



ENGENDERING ELECTORAL POLITICS – QUOTA REGULATIONS AS A MEANS OF INCREASING FEMALE POLITICAL REPRESENTATION?

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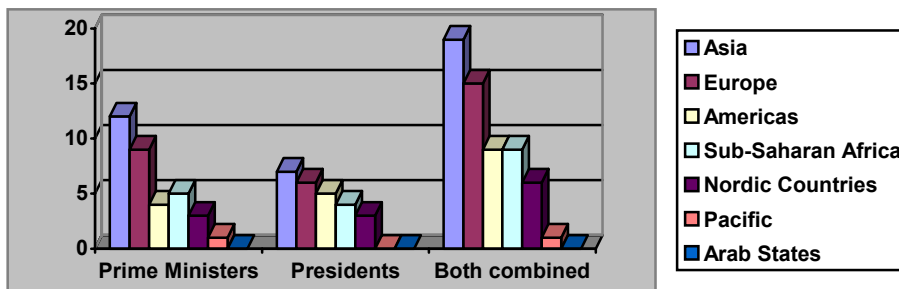
Abstract:

This presentation will take a closer look at forms and ways of female political representation and participation in Asian countries, with special focus on South and Southeast Asia. In this area we find frequent female political leadership which is not met by a widespread political participation of women in general. Therefore during the last decade several of these countries, willing to create a “historic jump”, introduced quota regulations aiming to empower women. The aim of this presentation, which might serve as an introduction into more specific discussion on female political empowerment, is to review in a comparative approach quota regulations in these countries and their impact in terms of electoral outcome.

Introduction

Athenian democratic thinking, the US Declaration of Independence and the Declaration of the French Revolution, milestones of liberal and republican democracy, excluded women and their enfranchisement (Rose 2000: 345). Until the beginning of the 20th century, the history of democracy and democratic elections is characterised rather by exclusiveness in active and passive voting rights – only a small circle of citizens can vote or may be elected for office. Women only received their voting rights after the Second World War or in the wake of decolonisation. Nevertheless we find in a region, where women usually received enfranchisement from 1945 onwards, the striking phenomenon of female political leadership: the world's first female PM, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, comes to power in Sri Lanka in 1960, followed in 1966 by Indira Gandhi in India, one of the biggest Asian countries. From the late 80s onwards the trend of frequent female political leadership in Asia increases.

Graphic 1: Women Presidents and Prime Ministers by region (1945-2004)



(Own graphic and calculations, sources: www.ipu.org, www.guide2womenleaders.com as of 20.01.05)

However, the political and socio-cultural context does tell a different story: The societies in the region are considered patriarchal and paternalistic, gender relations – as a component of general social and political change – seems to take place only at the margins. None of the respective national governments can claim to have a particularly women-friendly political record. The proportion of women in other political institutions and organisations such as parliaments or parties is comparatively low (see Alam 2004, Rustagi 2004, for sub national level: Drage 2001). The *gender-related development index GDI* ranges between 0,4 and 0,725 (Industrialised Countries: 0, 9) and the *gender empowerment measure GEM* ranges even lower: between 0,25-0,4 (Europe/OSCE: 0, 65). In addition, there is a huge discrepancy and dichotomy between female political top leadership and general female political participation in the political spheres and the level of empowerment of the respective countries. Across the region women legislators constitute actually less than half of the number (15,2 per cent) which is demanded by the United Nations by its criteria of a critical mass of 33 per cent female representation in legislative bodies.

