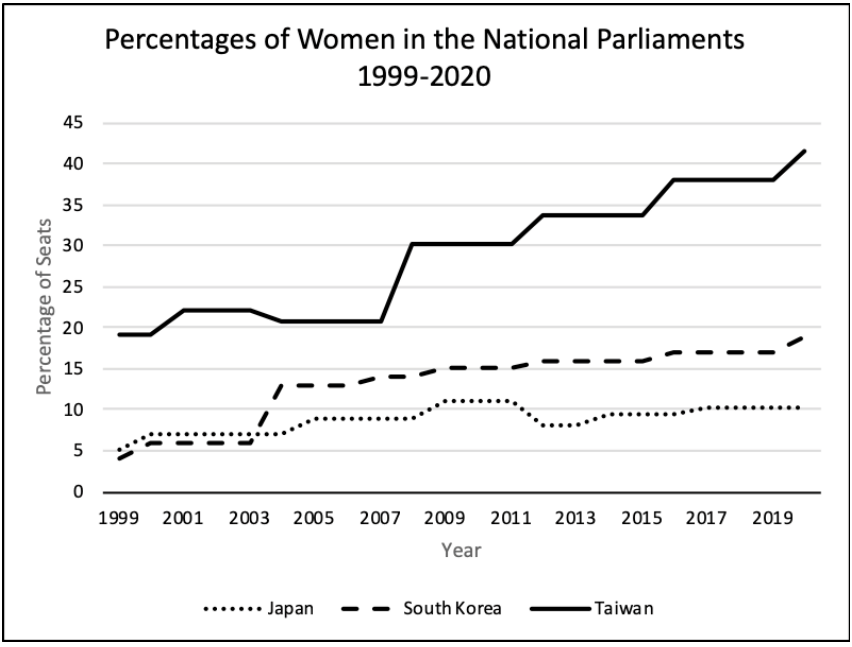
[1] Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in Parliament: Global and Regional Averages," IPU Parline, 2020, https://data.ipu.org/women-averages.

[2] Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Percentage of Women in National Parliaments - Ranking as of 1st May 2020," IPU Parline, 2020, https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=5&year=2020; Korean National Election Commission, "Election Statistics," Korean National Election Commission, 2020, http://info.nec.go.kr/main/showDocument.xhtml?electionId=0000000000&topMenuId=BI; Taiwan Central Election Commission, "2020 Legislator Election," Taiwan Central Election Commission, 2020, https://www.cec.gov.tw/english/cms/le/32472.

[3] Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Percentage of Women in National Parliaments - Ranking as of 1st May 2020."

sues than their male counterparts.[4] Japanese women MPs organised an all-partisan parliamentary group which prepared the historic Gender Parity Law on 16 April 2018.[5]

Graph 1: Percentage of women in the national parliaments, 1999–2020.



Data sources: Inter-Parliamentary Union, and Taiwan Central Election Commission.

It should also be noted that both South Korea and Taiwan have elected a female president respectively. Park Geun-hye was elected in 2012, being

[4] Cal Clark and Janet Clark, "Women in Taiwan: The Opportunities and Limits of Socioeconomic and Political Change for Women's Empowerment," in *Women and Politics Around the World: A Comparative History and Survey*, ed. Marian Lief Palley and Joyce Gelb (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 605–21; Young-Im Lee, "South Korea: Women's Political Representation," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Women's Political Rights*, ed. Susan Franceschet, Mona Lena Krook, and Netina Tan (London, UK, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 627–40.

[5] *Gender Studies Journal*, "The Gender Parity Law in Japan: The Potential to Change Women's Under-Representation: Interview with Mari Miura," ジェンダー研究 *(Gender Studies)* 21, no. 1 (2018): 87–99.

the first female president of South Korea.[6] However, she was impeached in 2016, and later sentenced to 25 years in prison due to bribery.[7] Tsai Ing-wen was elected in 2016, becoming the first female president of Taiwan,[8] and was re-elected in a landslide victory in January 2020.[9] Before Tsai, Lü Hsiu-lien (Annette Lu) was elected as the first female vice-president of Taiwan in 2000, serving for eight years with Chen Shui-bian.[10] Japan has not elected a female prime minister yet, but leaders like Tokyo's first female governor Koike Yuriko, the former Defense Minister Inada Tomomi, and the former Democratic Party leader Murata Renho are knocking against the glass ceiling.[11]

Why and how does Taiwan have a higher level of women's representation at the national level, compared to Japan and South Korea? How can women's presence in the national parliaments improve in a sustainable, empowering way? This chapter explains how the specific mechanisms of a mixed electoral system in Japan and gender quotas in Taiwan and South Korea result in varying levels of women's electoral success. The chapter concludes by proposing ways to improve women's presence in politics, emphasizing the important roles that political parties can play to promote women's political representation before and after elections.

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[6] Young-Im Lee, "From First Daughter to First Lady to First Woman President: Park Geun-Hye's Path to the South Korean Presidency," *Feminist Media Studies* 17, no. 3 (2017): 377–91.

[7] Sang-hun Choe, "Park Geun-Hye, Ex-South Korean Leader, Gets 25 Years in Prison," *New York Times*, August 24, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/24/world/asia/park-geun-hye-sentenced-south-korea.html.

[8] Austin Ramzy, "Tsai Ing-Wen Sworn In as Taiwan's President, as China Watches Closely," *The New York Times*, May 19, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/20/world/asia/tsai-ing-wen-sworn-in-as-taiwans-president-as-china-watches-closely.html?_r=0.

[9] Emily Feng, "Rebuking China, Taiwan Votes To Reelect President Tsai Ing-Wen," *National Public Radio*, January 11, 2020, https://www.npr.org/2020/01/11/795573457/rebuking-china-taiwan-votes-to-reelect-president-tsai-ing-wen.

[10] Wen-hui Anna Tang and Emma J. Teng, "Looking Again at Taiwan's Lü Hsiu-Lien: A Female Vice President or a Feminist Vice President?," *Women's Studies International Forum* 56 (2016): 92–102.

[11] Elise Hu, "Women Are Making Their Voices Heard In Male-Dominated Japanese Politics," *National Public Radio*, January 13, 2017, https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2017/01/13/509611952/women-are-making-their-voices-heard-in-male-dominated-japanese-politics.

Challenges and Opportunities for Women's Representation

Electoral System

South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan use mixed electoral systems, where some of the MPs are elected by the first-past-the-post system in single-member districts (SMD) and the remaining seats are allocated proportional to each party's vote share (proportional representation, PR). For the PR seats, political parties select and rank their candidates before the election. A PR system tends to see more women elected than an SMD system, as political parties have an incentive to create a more inclusive slate of candidates.[12] A mixed electoral system can achieve a high level of minority representation through the PR system while providing a mechanism for geographic representation and accountability through the SMD system.[13]

In all three countries, the share of female MPs is higher in the PR tier than in the SMD tier. In South Korea, women make up 11.4% of the 253 SMD seats, and 60% of the 47 PR seats.[14] About one third of the SMD seats in Taiwan are filled by women, whereas 55.8% of the 34 PR members are women.[15] In Japan, only 8% of the 289 SMD members and 13% of the 176 PR members are women.[16]

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[12] Wilma Rule, "Women's Underrepresentation and Electoral Systems," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 27, no. 4 (1994): 689–92; Rob Salmond, "Proportional Representation and Female Parliamentarians," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (2006): 175–204; Leslie A. Schwindt-Bayer and William Mishler, "An Integrated Model of Women's Representation," *Journal of Politics* 67, no. 2 (July 29, 2005): 407–28.

[13] Tracy-Ann Johnson-Myers, *The Mixed Member Proportional System: Providing Greater Representation for Women? A Case Study of the New Zealand Experience* (Springer International Publishing, 2017).

[14] Korean National Election Commission, "Election Statistics."

[15] Legislative Yuan of Taiwan, "第10屆 立法委員名單," Legislative Yuan of Taiwan, 2020, https://www.ly.gov.tw/Pages/List.aspx?nodeid=109.

[16] The House of Representatives of Japan, "Composition of the House," The House of Representatives of Japan, 2020, http://www.shugiin.go.jp/internet/itdb_english.nsf/html/statics/member/mem_a.htm; The International Foundation for Electoral Systems, "Japan Election for Shugiin, Oct 22, 2017," IFES Election Guide, 2020, http://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/3114/.

However, recent scholarship shows that this correlation is not as significant as previously thought.[17] Japan and South Korea show that electoral rule changes alone do not lead to sustained growths in female political representation. When Japan changed its electoral system from the SMD system to the mixed system in 1996, the share of female MPs immediately increased from 4.6% to 7.3%, but the growth has since stagnated. Similarly, the share of women in the National Assembly exceeded 10% for the first time right after the adoption of the mixed system and gender quotas in 2004, but since then it has reached a plateau. The mixed system has led to only slightly more women MPs, partly because the share of PR seats in the parliament is smaller than the SMDs': 18% of the seats in South Korea and 37.8% in Japan are PR seats. Thus, the number of seats more conducive to electing women is not large in the first place. However, Taiwan's PR seats are 30% of the Legislative Yuan, but its share of women MPs is four times higher than that of Japan. Hence, the share of PR seats is not a sufficient reason to explain women's under-representation.

A more compelling reason for women's under-representation under the mixed system is political parties' candidate nomination and district assignment practices. Both in South Korea and Japan, political parties are more likely to assign women candidates to run as challengers against another party's incumbents, and less likely to assign them to run in their own parties' strongholds. Women lack three critical resources, "*jiban* (a local support base), *kanban* (name recognition) and *kaban* (financial resources)," and thus face greater challenges in district elections than men in Japan.[18] Women incumbents' success rate is also much lower than that of male incumbents.[19]

To make the matter even more challenging for women, Japanese parties use a distinctive dual candidacy system, which undermines the potential of the PR system in achieving a more representative legislature.

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[17] Andrew Roberts, Jason Seawright, and Jennifer Cyr, "Do Electoral Laws Affect Women's Representation?," *Comparative Political Studies* 46, no. 12 (2013): 1555–81.

[18] Sherry L. Martin, "Japanese Women: In Pursuit of Gender Equality," in *Women and Politics Around the World: A Comparative History and Survey*, ed. Marian Lief Palley and Joyce Gelb (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 397–419.

[19] Miyuki Kubo and Aie Rie Lee, "Electing Women to the Japanese Lower House: The Impact of the Electoral System," *Asian Women* 33, no. 2 (2017): 69–99.

The majority of candidates run for both SMD and PR seats: if they narrowly lose in the district election, they have a second chance in the PR election. Many parties place these dual candidates at the same ranking on their PR lists before the election (for example, twenty candidates are ranked as the third place on the PR list). After the election, the candidates who were placed at the same rank on the list before the election are ranked again based on "the best-loser ratio," the ratio of the number of votes a candidate won compared to the district's winner. Thus, those who lost by the narrowest margins are more likely to be elected as the PR members. Due to the dual candidacy system, with equal ranking placements on the PR list, the SMD election results are tied to the PR result[20] and cannot promote the outcome of diversifying the candidate slate as effectively as other PR systems.

Gender Quotas in Taiwan and South Korea

Japan has not enacted gender quotas to promote women's representation in the national government. Four opposition parties submitted a bill proposing a gender quota for the election in 2016, but did not get enough support from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party for it to pass.[21] The aforementioned Gender Parity Law stipulates that political parties should aim for gender parity in candidate nomination, but it is not a gender quota.[22] The lack of a gender quota for elections partly explains the dearth of women MPs in Japan, compounded by the aforementioned dual candidacy and candidate nomination pattern. What then explains the differing share of women MPs in Taiwan and South Korea in spite of gender quotas in the two countries?

Taiwan has had reserved seats for women at the local level since the 1950s; 5% to 10% of local council seats are stipulated to be reserved for women, depending on the district size. Taiwanese feminists such as Peng

[20] Kubo and Lee.

[21] Rieko Kage, Frances M. Rosenbluth, and Seiki Tanaka, "What Explains Low Female Political Representation? Evidence from Survey Experiments in Japan," *Politics and Gender* 15, no. 2 (2019): 285–309.

[22] *Gender Studies Journal*, "The Gender Parity Law in Japan: The Potential to Change Women's Under-Representation: Interview with Mari Miura."

Wan-Ru led an effort to expand the gender quota, which eventually resulted in the 2005 constitutional amendment mandating at least half of each party's PR candidates be women. If the PR candidate list does not meet the 50% gender quota, the Central Election Commission does not accept the party's candidate list. If a party lists all the women at the bottom of the list, the Commission will skip the men ranked higher and give the seats to women, to make sure half of the eligible seats for each party go to women.[23] At the local level, at least one seat out of every four seats is to be held by a woman.[24]

The gender quota at the local level has increased the number of female candidates and female council members.[25] The local-level gender quota fills a pipeline of women candidates for national-level offices, and local members go on to win national-level non-quota seats, thereby offering upward mobility for female politicians.[26] On the other hand, the national-level gender quota has not been a vehicle for upward mobility, as national-level PR experience does not improve one's chances of winning SMD seats at the national level. Moreover, more than half of female PR members who served between 2008 and 2012 left politics after their term was over, compared to 30% of their male counterparts.[27]

In South Korea, women's organisations made a cross-ideological coalition in the 1990s to demand gender quotas for elections.[28] Immediately before the 2004 parliamentary election, the new Election Law stipulated a mandatory 50% gender quota for the national PR candidate list. The Law requires political parties to alternate women and men on the PR candidate list, with the first candidate on the list being a woman. For the SMD seats

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[23] Chang-Ling Huang, "Reserved for Whom? The Electoral Impact of Gender Quotas in Taiwan," *Pacific Affairs* 89, no. 2 (2016): 325–43.

[24] Chang-ling Huang, "Gender Quotas and Women's Increasing Political Competitiveness," *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 1 (2019): 25–40.

[25] Nathan F. Batto, Wen-Jong Juang, and Chiung-Chu Lin, "從四分之一到三分之一？ 婦女保障席次的選舉效應評估(From One Fourth to One Third: The Electoral Effects of Reserved Female Seats)," 東吳政治學報 32, no. 1 (2014): 99–141.

[26] Nathan F. Batto, "Gender Quotas and Upward Mobility in Elections in Taiwan," *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 39, no. 4 (2018): 1–16.

[27] Huang, "Gender Quotas and Women's Increasing Political Competitiveness."

[28] Ki-young Shin, "An Alternative Form of Women's Political Representation: Netto, a Proactive Women's Party in Japan," *Politics and Gender* 16, no. 1 (2020): 78–98.

at the national level, on the other hand, the law only *recommends* that parties *make an effort* to assign women as at least 30% of its SMD candidates.[29] At the local level, there is a mandatory 50% gender quota for the PR list, with strong sanctions for non-compliance as in Taiwan.

However, the growth in the number of women MPs has been slow, because parties do not follow the "recommended" 30% candidate quota for SMD seats. The monetary incentive for SMD quota compliance is inconsequential. More importantly, party factional leaders use the candidate nomination system as a way to reward their followers' loyalty rather than achieve other causes such as gender parity.[30] Unlike in Taiwan, local council members did not win any SMD elections between 2000 and 2016 in South Korea. Worse still, national-level PR experience does not boost one's bid for national-level SMD elections, similar to the situation in Taiwan. Political parties give priority to SMD members over PR members in leadership positions assignment, financial support, and candidate nomination. Therefore, many PR members have a hard time getting nominated and re-elected for SMD seats,[31] even though the situation seems to have improved in the most recent elections. In the April 2020 elections, 57 women were elected, the highest ever in South Korean history. Eight of 24 female PR members elected in 2016 were nominated to run for the district-level seats in 2020, and four eventually won their seats (7% of the 57 women winners).[32]

What Should be Done? The Role of Political Parties

Existing literature focuses on "three main suspects" to understand women's persistent political under-representation: voters' reluctance to vote for women; women's low level of interest in pursuing political office;

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[29] Young-Im Lee, "The Leaky Pipeline and Sacrificial Lambs: Gender, Candidate Nomination, and District Assignment in South Korea's National Legislative Elections," *Electoral Studies* 59 (2019): 27–38.

[30] Hyunji Lee and Ki-young Shin, "Gender Quotas and Candidate Selection Processes in South Korean Political Parties," *Pacific Affairs* 89, no. 2 (2016): 345–68.

[31] Lee, "The Leaky Pipeline and Sacrificial Lambs: Gender, Candidate Nomination, and District Assignment in South Korea's National Legislative Elections."

[32] Young-Im Lee, "Five Things to Know about Women and South Korea's 2020 Elections," *Washington Post*, May 11, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/05/11/five-things-know-about-women-south-koreas-2020-election.

and political elites' unwillingness to nominate and support women candidates.[33] Studies have shown that voters are willing to and do vote for women candidates,[34] even though they prefer women candidates who were selected by primaries rather than top-down party nomination.[35] One study points to the gender gap in willingness to run for office, as the number of women candidates has never been bigger than that of men candidates in all three countries. Japanese women are reluctant to run for office due to socially expected gender roles in families.[36] Moreover, women's interest in running for office is undermined by the situation where constituency building for election requires round-the-clock availability and is built around a masculine culture, with practices such as backroom dealing and heavy drinking.[37]

Party gatekeepers are a stronger factor in women's under-representation than the gender gap in political ambition. Political parties can and need to encourage more women to run for office, and to strengthen women candidates' electability. The positive impact of institutional arrangements like the mixed electoral system and the gender quotas on women's political representation depends on the political parties. The experience in Japan shows the critical role political parties play in nominating and electing women. Koizumi Junichiro of the Liberal Democratic Party in 2005, and Ozawa Ichiro of the Democratic Party of Japan in 2009 promoted many female candidates for strategic reasons. Due to these major parties' initiatives, the number of women candidates and MPs in the 2009 election was the highest ever in Japan. The record has not been broken since,

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[33] David Niven, "Throwing Your Hat Out of the Ring: Negative Recruitment and the Gender Imbalance in State Legislative Candidacy," *Politics & Gender* 2, no. 4 (2006): 473–89.

[34] Kage, Rosenbluth, and Tanaka, "What Explains Low Female Political Representation? Evidence from Survey Experiments in Japan"; Lee, "The Leaky Pipeline and Sacrificial Lambs: Gender, Candidate Nomination, and District Assignment in South Korea's National Legislative Elections."

[35] Young-Im Lee and Timothy S. Rich, "The Impact of Gender and Nomination Paths on Strategic Voting: Experimental Evidence from South Korea," *Representation* 54, no. 4 (2018): 313–30.

[36] Kage, Rosenbluth, and Tanaka, "What Explains Low Female Political Representation? Evidence from Survey Experiments in Japan."

[37] Chang-Ling Huang, "Gender Quotas in Taiwan: The Impact of Global Diffusion," *Politics & Gender* 11, no. 1 (2015): 207–17; Kage, Rosenbluth, and Tanaka, "What Explains Low Female Political Representation? Evidence from Survey Experiments in Japan"; Lee, "The Leaky Pipeline and Sacrificial Lambs: Gender, Candidate Nomination, and District Assignment in South Korea's National Legislative Elections."

because these parties nominated more women not with long-term gender equality in mind but for short-term electoral gains. Even worse, these women were considered as subjects to the party boss, being labelled as "Koizumi's female children" or "the Ozawa girls."[38] In South Korea, PR members are considered to be beneficiaries of the gender quotas, and they are expected to vote along party lines on controversial issues to pay back the party for the favour. This means some female PR members vote against women's interests under the pressure to conform.[39] Thus, policymakers need to consider measures not only to immediately increase the number of women MPs, but also to enable their autonomy and empowerment after the election.

From these three countries' experiences, designing a mechanism in which women are expected to engage in constituency formation seems to be more beneficial than relegating women to be the simple beneficiaries of gender quotas.[40] In order to achieve this, political parties can maintain and expand a pool of female candidate aspirants, provide financial support for women, and offer leadership development programmes.[41] This way, women can utilise the political capital to win elections and aim for even higher positions afterwards, reducing the likelihood of career interruption and termination of experienced women MPs. Moreover, women will be less likely to consider themselves as owing something to the party under this type of arrangement than when they are pejoratively considered as "quota women," a label that restricts their legislative activities even after the election. Once elected, increasing women's leadership in legislative committees, establishing policy advisory boards for women-related policies within the parliament, recruiting more female legislative staff, and creating coalitions and support networks among female MPs can help create gender-sensitive parliaments. In this environment, women MPs

[38] Kubo and Lee, "Electing Women to the Japanese Lower House: The Impact of the Electoral System."

[39] Ki-young Shin, "Women's Mobilizations for Political Representation in Patriarchal States: Models from Japan and South Korea," in *Gender and Power: Towards Equality and Democratic Governance*, ed. Mino Vianello and Mary Hawkesworth (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 344–65.

[40] Batto, "Gender Quotas and Upward Mobility in Elections in Taiwan."

[41] Jiso Yoon and Ki-young Shin, "Mixed Effects of Legislative Quotas in South Korea," *Politics and Gender* 11, no. 1 (2015): 186–95.

will be able to participate more effectively in parliamentary affairs and are empowered to be more responsive to women's interests, needs, and concerns if they desire.[42]

[42] Won-Hong Kim et al., "Research on the Measure to Strengthen the Effectiveness of Political Candidates' Gender Quota System : The Achievement and Its Limitation," 2016. Korean Women's Development Institute.

Women and Political Leadership in South Asia[1]

Mallarika Sinha Roy

Introduction

The issues of gender equality and women's autonomy have been recognised as key factors in the recent political discourses.[2] However, it has also been argued, and rightly so, that if we want to operationalise these ideas at various socio-economic levels of the stratified societies of South Asian countries, we must understand the entrenched structures of inequality based on multiple identities such as class, caste, religion, ethnicity, and region. Gender is implicated in each of these identities. The popular notions of public and private, nature and culture, reason and emotion, modern and primitive become analytical features through which gender becomes involved in shaping individual and collective identities. An overview of

[1] South Asia as a geopolitical entity consists of: India (independence achieved from Britain in 1947), Pakistan (independence achieved from Britain in 1947), Bangladesh (independence achieved from Pakistan in 1971), Bhutan (in 1910 the Kingdom of Bhutan signed the Treaty of Punakha that recognised the political autonomy of Bhutan from the British colonial rule in India and this treaty was a further consolidation of the Treaty of Sinchula signed in 1865), Nepal (in 1923 the British colonial rule in India recognised Nepal as an independent kingdom and in 2008 it became a federal democratic republic), Sri Lanka (became independent from Britain as the Dominion of Ceylon in 1948 and became Republic of Sri Lanka in 1972), Myanmar (Burma became independent from the British in 1948 and in 1989 the ruling military junta changed the name to Myanmar), Afghanistan (the history of Afghanistan is complex as it was never fully occupied by any imperialist force and yet has been vulnerable to the aggressive machinations of several imperial powers throughout the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries), Maldives (achieved independence from the British in 1965).

[2] Anne Phillips (ed), *Feminism and Equality* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987); Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (eds), *Feminists Theorize the Political* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Michelle Barrett and Anne Phillips (eds), *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

female political leadership in South Asia with special references to opportunities, gaps, negotiations, and resistances of "women" must be situated within these complexities of social formations.

In the last couple of decades the scholarship on gender and politics in the South Asian context has developed theoretical depth and a wide-ranging coverage of issues. This article is strategically placed within this scholarship.[3] This scholarship offers a framework to understand how the politics of gender influences the formation of "woman" as a political category and how the interests, needs, and concerns of this category are defined in different South Asian countries. Drawing from the larger body of feminist scholarship, and especially, South Asian feminist scholarship, this article makes an effort to elaborate an overview of female political leadership in South Asia.

Women and Politics in South Asia

In order to understand the complexities of women's political leadership it is imperative to recognise that gender is not a synonym for women. If we agree with Simone de Beauvoir's foundational statement that one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one, it will be reductive to accept that men are born men.[4] Accepting men as universal subjects of politics usually overlooks the constituent codes of "manliness", their internal differentiations, and the contextual meanings of femininity and masculinity. It is the perception of difference between men and women which needs to be considered in the idea of "gender equality". Accepting men and women

[3] Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London: Zed Books, 1984); Susie Tharu and Tejaswini Niranjana, "Problems for a Contemporary Theory of Gender" in Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakraborty (eds), *Subaltern Studies IX* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996); Kumari Jayawardena and Malathi de Alwis (eds), *Embodied Violence: Communalising Women's Sexuality in South Asia* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1996); Patricia Jeffery, "Agency, Activism, and Agendas" in Patricia Jeffery and Amrita Basu (eds), *Appropriating Gender: Women's Activism and Politicised Religion in South Asia* (London: Routledge, 1998), 221-43; Mary E. John and Janaki Nair (eds), *A Question of Silence: The Sexual Economies of Modern India* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998).

[4] This is a much quoted sentence from Beauvoir's ground-breaking book *The Second Sex*, first published in 1949. See Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012). For an exposition of feminist conceptualisation of masculinities and gender, see Terrell Carver, *Gender is Not a Synonym for Women* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1996).

as different but equal has certain advantages. This analytical standpoint allows us to define politics, especially political leadership, differently for men and women, i.e., the qualities of political leadership need not be the same for men and women leaders. However, in the context of "real-politik" such considerations are rarely valued. An anecdotal reference will illustrate the point. Inder Malhotra, in a biography of Indira Gandhi, wrote that Gandhi had been wryly humorous about her anomalous position of a woman in power. In response to US President Johnson's hesitation about how she should be addressed, Gandhi is reported to have said, "You can tell him that some of my cabinet ministers call me 'sir'. He can do so, too, if he likes."[5] The issue is not merely about addressing a woman head of state, but rather how the presence (or absence) of femininity in a position of leadership can be conceptualised.

South Asia provides an extraordinary regional background to conceptualise this connection. Defining "South Asia" as a region, however, becomes the first important task. The innovative methodological approaches and interdisciplinary content of "South Asian Studies" reflect the geopolitical realities of this region in its "modern' frame".[6] For South Asia, modernity combines the experiences of colonialism with various strands of nationalist thought and political activism that have emerged since the nineteenth century, which have shaped the postcolonial condition(s) of this region. The emergence of academic writing on the history, politics and practices of women in South Asia in the 1990s has led to the publication of several significant collections of essays on South Asian feminism(s) in the past few years, creating an exciting new field of study.[7] South Asian feminism conceptualises the region beyond a cluster of border-sharing nations and their political relations in terms of neighbourhood foreign policies. Insights from a range of disciplinary specialisations – ancient Indian history, literary criticism, histories of oceanic region formations, political sociology,

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[5] Inder Malhotra, *Indira Gandhi: A Personal and Political Biography* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1989), 191.

[6] Saloni Mathur, "History and Anthropology in South Asia: Rethinking the Archive", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 29, 2000, 89-106.

[7] Ania Loomba and Ritty Lukose (eds), *South Asian Feminisms* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2012); Alka Kurian and Sonora Jha (eds), *New Feminisms in South Asian Social Media, Film, and Literature: Disrupting the Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

and cultural studies – have influenced South Asian feminism(s) to trace the historical formation of the region through movements of people, goods, and ideas. South Asian feminist politics tracks the diverse yet connected feminist struggles of a region where public and private spheres intersect at various nodal points like family, community, religion, sexuality, caste and class.[8] In this broader vision of politics the understanding of women's political leadership, even when achieved through family ties or specific caste/religious affiliations, gain different meaningful dimensions. It becomes far more important to ask the question why family ties and dynastic rule are referred to more in cases of women leaders when male leaders also benefit by such connections than arguing that women leaders are "puppets" at the hands of male party bosses. Similarly, it also becomes a more serious concern for feminist politics to identify conditions of oppression at the grassroots level of political leadership and collectively challenge them rather than ask for only reformist public policies to accommodate women.

If we consider the case of South Asian women, the contextual meanings of women's political agency become more complex in everyday life and in periods of crises.[9] Jeffrey argues that even though South Asian women have been repeatedly stereotyped as victims, epitomised by the child bride, oppressed widow or *sati*, illiterate woman doomed to ignorance, and more recently as victims of dowry murders, honour killings, public sexual harassment or rape; they have been involved in anti-colonial struggles, and various caste- and class-based political and social movements, registering their voices. Their everyday resistance to different forms of patriarchal domination has also attracted the attention of feminists. In sites of everyday resistance like reproductive capacity, autonomy over body, division of labour, and access to resources like education and wage labour, the impact of women's participation in mass-based social and political movements have not always been impressive, but decisive changes are also not uncommon. Women in South Asia have also emerged as leaders in the public sphere of politics from the grassroots level to the level of supreme command in the electoral democracy with political parties. Familial ties, caste status, social class, and sheer political acumen to manoeuvre in specific

[8] Ania Loomba and Ritty Lukose (eds), *South Asian Feminisms* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2012).

[9] Jeffery, "Agency, Activism and Agenda".

situations have been crucial factors in either catapulting women into leadership positions, or to pave a tenacious ascendancy within a leadership structure.

Women leaders in South Asian countries (Indira Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi in India; Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan; Sheikh Hasina Wajed and Khaleda Zia in Bangladesh; Sirimavo Bandaranaike and Chandrika Kumartunga in Sri Lanka) have often assumed power in periods of intense political crises and usually been propelled to power by their respective political parties to continue some sort of dynastic rule following the death of a close male relative – either father or husband. Raunaq Jahan, in her rather comprehensive study of women leaders of South Asia, points out that these women leaders were chosen by the party bosses for their relative political inexperience and their acceptance among the people to be able to carry on the legacy of the dead leader.[10] The significance of family relations is undeniable in these women's rise to power. However, the issue which Jahan admits not to have touched upon and which Rajeswari Sunder Rajan analyses with the case study of Indira Gandhi concerns how these women leaders consolidate power at the helm after rising to that position. Sunder Rajan's excellent analysis reads selected high-cultural and popular texts to situate the cognitive structures of "female" authority.[11]

Female Political Authority vis-à-vis Women's Interests

A significant feature of this gap is the fact that no woman leader has overtly concerned herself with women's issues, even less with the women's movement. In the Indian context, women political leaders at the regional level, like Jayalalithaa in Tamil Nadu, Mayawati in Uttar Pradesh and Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal, have also not in any manner explicitly taken up women's issues as main issues of politics. This gap, a section of feminist political theorists have interpreted, is an inevitable outcome of the largely patriarchal system within which political power functions. At this point of overview, however, it is important to remember that women's

[10] Raunaq Jahan, "Women in South Asian Politics", *Third World Quarterly* 9.3, July 1987, 848-70.

[11] Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, "Gender, Leadership, and Representation" in her *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1993), 103-128.

empowerment in schemes of development and the issue of female political authority are separate, albeit with some overlappings. Unpacking certain dimensions of this overlapping will help us to further situate the complexities of political leadership/participation, women's interests and women's needs.

Women's political participation, outside the "elite" circle of women leaders, in South Asian countries has traversed an uneven territory in the postcolonial period. Let us discuss the contours of this uneven territory through three examples. In India, though the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution in 1992 gave a historic opportunity to increase women's representation in governance at the local level (*Panchyati* System) by granting 33% reservation, women still face structural inequalities. These inequalities, based on lesser access to resources like education, wage labour, autonomy over one's own sexuality, and financial independence, are entrenched in an overarching patriarchal social and cultural organisation which refuses to give women the final decision-making power.[12] Similarly, in Bangladesh, although women have made serious advancements towards women's empowerment through increased economic participation and widening girls' enrolment in educational institutions since 2000, women's political participation has not increased noticeably even after having two women leaders at the top of the principal political parties contesting for power.[13] In contrast, in the protracted people's revolution in Nepal (*Janayuddha*), the Nepali Maoist leadership took a conscious decision to mobilise women, especially young women. This strategic interest in women, it has been argued, involved a degree of coercion in Maoist recruitment policies. The greater visibility of illiterate and neo-literate young women reflects a move towards restricting women within lower ranks. The question of gender equality in the leadership of the movement remained undecided in spite of reformist practices like abolition of polygyny, and es-

[12] UNDP, India [United Nations Development Programme], *From Reservation to Participation: Capacity Building of Elected Women Representatives and Functionaries of Panchayati Raj Institutions*, Report published on 31 December 2009.

[13] Sohela Nazneen, Naomi Hossain and Maheen Sultan, *National Discourses on Women's Empowerment in Bangladesh: Continuities and Change*, IDS Working Paper, Volume 2011, Number 368 (July 2011).

tablishment of women's rights to inherit land, to divorce, to choose marital partners, and to access formal education.[14]

All three examples invite us to closely review women's interests and needs. Drawing from Maxine Molyneux's argument of making a considered division between the "strategic" and "practical" interests of women, it is possible to point out that it is important to distinguish between immediate reforms required to be implemented by the state to ensure a certain level of gender equality, and the long-term goals of effectively challenging (and eventually abolishing) patriarchal forms of oppression.[15] Reservation for women in processes of political representation is a reformist practical interest that would help in women's easier access to resources like land, financial independence, education, and entrepreneurship. It is imperative to overcome both tendencies of either *mystifying* – perpetuated through images of powerful figures of motherhood, or an almost androgynous soldier-like figure of "manly woman" – or *trivialising* – reducing *all* women leaders as replacements of their dead male relatives – the relationship between femininity and political leadership as a long-term goal of gender equality. The crucial question in deciding on the course of action concerns prioritising between immediate and long-term goals. What constitutes women's interest depends on the need of "women" as a political category.

Women as a category, however, is heterogeneous and the "strategic" as well as "practical" interests are equally diverse. In such a situation, countries in South Asia face the challenge of deciding what kind of need can achieve at least a sense of alliance among various identities residing within "women". Ferree and Mueller argue that "[n]eed definition is a political struggle over whose version of reality will be translated into public policy and social practices".[16] The problem becomes acute for women outside the "elite" circle of women leaders, when the same "elite" circle refuses to

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[14] Rita Manchanda, "Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Radicalising Gendered Narratives", *Cultural Dynamics*, 16 (2/3), 2004, 237-58.

[15] Maxine Molyneux, "Mobilisation without Emancipation? Women's Interests, the State and Revolution in Nicaragua", *Feminist Studies*, 11:2 (1985: Summer), 227-254.

[16] Myra Max Ferree and Carol McClurg Mueller, "Feminism and the Women's Movement: A Global Perspective" in David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi (eds), *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 576-607.

overtly concern itself with women's issues, which are also political articulations of women's needs.

The issues around women's empowerment and violence against women constitute the principal themes around which women's political leadership becomes meaningful outside the "elite" circle. Both these themes have been serious concerns of the international development discourses and national governments across South Asia have formed policies with advice from international organisations like the United Nations.[17] These policies are directed to encourage women's leadership at the grassroots level, to nurture women's agency and to ensure women's equal access to resources like rights to property, education and entrepreneurship. Implementation of women's rights, as they have been articulated in CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women), has been one of the most important challenges for ensuring women's political leadership at the grassroots level. The challenges are considerable and South Asian feminists have critically engaged with the International Development Discourse to chart out realistic paths for women in South Asia.[18]

Conclusion

The collective mobilisation around women's interests, needs, and concerns is referred to in everyday parlance as the women's movement. Feminism, as a body of knowledge, is inextricably connected with the women's movement because the principal concern of feminism is gender-based inequalities and the goal remains defining, analysing, and challenging the power relations between femininity and masculinity. Feminist authors and activists are not necessarily women, but rather, the movement and the knowledge production construct women as a political category. Political

[17] For example, government policies at the central and state level in India have launched several schemes of financial insurance and assistance to families with girl children. Policies like "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao", "Dhanalakshmi Yojana", "Kanyashree Prakalpa", and "Ladli Scheme" are directed to maintain a favourable sex ratio for girl children, to prevent school drop out among girl children, and to prevent forced marriage before girl children reach the legal age of consent. Well-known film personalities or figures from the world of sports often star in the advertisements of these policies.

[18] Ania Loomba and Ritty Lukose (eds), *South Asian Feminisms* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2012).

leadership, consequently, is an integral part of the movement as well as feminism. However, there has been an ambivalence in feminism regarding individual women leaders who have risen to positions of power within the public sphere of politics. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan has pointed out that the typical female subject of feminism has been the subaltern woman, or the woman-as-victim where the analytical point of departure for defining the principal protagonist of feminist politics is the shared experiences of oppression – powerlessness and collectivity. Individual women leaders, especially those who have not shown an overt solidarity with this shared experience, creates an unease among feminist authors and activists. This unease concerns the feminist opposition to the repressive role of the state – coercion and dominance often achieved through the armed forces, where typical codes of "manliness" are deployed with regularity. Political leadership in feminist politics, therefore, is more about shared aims than a hierarchy of obeying orders.

In conclusion, I would like to argue that a more radical reconstitution of the concept of power is required, where leadership ceases to be a tool for securing hierarchy and dominance. South Asian feminist politics is striving for redefining women's struggles. One half of achieving that courses through greater inclusion of women in governance, but the other half demands redefining modes of governance itself.

Worrying Flattening Curve: Women's Political Participation in Southeast Asia

Bridget Welsh

While the goal of public health officials has been to flatten the curve of Covid-19, another, less positive, flattening has been taking place over the past few years – the political empowerment of women in Southeast Asia. After decades of gains in the numbers of women in national executives and legislatures and among ordinary women participating in politics, a plateau pattern has emerged. In fact, in some countries – accompanying rising authoritarianism and populism tinged with anti-women rhetoric – we see outright backsliding in female political representation and participation.

This chapter examines trends in female political participation/inclusion in the ten ASEAN countries and Timor-Leste over the last five years, 2015-2020. It builds on and incorporates the discussion of a similar chapter in an earlier publication, updating numbers and pointing to important developments in recent years.[1] The problems for female political participation noted earlier – exclusionary cultural norms, resistant patriarchal political parties and "dirty" politics – have been compounded by narrowing political spaces and less welcoming environments for female participation. Once again, however, there continues to be conflicting trends. While levels of representation and attitudes towards women participating in politics plateau and even in some places decline, data shows the importance of ordinary women in politics and a modest narrowing of gender gaps in the political participation of ordinary citizens.

[1] Bridget Welsh, "Promoting Inclusion: Women's Political Participation in Southeast Asia," in *Women, Policy and Political Leadership,* (Singapore: Konrad Adenaur Stiftung, 2014), pp. 9-25.

Lower Numbers but Expanded Portfolios: Curtailed Female Executive Control

Five years ago, Southeast Asia was showing important gains in female leadership. The Philippines had been led by multiple female presidents, including Cory Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the world's largest Muslim democracy, Indonesia, had Megawati Sukarnoputri, and Thailand had the region's first female prime minister, Yingluck Shinawatra. Half a decade later, there are only two major female leaders in top positions in the region. The first is Halimah Yacob, Singapore's president elected in a skewed contest in 2017 and holding largely ceremonial powers. The second is Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi, the only female leading a government. She holds the State Counsellor position, as opposed to the presidency as Myanmar's constitution prevents her from assuming this position as she has foreign national children. Despite remaining highly popular within Myanmar, her icon status has been badly dented by events in the Rakhine state from 2017 onwards, involving the forced displacement of the Rohingya community.

Along with these limited gains at the top, a more positive picture emerges at the deputy level. More women have assumed deputy executive positions – the Philippines' Leni Robredo was elected to the vice-presidency in 2016, Malaysia's Wan Azizah Wan Ismail became deputy prime minister in May 2018 and Vietnam's Dang Thi Ngoc Thinh became acting president for a month in September 2018 after the death of the then president, returning to her vice-president position afterwards. They join Cambodia's Men Sam An, who has been deputy prime minister since 2009.

Despite playing prominent roles, women have increasingly become more targeted in their leadership roles in recent years. Both Yingluck and Aung San Suu Kyi are facing charges for wrong-doing of their governments. Robredo was fired in 2019 for criticising President Rodrigo Duterte on the drug war and Wan Azizah Wan Ismail (and the rest of her government with a record number of female ministers and appointees) was ousted from her position in February 2020 in a power grab – showing first-hand the difficult environment that women face holding power.

To understand these developments, one should step back and look at both historical trends as well as recent trajectories. Southeast Asia has never been a region where women national leaders have been prominent. Of the 62 different presidents and 92 prime ministers who have held office

in Southeast Asian countries since 1945, only 6.5% and 1% have been women respectively. The examples of women leaders at the national level that do exist are a relatively recent phenomenon, with Cory Aquino leading the way from 1986. Attaining the position of prime minister via a political party election is particularly difficult. There is only one example where this has happened – Thailand, with Yingluck Shinawatra. Aung San Suu Kyi also leads her party, the National League for Democracy, but is not her country's official leader.

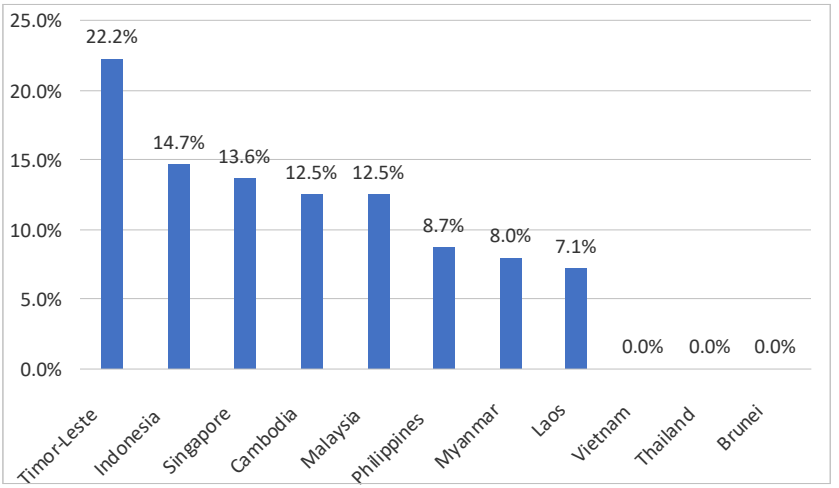
All of Southeast Asia's contemporary female national governing leaders have followed Asia's common "wives and daughters" syndrome of being related to someone who had held the position earlier or been a prominent politician. Megawati, Macapagal-Arroyo and Aung San Suu Kyi were daughters of famous leaders, Aquino and Wan Azizah Wan Ismail are wives of prominent opposition leaders, and Yingluck was a sister to a former prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra. Family ties and political socialisation continue to play a large role in boosting the chances for women to be elected, a pattern that is as prominent at the local level as it is in the national arena. This is especially the case in the Philippines. There the two-term limit for legislatures encourages the appointment of wives to hold the seat for the male incumbents to return to two terms later. Increasingly this "wives and daughters" pattern is evident in Indonesia, Malaysia and Myanmar as well, as elite families continue to be elected to office.