Table 1: Female political representation in Asian countries (as of November 2004)

Rank (out of 121)	Country	Lower or single House (% of women)	Upper House or Senate (% of women)
17	Viet Nam	27.3	--
20	Timor-Leste	26.1	--
21	Turkmenistan	26.0	--
24	Laos	22.9	--
29	Pakistan ^Q	21.6	18.0
36	China	20.2	--



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37	North Korea	20.1	--
53	Singapore	16.0	--
55	Philippines ^Q	15.3	16.7
64	South Korea ^Q	13.0	--
66	Tajikistan	12.7	11.8
71	Indonesia ^Q	11.8	
77	Azerbaijan	10.5	--
78	Kazakhstan	10.4	7.7
80	Kyrgyzstan	10.0	2.2
81	Cambodia	9.8	13.1
85	Bhutan	9.2	--
"	Thailand	9.2	10.5
86	Malaysia	9.1	25.7
90	India	8.3	11.6
95	Uzbekistan	7.2	--
96	Japan	7.1	13.6
97	Mongolia	6.8	--
100	Maldives	6.0	--
101	Nepal	5.9	8.3
106	Sri Lanka	4.9	--
118	Bangladesh ^Q	2.0	--
World Average		15.8	14.9
Regional Average Americas		18.5	18.3
Regional Average Europe – OSCE (without Nordic countries)		16.6	17.1
Regional Average Asia		15.2	13.5
Regional Average Sub-Saharan Africa		14.5	11.7
Regional Average Pacific		10.9	24.8
Regional Average Arab States		6.8	7.8

(Graphic by Melanie Stollwerck, Source: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> as of 22.02.2005)^Q = quota system

Given the worldwide persistent gender-related democracy deficit in political empowerment of women, two central questions arouse: What are the general patterns of female political representation and participation in Asia? In how far are quota regulations a suitable tool to achieve a significant change?



General patterns of female political participation in Asia

Given the worldwide diversity of political and sociocultural systems, “it is now very well documented that men and women participate differently in all forms of formal politics in both the First and Third World, whether getting issues on the political agendas, or in policy making and implementation“ (Waylen 1996: 10). On the other hand, authors like Lenz underline the difference between European and (East) Asian political participation due to the public-private-dichotomy in sociocultural organisation, which leads to Asian women being selectively integrated as *women* into politics (extension of semi-official gender roles into the public realm of politics), while men are integrated as politicians. As a result, women politicians are constrained by problematic gender stereotypes, thus limiting their agency to rather subordinate positions (Lenz 1997: 93-94).

In mainstream politics, Asia’s women participate rather equally in elections, attending public meetings and rallies, are members of elective bodies and political mass organisations, and engage in political struggles and movements (e.g. independence and / or pro-democracy movements like in India, Pakistan, Burma, Malaysia, and Indonesia). As Jahan indicates, they “participate in great numbers and often assume leadership during crisis periods but the rate and the level of participation often falls during normal times” (Jahan 1987: 862). Although they show an equal rate of participation, this does not tell us anything about the significance and character of their political activity (Jahan 1987: 858). Jahan draws quite a negative picture of the impact of female political agency in Asia, as women are operating mostly in supportive roles, more as “unrecognised foot-soldiers than as leaders” (Jahan 1987: 863). Additionally, women act less in formal than in informal structures,

“since women rarely fall into the category of local influentials (...), they are left out of the mainstream process of organisation building. Women tend to be active in social reform movements, in community organisations and NGOs, but in political organisations and social reform movements have generally kept apart. Only in period when the two are linked (...) do women participate in large numbers in the mainstream” (Jahan 1987: 864).

Mobilising women “on an *ad hoc* basis to support specific cases and issues”, and letting them loose out as soon as the routine political game of power distribution starts is quite a worldwide phenomenon (see Jahan 1987: 862, Kelly et.al. 2001: 12).

What does reality and its figures tell us about the state of Asian female political participation in different spheres of political life? Except for Japan, no woman ever presided over an Asian national parliament or was assigned an influential government portfolio such as finance, defence or foreign affairs. Even in South Asia, where we can look back on four decades of female political leadership, no “South Asian woman has yet held a Ministry of Foreign Affairs or a Ministry of Finance portfolio” (Mahbub ul Haq 2000: 141). In national governments, women only constitute a small minority of cabinet members or ministers, although reliable figures are scarce and can only be indicated for differing years (see http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/indic/indic_258_1_1.html).



According to Human Development Reports of the United Nations and its regional agencies, in Bangladesh women held 8,8 per cent of cabinet posts in 1999, in Indonesia 5,9 per cent in 2001, in India and Malaysia 10 per cent in 2003 (ibid., Mahbub ul Haq 2000: 140), but in Pakistan's male-dominated military regime women do hold after all 11 cabinet posts (no total number given, previous figure of 3 out of 26 or 10,34 per cent in 1999, see Mahbub ul Haq 2000: 140). In South Asia, in average (as of 1999), women represent only 9 per cent of the cabinet members, 6 per cent of positions in the judiciary, 9 per cent of civil servants and 20 per cent members of local government (Mahbub ul Haq 2000: 136). When it comes to participation in parliamentary committees, the impact of female members is negligible (e.g. Sri Lanka with less than 1 per cent) – except for India “where it is mandatory to include every Member of Parliament in committee work” (Mahbub ul Haq 2000: 159). But, on a worldwide scale, there have always been progresses and setbacks in the parliamentary participation of women. Regardless of the level of development, however, an overall positive trend towards higher rates prevails in 103 out of 177 national parliaments in the 1990s (see Inter-Parliamentary Union 2000). As the table below demonstrates, since independence, all of the countries with current or former female political leadership (except Pakistan 1990-2002) increased the share of female political representation in real figures and in significant proportions despite a stagnating regional average.

Table 2: parliamentary gender ratio in 1975 and 1998 (% of women)

Country	Lower/Single House		Upper House/Senate		Rank in 1975	Rank in 1998
	1975	1998	1975	1998		
Bangladesh	4,8% (15)	9,1% (30)	-	-	10	7
Burma	-	-	-	-	-	-
India	4,1% (21)	8,1% (44)	7,0% (17)	8,6% (19)	11	8
Indonesia	7,2% (33)	11,4% (54)	-	-	7	6
Malaysia	3,2% (5)	7,8% (15)	3,3% (2)	17,4% (12)	13	10
Pakistan	4,1% (6)	2,3% (5)	2,2% (1)	1,1% (1)	11	21
Philippines	2,8% (3)	12,4% (27)	12,5% (1)	17,4% (4)	14	5
Sri Lanka	3,8% (6)	5,3% (12)	-	-	12	15
Asia (average)	14,3%	14,1%	6,2%	10,0%	-	-

(Own graphic, source: Inter-Parliamentary Union 2000, data as of 1998)

Progress was achieved in Asian countries with different development level such as Malaysia (+2,6 per cent), the Philippines (+2,5 per cent), Japan (+2,3 per cent), South Korea (+1,7 per cent) and India (0,9 per cent). The forty countries in which setbacks occurred also range from developing countries like Sri Lanka (-0,4 per cent), Bangladesh (-1,5 per cent), Indonesia (-4,2 per cent), to highly industrialised nations such as Norway (-3,0 per cent), Liechtenstein (-4,0 per cent), Luxembourg (-3,3 per cent), Italy (-4,0 per cent) - as well as such fairly industrialised countries as the new EU-members Slovenia (-4,4 per cent) and Hungary (-3,1 per cent), among others (see Inter-Parliamentary Union 2000: 15-18).

The outlined gender-specific dichotomy does not change when it comes to female political participation in the party systems of the countries mentioned. Although we can find prominent female politicians leading parties in all South and Southeast Asian countries, female party mem-



bers have hardly any say when it comes to influencing party policies, raising autonomously agenda issues or participating in the top level decision-making process. Bangladesh is exemplary for the region: only 5,1 per cent of executive council posts are held by women (Mahbub ul Haq 2000: 145). The situation worsens when one looks at Pakistan, where less than 5 per cent of all political party members are women, and where the numbers of female decision-makers are rather negligible. In the Pakistan People's Party, led by Benazir Bhutto, in 1999 only 3 out of 21 members of the central executive committees are women, and in the Muslim League-Nawaz Group 5 out of 47 members (ibid.). The same trend prevailed in South Asian electoral politics during the 1990s, when women constituted, throughout several elections taking place, an average 6,53 per cent of candidates in India, 3,9 per cent in Sri Lanka, 1,69 per cent in Bangladesh and 1,71 per cent in Pakistan (changed with the introduction of a quota system in the 2002 elections) (Mahbub ul Haq 2000: 147). Thus, one can conclude that even if women "hold the top positions in major political parties of the region, yet these powerful positions have not translated into positive outcomes for the majority of Asian women" (Mahbub ul Haq 2000: 147).