In other parts of the executive, namely the cabinet, women have held office for decades. My earlier chapter showed that Indonesia led the way in appointing a woman into cabinet, in 1946, as Maria Ulfah Santoso was appointed Minister of Social Affairs. Singapore was the laggard in the region, not appointing its first woman in cabinet, Lim Hwee Hua, until 2009. As we will see below, Singapore is among the contemporary leaders in promoting female inclusion in the executive.

The level of women's representation in cabinet has always varied across the region, but in recent years we have seen two trends in the level of representation – a plateauing and a decline. Chart 1 below shows the share of representation as of August 2020. Compared to five years ago, only Timor-Leste has over 20% females in cabinet. Indonesia, Cambodia, Singapore and Malaysia have under 15% representation, with the Philippines, Myanmar and Laos under 10% female ministers. Three countries – Vietnam, Brunei and Thailand – have no women in cabinet at all. The

Philippines and Thailand – which have both experienced sharp democratic contractions – have had the highest decline in the share of women in cabinet. In 2015 the Philippines was reaching international targets for female representation in cabinet. Today it has joined the lowest ranks. The only countries that show modest increases are Singapore and Cambodia, with an additional minister. Singapore's increase began in 2009 and has intensified in recent years, as women now lead multiple portfolios. To keep these shares in mind, throughout Southeast Asia only 22 women are full cabinet ministers (with one of those, Aung San Suu Kyi, holding two full ministerial positions).

Chart 1. Women's Representation in Southeast Asian Cabinets, August 2020.[2]



If there is an overall positive trend involving women in executive roles it is that increasingly, women are breaking the "women's work" mould. Throughout Southeast Asia women are taking on varied ministerial portfolios – from finance and foreign affairs to industry and the environment. In Indonesia, women have held 17 different portfolios, with five of these coming recently under President Joko Widodo's administrations (2014-present). A similar broadening occurred in Malaysia, with women holding portfolios

[2] These figures were derived from official government websites. Accessed 20 May 2020.

traditionally given to men, such as science, technology and the environment, local housing and development and rural development, under the Mahathir government from 2018-2020

One feature that holds women back from executive positions is the dominance of appointees from the military. We find that regimes closely aligned with the military often see a decrease in female representation. Thailand is a good example. The decline in the Philippines and the low share of women in Myanmar can also be understood through this lens. Many officials from the security forces are given cabinet-level positions but are not listed as ministers. This has especially been the case during Covid-19, where countries in the region have relied on militaries in their responses to the virus. At issue is not only the influence of the military in domestic politics, but the fact that women have fewer arenas for training and recruitment for political advancement.

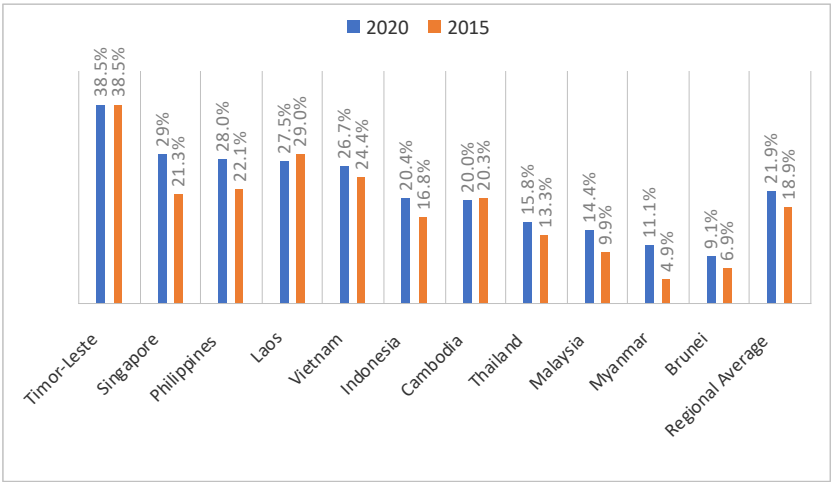
Voices and Collaboration: Legislators and Caucuses

One of the reasons that women have maintained a foothold in cabinet is that female representation in legislatures has remained steadily strong. In 2020, women comprise an average 21.9% of legislatures (lower houses) in Southeast Asia, slightly above the global average of 20%. There is considerable variation across the region, with Timor-Leste (with its strong quota system in place) at 38.5%, and Brunei (with appointees made by the sultan) at 9.1%. Considering changes over time, we see two trends in the level of representation in legislatures – a similar plateauing in representation levels and, in contrast to developments with the executive, a modest increase in representation.

Chart 2 below captures levels of representation of women in legislatures in 2020 and 2015. The dominant pattern is one of consistency – in Timor-Leste, Vietnam, Cambodia, Brunei, and Laos (although here there is a modest decline). After five years, there has been little change in these countries despite turnover – as representation levels have indeed flattened. Elections did bring in more women in the remaining countries of Southeast Asia – Singapore (2020), Myanmar (2015), the Philippines (2016 and 2019), Malaysia (2018) and Thailand (2019). In all these cases the increase was the product of political parties slating more female candidates, and in all cases (except Singapore and the Philippines) the increase

was modest – below the global and regional average. Singapore's boost in female representation in 2020 came in part due to the opposition Workers Party winning more seats. Importantly, greater democratisation in Myanmar and Malaysia through key elections was not accompanied by major shifts in female political representation, despite the prominent role of female leaders. Ironically and in contrast, contractions of democratisation in Thailand and the Philippines have seen increases in the numbers of women in legislatures. The Philippines had an increase of 7% women parliamentarians, the opposite to the contraction in the executive. Again, the actual numbers of women involved puts this in perspective – less than 100 women in Southeast Asia have become part of national legislatures in the last five years.

Chart 2. Women's Representation in Southeast Asian Legislatures: 2020 (August) vs. 2015.



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union. https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=5&year=2020.

The factors accounting for low levels of representation of women in parliament in Southeast Asia outlined in my earlier chapter remain salient. The main responsibility lies with the institutional arrangements that shape the access of women to political positions. Political parties are gate-keepers – they select candidates centrally, marginalise women to their party wings and limit the resources and political upward mobility

for women. The strength of women's party organisations in places such as Vietnam and Laos have contributed to more women in their legislatures, as have decisions by party leaders to slate women, which has occurred in Singapore and Cambodia. Resistance by parties to field women in Thailand and Malaysia, in contrast, account for their lower levels of representation. Even in countries where gains have been made in the legislatures for women, party leaders do not appoint many women into the cabinet or to senior leadership positions. This contradiction is most striking in Vietnam, reaching 27% female representation in the legislature and none in the cabinet. It is also noteworthy that despite being party leader, Aung San Suu Kyi has only one woman in her cabinet – herself.

Another important institutional arrangement affecting legislatures involves quotas. Both Timor-Leste and Indonesia introduced these during their democratisation periods after 2003 and 1999, respectively. This initiative alone accounts for the impressive level of female representation in parliament in Timor-Leste, but recent years have seen a flattening of representation at the required quota level and similarly a limited rise in the number of women in the executive. Indonesia also introduced quotas, but they are for parties (rather than for the legislature) and administered in a manner that allows for loopholes in slating women into political positions. As they give greater jurisdiction to party leaders, they have been less effective. An important recent development is that Timor-Leste has broadened the use of the quota system, introducing quotas for village elections in 2017, which has seen a significant number of elected women at the local level.[3] The lack of local elections in many countries, notably Malaysia, Singapore, Myanmar and Thailand, has closed off opportunities to give women experience in public office at local levels. Research has shown that women are finding new paths to office, with more relying on community networks and engaging local issues.[4] This is especially the case for women not part of the traditional elite and at the local level.

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[3] See Sara Niner, "Women and Power in Timor's Elections," *New Mandala*, July 21, 2017, https://www.newmandala.org/women-power-timors-elections/ and https://iwda.org.au/assets/files/Women-and-Political-Leadership-Literature-Review-Timor-Leste_publicPDF3_3_2020.pdf.

[4] Nankyung Choi. "Women's political pathways in Southeast Asia." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 21, no. 2 (2019): 224-248.

Along with institutional conditions, sexist and conservative norms remain barriers for women. Women are expected to follow traditional roles and behaviours. Women are constrained in how they campaign and raise funds and by the multiple roles they hold as part of what is known as a "triple shift" – take care of their family, complete their main source of revenue and campaign for office. Disproportionately there is a focus on the appearance of women, rather than their credentials and the substance of their work. Women are also constrained by stereotypes of how a "good" woman or wife is supposed to behave.

The sad fact is that politics has traditionally not been a welcoming arena for women in the region. It has been described as "dirty" – for "guns and goons" as the Filipinos say. Most of the risks have concentrated around local politics – including death threats – but in recent years the risks have moved to the national level. Women have also recently been openly objectified and vilified with comments, such as Philippine President Duterte's 2018 comment "we will shoot your vagina," and apparent approval of rape.[5] This builds into the increased targeting of women, noted above. In this era of anti-women populist rhetoric, the context for women has worsened in parts of Southeast Asia.

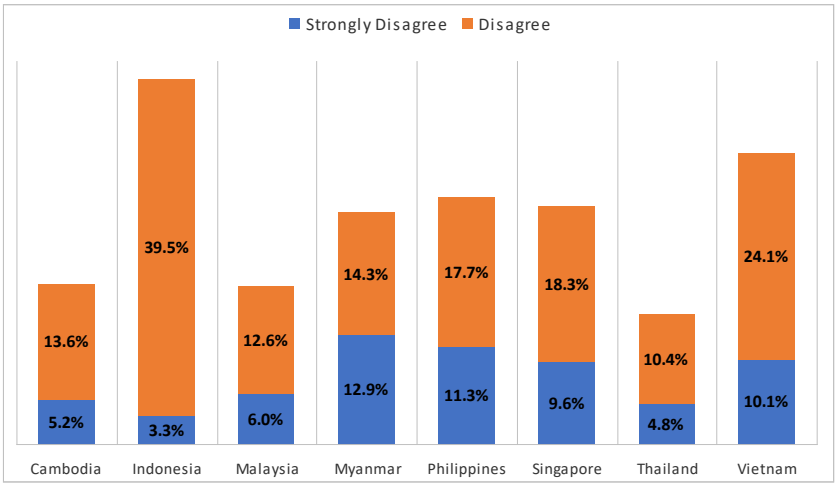
What is striking is that five years on, public attitudes toward accepting women as equals in politics have not shifted positively either. In fact, the trend in some countries is negative. Using findings from the Asia Barometer Survey's[6] (ABS's) recent waves conducted in eight Southeast Asian countries (detailed in Chart 3) we see that there remains a large share of citizens who do not believe that women should equally participate in politics with men. Indonesia leads in opposition to women in politics, with 42.8% not believing in gender political equality (down slightly from 45.3% five years ago). Vietnam follows with over a third (34.1%) opposing gender political equality, then the Philippines (29%), Myanmar (27.2%), and Singapore (26.9). Cambodia, Thailand and Malaysia have the most support for women

[5] See https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2018/feb/13/shoot-vagina-philippines-president-duterte-communist-female-rebels-video.

[6] The Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) is conducted in eight Southeast Asian countries. It is currently in its 5th wave (2018-2020), with two surveys outstanding, Cambodia and Singapore. For these two countries, the 4th Wave data (2015-2017) was used. For more information on the ABS, see: http://www.asianbarometer.org/survey.

in politics – but all three have comparatively low representation of women, especially Thailand. This points to a disconnect between public attitudes and practices. The ABS findings over time show that more Filipinos and Singaporeans are strongly against women in politics compared to five years ago, with the latter reporting an increase of 7.3% opposition across the latest available ABS waves. As the number of women in Singaporean politics has increased, so has public opposition to their presence. Vietnam also has a marked increase of opposition to women equally participating in politics, up 11.3% compared to earlier waves.

Chart 3. Resistance to Equal Political Participation of Women in Selected Southeast Asian Countries.



Source: Asian Barometer Survey, Waves IV-V.

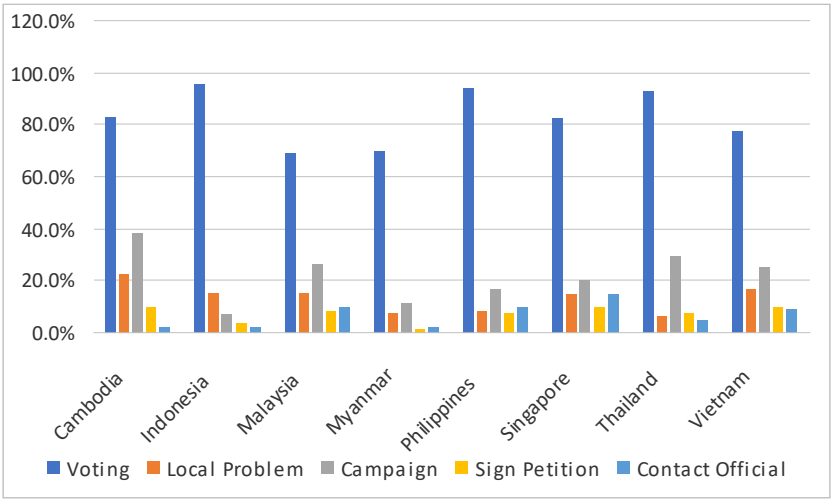
The trends in public support show that hurdles for greater female political participation extend into society. More needs to be done to change attitudes, so as to reverse public resistance to female participation.

Engaged Politically: Voting and Political Participation

One of the approaches to shift these attitudes involves capitalising on other changes taking place in the participation of women. Data from the Asian Barometer Survey shows that ordinary women are participating in politics, especially voting. In Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and

Thailand more than 80% of women vote – as shown in Chart 4. In recent elections, women voters were decisive in returning Joko Widodo to power in Indonesia in 2019.

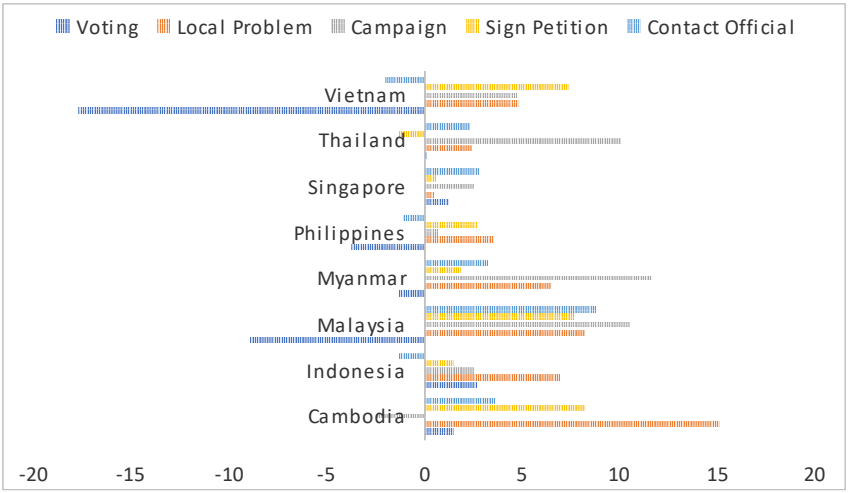
Chart 4. Ordinary Female Participation in Politics in Selected Southeast Asian Countries.



Women also participate in other ways, but at considerably lower levels. More than 20% of women participate in electoral campaigns in Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. More than 20% of women in Cambodia also engage local problems as well. The area where women participate less is in contacting local officials – in part because many of the offices are staffed by men. Overall, the latest figures point to modest increases in the participation of ordinary women in politics.

There are continued gender gaps in the political participation of women, detailed below in Chart 5. Malaysia and Myanmar have the largest gaps, with more men participating in politics in all areas, except voting, as women vote more than men. This is also the case in Vietnam and the Philippines, emphasising the important role women play in shaping electoral outcomes.

Chart 5. Gender Gaps in Political Participation in Selected Southeast Asia Countries.



Source: Asian Barometer Survey, Waves IV-V.

There is considerable variation across countries. Singapore has the lowest gender gaps in participation (although it also has the lowest level of reported political participation), followed by the Philippines. In Myanmar and Thailand the largest gap involves participating in a campaign, while in Cambodia and Indonesia the largest gap surrounds solving local problems. More women contact officials in Vietnam and Indonesia, while more women sign petitions in Thailand, in stark contrast to Vietnam. This variation highlights the central role that local contexts play in shaping participation. More can be done to address these gaps, with outreach and creating awareness. A key step to bringing more women into politics is to engage underlying factors discouraging female participation at the local level – values and norms as well as exclusion of women in policies and government outreach.

Five years on from the initial study, the trends are not encouraging. While Southeast Asia continues to be above the global average in terms of female participation in politics, trends have flattened and gaps in participation extend from the executive to local community participation. There is a need to rethink how to break down the barriers and differences, to move the trend in a needed upward direction.

Women in Politics in Australia

Elisabeth Porter

It is reasonable to think that women should be more conspicuous on the Australian political landscape. South Australian women (except for indigenous Australians) gained the right to vote and stand for parliament in 1894, and the rest of the country's women gained these rights by 1902. Indigenous Australians were granted suffrage as late as 1962.[1] Edith Cowan was the first woman elected to a state Legislative Assembly, in 1921. In 1943, Enid Lyons and Dorothy Tangney made history in being elected to Australia's national parliament. The reasons why so few women were active in political life in this era include "the difficulties of combining the roles of wife, mother and housekeeper with public, political life, and the fears of the parties that the electorate would not generally accept women candidates".[2] Has much changed?

To answer this question, this chapter offers some explanations as to why there are not higher numbers of women in politics or in high-level policy positions in Australia. Traditional stereotypes about women's social roles remain as obstacles to their progression. Current numbers of women in political leadership are lower than one would expect. For example, while the Social Progress Index (2019) ranks Australia 12th out of 149 countries on an overall assessment of 50 indicators on human needs, well-being and opportunity, in the "equality of political power by gender" component,

[1] Senator Nova Peris was the first indigenous woman to be elected as Senator for the Northern Territory to the Federal Parliament, serving from 2013 to 2016. Linda Burney was the first indigenous woman elected to the Federal House of Representatives, in 2016. Australia has governments in six states, two territories and a national parliament, and at local government level in states and territories. The national parliament is called the Parliament of Australia, Commonwealth Parliament or Federal Parliament.

[2] Jocelyn Clarke and Kate White, *Women in Australian Politics* (Sydney: Fontana/Collins, 1983), 311.

Australia is ranked 39th.[3] Changes needed for equitable gender representation are worryingly slow to come about.

Australian Women and Politics

Australian feminists have a long tradition of being active in the state bureaucracy. These "femocrats," or feminist bureaucrats, consciously work "to 'represent women's interests' within the state".[4] From the 1970s on, femocrats made a significant difference in addressing practical matters like domestic violence, childcare, anti-discrimination and equal-opportunity legislation, custody and child support, women's participation in the labour force, and women's election to political positions. Since then, various governments have built on this early work to strengthen women's opportunities to engage in active participation in public life.

Particularly since the 1996 election of the Liberal-National Coalition government led by John Howard and continuing until 2007, there have been progressive budget cuts to health, housing, education, employment and training, with significant impact on women's lives. Now, there is "little support on either side of politics for systematic gender analysis of policy" with a greater domestic focus given to lessening gender-based violence,[5] an area of grave concern, given that "more than one in three Australian women experience physical or sexual violence in a lifetime."[6] However, the active women's policy machinery for broader issues of gender equality has declined. In 2017, Australia, an early frontrunner for women's right to vote and women's rights, was ranked 35th on the global index measuring gender equality.[7] In 2020, Australia ranked 44th out of 153 on the World

[3] Social Progress Index 2019, https://www.socialprogress.org/, accessed 23 April 2020.

[4] Suzanne Franzway, Diane Court, and R. W. Connell, *Staking a Claim, Feminism, Bureaucracy and the State* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), 133.

[5] Susan Harris Rimmer and Marian Sawer, "Neoliberalism and Gender Equality Policy in Australia," *Australian Journal of Political Science*, (2016) 51(4): 753.

[6] Katrine Beauregard, "Partisanship and the Gender Gap: Support for Gender Quotas in Australia," *Australian Journal of Political Science*, (2018) 53(3): 291.

[7] Ibid., 291.

Economic Forum's "gender gap" index, and 57th on the "political empowerment" index.[8]

Obstacles to Women's Political Representation

The current factors that limit women's opportunities for political participation are similar to those in previous eras. Mainstream political parties persist in favouring men in pre-selection for winnable seats, sometimes as a reward for long-term party loyalism. There remains the social expectation that women should be the prime carer within families for children, the elderly and the ill, despite increasing assistance with childcare from some men. Certainly, "being a 'family man' is an advantage" for men, "whereas many women with high profile public positions have no family dependants".[9] I return to this issue shortly when discussing Australia's first woman Prime Minister.

Obstacles faced by women in high-profile professional positions overlap to include sexism, discrimination, workplace bullying, sexual harassment, inflexibility of work hours and lack of access to affordable childcare and influential mentors. Sheryl Sandberg argues that in addition to external constraints, there are many internal obstacles women face that say, "it's wrong to be outspoken, aggressive, more powerful than men".[10] Effective leadership galvanises support within political ranks and outside of it, cultivating potentially useful links and networks. Generally, men have greater opportunities to develop networks.

In Australia, political advisers play an increasingly influential role. About 450 politically appointed staff working at the national level have effectively become an "institutionalised 'third' pillar of executive governance and policy actors in their own right".[11] Operating at the intersection be-

[8] World Economic Forum, 2020. https://www.weforum.org/agenda, accessed 24 April 2020.

[9] Elisabeth Porter, "Feminist Analysis," in J. Summers, D. Woodward and A. Parkin (eds), *Government, Politics, Power and Policy in Australia*, 7th ed. (Sydney: Longman, 2002), 397.

[10] Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 8.

[11] Marija Taflaga, and Matthew Kerby, "Who Does What Work in a Ministerial Office: Politically Appointed Staff and the Descriptive Representation of Women in Australian Political Offices," *Political Studies*, (2019), 2.

tween political functions and policy work, they are powerful actors. While there are 58 percent of women in this group, the bulk of women are at lower levels of status, responsibility and remuneration.[12] These positions often act as important stepping-stones for a political career. Yet, in international relations, women rarely feature in key policy-shaping activities on "foreign policy, defence, intelligence, trade white papers"; and only one third of Australian ambassadors, high commissioners and heads of international missions are women.[13]

Australian Women Members of Parliament

Regarding women's political representation, the pace of change is slow. Australia lags behind many other countries. In international terms, "Australia's comparative ranking for women in national parliaments has declined from 20th position in 2001, to 48th in 2014,[14] to 51st in 2020, with 30.5 percent of women elected to the lower house and 46.7 percent sitting in the upper house.[15]

In the 2019 federal election, 23 percent of successful candidates from the Liberal Party of Australia from both houses are women, 47 percent from the Australian Labor Party and 50 percent from the Australian Greens. Reasons cited for typical under-representation "include party candidate selection practices, the nature of the electoral system, the challenges women face in balancing work and family responsibilities, discriminatory views about women in politics, and the adversarial nature of the parliamentary environment".[16] In Prime Minister Scott Morrison's Cabinet reshuffle in 2019, there are 7 ministry positions held by women from 23 positions in the Parliament of Australia. To date, the Parliament of

[12] Ibid., 7.

[13] Danielle Cave, Alex Oliver, Jenny Hayward-Jones, "Foreign Territory: Women in International Relations," (Sydney: Lowy Institute, 2019), 3, 2.

[14] Joy McCann, and Janet Wilson, "Representation of Women in Australian Parliaments," Research Paper Series 2014-2015, *Parliamentary Library,* (Commonwealth of Australia: Department of Parliamentary Services, 2014), 4.

[15] All statistics have been rounded. Inter-Parliamentary Union: Percentage of Women in National Parliaments Data, www.ip.org, accessed 7 April 2020.

[16] McCann and Wilson, op. cit., 4.

Australia has not had a woman appointed as Treasurer. In the Cabinet of the 46th Parliament, from 6 February 2020, the following women hold positions: Merise Payne, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Women; Michaelia Cash, Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business; Sussan Ley, Minister for the Environment; Linda Reynolds, Minister of Defence; Anne Ruston, Minister for Families and Social Services; Karen Andrews, Minister of Industry, Science and Technology, and in the Outer Ministry, Melissa Price, Minister for Defence Industries. These are significant posts. Typically, Australian women hold portfolios in agriculture, arts, community services, education and social security.

Local government work is grounded in the community, where many women are already active in organisations. At local government level, in 2011, women comprised 27.8 percent of elected representatives,[17] and from 2019, the numbers have improved, with women constituting 34.9 percent of local members across Australia.[18]

Gender Quotas

It is interesting to reflect on the importance of quotas in post-conflict scenarios, where "since the early 1990s, quotas have been established for women's participation in government";[19] Rwanda being a superb example. Inter-Parliamentary Union statistics show that on 1 March 2020, Rwanda has 61.3 percent women elected to the lower house and 38.5 percent to the upper chamber. Quotas can be effective, raising the profile of women as role models, compensating for previous discrimination and permitting the delivery of substantive equality outcomes. Evidence shows a clear relation between mandated quotas and a higher percent of women parliamentarians.

Historically, Australian debates about quotas reflect party divisions. The Coalition parties of the Australian Liberal Party and the Nationals do not adopt affirmative action measures, believing that gender quotas

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[17] Ibid., 27.

[18] Judy Skatssoon, 2019, "Women in Local Government Hit Historical High," *Government News*, www.goverment.news.com.au, accessed 7 April 2020.

[19] Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Dina Francesca Haynes and Naomi Cahn, *On the Frontlines. Gender, War and the Post-Conflict Process* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 238.

contradict merit principles, although the Liberal Party recognises the need to improve women's situation within its party. The Australian Greens do not adopt quotas but have highly supportive policies on gender equality. The Australian Greens' Constitution states affirmative action to encourage women into non-traditional positions. The Australian Labor Party introduced a 40:40:20 quota system in 2012 "to produce an outcome where not less than 40 percent of seats held by Labor will be filled by women, and not less than 40 percent by men", with the remaining 20 percent filled by either women or men.[20] In 2015, it set a target of 50 percent of women to be elected by 2025.[21] Centre-left parties are more inclined to support gender equality or quotas.

Australia's Female Prime Minister

From 2010 to 2013, Julia Gillard was Australia's first woman appointed as Prime Minister. When in opposition, former Prime Minister Tony Abbott taunted Gillard as then-Prime Minister, when he "repeatedly implied that, as an unmarried woman who has not given birth, Julia Gillard can't empathise with ordinary Australian families".[22] Yet when asked about her achievements, Gillard said: "I'm proud of what we've done in paid parental leave and the more support for childcare, all of those things that actually support family and support women," but the thing that is "really absolutely closest to my heart is the equal pay case".[23]

Gillard's famous "misogyny speech" went viral on social media. As she explained, it was the result of an emotional "crack point" after Abbott persistently made derogatory sexist remarks.[24] Misogyny is offensive. It degrades and undermines women's sense of self-dignity. Gillard's motivation in giving this passionate speech was for the national parliament to

[20] McCann and Wilson, op. cit., 18.

[21] Laura Ismay, "Women in Parliament Briefing Paper," NSW Parliamentary Research Service, Briefing Paper No 3/2018, (Sydney: NSW Parliament, 2018), 26.

[22] In Carol Johnson, "Tony Abbott and Women: How Both Sides Have Played the Gender Card," *The Conversation*, 8 October 2012.

[23] In Anne Summers, "The Prime Ministership According to Julia Gillard," *Anne Summers Reports*, 3, July 2013, 18.

[24] In Gabrielle Chan, "Julia Gillard Explains 'Misogyny Speech'," *The Guardian*, 30 September 2013.

"think seriously about the role of women in public life and in Australian society" and to show that "sexism should always be unacceptable".[25] Her "on-going personal experience of sexism lay bare the gendered hierarchy embedded" in Australian political life.[26] In her last formal interview before being voted out of office by the Australian Labor Party, she reflected on her successes, singling out health reform, pricing of carbon, paid parental leave, disability care, school improvement programme, a Royal commission into child sexual abuse in institutions and her foreign policy record. A productive Prime Minister, she was "responsible for legislating at the rate of 0.495 acts per day".[27]

Increasing Women's Participation in Political Leadership

Women's political leadership in decision-making is vital to a nation for three main reasons. First, equality-based arguments support "an ethical commitment to inclusivity" as a "fundamental pillar of good governance".[28] Equal rights to participate in decision-making are crucial to liberal democratic principles and practices. Second, rights-based frameworks highlight the need to change "structures and relationships of power to create a just society".[29] Diverse marginalised groups require a public voice to express specific needs. Third, women have multiple different experiences to men, and thus often have different priorities, so the hope is that more women in politics might change political processes in exercising power differently, and in placing onto the agenda human concerns of well-being that may otherwise be overlooked. A critical mass of women is needed to mainstream gender inclusivity.

Some best practices identified by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) include determining "the skills that every woman needs to participate

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[25] Julia Gillard, "Transcript of Julia Gillard's Speech," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 October 2012.

[26] Cheryl Collier and Tracey Raney, "Understanding Sexism and Sexual Harassment in Politics: A Comparison of Western Parliaments in Australia, the UK, and Canada," *Sexual Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society*, (2018) 25(3): 441.

[27] Summers, op. cit., 17.

[28] Elisabeth Porter and Anuradha Mundkur. *Peace and Security. Implications for Women.* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2012), 111.

[29] Ibid., 111.

fully and capably in the political process", including what training assists; what positive and negative factors help or hinder building skills and confidence to participate capably; and what strategies women use to embrace positive forces and minimise negative tendencies.[30]

It is important to note that many women in Australia are active in informal political networks and non-government organisations (NGOs). An interesting example of this lies in the processes leading to the Fourth Civil-Society Report Card,[31] which assesses Australia's national action plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. This rigorous evaluation of the Australian government's response to the resolution brings together various civil society groups, academics and the Australian Civil-Military Centre. It recommends inclusive consultative processes with civil society, strong monitoring and evaluation of plans, and a plea for adequate resources to implement policies. A wide range of women play active roles on the broad political landscape, including in NGOs such as Action Aid, Amnesty International, Care Australia, International Women's Development Agency, Oxfam, Red Cross, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and World Vision.

Conclusion

In conclusion, to make Australian women's participation effective in influencing the governance agenda and making it responsive to women's concerns, a gender-sensitive approach to all political decisions is needed to analyse how policy decisions might affect women and girls differently to men and boys. This approach broadens gender awareness, so that the supposed "soft" political concerns of education, health, childcare, aged care and community service and welfare are not merely seen as women's concerns, but as gender-inclusive human needs; nor are supposed "hard"

[30] The NDI partners with United Nations Development Programme, UN Women, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance to establish the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics to advance women in politics. National Democratic Institute, *Women's Political Participation Through Effective Training Program. A Guide to Best Practices and Lessons Learned.* (Washington: NDI, 2013), 51.

[31] Hannah Jay, Luke Johnson, Katrina Lee-Koo, and Barbara Trojanowska. "Fourth Annual Civil Society Report Card – Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace, Security," (Melbourne: Monash Gender, Peace and Security Research Centre, 2016).

concerns of defence, finance and foreign policy viewed exclusively as men's affairs, because they are important for human security and well-being.

Democratic politics requires open public expression and broad-based participation in the decision-making processes of a nation. Where women are a lone voice in policy and political leadership, enormous courage and confidence are essential. Where women are part of a coalition, whether interest-based, ideological or party-based, there are strengths in acting together, and also in sharing platforms congenially with sympathetic men who understand the mutual benefits of gender-inclusive policies. High-profile male champions who oppose violence against women and actively support gender equality can play a crucial role in changing stereotypical perceptions of men and boys.

Surveys show there is a "persistent gender gap in political knowledge, with women knowing less about politics than men"; however, this gap was reduced when Gillard was Prime Minister.[32] Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that "opening up the political world to greater numbers of women politicians should generate higher levels of political engagement among women."[33] A key challenge remains to support and mentor women throughout the entire political process leading to their successful election. This engagement extends beyond formal corridors of power, to fostering multiple informal and community-based networks, beginning with sustained support for interested young women.

Effective women politicians are productive, constructive, fruitful and powerful leaders. These women do not shy away from presenting compelling, convincing and valid reasons why their presence on the political stage is valuable. Many Australian women from diverse multicultural backgrounds are articulate, impressive and authoritative politicians, and Australia needs many more.

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[32] Ian McAllister, "The Gender Gap in Political Knowledge Revisited: Australia's Julia Gillard as a Natural Experiment," *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, (2019) 2(2): 197.

[33] Ibid., 213.

Women in Politics: Pacific Islands and New Zealand

Nicole George

The Pacific Islands is regularly recognised as a region that does not favour the political ambitions of women. While Pacific women have played important political roles within women's organisations as advocates for social and political change in past decades, their path into institutional politics has been more difficult. The result is a region where women currently hold roughly 8% of parliamentary seats.[1]

New Zealand is not included in these figures. As a post-industrialised country, it makes more sense to compare the political standing of women in New Zealand with women in Australia rather than other Pacific Island countries (PICs) because of both countries' regionally unique levels of wealth, long histories of self-government, and broadly similar political traditions. New Zealand was the first state to recognise women's right to vote in 1893 but women did not win the right to stand for electoral representation until 1919, and it was not until 1933, that the first woman entered New Zealand's national parliament. By the 1980s, however, women began to make their political mark. Because of a party leadership challenge, Jenny Shipley became the first female Prime Minister in 1997, an office she held until a change of government which saw New Zealand's voters directly elect a second consecutive woman, Helen Clark, as Prime Minister in 1999 at the head of a Labour party government. Clark's government was re-elected three times until her party's electoral defeat in 2008, leading to her resignation as party leader. New Zealand's third female Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern won office just under a decade later, again at the head of

[1] This figure is calculated using statistics for sovereign Pacific Island states only.

a Labour government. Ardern, 37 at the time, was the second youngest person to hold this position in New Zealand's history. Commentary on her youth and marital status dogged her election campaigning in 2017,[2] but in the intervening years Ardern has managed a number of difficult political events, such as the Christchurch shooting of 2019[3] and the COVID-19 crisis of 2020, in ways that have shown her capacity to combine decisive action with compassionate political leadership.[4] She has also garnered international popularity for her commitments to social justice and environmental issues. She is only the second woman Prime Minister to give birth to a child while holding office (after Pakistan's Benezir Bhutto).

As of August 2020, New Zealand's National Party, the major opposition party to the Labour government, has elected a woman, Judith Collins, as leader. This means the 2020 elections will see women heading both major parties. Collins is known locally as a tough political representative with conservative views on issues related to law and order but also supportive of reforms in areas such as euthanasia, access to abortion and marriage equality. In the early months of 2020, the National party looked to be in a competitive electoral position as the Ardern Labour government struggled to deliver aspects of its housing and infrastructure programmes.[5] Ardern's deft handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, comprising swift lock-down provisions and clear and accessible communications, elevated her electoral support considerably as the year progressed. At the time of writing, Ardern enjoys a comfortable lead in the polls with voter approval of Collins' National Party running at below 30%. This has not deterred Collins from mounting critical attacks on the failure of the Ardern government's COVID

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[2] See *The Guardian*, 2 August 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2017/aug/02/jacinda-ardern-grilled-over-motherhood-plans-on-first-day-video.

[3] Amelia Lester, "The Roots of Jacinda Ardern's Extraordinary Leadership after Christchurch", *The New York Times*, 23 March 2019. Located at https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/what-jacinda-arderns-leadership-means-to-new-zealand-and-to-the-world.

[4] Suze Wilson, "Three reasons why Jacinda Ardern's coronavirus response has been a masterclass in crisis leadership", The Conversation, 6 April 2020. Located at https://theconversation.com/three-reasons-why-jacinda-arderns-coronavirus-response-has-been-a-masterclass-in-crisis-leadership-135541.

[5] AAP. "The Crusher comes out swinging: Jacinda Ardern's fierce election rival brands the New Zealand PM 'totally useless' and says she's achieved 'nothing' despite eliminating corona virus". The Daily Mail, 11 August 2020. https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8614219/Judith-Collins-brands-New-Zealand-PM-Jacinda-Ardern-totally-useless.html [accessed 27 August 2020].

response in the wake of a new outbreak that flared in Auckland in August 2020. Collins has recently unveiled a tough new border security policy as part of her campaign to build voter support.[6]

In contrast to the history of women's political leadership across the Tasman Sea, it was not until 2010 that Australia was able to boast a female Australian Prime Minister, and indeed no woman had even been nominated to lead either of the two major political parties until that point. It is also notable that Australian women in political office have often been subjected to discriminatory media treatment and less than supportive party environments, particularly on the conservative side of politics. Today, New Zealand's women hold just over 40% of seats in the national legislature. This number exceeds women's more modest 30% representation in the Australian Federal parliament's House of Representatives (48% in the Federal Senate).

These figures contrast sharply with the electoral standing of women in Pacific Island countries (PICs), which until the early 2010s, hovered around the 4% level. Some interesting gains in some sites have seen this regional average improve in the last five years to just under 9% although this is not a uniform experience for all Pacific Island countries.[7] Indeed, three countries, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Federated States of Micronesia, currently have no women members of parliament. Some non-independent territories of the region have much higher levels of female representation because of electoral provisions adopted in metropolitan jurisdictions. In the rest of this chapter, I explain some of the factors that contribute to women's marginalisation from electoral politics, some specific examples that show where and how women have achieved electoral and political success and the fates of various campaigns to promote electoral reform to bring more women into the region's parliaments.

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[6] Jo Moir, "Judith Collins unveils National's border security policy". Radio New Zealand, 20 August 2020. https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/423980/judith-collins-unveils-national-s-border-security-policy [accessed 27 August 2020].

[7] Figures taken from PACWIP website https://www.pacwip.org/women-mps/national-women-mps/ [accessed 28 July 2020.

Obstacles to Women's Political Representation

Custom and faith

It is often argued that Pacific women's political marginalisation is explained by the patriarchal underpinnings of Pacific Islands culture. While there is some truth to this claim, the idea that culture legitimises the kinds of discrimination that prevents women achieving political office is also an over-simplification. It is certainly true that Pacific women with political ambitions face accusations of "inauthenticity",[8] and of acting "above themselves" or *bikhet.*[9] If they achieve success, it is often alleged that they have lost touch with both tradition and their "real" grassroots constituents/sisters. Yet claims that women with political ambition are acting against custom overlook how custom has been subject to enormous change across the Pacific Islands since the period of European contact; modified by colonial, missionary and other globalising influences.[10] Matrilineal political and economic structures were present in tribal societies in many parts of the region. In others, women were accorded specific sorts of power and respect due to the particular gendered social reproduction roles they shouldered.[11] These structures of power were actively undermined both by colonial governments and Christian missionaries when they were overlaid with European-style legal systems and value structures that replicated the "patriarchal, hierarchical and hereditary" structures of metropolitan societies.[12] These led to the normalisation of men's public and political roles, and an eventual masculine dominance of institutional politics, continuing even after Pacific Islands states achieved independence.

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[8] Margaret Jolly, "Spectres of Inauthenticity", *The Contemporary Pacific* 4 (1), 1992, pp. 49-72.

[9] Martha Macintyre, "Gender Violence in Melanesia and the Problem of Millennium Development Goal No. 3", in M. Jolly and C. Stewart (eds.), *Engendering Violence in Papua New Guinea*. ANU E-press, Canberra, 2012, pp. 239-266.

[10] Bronwen Douglas, "Why Religion, Race and Gender Matter in Pacific Politics", *Development Studies Network*, 2002. Located at https://crawford.anu.edu.au/rmap/devnet/devnet/gen/gen_civil.pdf [accessed 10 November 2012].

[11] Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (eds.), *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010.

[12] Ibid.

In the Melanesian countries of Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Fiji, Christian values are closely intertwined with customary protocols and have been institutionalised in various state constitutional structures.[13] This has further contributed to a general masculinisation of the political realm as male political leaders invoke religiously oriented discourses that seek to remind politically ambitious women about their "rightful" roles. At times, male parliamentarians have also adopted strongly moralistic tones to discredit female parliamentary colleagues, as Kiribati cabinet minister Tangariki Reete found in 2014, when she faced criticism from opposition representatives because of alleged misbehaviour while consuming alcohol. These included comments that she set a poor role model as a "... wife and mother..." and had acted "against Kiribati" custom.[14]

Research in Samoa shows how tradition and faith intertwine in ways that can undermine women's confidence to participate in decision-making.[15] The Matai title that endows Samoans with chiefly authority and the right to participate in local, and national, decision-making is open to women in theory but, in practice, is claimed by only 6% of Samoa's women. Even when they do hold these titles, women are excluded from 14% of village councils and in other cases choose not to attend these meetings even if they are entitled to.[16] As I will explain later, a unique quota system has been adopted in this setting to increase women's political representation.