What explanations can be found for this pattern of female political agency? There are two major sociocultural reasons used to explain this phenomenon. First, politics, due to its public nature, is perceived as a male domain, hence, limiting culturally acceptable female agency (lack of mobility, interaction with male counterparts) and participation options. So, parties may be reluctant to choose a female candidate due to the perceived gender bias of the electorate, impairing a woman's potential as "winning candidate" and complicating necessary financial (party) support for running an election (Mahbub ul Haq 2000: 147-148). Secondly,

"decision-making has traditionally been regarded as a male domain in South Asia. Often using customs and traditions as a tool, women have been sidelined from most decision-making processes. While the past few decades have witnessed an improvement in the status of women, especially for the urban middle class women who have a degree of freedom in making decisions, for the majority of South Asian women such freedom remains an elusive dream. This lack of liberty is a tradition that is rooted in the home and the community, where male members maintain strict control over decision-making and follows though the highest levels of national legislatures and parliaments" (Mahbub ul Haq 2000: 136, 140, Lenz 1997: 79-80).

In gender- and Asia-related literature, this sociocultural and political context specific to South and Southeast Asia is furthermore perceived as resulting in severe constraints for female political agency and leadership, as women are restricted from establishing protégé-patron relationships, other than within family circles or kinship-related networks. Due to a widespread, dominant, and male-related concept of "honour", women and their bodies' "integrity" are transformed into essential bearers of cultural identity and sociocultural boundary markers (Waylen 1996: 15). Potential political sacrifices such as imprisonment, possible abuse, and other threats to a woman's physical integrity lead to the notion that political agency is an inappropriate public field



of female activity. Nevertheless “for a woman, a well-known family background works as a relative safeguard against sexual harassment during imprisonment” (Jahan 1987: 854). Therefore, it “is worth remembering that the vast majority of women political activists who achieved national fame (...) came from rich, established families” (ibid.). In South Asia, where the phenomenon of frequent female political leadership is particularly predominant for women with dynastic descent, options remain quite restricted for the rest of the female population agency as “the norms of purdah (...) are widely prevalent amongst all communities and classes in south Asia, making it difficult for women to seek [the] critical routes to leadership” (Jahan 1987: 854). In South and Southeast Asia overall socio-political structures severely obstruct women’s engagement in politics: a parochial political culture, lack of substantial devolution and powerful male-dominated elites and institutions who manipulate democracy

“without allowing greater participation to the people in day to day democracy and governance. Marriage of crime and politics and use of unfair means, in invariably all countries of the region, have lowered the esteem of public representatives, politics and political parties”

and have led to often violently reinforced authoritarian tendencies (Alam 2004: 1; see: Rai 2002: 1). Furthermore, there is no trickle-down-effect generated by female political top leadership and decision-making from the upper party- and government level down to the lower levels of political life and decision-making which partly needs to be blamed on (a) the female politicians themselves who often came to power with the support of women organisations and lobby groups and (b) on the lack of adequate positive measures such as quota systems on party lists or reserved seats.

“Women as a group is both the Achilles heel of the feminist movement and its *raison d’être*.” (Dahlerup 2002: 4, see Raman 2002)

“The proletariat say ‘We’, Negroes also. Regarding themselves as subjects, they transform the bourgeois, the whites, into ‘others’. But women do not say ‘We’...Men say ‘Women’, and women use the same word in referring to themselves.” (Simone de Beauvoir, 1949, as quoted in Dahlerup 2002: 5)

Engendering Asian electoral politics

Bringing women in is a worldwide task given the prevalent gender-related democracy deficit in most of the world’s countries – not only of developing nations. What strategies are available for political empowerment? “Changing a country’s electoral system often represents a far more realistic goal to work towards than dramatically changing the culture’s view of women” (Matland 2002: 5). Pippa Norris distinguishes between a set of three different gender equality strategies: (a) modifying the electoral system to set different rules of the game, (b) equal opportunity policies for both genders (legal rights, employment opportunities, training and financial support for electoral candidates) and (c) positive action policies until gender parity is reached such as voluntary or mandatory quota systems (Norris 2004: 23).