Faith and custom do not always combine to politically disempower women in the region however. Kanak Independence leader Jean-Marie Tjibaou, an ordained Catholic priest until 1970, frequently articulated perspectives on Christian belief and indigenous custom that emphasised their elasticity and responsiveness to adaptation and contemporary reinterpre-

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[13] Bronwen Douglas, "Why Religion, Race and Gender Matter in Pacific Politics", *Development Studies Network*, 2002. Located at https://crawford.anu.edu.au/rmap/devnet/devnet/gen/gen_civil.pdf [accessed 10 November 2012].

[14] RNZI, 27 August 2014.

[15] Measina Meredith, "Factors Preventing Women Entering Electoral Politics in Samoa", Presentation to the Pacific Islands Political Science Association Conference, University of French Polynesia, 6 June 2014.

[16] Ibid.

tation.[17] He was also quick to acknowledge the contributions that Kanak women could make to the evolution of Kanak nationalism. These ideas remain central to articulations of indigenous culture and nation-building in New Caledonia today[18] and afford indigenous women some latitude when they contest discriminatory treatment.[19] More concretely, the positive representation of women in Kanak culture helped them win acceptance for the local adoption of Parity measures in New Caledonia in the early 2000s against widespread masculine opposition (Rettig et al. 2007).[20] In the following years, these same discourses have enabled Kanak women to attain high political office at all levels of government, municipal, regional and territorial, and pursue innovative gender policy reform[21] (see discussion on quotas, temporary special measures and parity provisions below).

Economic considerations

Politics in many parts of the Pacific Islands reflects a "big man culture" where candidates demonstrate their capacity for political office through personal achievement, clan-based exchange and material accumulation. The experience, skill, and integrity of candidates are recognised as important, but these qualities may be outweighed in the minds of many voters by other factors.[22] This is because, within custom, the bigman is usually assumed to inhabit both a male body, as the term suggests, but also a

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[17] Jean Marie Tjibaou, *Kanaky* (Translated by H. Fraser and J. Trotter). Pandanus Books, ANU. Canberra, 2005, pp. 128-129.

[18] Eric Wadell, *Jean Marie Tjibaou: Kanak Witness to the World, An Intellectual Biography*. University of Hawaii Press, Manoa, 2008, p. viii.

[19] Nicole George, "Women's Political Representation in the Pacific Islands: Lessons from New Caledonia, Lessons for the Region", Presentation to the Pacific Islands Political Science Association Conference, University of French Polynesia, 3 June 2014.

[20] French Parity laws also operate in the French territories of the Pacific Islands and require political parties to field lists of candidates that alternate the names of men and women from the bottom to the top of the list.

[21] Nicole George, "Women's Political Representation in the Pacific Islands: Lessons from New Caledonia, Lessons for the Region", Presentation to the Pacific Islands Political Science Association Conference, University of French Polynesia, 3 June 2014.

[22] Pauline Soaki, "Casting her vote: Women's political participation in Solomon Islands", in Martha Macintyre and Ceridwen Spark (eds.), *Transformations of Gender in Melanesia*. Acton: ANU Press, 2017, pp. 95-114. Retrieved 27 July 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1q1crwn.9.

model of leadership that assigns authority to those who have access to (material) wealth and a capacity to distribute that wealth among kin-based and extended networks.[23] In the contemporary context, this helps to blur the lines that separate bigman politics as part of customary practice and "vote buying," an activity that, although officially outlawed in most parts of the region, still continues informally. Electoral candidates who eagerly distribute "gifts" as part of their campaigns are more likely to be rewarded with voter support than those who do not.[24]

Baker has noted that politicians' primary function is often understood to be that of service delivery in these contexts; thus, for candidates to be taken seriously they must demonstrate a capacity to distribute wealth as part of the campaign process.[25] This means that wealth is critical for those with political aspirations and that gendered economic disadvantage compounds women's political marginalisation. Gender-disaggregated economic data for the region indicates the challenges this poses for women. Between 54% and 66% of women are employed in subsistence food cultivation, agriculture or fisheries (rising to 95% of women in Papua New Guinea), while patrilineal systems of hereditary land and wealth transfer prevent women from accessing capital, credit and education opportunities. Women's waged employment is generally ghettoised in low-skilled, low-income, feminised occupations such as factory production-line work (e.g., fish canneries, garment manufacturing), teaching, nursing and caring professions, and low-scale clerical work.[26] Women's subordinate economic status has negative implications when they stand for election as they frequently finance their campaigns as independents from their own limited

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[23] Orovu Sepoe, "To Make a Difference: Realities of Women's Participation in Papua New Guinea Politics", *Development Studies Network*, 2002. Located at https://crawford.anu.edu.au/rmap/devnet/devnet/gen/gen_civil.pdf [accessed 10 November 2012].

[24] Terence Wood. "Predicting the 2019 Solomon Islands Election." *Devpolicy Blog*, 14 March 2019. Located at https://devpolicy.org/predicting-the-2019-solomon-islands-elections-20190314 [accessed July 13, 2020].

[25] Kerryn Baker, "Great Expectations: Gender and Political Representation in the Pacific Islands", Government and Opposition, 53(3), 2018, p. 554. doi:10.1017/gov.2016.54.

[26] Elise Huffer, "A desk review of the factors which enable and constrain women's political representation in Forum Island countries" in Elise Huffer et al., *A Women's Place is in the House: The House of Parliament: Research to advance women's political representation in Forum Island Countries: A regional study presented in five reports*, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Suva, 2006, pp. 1-56, 38.

purse, and hence have difficulty meeting the material expectations of an electorate expecting "big man" largesse. Even if they do win party endorsement, they are unlikely to be favoured with the same levels of financial support as their male colleagues.[27]

The bigman style of politics has become excessive in some political contexts and in Papua New Guinea (PNG) has evolved into what is commonly referred to as "money politics".[28] Kerry Zubrinich's observations, gathered during the 2012 national election, noted the practice of vote-buying to be wide-spread with votes traded between electors and candidates for amounts ranging from 5 Kina for individual votes to 10,000 and even 100,000 Kina for guarantees of block voting across a whole village or clan group. In PNG's Highlands Provinces, Zubrinich also recorded candidates plying (male) electors generously with food, alcohol and even female sexual partners as part of vote trading.[29]

Women candidates may try to turn this scenario to their advantage by promoting their commitment to anti-corruption principles and "clean politics". Baker contends that this sort of campaign agenda assisted the fortunes of Jospehine Getsi, the first woman to win an open seat in Bougainville's parliament in 2015 (aside from the three seats reserved for women in this assembly).[30] More generally, it remains a difficult strategy for women to progress electorally and goes against the general expectations of voters who may expect "patronage" in exchange for their support.[31] These kinds of pressures help to explain why only seven women have ever been elected to the national parliament of PNG since the country gained

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[27] Kerry Zubrinich, 2014, Women in the 2012 National Elections in Papua New Guinea, Presentation to the Pacific Islands Political Science Association Conference, University of French Polynesia, 6 June.

[28] Kerryn Baker, 2018, "Great Expectations: Gender and Political Representation in the Pacific Islands", Government and Opposition, 53(3), p. 554, doi:10.1017/gov.2016.54.

[29] Zubrinich, op. cit.

[30] Elise Huffer, "A desk review of the factors which enable and constrain women's political representation in Forum Island countries", in Elise Huffer et al., *A Women's Place is in the House: The House of Parliament: Research to advance women's political representation in Forum Island Countries: A regional study presented in five reports*, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Suva, 2006, pp. 1-56.

[31] Pauline Soaki, "Casting her vote: Women's political participation in Solomon Islands", in Martha Macintyre and Ceridwen Spark (eds.), *Transformations of Gender in Melanesia*. Acton: ANU Press, 2017, p. 107. Retrieved 27 July 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1q1crwn.9.

independence in 1975. The 2012 national elections saw three women successfully contest seats in the 111-seat assembly and inclined regional observers towards optimism that women were becoming more electable. However, while the 2017 elections saw 179 women stand as candidates, none were voted into the national parliament.[32]

Gendered violence, intimidation and the political process

While there is a dearth of literature on women's voting behaviour in the Pacific Islands, existing research tends to show that female voters are often reluctant to vote for women candidates. In part, this is because women are often not able to vote freely. Across the region there is a high tolerance of violence against women, a gendered social challenge that also shapes women's voting behaviour. Threats of violence or estrangement from male family or clan members are often used to enforce bloc voting in favour of a preferred male candidate.[33] Pauline Soaki's research in Solomon Islands has further shown that leaders with authority can also use coercive tactics to shape women's voter behaviour and deter them from voting for women candidates. She explains that in this context, women often describe the responsibilities of voting within a Christian rather than civic framework such that religious leaders are able to use the authority of the pulpit to direct voting behaviour.[34] This can sometimes also be coupled with religious leaders' "warnings" that families, or whole villages and clans, can invite punishment by natural disaster should they vote in ways that contravene the church's electoral advice (Soaki personal communication Honiara, August 2017). Women voters can therefore be persuaded by appeals to principles of Christian duty and obligation to vote in particular ways and to put their own political views to one side.

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[32] Nicole Haley and Kerry Zubrinic, "2017 Papua New Guinea General Election Observation Report", Department of Pacific Affairs: Australian National University. Canberra, 2018. Located at http://dpa.bellschool.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/news/related-documents/2019-05/png_report_hi_res.pdf.

[33] Kerryn Baker, "Great Expectations: Gender and Political Representation in the Pacific Islands", Government and Opposition, 53(3), 2018, p. 550. doi:10.1017/gov.2016.54.

[34] Pauline Soaki, "Casting her vote: Women's political participation in Solomon Islands", in Martha Macintyre and Ceridwen Spark (eds.), *Transformations of Gender in Melanesia*. Acton: ANU Press, 2017, p. 107. Retrieved 27 July 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1q1crwn.9.

Periods of political upheaval and conflict in some parts of the Pacific – Bougainville (1990s), Solomon Islands (early 2000s) and a history of coups in Fiji (1987 onwards) – have all shaped women's experiences as would-be political representatives. In Fiji, for example, parliamentary statistics up until 2006 seemed to indicate a regionally unique acceptance of female representatives, with women making up 11% of the national legislature. However, political office here has come with a risk of exposure to violence. When civilian rebel forces invaded the country's parliament in 2000, women MPs were detained for a number of days by coup perpetrators and subject to threats of violence. The military coup that occurred in 2006 again resulted in the dismissal of the national parliament and, later, city councils. Women within provincial councils, labour unions, and women's civil society organisations, and women elected to the national parliament who voice criticism of the government, have been subjected to intimidation and threats of arrest.[35]

Fiji's most recent period of military rule ended in September 2014, in an election that saw women make up 16% of the 249 candidates standing for election. Some parties made a significant show of support for women by adopting 30% female quotas governing their preselection of candidates and appointing women as their party presidents.[36] At the conclusion of counting, eight women won seats in the new parliament, the opposition leader was a woman and all female members elected to the government benches were allocated ministerial responsibilities. Not all women who stood for election were treated kindly by the electorate or by those they opposed, however. One of the youngest women contesting the 2014 Fiji election, Roshika Deo stood as an independent with a strong background in advocacy for women. Her youth combined with her feminist politics

[35] Ro Teimumu Kepa, *Address by the Gone Marama Bale Na Roko Tui Dreketi: A Clarification of Rewa's Perspective Regarding the Illegal Overthrow of the Fiji Government*. Delivered at the Bose Ni Yasana 'O Rewa Burenivudi, Lamanikoro, Rewa, Thursday, 16 November 2011. Electronic version posted to Pacwin listserve, 18 November 2011. Nicole George, *Situating Women: Gender Politics and Circumstance in Fiji*, ANU Press, Canberra, 2012. Maggie Boyle, "Opposition MP Lynda Tabuya granted bail". Fiji Broadcasting Corporation News, 20 March 2020. Located at https://www.fbcnews.com.fj/news/court/opposition-mp-lynda-tabuya-granted-bail/ [accessed 27 August 2020].

[36] Lynda Tabuya, "Pacific Women in Politics: experiences, attitudes, obstacles", Presentation to the Pacific Islands Political Science Association Conference, University of French Polynesia, 5 June 2014. Fiji Sun, 29 March, p. 38.

made her a target of particularly virulent and sometimes intimidating campaigns, which included media harassment by personalities closely aligned to Fiji's post-coup ruling elite,[37] as well as intimidation and threats of violence directed at her via social media.[38] In the 2018 elections that followed, women made up 24% of the candidates and 10 women were elected to the 51-seat national assembly. Five of those elected as part of the Fiji First government were awarded ministerial or ministerial assistant portfolios. The remaining five were elected to opposition parties. One of the women voted to the opposition ranks was Lynda Tabuya, whose electoral popularity saw her amass a far greater share of the national vote than women elected as part of the Fiji First government. She was both the highest-polling female candidate in this election, and fifth highest-polling candidate overall.

Women's Political Contributions

Around the globe, women's capacities to make political contributions, even as elected parliamentary representatives, are limited because they are frequently sidelined from positions of political power within government. Global averages show gender parity in the executive arm of government to be a rarity, and women's ministerial responsibilities generally limited to social and welfare portfolios considered appropriate to their gender.[39] These patterns are particularly pronounced in the Pacific region. Fiji has three women ministers; Tonga, Samoa and Solomon Islands have two; Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Bougainville and Tuvalu all have only one woman holding a ministerial portfolio. Further in line with global trends, the majority of these ministerial appointments are of the sort typically distributed to women and focus on policy areas such as women, youth, family and cultural affairs, health, education, and development.

In some contexts women have played more senior roles, however. Most notable in this regard is Hilda Heine, who, between 2016 and early 2020, held the office of President of the Marshall Islands, the first woman of a self-governing Pacific Islands country to hold a national political

[37] Fiji Sun, 29 March 2014, pp. 45, 48.

[38] Fiji Times, 3 June 2014, http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=270360.

[39] IPU & UN Women, 2020.

leadership role. In the US territory of Guam, Lou Guerrero was elected as the first female Governor in 2018. The Honourable Fiame Naomi Mataafa currently holds the position of Deputy Prime Minister in Samoa. In other Pacific countries, women members of parliament have won parliamentary support to assume the roles of Speaker or Deputy Speaker. Ms Tangariki Reete was elected as the first woman Speaker for Kiribati in May 2020, Dr. Jiko Luveni was elected for a second term as Speaker of the Fijian parliament in 2018, a position she held until her death in office, and Ms Niki Rattle has held two consecutive terms as Speaker in the Cook Islands parliament from 2012. Francesca Semoso has held the position of Deputy Speaker in Bougainville's parliament since 2015 and also held this post in her earlier parliamentary term from 2005-2010.

Promoting Electoral Reform

Quotas, Temporary Special Measures, Parity Provisions

The desirability of adopting electoral reforms that will assist women's political representation is hotly debated across the region. With the exception of Tonga and Palau, all other independent PICs have ratified United Nation Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (UNCEDAW), which allows lobbyists, activists and women's machineries in government to refer to the provisions of article 4 covering women's political participation as they lobby for gender-equitable reforms. As a result, there has been increased institutional activity on this question in many countries, but results remain mixed.

In Solomon Islands, a campaign to develop a bill establishing 10 reserved seats of women in the national parliament was initiated from the Solomon Islands Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs, and spearheaded by its Permanent Secretary, Ethel Sigimanu, in 2008. Despite recent survey data showing broad public support for reserved

seats for women,[40] these efforts did not win sufficient government support, with the result that the project appears to have reached a stalemate. At present, Solomon Islands has three women sitting in its 50-seat assembly. In recognition of women's ongoing marginalisation from electoral decision-making at the national and provincial level, three provinces moved to create Provincial Women's Councils in 2018 as an alternative forum that might increase women's ability to make their political concerns heard by elected representatives.[41] Women leaders participating in this initiative were particularly frustrated by the poor state of road and transport infrastructure in most parts of the country, as well as by their inability to access national consultations on questions of land access and reform.

In 2011, Dame Carol Kidu, at that time PNG's only woman MP in the national parliament, led a campaign to create 22 reserved seats for that country's parliament. Her efforts won strong public support, and seemed headed for success when a constitutional amendment passed parliament in preparation for a later reading of the Temporary Special Measures (TSM) bill.[42] The latter attempt failed, however, and the TSM bill has not become law. Sometimes, women MPs themselves resist these reforms. For example, Loujaya Toni voiced her opposition to reserved seats as an elected member of parliament in 2012, stating that women parliamentarians can only win respect by getting "your hands dirty like the guys".[43] This contrasted with Ms Toni's earlier apparent support for the proposition articulated in a poem entitled "Twenty Two Women".[44]

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[40] Women's Rights Action Movement and International Women's Development Agency, "Public perception of women as political leaders", WRAM and IWDA, 2019. Located at https://iwda.org.au/assets/files/Public-Perceptions-of-Women-as-Leaders-in-Solomon-Islands.pdf. Christine McMurray, "National elections and women candidates in Solomon Islands: Results from the People's Survey", CDI Policy Papers, 2012. Located at http://www.cdi.anu.edu.au/.SI/2011-12/D/2011_12_RES-PPS9_SOLS_WMN_PPLS_SRVY_McMurray/2012_01_PPS_CM_SIPS.pdf [accessed 5 November 2012].

[41] Nicole George, "Conflict transition, emplaced identity and the gendered politics of scale in Solomon Islands". *Cooperation and Conflict*. *In Press for Volume 3*, 2020.

[42] *Sydney Morning Herald,* 24 November 2011.

[43] Loujaya Toni, *ABC Radio Australia,* 13 August 2012.

[44] This poem was published on *PNG Attitude,* 18 January 2012, https://www.pngattitude.com/2012/01/-twenty-two-women-.html.

In Samoa, in 2013, the government passed a bill amending the constitution, and established a system of up to five floating reserved seats for women.[45] During the debating process, the bill's detractors argued that the provisions were undemocratic and amounted to Samoa "following orders from the UN".[46] Yet when the bill was passed into law, it gained widespread media support and prompted wider debate on other areas where women in Samoa still suffer serious discrimination.[47] The bill saw five women enter the Samoan parliament after the 2016 general election. It has since been described as a "uniquely Pacific" electoral mechanism designed to respond to "common criticisms that reserved seats are unfair" or give women "special treatment".[48]

In the region's francophone territories, New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Wallis and Futuna, parity provisions adopted in 2001 in metropolitan France have been replicated, albeit sometimes with resistance. These same laws also operate for municipal and regional elections and have contributed to a meteoric rise in women's political standing, such that women now outnumber men in both the New Caledonian and French Polynesian national parliaments. In New Caledonia, women's increased political participation has allowed them to mobilise state resources to fund a series of agencies specifically devoted to women's well-being known as "la secteur de la Condition Féminine". Women have also achieved high political office. Between 2004 and 2008, an indigenous Kanak woman, Déwé Gorodé, held the office of Vice President in New Caledonia, while two European women have held the office of President; Marie-Noëlle Thémereau from 2004 until 2007 and Cynthia Liegeard from 2014 to 2015. In 2013, Caroline Machoro, a Kanak woman member of the national assembly, was nominated as the leader of the Melanesian Spearhead Group's Foreign Minister's Meeting, the first time this regional body has ever given

[45] In the event that no woman wins a parliamentary seat in open contest, the five highest polling women candidates will win seats in the parliament; if one woman wins an open seat, the next four highest polling women candidates will be appointed, and so on.

[46] Levaopolo Talatonu, cited *Samoan Observer,* 5 February 2012.

[47] Samoan Observer, 26 June 2013.

[48] Kerryn Baker, "The 'Samoan model' adapts gender quotas to Pacific politics", *East Asia Forum*, 14 August 2019. Located at https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2019/08/14/the-samoan-model-adapts-gender-quotas-to-pacific-politics/.

this level of recognition to a female representative. Women's political advancement has followed a similar pattern in French Polynesia, where parity has also seen the number of women parliamentarians rise dramatically. In Wallis and Futuna, also a francophone territory, parity provisions work less effectively due to a more unstable party structure.[49] Yet, even with this challenge, the last elections in 2017 brought six women into the 20-seat Territorial Assembly.

Women have also benefited from parity provisions at the level of municipal elections in the francophone territories. The numbers of women placed at the head of party lists in these elections have risen with each election round, increasing both the number of women elected to municipal councils generally but also the number of women elected to the office of Mayor. In the 2020 municipal round of elections, five women were elected as Mayors, including Sonia Lagarde, who was re-elected as the Mayor of Nouméa, New Caledonia's capital, and Maryline Sinewami, who was elected as the first woman Mayor for the island municipality of Maré. Municipal election results followed a similar pattern in French Polynesia in 2020 with five women also elected to the position of Mayor.

Constitutional negotiations established Bougainville as an autonomous region of Papua New Guinea as part of the post-conflict reconstruction process at the end of a ten-year period of conflict. In recognition of the matrilineal structures of Bougainvillean society and the important role women had played in the peace processes that would end fighting on the island, three seats were reserved for women in the new territorial assembly, allocated to represent the three regions of the island territory. More recently, in 2016, a new community government act was established that requires parity representation of women and men in each ward, and women and men alternating in President and Vice President roles at each election.[50]

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[49] John Fraenkel, "The Impact of Electoral Systems on Women's Representation in Pacific Parliaments", in E. Huffer et al., *A Women's Place is in the House: The House of Parliament: Research to advance women's political representation in Forum Island Countries: A regional study presented in five reports*, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Suva, 2006, pp. 57-106.

[50] Nicole George, "Bougainville, Papua New Guinea: Gender and participation in the wake of a partially "gendered" peace agreement". *Monash Gender, Peace and Security*, September, 2018. Located at http://mappingpeace.monashgps.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/PNG_Bougainville_v5-1.pdf [accessed 27 August 2020].

Elizabeth Burain, elected to the Bougainville assembly in 2010, has argued that the reserved seat provisions have encouraged wide acceptance of women parliamentarians.[51] Few women contested Bougainville's 33 open seats in the early rounds of elections, but this number has increased in the intervening years. Some contend that Bougainville's voters are disinclined to support women campaigning for open seats, believing that the quota system gives them sufficient electoral representation.[52] My own research conducted with would-be women parliamentarians in Bougainville in June 2014, indicates a strong determination amongst many women leaders to change this situation. Many of the women leaders I spoke to stated their frustration with the reserved seats system, arguing it was too difficult and costly for women to campaign effectively across their large regional electorates. They also declared that having women in only three parliamentary seats in a 39-seat assembly was insufficient and that more women needed to achieve parliamentary representation before real gains could be achieved. In 2015, this determination saw 12 women stand as candidates for open seats (in addition to the 23 women who contested the reserve seats) and one woman, Josephine Getsi, succeed in winning an open seat. This brought four women into the parliament. Bougainville's voters will go to the polls again in July to elect a new parliament to oversee negotiations on the territory's future political status. More than 40 women are standing for open seats and the three reserved seats. Two women are standing for the position of President.

Wives, Widows and Family connections

Around the globe it has been noted that women who are connected to families with a political pedigree often have greater capacity to garner electoral support than those from non-political families. The same is true in the Pacific but recent observations have also emphasised how women candidates have benefited more particularly from their marriage to former

[51] Burain, cited *Radio New Zealand International,* 28 March 2011.

[52] Norm Kelly, "Electoral Democracy in Post-Conflict Melanesia: The 2010 Bougainville and Solomon Islands Elections", CDI Policy Papers on Political Governance, CDI, 2010. Located at http://www.cdi.anu.edu.au/.AP/2010-11/D/2010_11_RES_PPS8_BGV.SOLS_Kelly/PPS_2010-02_NK_BGV_SI_FIN.pdf [accessed 16 November 2012].

MPs.[53] Specifically, the argument is that women married to men who lose their seat in parliament through some form of legal challenge, or as a result of death, often mount successful electoral campaigns in subsequent by-elections. While this is not an unknown phenomena, and was also characteristic of the ways some women achieved electoral success, in the early years of established democracies,[54] it has also featured as a prominent pathway into politics for women in Solomon Islands, Tonga, Cook Islands, and Tuvalu in recent years. Baker and Palmieri[55] suggest that while bereaved women may benefit from a "sympathy vote" in these instances, more complex motivations may also explain voter support for the wives or widows of former MPs. They include voter allegiance to a patronage network that they anticipate will continue if the wife is elected; and the idea that voters may view both the husband and the wife as the members of a representative team, and vote to ensure that team continues their political role.

Concluding remarks

Women's electoral success across the Pacific and particularly in the region's self-governing territories is persistently low but it is also consistently challenged by women who refuse to let go of their political ambitions. While it is concerning that the three countries in the world that currently have no women sitting in their parliaments are all from the Pacific region, this needs to be balanced with an appreciation of where and how women's political standing is also improving. First, regional averages of women's representation are slowly improving and have in fact doubled from 4% to just under 9% in the past five years. Second, the success of quota systems adopted in countries like Samoa, Bougainville and the French territories demonstrate that reform can be embraced and capitalised upon to increase women's political visibility and agency. Third, recent instances

[53] Kerryn Baker and Sonia Palmieri, "Widows and Wives in Pacific Politics: A Reliable Pathway for Women?", *Department of Pacific Affairs In Brief 2020/1*, 2020. Located at http://dpa.bellschool.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/2020-02/dpa_in_brief_baker_palmieri_2020_01_final.pdf.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

of elected women also achieving high political office in Samoa, Marshall Islands and New Caledonia set critical precedents for women elsewhere in the Pacific. The fact that there are increasing numbers of female political candidates entering electoral contests around the region suggests that while women may be politically marginalised, they are not sitting idly by waiting for change, but working hard to create it.

Country	Year of Last Election	Number of Women Elected	Total Number of Seats	TSMs, Quotas etc. in Place
American Samoa	2018	1	21	None
Bougainville	2015	4	39	3 reserved seats – election due August 2020
Cook Islands	2018	6	24	None
Federated States of Micronesia	2017	0	14	None
Fiji	2018	10	51	None
French Polynesia	2018	30	57	Parity Laws
Guam	2018	10	15	None
Kiribati	2020	4	45	None
Marshall Islands	2019	2	33	None
New Caledonia	2019	28	54	Parity Laws
Nauru	2019	2	19	None
Niue	2020	3	20	None
Northern Mariana Islands	2018	3	20	None
Palau	2016	4	29 (two houses)	None
Papua New Guinea	2017	0	111	None
Samoa	2016	5	50	Quota of maximum of 5 reserved
Solomon Islands	2019	3	49	None
Tonga	2017	2	27	None
Tuvalu	2019	1	16	None
Vanuatu	2020	0	52	None
Wallis and Futuna	2017	6	20	Parity Laws

Women in Politics in Eastern Europe: 30 Years After the Fall of the Berlin Wall

Ekaterina R. Rashkova and Emilia Zankina

The dramatic transformations that have marked East European countries, namely the implosion and then collapse of communist regimes, followed by an uneven and troubled transition towards democracy and European integration, as well as the recent democratic backsliding across the region and the rise of radical right parties,[1] have defined the role of women in politics. Change is what best describes gender representation in Eastern Europe.

Former communist countries are often described as patriarchic in culture and a place where women face discrimination, are under-represented in politics, and are expected to have superior credentials in order to be granted access to political positions.[2] East European women are often accused of "gender blindness"[3] and aversion towards the Western feminist agenda,[4] while political parties are blamed for a lack of interest in pro-

[1] Ekaterina Rashkova and Emilia Zankina. 2017. "Are (Populist) Radical Right Parties *Männerparteien?* Evidence from Bulgaria", *West European Politics*, 2017, 40 (4): 848-868; Ekaterina Rashkova. 2020. "Gender Politics and Radical Right Parties: An Examination of Women's Substantive Representation in Slovakia", *East European Politics and Societies*, online first. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325419897993.

[2] Richard E. Matland. 2003. "Women's Representation in Post-Communist Europe", in Richard E. Matland and Kathleen A. Montgomery (eds), *Women's Access to Political Power in Post-Communist Europe*, Oxford University Press, pp. 321-342, p. 326.

[3] Malgorzata Fuszara. 2010. "Citizenship, Representation and Gender", *Polish Sociological Review*, Vol. 172 (4): 367-389.

[4] Matland 2003*,* op. cit.

moting women or gender equality.[5] While such a view is not inaccurate in comparative terms, it prevents us from seeing the fast and dramatic changes that are taking place in the region and that are reshaping women's political representation. If communist regimes staged women in large numbers but with no power, today, female politicians are claiming the highest political posts. Female representation in parliament is steadily growing, in many places due to the reintroduction of gender quotas, whereas the presence of women in government is growing at an even faster rate. The European Union's (EU's) influence is evident not only in legal transposition, but in the gradual adoption of norms and values that bring increased gender awareness and a change of mentality.

We offer a brief account of the changing nature of gender representation in Eastern Europe, emphasising the positive trends in the last decade while accounting for still-existing gaps and past legacies. Gender representation in the region has undergone three major transformations – the forced and hollow emancipation of women during communist rule, the almost complete neglect of women's issues and the sharp drop in women's political representation following the collapse of communist regimes, and the gradual increase in the number and status of women in politics as a result of European integration. To illustrate these changes in women's political representation, we briefly examine each.

Women and Communist-Era Emancipation

Women's activism in Eastern Europe dates back to the 19th century, but in these early days, little progress was made towards ensuring women's political and economic rights. With the establishing of communist regimes across Eastern Europe following World War Two, women's emancipation became an official goal of state policy. The so-called "socialist emancipation project" which focused on integrating women into paid labour and into state positions of power had dubious success. Female participation in the labour force steadily increased, even surpassing figures in the West,

[5] Christina Chiva. 2005. "Women in Post-Communist Politics: Explaining Under-Representation in the Hungarian and Romanian Parliaments", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 57 (7): 969-994; C. Chiva. 2018. *Gender, Institutions and Political Representation*. London: PalgraveMacmillan. DOI: 10.1057/978-1-137-01177-0.

and the nature of female labour changed with more women occupying managerial positions and jobs in the industry and the state administration. At the same time, women occupied less prestigious, lower-level and lower-paid jobs, in professions that required less education and more commitment. Women were given the additional role of workers, but the bases of the unequal gender order were never contested,[6] as women were still expected to carry out most household chores.

Communist regimes further showed great commitment to opening channels for women's political participation. Women were granted voting rights (if not gained in the interwar period) and access to political positions; women's socialist mass organisations were formed to mobilise the female population; gender quotas for state legislatures were introduced; and efforts were made to recruit women to communist parties. As a result, the proportion of women in parliaments reached an average of 25 percent by the 1980s and for the first time women entered executive positions. Yet, women played a marginal role in political decision-making, occupying positions at the lower and/or local level. While rubber-stamp parliaments welcomed female representatives, women's participation in bodies with real political power was extremely limited. Women did not exceed 10 percent of party central committees and practically did not feature in politburos. Women's organisations became an instrument of party control and were hardly defenders of women's rights. Political equality came to be associated with women's nominal presence in political bodies, indicating a hollow commitment to women's emancipation.

Communist Legacies and the Post-Communist Context

The communist experience of centralised decision-making, regimented political mobilisation, and political oppression left a legacy of passivity as well as a distaste for Western feminism,[7] which had little applicability in the

[6] Raluca Maria Popa. 2003. "The Socialist Project for Gender (In)Equality: A Critical Discussion", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, Vol.6 (Winter 2003): 49-72, p. 69.

[7] With the exception of Yugoslavia, which was much more open to the West and where Western feminist ideas penetrated and took root in the 1970s, resulting in independent women's organisations and embracing of Western feminist ideas, particularly by Croatian and Serbian women's activists.

East European context. Unlike their Western counterparts, East European women did not view men as oppressors, but rather as fellow victims of state oppression. Given such legacies, women's political involvement in post-communist societies was characterised by (1) an aversion to political mobilisation, (2) hostility towards Western feminist agendas, and (3) negative attitudes towards affirmative action for women.[8] The immediate result of such an outlook was the abolition of gender quotas for legislatures and a subsequent 50 percent drop in women's political representation.[9]

The transition context further proved particularly harmful to women's representation and interests as women's issues were subordinated to the "larger" issues of democracy and economic restructuring.[10] Women's interests were bundled with those of larger groups such as the unemployed or the pensioners, preventing the emergence of a distinct women's agenda and strong women's parties. Women's parties were found in few post-communist states, with only three of these parties entering national parliaments.[11]

At the same time, the number of women occupying executive positions in Eastern Europe has dramatically risen. In Slovenia, Croatia and the Baltic states, for example, 68 women headed 80 ministries and at least 122 women held 132 executive positions in the first decade of the transition.[12] In Bulgaria, women's representation in the executive reached over 35 percent in the past decade, while in Romania and Croatia, it reached 25 percent.[13] Female executives have further enjoyed greater access to "big" ministries

[8] Ekaterina Rashkova and Emilia Zankina. 2014. "When Less Means More: Influential Women of the Right – the Case of Bulgaria", in Sarah Childs and Karen Celis (eds), *Gender, Conservatism and Political Representation*, ECPR Press, pp. 103-120.

[9] United Nations. 2005. *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World*, United Nations Research Institution for Social Research.

[10] Ann Graham and Joanna Regulska. 1997. "Where Political Meets Women: Creating Local Political Space", *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, Vol. 15 (1): 4-12, p. 6.

[11] Mona Lena Krook and Ekaterina Rashkova. 2006. "The Emergence and Impact of Women's Parties: A Comparative Analysis of Western and Eastern Europe". Unpublished manuscript.

[12] Maxime Forest. 2011. "From State-Socialism to EU accession: Contrasting the Gendering of (Executive) Political Power in Central Europe", 2nd ECPR Conference, Budapest, January 12-15, p. 6.

[13] Ekaterina Rashkova and Emilia Zankina. 2019. "Executive Leadership and Gender Politics in South-Eastern Europe", *Politics & Gender*, 15 (2): 211-239. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X18001071.

such as economy, finance or defence, in addition to the more traditional ministries for women – environment, social care or education. The growth rate of women ministers has been much higher than the steady and slow growth rate of women in parliament.[14] Moreover, only a few ministers had previously served as members of parliament, suggesting a much broader source of supply than just the legislature.

One of the most significant factors in improving women's representation and placing gender equality high on the agenda has been the role of the EU.[15] Legislative and policy transfers entailed by EU accession have resulted in a smaller gap in women's representation between new member states and the EU-15 average,[16] as well as legal frameworks more sensitive to women's issues.[17] Along with regulatory changes, European values have been making headway, slowly changing rigid views of gender relations. The EU has been the key external force in increasing women's representation, but domestic actors and their ability to mediate external pressures have been critical in the implementation of the EU's gender equality policy in the East.[18] In the 2014 and 2019 EU parliament elections, the European Parliament has urged Member States and political parties to support gender-balanced electoral lists, as well as the nominations of women to high-level positions in the EU institutions. Moreover, for the last 30 years, the EU has actively promoted a balanced participation of women and men in decision-making at local, regional and national levels through various "hard" and "soft" measures, including quotas, "zipped systems", data-collection and funding, to support the Member States and civil society.[19]

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[14] Ingrid Bego. 2013. "Accessing Power in New Democracies: The Appointment of Female Ministers in Postcommunist Europe", *Political Research Quarterly*. DOI: 10.1177/1065912913509028, p. 347.

[15] Leah Seppanen Anderson. 2006. "European Union Gender Regulations in the East: The Czech and Polish Accession Process", *East European Politics and Societies,* Vol. 20 (1): 101-125.

[16] Maxime Forest. 2011. "From State-Socialism to EU accession: Contrasting the Gendering of (Executive) Political Power in Central Europe", 2nd ECPR Conference, Budapest, January 12-15.

[17] Not surprisingly, many ministerial positions overseeing EU affairs or integration in the countries examined here have been occupied by women.

[18] Ibidem.

[19] Rosamund Shreeves, Martina Prpic, and Eulalia Claros. 2019. "Women in politics in the EU: State of Play", European Parliamentary Research Service, p. 10.

Women in Politics Today

Women's representation in Eastern Europe has changed vastly since the region's transition to democracy. While the number of women in the majority of the first post-communist parliaments was negligible, today, nine out of the seventeen countries examined here show a proportion of women in parliament on par with or larger than the current world average of 24.6 percent.[20] The data in Table 1 indicates that in their current legislatures, Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Poland, and Serbia have a higher percentage of women in parliament than most world states. Furthermore, Kosovo, Latvia, North Macedonia, and Serbia have a higher percentage of women in parliament than the European average of 30.1 percent.[21]

This phenomenon can be attributed to the EU's influence, as well as the gradual reintroduction of quotas across the region. Of the countries examined here, only three have no gender quotas, seven have legislative candidate quotas of 30-35 percent, and one (Kosovo) has reserved seats (see Table 1). Voluntary quotas ranging from 20 to 40 percent are also common, primarily among social-democratic parties. This shows that in most cases negative attitudes towards affirmative action for women have been overcome and gender awareness is increasing.

Besides a vastly changing parliamentary representation, women are beginning to penetrate "the highest ceiling" by increasing their numbers as well as securing bigger roles in governments. Data from the current cabinets in the seventeen East European countries included here shows that the average proportion of women in government for the region is 23.1 percent, with Albania at 50 percent, Bulgaria at 35 percent, Kosovo at 29.4 percent and Serbia at 26 percent. Given the fact that politics is considered a primarily male domain in many of the East European states,[22] this is a remarkable sign that things are rapidly changing. Moreover, East European states have pioneered the electing of female politicians to the highest political

[20] IPU Women in National Parliaments. Available here: http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm (last accessed 27 May 2020).

[21] Ibidem.

[22] Matland 2003, op. cit., p. 339.

leadership posts. Seven states have chosen females to be President, and nine of the countries have had female Prime Ministers. Poland stands out with the fact that it has had not one but three female Prime Ministers since its transition to democracy. Compared to just five years ago when three countries – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary and Slovakia – did not have any women in their cabinets, currently all countries examined here have female ministers, ranging from two to six. Even countries with a legacy of ethnic conflicts (for example, Bosnia and Herzegovina), which is typically associated with lower political representation of women, particularly in the executive,[23] currently have female ministers – a significant change compared to five years ago. Hungary is the country where developments have been in stark contrast to overall regional trends. This may be due to the fact that parties which have adopted voluntary quotas and presumably are more sensitive to women's representation are not currently in power in either country.[24] More importantly, Orban, who has now ruled Hungary for a decade, has been increasingly authoritarian and for the first time since the collapse of the communist regime, Hungary is no longer classified as a democracy by Freedom House.[25] Such an authoritarian tendency has had a clear negative impact on female political representation in Hungary. Poland, in turn, is rolling back on legislation protecting women rights and similarly turning more authoritarian.[26]

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[23] Leonardo Ariola and Martha Johnson. 2014. "Ethnic Politics and Women's Empowerment in Africa: Ministerial Appointments to Executive Cabinets", *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 58 (2): 495-451.

[24] Slovakia represents an interesting case, as the incumbent social-democratic party has no voluntary quotas, whereas the conservative Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) has a voluntary quota of 30 percent.

[25] Freedom House, "Dropping the Democratic Façade in Europe and Eurasia", 2020, available at: https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2020/dropping-democratic-facade.

[26] "Poland's Top Court to Probe Europe's Domestic Violence Pact", *The New York Times*, 30 July 2020, available at: https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2020/07/30/world/europe/ap-eu-poland-domestic-violence.html.

Table 1. Female Representation in Parliament and Government, Quotas in Eastern Europe.

Country	Last election	Women in parliament	Women in government	Female PMs since transition	Female Presidents	Quotas: Type, %
Albania	2017	29.5 % (36)	50% (8)	0	0	Legislated candidate, 30
Bosnia & Herzegovina	2018	21.4 % (9)	23.5 % (4)	0	1	Legislated candidate, 40
Bulgaria	2017	26.7 % (64)	35% (7)	1	0	None
Croatia	2016	19.2% (29)	19% (4)	1	1	Voluntary party, 40
Czech Republic	2017	22.5% (45)	28.6% (4)	0	0	Voluntary party, 25
Estonia	2019	28.7% (28)	13.3% (2)	0	1	None
Hungary	2018	12.1% (24)	14.3% (2)	0	0	Voluntary party, 20-30
Kosovo	2019	31.7% (38)	29.4% (5)	0	1	Reserved seats, 30
Latvia	2018	31.0% (31)	21.4% (3)	1	1	None
Lithuania	2016	28.0% (30)	20.0% (3)	1	1	Voluntary party, 33
North Macedonia	2016	31.7% (38)	21.7% (5)	0	0	Legislated candidate, 33
Montenegro	2016	23.5% (19)	20.0% (4)	0	0	Legislated candidate, 30
Poland	2019	28.7% (132)	16.7% (4)	3	0	Legislated candidate, 35
Romania	2016	20.7% (68)	16.7% (3)	1	0	Voluntary party, 30
Serbia	2016	34.8% (86)	26.0% (6)	1	1	Legislated candidate, 33
Slovakia	2016	22% (33)	14.3% (2)	1	0	Voluntary party, 30
Slovenia	2018	24.4% (22)	23.5% (4)	1	0	Legislated candidate, 35
Total (average)		25.7%	23.1%	11	7	

Source: Data collected by authors (amongst others from: data.ipu.org). Albania has 29 reserved seats for women. The number of female leadership positions for Serbia has been counted since 2000, after the end of the war period.

In addition to seeing a largely more optimistic picture of the current political representation of women in Eastern Europe, for a smaller segment of five democracies from Southeastern Europe,[27] we observe a positive trend not only in representation as a whole, but also in the type of representations that women have. In those countries women are making headway across the political spectrum and, unlike in many West European countries, their avenues to power have not been primarily limited to parties on the left. In fact, it is the Right that have assigned women to the highest positions of power and those traditionally occupied by men. Such findings may be explained by the peculiarity of the political spectrum in post-communist countries, where the *Left* was largely dominated by former communist parties, and hence, was associated with the status quo, whereas the *Right* came to represent change and reform, attracting people with more progressive views and diverse backgrounds.[28]

Conclusion

The story of women's political representation in Eastern Europe is one of dynamic and positive change. We have witnessed growing representations of women in parliaments and a significant increase of women in the executives. Moreover, women are represented across the political spectrum, occupying a wider range of positions as well as positions traditionally reserved for men. Nevertheless, mentalities have been slower to change, with the EU being the key driver of increased gender awareness and the transfer of values and norms. Quotas are increasingly the norm in the region and have proved very successful in improving women's political representation. Yet, countries with no quotas have demonstrated some of the highest number and percentage of women in the executive.