Since the watershed event Beijing Platform of Action of 1995, quota regulations have become a frequently used tool to annul the gender-related democracy deficit in national legislatures and promote gender-balanced decision-making with now more than eighty-one countries worldwide with Africa and Latin America taking the lead (see Krook 2004: 3, idem 2003: 1-2, Dahlerup 2002: 2, Peschard 2002).

There is still little comparative research on the actual qualitative outcome of recent quota implementations on women in politics, their policy-making and empowerment. Most research focuses on the quantitative outcome, meaning the actual increase of female representation, of engendered electoral politics given the short time horizon. It will take at least another ten years before substantial evidence can be gathered on a possible impact and qualitative outcome as it needs several elections to assess for instance crucial factors such as performance, incumbency / re-election, entrance into and sustainable positioning in mainstream politics and decision-making. It is yet to early to answer “whether quotas per se lead to a qualitative change, that is actual empowerment of women, or may even cause a certain stigmatization” (Dahlerup 2002: 3). The paths towards quota introduction are fourfold – via (a) women activists (e.g. India, Indonesia, Philippines), (b) political elites who recognize them as a strategic advantage (usually “empty” gestures without substantial change of representation patterns (e.g. Bangladesh, Pakistan), (c) existing or emerging notions of equality and representation, especially in periods of post-conflict and/or democratisation (e.g. East Timor, South Africa, Rwanda, Namibia, Mozambique), (d) support by international norms or actors (e.g. Kosovo, Afghanistan) and spread through transnational sharing (see Krook 2004: 4).

But quotas are a two-fold sword: often passed unanimously, they are perceived by party and legislative elites as paper tigers and are for this reason often unable to substantially change representation patterns or to affect dominant political elites as those policies will never be implemented or deemed unconstitutional before being applied (Krook 2004: 7). Depending on the electoral mechanisms used for quota regulations, those can serve to “apply quotas as a means of consolidating control over party representatives and political rivals”, for instance through hand-picked ‘malleable women’, who will not challenge the patriarchal status quo, or through institutionalized procedures for candidate selection that enforce central party decisions and limit party-base democratic recruitment mechanisms (Krook 2004: 7-8). On the other hand, for example Indian “women candidates are usually fielded from ‘losing’ constituencies where the party does not want to ‘waste’ a male candidate” (Rai 2002: 1).

Furthermore, the same quota regulations can have different outcomes in different political systems and are largely dependent from the “dynamics of distribution or institutions of political recruitment” as the state as such, its institutions and intermediary organisations are not neutral coordinating mechanisms but reflect, reproduce, and magnify particular patterns of power distribution and vested interests (Krook 2003: 4, 8, 12, Kethusegile-Juru 2003). One indicator is the



disproportional selection of women deriving from dominant classes (socioeconomic elite / political families) which make up to one-third of female parliamentarians in South and Southeast Asia and seldom lead to a general women empowerment and gender-sensitive policy-making on the national level (different to sub national processes in South Asia!). Subsequently, three different institutional dimensions need to be taken into account leading to a country-specific configuration for political recruitment and hence electoral outcome of any affirmative action for women in politics:

- Systemic institutions such as formal features of a political system (electoral rules, ballot structures, district sizes, numbers of political parties),
- Practical institutions such as formal and informal party structures of internal political recruitment, and
- Normative institutions such as formal and informal principles “that define the moral bases and goals of recruitment or the definitions of equality and representation enshrined formally” (constitution, laws, party statutes) and informally (party platforms, political ideologies / culture) (ibid.).