While positive trends are evident in regard to the presence of women in politics, the substantive representation of women in Eastern Europe remains a far-fetched reality and the most we can argue for is *substantive*

[27] Those are Bulgaria, Croatia, North Macedonia, Romania and Serbia. See Ekaterina Rashkova and Emilia Zankina. 2019. "Executive Leadership and Gender Politics in South-Eastern Europe", *Politics & Gender*, 15 (2): 211-239. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X18001071.

[28] Rashkova and Zankina, 2014, op. cit.

presence,[29] i.e., the increased presence of women in key decision-making positions, which holds a potential for substantive claims and for bringing about social-attitude transformation. Hence, efforts from here on should be focused not only on placing women in key positions, but on pushing a political agenda that is responsive to women's interests and concerns, which can eventually bring change not only to the policies addressing women's issues but also to the mentality regarding what is a man's job and what isn't.

[29] Rashkova and Zankina 2014, op. cit.

Women's Descriptive and Substantive Representation in Nordic Politics

Lenita Freidenvall

In the international perspective, the five Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden – are often pointed to as models of gender equality, and they have frequently been placed at the top of world ranking lists pertaining to women's political representation. Today there is an average representation of 42.5 percent women in the national parliaments of the five countries, ranging from 38.1 percent in Iceland to 47.0 percent in Finland, compared to an international average of 25.1 percent women parliamentarians. The specificity of the Nordic countries in terms of women in politics can also be noted on the website of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, where regional statistics on women in parliamentary politics is provided with and without the Nordic countries.[1] Although the pursuit of gender balance in decision-making has been established as a cornerstone of the Nordic concept of democracy and gender equality policy for a long time, it is not so commonly known that it has taken quite some time to achieve high levels of women's representation. In fact, it has taken 70 to 80 years after the enfranchisement for women to reach the representation level of 30 to 40 percent of parliamentary seats. The proportion of women has increased by 2 or 3 percentage units per election, with only a few historical jumps. Scholars have described the development as a step-by-step process and the Nordic discourse on gender equality

[1] www.ipu.org.

as an incrementalist discourse of empowerment.[2] Considering the time it has taken for gender balance to be achieved and the many challenges that remain, scholars have even rejected the idea that the Nordic countries constitute a model for gender equality, at least not the only model.[3]

Departing from theories on descriptive and substantive representation, this chapter will analyse women's political representation in the Nordic countries. The chapter will give an overview of female leadership in the region and address the opportunities and gaps. It will also discuss how to make women's participation effective enough to influence the governance agenda and make it responsible to women's interests, needs and concerns.

Theories on Gender and Political Representation

Departing from Hanna Pitkin's[4] seminal work, scholars have made a distinction between descriptive, substantive, and symbolic representation. *Descriptive representation,* or numerical representation, concerns the composition of elected bodies. It normally refers to the number of women elected and the ways in which the proportion of women can increase. It is usually argued that political decision-making bodies should reflect the composition of the population. *Substantive representation* focuses on the activities of women in parliaments and the ways in which elected women may change political procedures, political agendas and public policies to make them more women-friendly. *Symbolic representation,* finally, con-

[2] D. Dahlerup and L. Freidenvall. 2005. "Quotas as a 'Fast Track' to Equal Political Representation for Women. Why Scandinavia is No Longer the Model." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 7 (1): 26-48; L. Freidenvall, D. Dahlerup and H. Skjeie. 2006. "The Nordic Countries: An Incremental Model." In Drude Dahlerup, ed. *Gender, Quotas and Politics.* New York/London: Routledge, 55-62; L. Freidenvall. 2013. "Step by Step: Women's Inroads to Parliamentary Power in Sweden." In: D. Dahlerup and M. Leyenaar, eds. *Breaking Male Democracy in Older Democracies.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 97-123; D. Dahlerup and M. Leyenaar, eds. 2013. *Breaking Male Democracy in Older Democracies.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[3] D. Dahlerup and L. Freidenvall. 2005. "Quotas as a 'Fast Track' to Equal Political Representation for Women. Why Scandinavia is No Longer the Model." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 7 (1): 26-48.

[4] H. Pitkin. 1967. *The Concept of Representation.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

cerns the perception of women as political leaders and the importance of gender-balanced decision-making bodies.

The first topic (descriptive representation), including the vast research on gender quotas, has received by far the most attention in comparative work.[5] The second topic (substantive representation) includes research on attitudes and priorities[6] and introduction of bills.[7] Research within this field has also discussed whether a critical mass of women is needed in order for legislative changes to occur.[8] In contrast, research on the third topic (symbolic representation) is much less common, as it is often the least concrete outcome to investigate, creating difficulties with operationalisation, measurement and effects. One approach examines how women's presence affects the perceived legitimacy of elected bodies.[9] Another approach focuses on what functions symbolic representation fulfils in the construction of gender, in terms of what social roles get legitimised in policy discourse, and how this affects power constellations, ultimately revealing much about the relation between symbolic, descriptive, and substantive representation.[10]

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[5] A. Phillips. 1995. *The Politics of Presence.* Oxford: Oxford University Press; J. Mansbridge. 1999. "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes.'" *Journal of Politics* 61 (3): 628-657; I. M. Young. 2000. *Inclusion and Democracy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press; D. Dahlerup. 2006. *Women, Quotas and Politics.* New York: Routledge; M. L. Krook. 2009. *Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide.* New York: Oxford University Press.

[6] L. A. Schwindt-Bayer and W. Mishler. 2005. "An Integrated Model of Women's Representation". *The Journal of Politics* 67 (2): 407-28.

[7] S. Franceschet and J. Piscopo. 2008. "Gender Quotas and Women's Substantive Representation: Lessons from Argentina." *Politics & Gender* 4 (3): 393-425.

[8] K. Celis. 2006. "Substantive representation of women: The representation of women's interests and the impact of descriptive representation in the Belgian parliament (1900-1979)." *Journal of Women Political Policy* 28 (2): 85-114; K. Celis, S. Childs, J. Kantola and M. L. Krook. 2008. "Rethinking Women's Substantive Representation." *Representation* 44 (2): 99-110; S. Dovi. 2002. "Preferable Descriptive Representatives: Will Just Any Woman, Black, or Latino Do?" *American Political Science Review* 96 (4): 729-743.

[9] S. Childs. 2004. *New Labour Women's MPs: Women Representing Women*. London and New York: Routledge; L. A. Schwindt-Bayer and W. Mishler. 2005. "An Integrated Model of Women's Representation". *The Journal of Politics* 67 (2): 407-28.

[10] E. Lombardo and P. Meier. 2014. *The Symbolic Representation of Gender. A Discursive Approach.* Aldershot: Ashgate.

Women's Descriptive Representation in the Nordic Countries

The Nordic countries share a number of characteristics, including democratic stability, secularism, a large public sector and an extended welfare state, as well as high standards of living and a long tradition for popular participation in politics.[11] The Proportional Representation-list (PR-list) electoral system, the dominance of the Social Democratic Party, and the long and continuous activities of the women's movement are additional common traits. In the Nordic countries, the breakthrough for women's participation in politics emerged in the 1970s and the proportion of women in politics has since then increased. Table 1 shows women's descriptive representation in Nordic politics in two periods, the mid-1990s and 2010–2019.

Table 1. The descriptive representation of women in a number of key political positions in the Nordic countries in the mid-1990s and 2010–2019. Percent.

Positions	Denmark		Finland		Iceland		Norway		Sweden	
Parliament and government	1994	2019	1995	2019	1995	2017	1993	2017	1994	2018
MPs	34	39.1	34	47.0	25	38.1	39	42.1	40	46.1
Ministers	35	35	41	63	10	45	42	40	50	50
Female Prime Minister		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		No
Municipalities	1997	2017	1996	2019	1994	2018	1995	2017	1994	2018
Municipal assemblies	27	33	31	39	25	47	33	39	41	43

Sources: K. Niskanen and A. Nyberg, eds. 2009. Kön och makt i Norden. Del 1. Nordiska ministerrådet: Tema Nord*; own calculations.*

The table shows that the proportion of women at various key political positions in the Nordic countries is quite good. Based on the 40-60 principle, that a proportion of 40-60 percent of each sex constitutes an equal or balanced representation, gender balance in parliament has been achieved in Finland, Norway and Sweden. In Denmark and Iceland, the representation of women is just below 40 percent. Compared to 25 years ago, in the

[11] L. Freidenvall, D. Dahlerup and H. Skjeie. 2006. "The Nordic Countries: An Incremental Model." In Drude Dahlerup, ed. *Gender, Quotas and Politics.* New York/London: Routledge.

mid-1990s, the representation of women has increased in all countries. Over the years, however, the number of women members of parliament (MPs) has fluctuated, most recently in Iceland where it decreased at the last parliamentary election (2017).

The current governments of the Nordic countries, except for Denmark, are also gender-balanced. The governments of Iceland, Norway and Sweden are gender-balanced, with 40-60 percent of ministers being women. In Denmark the ratio is around 35 percent. In Iceland, the proportion of women ministers has increased quite extensively, from 10 to 45 percent in 25 years, and in Finland, it has increased from 41 to 63, hence being female dominated. Notably, all Nordic countries, except for Sweden, have female leaders at the very top – as prime ministers.

The representation of women in local political assemblies is lower than in national parliaments, on the average, 40.2 percent in local bodies compared to 42.4 percent in national assemblies. However, in all of the Nordic countries the proportion of women councillors has increased, and the biggest increase can be noted in Iceland where the proportion has increased from 25 to 47 percent in the last 25 years.

Special Measures, Including Party Quotas

In many countries across the world electoral gender quotas have been adopted to increase the number of women in politics.[12] In the Nordic countries, no legal electoral gender quotas have been adopted.[13] As noted by Lépinard and Rubio-Marín,[14] gender quotas in general have been only weakly endorsed in the Nordic countries. Regional variations exist, however; where Sweden and Denmark have resisted all forms of legislated quotas, Finland has introduced quotas for local politics, and Iceland and Norway have adopted quotas for corporate boards.

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[12] D. Dahlerup 2006. *Women, Quotas and Politics.* New York: Routledge; M. L. Krook 2009. *Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide.* New York: Oxford University Press.

[13] L. Freidenvall, D. Dahlerup and H. Skjeie. 2006. "The Nordic Countries: An Incremental Model." In Drude Dahlerup, ed. *Gender, Quotas and Politics.* New York/London: Routledge, 55-82.

[14] E. Lépinard and R. Rubio-Marín, eds. 2018. *Transforming Gender Citizenship. The Irresistible Rise of Gender Quotas in Europe.* Cambridge: Cambridge. University Press.

Internal party quotas and candidate quotas were adopted by centre and left-wing parties in Denmark and Norway in the 1970s, in Sweden in the 1980s, and in Iceland in the 1990s. In Denmark, quotas were adopted by two political parties in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but they were also abolished a few years later on the grounds that they were no longer considered necessary.[15] As noted by Agustín, Siim and Borchorst,[16] there has been consensus in Denmark on using the voluntary approach to achieve gender equality in politics; in fact, Denmark prides itself on refusing gender quotas. In Finland, no party has adopted electoral quotas, due to the electoral system in which preferential voting plays a key role. However, a majority of the parties represented in parliament have adopted internal quotas and the remaining parties promote gender balance.[17] In addition, the Finnish Gender Equality Act of 1995 stipulates that each sex shall have at least 40 percent representation on the municipal executive board. In Iceland, the Left Party adopted a 40 percent quota in the 1980s. One may also define the Women's Party as possessing a radical quota system, because only women candidates were eligible on the party's list in 1983–1999. In Norway and Sweden, party quotas have been adopted by many parties, including the large Social Democratic Parties. In 1993, the Social Democratic Party in Sweden adopted the zipper system, in which men and women are altered on party lists. A few years earlier, similar policies were adopted by the Green Party and the Left Party, while parties to the centre/right adopted recommended targets and general goals.[18] In 1986, the Social Democratic prime minister in Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland, made gender balance a regulative norm also for cabinet appointments, forming

[15] L. Freidenvall, D. Dahlerup and H. Skjeie. 2006. "The Nordic Countries: An Incremental Model." In Drude Dahlerup, ed. *Gender, Quotas and Politics.* New York/London: Routledge, 64.

[16] L. Agustín, B. Siim and A. Borchorst. 2018. "Gender Equality Without Gender Quotas: Dilemmas in the Danish Approach to Gender Equality and Citizenship." In: E. Lépinard and R. Rubio-Marín, eds. *Transforming Gender Citizenship. The Irresistible Rise of Gender Quotas in Europe.* Cambridge: Cambridge. University Press, 400-423.

[17] L. Hart, A.-M. Holli and A. Kovalainen. 2009. "Gender and Power in Politics and Business in Finland". In: K. Niskanen and A. Nyberg, eds. *Kön och makt i Norden. Del 1*. Nordiska ministerrådet: Tema Nord, 569.

[18] L. Freidenvall. 2018. "Gender Equality without Legislated Quotas in Sweden." In: E. Lépinard and R. Rubio-Marín. *Transforming Gender Citizenship. The Irresistible Rise of Gender Quotas in Europe.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 366-399.

the world's first gender-balanced cabinet. Quotas have today become an institutional norm in Norway; this is true also in other areas of public life, including the corporate sector. According to Mari Teigen,[19] the adoption of corporate quotas was a "natural" prolongation of the institutionalisation of the gender equality policy in Norway, which started with the introduction of voluntary party quotas in the 1970s as well as the regulation of the gender composition in public commissions.

It is important to keep in mind, though, that party quotas were adopted during a period of time in which the parliamentary representation of women was already relatively high, between 20 and 30 percent. The quotas adopted in the Nordic countries have therefore been labelled "high echelon quotas", being promoted by a strong female minority in parties that took advantage of their position of power to achieve a better gender distribution in party politics.[20] These high echelon quotas were introduced to ensure that women's presence did not decrease. Hence, they operate as a lower threshold rather than as ambitions to increase the level.[21]

A key effect of the adoption of special measures, such as party quotas, may be found at the discursive level: women's movements' pressure on political parties to improve the gender balance as well as the competition between parties for votes have forced the entire political spectrum to react and take an active position on representational issues.[22]

Women's Substantive Representation

To what extent do women MPs prioritise gender equality issues? In what ways do they promote women-friendly policies? Previous research has

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[19] M. Teigen. 2018. "The Natural Prolongation of The Norwegian Gender Equality Policy Institution." In: E. Lépinard and R. Rubio-Marín. *Transforming Gender Citizenship. The Irresistible Rise of Gender Quotas in Europe.* Cambridge: Cambridge. University Press, 341-365.

[20] L. Freidenvall, D. Dahlerup and H. Skjeie. 2006. "The Nordic Countries: An Incremental Model." In Drude Dahlerup, ed. *Gender, Quotas and Politics.* New York/London: Routledge, 55-82.

[21] Dahlerup and Freidenvall. 2005. "Quotas as a 'Fast Track' to Equal Political Representation for Women. Why Scandinavia is No Longer the Model." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 7 (1): 26–48.

[22] L. Freidenvall, D. Dahlerup and H. Skjeie. 2006. "The Nordic Countries: An Incremental Model." In Drude Dahlerup, ed. *Gender, Quotas and Politics.* New York/London: Routledge, 55-82.

shown that men and women MPs espouse distinct policy priorities[23] and that women MPs share many of the same opinions as female voters.[24] Research has also shown that women MPs tend to differ from men MPs in terms of setting the legislative agenda and proposing new policies that deal with issues of concern to women.[25] Party affiliation matters, of course. For instance, left-leaning parties have traditionally been more prone to pursue gender equality issues,[26] although conservative women MPs have also championed gender equality.[27]

While there is agreement that gender has an impact, scholars disagree on the degree of the impact.[28] Scholars have also noted that a simple increase in the numbers of women elected – a "critical mass" – does not necessarily result in policy gains for women, because of various constraints such as party affiliation and institutional norms.[29] Political scientist Hege Skjeie,[30] for instance, has shown that female MPs in Norway prioritise issues related to "care and career policies" (to be able to combine working life with family responsibilities) to a greater extent than male MPs. More recent research from Sweden finds that women MPs experience greater pressure and higher levels of anxiety and are subject to more negative

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[23] M. L. Swers. 1998. "Are Women More Likely to Vote for Women's Issue Bills Than Their Male Colleagues?" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 23 (1): 67-91; L. A. Schwindt-Bayer and W. Mishler. 2005. "An Integrated Model of Women's Representation". *The Journal of Politics* 67 (2): 407-28.

[24] M. M. Diaz. 2005. *Representing Women's Female Legislators in West European Parliaments.* Colchester, UK: ECPR Press.

[25] K. A. Bratton and L. P. Ray. 2002. "Descriptive Representation, Policy Outcomes, and Municipal Day-Care Coverage in Norway." *American Journal of Political Science* 46 (2): 428-37.

[26] M. Caul. 1999. "Women's Representation in Parliament: The Role of Political Parties." *Party Politics* 5 (1):79-98.

[27] P. Webb and S. Childs. 2012. "Gender Politics and Conservatism: The View from the British Conservative Party Grassroots." *Government and Opposition* 47 (1): 21-48.

[28] J. Lovenduski and P. Norris. 2003. "Westminster women: The politics of presence." *Political Studies* 51 (1): 84-102; L. Wängnerud. 2011. "Politics of Presence or Feminist Awareness? Two Perspectives on Gender Dynamics in Politics" In: L. Freidenvall and J. Rönnbäck, eds. *Bortom Rösträtten: Kön, politik och medborgarskap i Norden*. Huddinge: Södertörns högskola, 141.

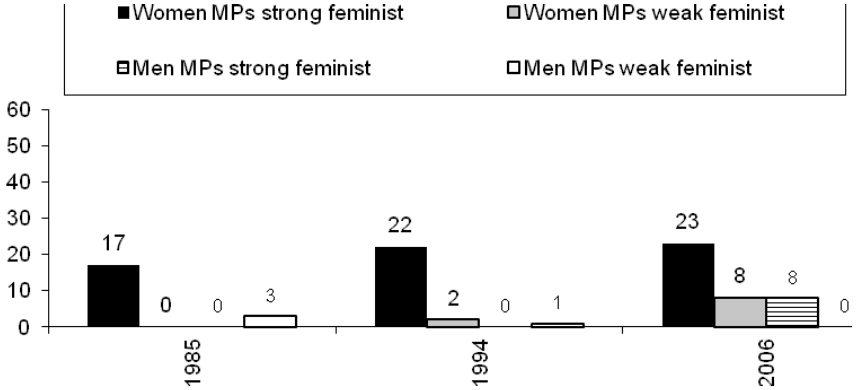
[29] K. Celis, S. Childs, J. Kantola and M. L. Krook. 2008. "Rethinking Women's Substantive Representation." *Representation* 44 (2): 99-110.

[30] H. Skjeie. 1992. *Den politiske betydningen av kjønn. En studie av norsk topp-politikk*. Oslo: Institutt for samfunnsforskning, rapport 92: 11.

treatment than male MPs.[31] Hence equal descriptive representation does not necessarily result in equal substantive representation.

Political scientist Lena Wängnerud[32] has analysed the extent to which Swedish parliamentarians promote issues of gender equality in political work. Figure 1 shows the response to the question: "Which political issues/ area are you personally most interested in?"

Figure 1. Gender Equality as an issue in the work of Swedish MPs. Percent.



Comments: The figure shows the response to an open question that reads: "Which political issues/areas are you personally most interested in?" Up to three issues could be mentioned. The responses were coded according to a detailed code scheme. The members of parliament whose answers included gender equality, women's issues, sex discrimination, affirmative action etc. were entered into the "gender equality policy" category. "Strong feminist" refers to members of parliament who consider the duty to promote the interests/views of women as "very important", while "weak feminist" refers to those who consider this duty as "fairly important", "not very important", or "not at all important" (categories are merged). The number of respondents: 1985: women MPs strong feminist 54, women MPs weak feminist 44, men MPs strong feminist 19, men MPs weak feminist 190; 1994: women MPs strong feminist 68, women MPs weak feminist 51, men MPs strong feminist 10, men MPs weak feminist 169; 2006: women MPs strong feminist 62, women MPs weak feminist 66, men MPs strong feminist 25, men MPs weak feminist 121.

[31] J. Erikson and C. Josefsson. 2019. "The Legislature as a Gendered Workplace: Exploring Members of Parliament's Experiences of Working in the Swedish Parliament." *International Political Science Review* 40 (2): 197-214.

[32] L. Wängnerud. 2011. "Politics of Presence or Feminist Awareness? Two Perspectives on Gender Dynamics in Politics." In: L. Freidenvall and J. Rönnbäck, eds. *Bortom Rösträtten: Kön, politik och medborgarskap i Norden*. Huddinge: Södertörns högskola, 141.

Source: L. Wängnerud. 2011. "Politics of Presence or Feminist Awareness? Two Perspectives on Gender Dynamics in Politics" In: L. Freidenvall and J. Rönnbäck, eds. Bortom Rösträtten: Kön, politik och medborgarskap i Norden. Huddinge: Södertörns högskola, 141.

As the figure shows, it is primarily women MPs categorised as strong feminists who promote gender equality policies in their political work. In 1985 and 1994, 17 and 22 percent, respectively, prioritised gender equality policies. In 2006, women MPs categorised as strong feminists remain the ones that promote gender equality issues the most (23 percent). However, men MPs categorised as strong feminists now also score fairly well, eight percent, which corresponds to the figure among women MPs categorised as weak feminists.[33] Thus, feminist actors also matter. As scholars have pointed out, it appears crucial to have "critical actors", parliamentarians who initiate policy proposals or encourage others to take steps to promote gender-sensitive policies.[34] Indeed, in some contexts, men may play a key role in promoting women's policy concerns.[35]

Conclusion

The Nordic countries have for many years been at the top of the league pertaining to women's political representation. Today, they are moving down on the global ranking list, as their leading position is challenged by other regions. This development can most likely be explained by the reluctance to use electoral gender quotas. It is also notable that it seems like the linear development in the Nordic countries in terms of descriptive representation has come to a halt. The 40 percent threshold seems to be a magic line that is difficult to pass, and in some countries, most recently in Iceland, the proportion of women MPs has even decreased. These trends should function as a wake-up call for the Nordic countries, making them

[33] Ibid.

[34] S. Childs and M. L. Krook. 2006. "Should Feminists Give Up on Critical Mass? A Contingent Yes." *Politics & Gender* 2 (4): 522-530.

[35] K. Celis. 2006. "Substantive representation of women: The representation of women's interests and the impact of descriptive representation in the Belgian parliament (1900-1979)." *Journal of Women Political Policy* 28 (2): 85-114.

pay attention to the fact that gender equality will not manifest automatically, neither in terms of descriptive representation nor substantive representation. Without political will or political pressure positive change is unlikely to occur.

Women in Politics in Western Europe

Haley Norris and Mary Nugent

Introduction

Political representation for women in Western Europe has been a complex process of progress and resistance. For example, the parity movement in France was among the first in the world to succeed in securing a constitutional amendment requiring the equal representation of women in politics. However, France has still not achieved parity. Progress has never been even amongst the countries. While some women in Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom (UK) were granted suffrage as early as the 1910s, women in France and Italy had to wait until the end of World War II and women in Switzerland until 1971.

Interestingly, today only Switzerland makes it into the top twenty countries in the world for women's representation in parliaments, while the Netherlands, placing the lowest in the region, is 41st globally. Recent changes in the electoral space coupled with economic and political crises of great magnitude are threatening some of the progress that women have made in the region. Research shows, however, that women continue to pursue the goal of equal representation in spite of resistance and backlash from other political actors and the general public.

In this chapter we address two broad questions: how many women are in parliament and what do they do once in office. We consider the presence of women in parliament to be an important, although not always sufficient, goal for improving the representation of women. The question of women in politics is thus crucial for assessing the quality of democracy. In addressing these themes, the article will also discuss several important changes to the political landscape for women: increased discussion of violence against women in politics, the attention given to minority women in politics, and the political crises that are affecting women's ability to participate.

How Many Women?

As of 2020, there are 1,099 women currently serving in national-level parliaments in Western European countries.[1] The regional average is 36.3% women in office, with the largest increases coming from France, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Since 2014, the regional average has only increased by roughly 5 percentage points. Other regions, particularly Africa and South America, have overtaken Western European countries, and now only one Western European country makes the top twenty. As mentioned in the introduction, all countries in Western Europe are in the top 50. The regional average of 36.3% is still well above the global average of women's representation, which is only 25%.

The fall in the global rankings then, speaks to stagnation and reversal of progress in some countries (i.e., Germany, Austria, Italy, and the Netherlands). For example, after the 2017 elections in Germany, the country was at its lowest level of women's representation since 1998.

The mixed changes in women's representation are a multifaceted and complex issue. Two variables must be examined: the electoral competition of political parties, and the continued difficulties of implementing substantial and robust gender quota provisions in the countries of Western Europe.

As significant research has demonstrated, gender quotas has been a central factor in the increasing levels of women in elected office.[2] Scholars categorise gender quotas into three types: legal candidate quotas, voluntary party quotas, and reserved seats.[3] Only one country in Western Europe (France) has any kind of legal candidate quota – a legal provision that imposes a rule on all parties about the minimum percentage of women that should be put forward as political candidates. All seven of the countries under discussion, however, have at least one party with a voluntarily imposed gender quota for their candidate selection.

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[1] https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=5&year=2020.

[2] See Mona Lena Krook, *Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[3] http://www.quotaproject.org/aboutQuotas.cfm.

The impact of all gender quotas – both legal candidate and voluntary party – is very much dependent on the design of the quota provision, and the simple fact that a quota exists is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for a gender-balanced parliament, as research on Western Europe and elsewhere has demonstrated.[4] For legal candidate quotas, both the mandated percentage of representation and the penalty for non-compliance are key to determining the resultant percentage of women represented in the elected body.[5]

In the case of France, where the gender quota law that applies to parties does not dictate what kinds of seats (whether they are likely to be won by the party or not) the party places women in, scholars have found that women tend to be in less "safe" seats, meaning their chances of actually winning are often low. This helps to explain the changing levels of women's representation in France, despite their more far-reaching quota – as of 2014, only 26.2% of the lower chamber was made up of women, but after the major party changes in 2016, nearly 40% of their representatives are women. French parties must pay fines if they violate the quota law and the new centre party, *La République En Marche!*, successfully positioned itself as the party of gender equality by intentionally respecting the quota law and placing women in winnable seats.[6]

Just like legal candidate quotas then, when it comes to the party quotas, not all quotas are made equal. In the case of party quotas, the electoral success of the party (or parties) utilising a quota is central to determining the effect of party quotas on the overall system gender balance of the parliament. This was evident in the UK, where the Labour Party's "All-Women Shortlist" policy doubled the number of women in the House of Commons in the 1997 election. The All-Women Shortlist Policy recognised the difficulty of increasing women's representation if women are not placed in "winnable seats", and so commits the party to placing women in at least half of all "winnable" seats being contested. The robust quota design was

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[4] Emelie Lilliefeldt, *Political Parties and Gender Balanced Parliamentary Presence in Western Europe: A two-step Fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis* (Sussex European Institute, 2009).

[5] Rainbow Murray, Katherine A. R. Opello, and Mona Lena Krook, "Why Are Gender Quotas Adopted? Parity and Party Pragmatism in France," *Political Research Quarterly* 65 (2012): 529-543.

[6] https://www.representwomen.org/progress_towards_gender_parity_in_french_legislative_election.

important in increasing the number of women candidates, but it was only impactful on the level of representation in parliament when coupled with the overall success of the Labour Party in 1997, with its landslide victory and majority of the seats in the House of Commons. Many small parties, in Western Europe and elsewhere, have voluntary party quotas that, though in principle are conducive to increasing the levels of women's representation, have little effect on the gender balance in parliaments due to the lack of seats these small parties can win.

In addition to quotas and the partisan composition of a parliament, there are a multitude of other contributing factors surrounding the political system, such as the electoral system, which contribute to women's representation. Research has suggested that Proportional Representation (PR) systems are more conducive to the election of more women into parliament – a pattern that is borne out in the case of Western Europe. The Netherlands, which leads the pack in Western Europe in terms of proportion of women in parliaments, utilises a list PR system. List PR systems, which see multiple parliamentarians elected from a party list, are much more conducive to effective quotas – allowing for the party to simply demand that a certain percentage of each list be women. The highest-ranking country in the region, Switzerland, has a mixed electoral system which uses both PR and single-member districts. It is possible that these blended systems, combined with the presence of gender quotas and other equality measures, may provide the incentives and flexibility that encourage parties to name large numbers of women as candidates.

The broader conditions in which politics operates are also considered as important in understanding the levels of women's representation. In particular, women's place in society and the economy is key to understanding their place in politics; when women are in the occupations that many consider as making them "eligible" for office, they are more likely to enter politics.[7] In the case of Western Europe, Diaz compared measures of women's socioeconomic progress and levels of women's representation in parliaments. Though the two are correlated, she notes that the relationship is certainly not sufficient for understanding the complex dynamics

[7] Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox, *Girls Just Wanna Not Run: The Gender Gap in Young Americans' Political Ambition* (Washington, DC, 2013).

both in society and within politics that are entailed in the level of women's representation in politics.[8] It is clear though, that a pool of qualified and educated women in society is a necessary – though not sufficient – condition for the presence of women in politics; in this regard, Western Europe is amongst the most hopeful regions in terms of future potential of women's representation. Given the correct political context – with parties, parliament, and selection systems conducive to encouraging women to come forward – there is surely great hope for increasing the ranks of women in elected bodies.

One way to see greater proportions of women in politics is to improve representation for minority women. While not all countries consider the racial and ethnic make-up of politics to be important, many are beginning to report on the levels of racial and ethnic diversity in public offices. Publicly funded research projects, such as the Pathways to Politics project,[9] are also beginning to investigate the activities of citizens of immigrant background in politics.

Minority women experience both sexism and racism and often face extreme levels of backlash and violence in response to their public presence. This compounding of marginalised identities and subsequent increased risk and/or discrimination is described as a "double jeopardy".[10] Its counterpart, "multiple advantage" or "comparative advantage",[11] describes the benefits that minority women experience as a result of their intersecting identities. In some cases, minority women are present at higher levels than majority women or minority men because they are able to represent multiple politicised identity categories at once. Parties can strategically choose minority women to fulfil their commitments to women's representation *and* minority representation.

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[8] Mercedes Mateo Diaz, *Representing Women: Female Legislators in Western Europe* (ECPR Press, 2005).

[9] Fernandes, Jorge, Laura Morales, and Thomas Saalfeld. 2018. "Pathways to Power: The Political Representation of Citizens of Immigrant Origin in Eight European Democracies." Policy Briefing/ Report.

[10] King, Deborah K. "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology." Signs 14, no. 1 (1988): 42-72. Accessed May 29, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/3174661.

[11] Celis, Karen, and Silvia Erzeel. 2017. "The Complementarity Advantage: Parties, Representativeness and Newcomers' Access to Power." Parliamentary Affairs 70 (1): 43–61. https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsv043.

The numbers of minority women in politics seem to vary by country due to the presence of gender quotas and the motivations of the political parties which selectively recruit potential candidates. In Germany, visible minorities are targeted for candidate selection only when it benefits the party, based on the calculations of party elites.[12] Research from France, the UK, and the Netherlands suggests that minority women are only admitted to politics if they play the role of token representation, or serve some other symbolic purpose of the party.[13] In France, for example, Murray argues that minority women are included as long as they further the project of secularism. Researchers in the UK refer to this practice as "acceptably different".[14]

Finally, many researchers are flipping the question to ask "what keeps women *out* of office". The most common answer is the overrepresentation of men. Another possible answer is the deterrent in the form of violence against women in politics (VAWIP). Krook and Sanin (2019) state that "violence against women in politics originates in structural violence, is perpetrated through cultural violence, and results in symbolic violence against women". VAWIP includes the use, or threat of, force and can take five forms – physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and semiotic, and scholars argue that the purpose of VAWIP is the exclusion or expulsion of women from politics.[15]

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[12] Jenichen, Anne. 2020. "Visible Minority Women in German Politics: Between Discrimination and Targeted Recruitment." German Politics, April, 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1080/09644008.2020.1748601.

[13] Mügge, Liza M., Daphne J. van der Pas, and Marc van de Wardt. 2019. "Representing Their Own? Ethnic Minority Women in the Dutch Parliament." West European Politics 42 (4): 705-27. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2019.1573036.; Murray, Rainbow. 2016. "The Political Representation of Ethnic Minority Women in France." Parliamentary Affairs 69 (3): 586-602. https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsv064.

[14] Durose, C., L. Richardson, R. Combs, C. Eason, and F. Gains. 2013. "'Acceptable Difference': Diversity, Representation and Pathways to UK Politics." Parliamentary Affairs 66 (2): 246-67. https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gss085.

[15] Krook, Mona Lena, and Juliana Restrepo Sanín. 2019. "The Cost of Doing Politics? Analyzing Violence and Harassment against Female Politicians." Perspectives on Politics, July, 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592719001397.

What are the Women Doing?

A look at women in politics in Western Europe is not complete without an analysis of not only how many women are elected, but what the women who get into legislative chambers are actually able to, and choose to, do once in power. What difference, if any, does a more gender-balanced parliament make?

There is significant evidence that, across Western Europe, the presence of women in parliaments has changed the institutions that they sit in, and at times women have been seen to promote a divergent policy agenda to that advocated by men. In the case of the UK, Catalano found a difference in the areas of focus between men and women; women MPs were more than twice as likely as their male counterparts to participate in debates on healthcare.[16] As Catalano notes, women voters prioritise social issues such as healthcare more than male voters – perhaps reflecting the traditional association between women and caregiving. In this way, we can see patterns emerging when more women are in parliament, with more voice given to issues that may not previously have been given as much import in (even more) male-dominated parliaments. Similar findings were reached in studies of a region of the UK – Northern Ireland. In interviews with female elected officials, Cowell-Meyers found women to be "more concerned than men with issues of healthcare, childcare, education, and eldercare."[17]

Furthermore, there is evidence of some (limited) effect of the presence of women in parliaments on increasing the advocacy surrounding issues more explicitly related to women constituents. Scholars have noted that in the 1970s in Germany, female legislators fought for divorce reform that specifically benefited women.[18] In the UK, Childs found in interviews with female British Labour MPs that they often purposefully focused on issues of particular importance to women, and saw it as an obligation on women

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[16] Ana Catalano, "Women Acting for Women? An Analysis of Gender and Debate Participation in the British House of Commons 2005-2007," *Politics & Gender* 5, no. 01 (March 09, 2009): 45.

[17] Kimberly Cowell-Meyers, "Gender, Power, and Peace: A Preliminary Look at Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly," *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, 2001, 72.

[18] Kimberly Cowell-Meyers, "Women in Northern Ireland Politics: Gender and the Politics of Peace-Building in the New Legislative Assembly," *Irish Political Studies*, 2003, 415.

to raise some issues; one MP said, "I don't see men lining up to talk about childcare, never have; [I] don't see men lining [up] to talk about women's rights to abortion, never have."[19] Childs's interviews also highlighted another way in which women may be better placed to represent their female constituents. In an interview, another female Labour MP described an instance where a constituent discussed the issue of rape with the MP: "I felt she found it easier to talk to me than she may have a male MP."[20] This aspect of representation – the interaction between representative and the represented – is an important part of the role of an elected representative. Gender-balanced parliaments, as we are increasingly seeing across Western Europe, serve to change and hopefully improve this relationship. A secondary effect of the increased advocacy has been the pursuit of these issues by men in parliaments as well. Research shows that "unlikely advocates" – men from all parties and women from centre or right parties – are taking up women's issues at increasing rates. Thus, the presence of women has a spillover effect when it comes to increasing representation for women.

The success of this representation of women's issues depends on a range of factors – including the political ideology of the women in parliament and the party balance of that parliament, as well as the willingness of parties to promote and support their women MPs. In the Netherlands, for example, Koning found that there was a connection between women's presence and substantive policy actions on behalf of women – but only amongst representatives from some parties and not others.[21] More recent research in the Netherlands also suggests that political party control of parliamentary committee assignments may also influence women's actions once they are in office – minority women are significantly more likely than minority men to be placed on committees that handle migration

[19] Sarah Childs, "'Attitudinally Feminist'? The New Labour Women MPs and the Substantive Representation of Women," *Politics* 21, no. 3 (September 2001): 181.

[20] Ibid., 179.

[21] Edward A. Koning, "Women for women's sake: Assessing symbolic and substantive effects of descriptive representation in the Netherlands," *Acta Politica* 44 (2009): 171-191.

concerns.[22] A similar pattern has been found in the committee placements of women in Italy – analysis of data from 1990-2013 shows that women are significantly more likely than men to be placed on "feminine" committees.[23]

However, women in parliament do not automatically flock towards so-called "women's issues". For example, though research by Bird found that, on average, women were more likely to ask a higher proportion of parliamentary questions about issues that disproportionately affect women,[24] they also asked questions on a range of other topics. Furthermore, not all women displayed this tendency; more women in parliament is by no means a guarantee that women's political interests will be better articulated in parliament.

This complexity in the relationship between the number of women in parliament and policy outcomes for women has led some scholars to call for a movement beyond the idea of "critical mass" (which sees a critical number of women as necessary for women to make a difference) to the idea of "critical actors" – which instead posits that even when small in number, well-placed and dedicated actors, both male and female, can alter the course of policy discussions in favour of the women's issues for which they advocate.[25] This is seen in some of the examples where women have "made a difference" in politics, working for the interests of women specifically. In the UK, Childs and Withey offer the example of the feminine sanitary taxes.[26] Here it was key actors who consistently pushed on the issue, rather than the voting power of many women combined, that made a difference. Increasing the number of women in parliament increases the chance of such critical actors emerging, but ultimately the process is more

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[22] Mügge, Liza M., Daphne J. van der Pas, and Marc van de Wardt. 2019. "Representing Their Own? Ethnic Minority Women in the Dutch Parliament." West European Politics 42 (4): 705-27. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2019.1573036.

[23] Pansardi, Pamela, and Michelangelo Vercesi. 2017. "Party Gate-Keeping and Women's Appointment to Parliamentary Committees: Evidence from the Italian Case." Parliamentary Affairs 70 (1): 62-83. https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsv066.

[24] Karen Bird, "Gendering Parliamentary Questions," *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 7 (2005): 353-370.

[25] Sarah Childs and Mona Lena Krook, "Analysing Women's Substantive Representation: From Critical Mass to Critical Actors," *Government and Opposition* 44, no. 02 (January 02, 2009): 125-145.

[26] S. Childs, "The Substantive Representation of Women: The Case of the Reduction of VAT on Sanitary Products," *Parliamentary Affairs* 59, no. 1 (November 04, 2005): 10-23.

complex than numbers alone. This important balance, of both a "critical mass" and "critical actors", is played out in the case of France. Opello finds that the number of "women-friendly policies" increased when women held a majority of local council seats. She notes, though, that the policies resulted not from the power that came with a higher proportion of women elected, but were "primarily" due to the critical acts of certain officeholders – both male and female.[27]

The role of women as representatives can also extend beyond their legislator role, where parliamentary systems mean that a portion of legislators also make up the government. Traditionally, in line with the make-up of the parliament, executives have been heavily dominated by men. More recently though, there has been signs of change; in the UK, Theresa May served as Prime Minister from 2016-2019, and Switzerland has continued its impressive gains from 2010. Today, women are in leadership roles in 26 Swiss cantons.[28] This comes only four decades after Switzerland finally granted women the right to vote, showing that political history does not determine, though it certainly shapes, the future path of women's representation.

Looking Ahead?

To conclude, it is clear that the process of getting women into parliament and seeing women's views represented in political debates and policy outcomes is a complex one. Both sympathetic actors and a conducive political context are required. In the wake of dramatic political crises such as the ongoing EU migrant crisis, Brexit, and the rise of far-right nationalist parties, researchers should explore the ways that major changes to political landscapes can impact women's ability to gain office and represent themselves.

Despite these challenges, Western Europe, though, has many reasons to be hopeful. Proportional representation, the electoral system that

[27] Katherine A. R. Opello, "Do Women Represent Women in France? The Case of Brittany's Regional Council," *French Politics* 6 (December 2008): 321-341.

[28] https://www.representwomen.org/switzerland_s_strategies_for_political_parity_paid_off_in_2019.

research suggests is most helpful to increasing women's representation, is prevalent across the region. The status of women in society and the economy is such that there is an ample talent pool of potential politicians across the region. And the recent emergence of critical actors who are committed to advocating for women in politics and for issues that women voters wish to grant more attention to offers hope of these conducive conditions being turned into positive steps towards a more politically gender-balanced region.

	1997		2014		2020	
	% Women in Parliament	Global Rank	% Women in Parliament	Global Rank	% Women in Parliament	Global Rank
Germany	26.2	8	36.5	21	31.2	26
France	10.9	41	26.2	47	39.5	26
Netherlands	31.3	5	38.7	16	33.3	41
Austria	26.2	8	32.2	27	39.3	28
Switzerland	21.0	15	31	33	41.5	16
Italy	11.1	49	31.4	30	35.7	35
United Kingdom	18.2	19	22.6	61	33.9	40
Regional Average	20.7	-	31.2	-	36.3	-

Table 1: November 1997, November 2014 and May 2020 respectively. Compiled from IPU 'Women In Parliaments' Archives and IPU Parline Data.

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