It is important to note that quotas are often perceived to “embody a seemingly paradoxical demand” of equality through positive discrimination and social group-based selection, but the often favoured meritocratic argument of political recruitment is also not value-neutral and based on normative and cultural judgements, thus political partial statements (Krook 2003: 21-22, see: Dahlerup 2002: 2). The same is true for the main gatekeepers to political office, political parties, which operate and embody a specific normative and socio-political setting through party structures, party rules and party norms within the overall socio-political system of a country (Matland 2002: 1f, Dahlerup 2002: 3). In terms of gatekeeper decision-making we can distinguish between systems that are (a) patronage-oriented with unwritten or less likely clear rules followed, traditional or charismatic leadership style where loyalty of party members and candidates is paramount, and (b) bureaucratic-oriented with standardized rules and legalistic, legal-rational authority with the latter providing a distinct advantage for women candidates or members of any marginalised group (Matland 2002: 4).

According to the *Global Database of Quotas for Women* there are three different types of quota regulations for national legislatures identifiable:

- Constitutional quotas can be found in fourteen out of eighty-one countries, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Philippines, generating an average female political representation of 18,4 percent.
- Electoral Law quota regulations have been implemented in thirty-three countries, including Indonesia, Korea (North and South), Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines which lead to an average of 16,3 percent of women legislators.



- Political Party quotas for electoral candidates are used in 62 countries by 131 political parties including India (Indian National Congress with 15 percent, Assa People's Council with 35 percent), South Korea (Grand National Party with 30 percent), Philippines (Filipino Social democratic Party with 25 percent), Taiwan (Democratic Progressive Party and Chinese Nationalist Party with both 25 percent), Thailand (Democrat Party with 30 percent). As this type of quotas is largely based on voluntary party compliance and only followed up by those to a limited extent, usually without sanctions, no convincing average figure of resulting female political representation can be given. (www.quotaproject.org)

Apart from the indispensable political will and commitment required, electoral systems as such seem to play a crucial role. There is a general understanding and empirical prove that quotas, usually electoral candidate ones, work worldwide best in combination with a proportional representation electoral system with closed lists, zipper-principle candidate placement (one men-one woman), high electoral thresholds and high district magnitude as those structures give incentives to the ultimate gatekeepers (political parties) to socially balance their electoral roll as inclusive and representative as possible (see Matland 2002, Morna 2003: 3, Rose 2000: 348-350, Norris 2004: 2-3, Peschard 2002). Lowe-Morna observes in the case of African countries and Commonwealth nations that under a proportional system

“candidates focus on the party and its policies, rather than on a particular individual. This works in favour of women – at least in getting their foot in the door – because of the in-built prejudices against women” (Kethusegile-Juru 2003: 6).

Proportional systems are not per se the much searched for wonder tool as one African local councillor, Rehana Moosajee, points out: “If we go for a straight PR system, we would have an accountability problem. I think we need both, to deepen democracy. But we need to see how we bring more women in on the ward lists” (quoted in Morna 2003: 7-8). Solutions have been found in Mozambique and South Africa, the African countries ranking high in worldwide terms of representation numbers, where deployment mechanisms have been established for members of parliament who are assigned constituency duties to ensure accountability and public recognition (Morna 2003: 8).

In contrast, we find a different trend in Asia where in most countries with mandatory quotas plurality systems (Bangladesh, Nepal) or parallel systems with a tendency towards a plurality system (with more than 2/3 of seats determined via plurality vote as in Korea, Pakistan, Philippines) dominate electoral life. Only in Afghanistan, Indonesia and Taiwan semi- or proportional systems are used with differing success stories for female representation (see table below). In six out of eight Asian countries with competitive to semi-competitive elections a specific quota type is used to ensure the maximum security about the electoral outcome - reserved seats.



Table 3: Asian countries with quota regulations in competitive to semi-competitive national elections

Asian Countries (Electoral System)	Mandatory Quota Type for National Parliament	% of ♀ MPs
<u>AFGHANISTAN</u> - SNTV	Constitutional Quota (reserved seats)	Elections in 2005
<u>BANGLADESH</u> - FPTP	Constitutional Quota (reserved seats)	2.0%* (6/300)
<u>INDONESIA</u> - List PR	Election Law Quota Regulation	11.8% (65/550)
<u>KOREA, REPUBLIC OF</u> - Parallel (FPTP and List PR)	Election Law Quota Regulation and Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	13.0% (39/299)
<u>NEPAL</u> - FPTP	Constitutional Quota (reserved seats) and Election Law Quota Regulation	5.9% (12/205)
<u>PAKISTAN</u> - Parallel (FPTP and List PR)	Election Law Quota Regulation (reserved seats)	21.6% (74/342)
<u>PHILIPPINES</u> - Parallel (FPTP and List PR)	Constitutional Quota (reserved seats), Election Law Quota Regulation and Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	15.3% (36/236)
<u>TAIWAN</u> - Parallel (SNTV and List PR)	Constitutional Quota (reserved seats) and Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	22.2% (50/225)
Average for countries with mandatory quotas (Asia)		14.9%
Average of female representation for countries with quotas worldwide		17.0%

(Graphic by Melanie Stollwerck, Source: <http://www.quotaproject.org/country.cfm?SortOrder=Country>,
www.ipu.org as of 22.02.2005)

*Currently women represent 2 percent of national parliamentarians (6 out of 300). The new quota regulation was codified in May 2004 and will lapse after ten years (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3719227.stm as of 22.02.2005).

The new constitution of Afghanistan from 2004 includes a quota for the lower house (Wolesi Jirga) with a minimum of 25,6 percent female representation (64 of 250 seats) and for the upper house (Meshrano Jirga) with a minimum of 17 percent which will be appointed by the President (www.quotaproject.org/country.cfm). In the same year, the Bangladeshi Government under Khaleda Zia reintroduced via the 14th constitutional amendment reserved seats (45 out of 345, 13 percent) for women in the national parliament (Jatiyo Sangshad) during a period of ten years (ibid.). Nepal is one of the countries with a very low 5 percent-quota for reserved seats (Clause 96 and 114 of the 1990 Constitution) in the upper house and for electoral candidates per party contesting for the lower house (ibid.) The first country to introduce quota regulations in the 1950s was Pakistan which had already several provisions for reserved seats (3-10 percent) lapsing after some years. The most recent quota regulation derives from the military-led government under General Pervez Musharraf in 2002 under which 17 percent of the seats in both houses are reserved for women and are proportionally allocated to the political parties according to their election result and the party's list presented to election authorities prior to election date (ibid.). Nevertheless, the country's strong women's movement requested a 30 percent-quota in accordance with a national consultation by the Ministry of Women and Development in



May 2001 and the National Campaign for Restoration of Women's Reserved Seats in 1998 (ibid.). In the Philippines, too, the Women's Movement has been a strong lobbyist for 30 percent-quota regulations in all decision-making bodies of political life, e.g. the Women Empowerment Act which has been filed in consecutive Congresses since 1992 without success, and several women groups have registered with the Election Commission (ibid.). Apart from that, the Party List Law from 1995 codified a compulsory provision for parties to include women in their lists as well as a 20 percent-quota in the lower house, which is usually dominated by elite parliamentarians and so called *trapos*, for marginalised societal sectors, including women (ibid.). In the only East Asian country with reserved seats, Taiwan, the number of women parliamentarians on reserved seats varies since 1997 according to the statutory provision for each legislative body between 10-25 percent (ibid.).

There are only two countries which follow mandatory electoral candidate quotas: Indonesia under a proportional list system and South Korea under a parallel system. Shortly before last year's election in April 2004, South Korea reformed its Political Party Law (Art. 31) whereby 23 percent of national legislators are elected via a proportional list system for which political parties must include 50 percent women among its lists. For the majority of the seats elected via majority vote, political parties are recommended a voluntary 30 percent-quota. Nevertheless, the legislative reform led to a doubling in female representation from 5,9 percent to 13 percent in the current legislature (ibid.). The Indonesian quota regulation could only be introduced after strong lobbying of the women's movement and despite protests from the country's female president, Megawati Sukarnoputri (a dynastic leader), which partly explains the rather weak provision (Art. 65 election law) as political parties are required to consider the nomination of at least 30 percent female candidates for all legislative bodies without clear sanctions in case of non-compliance (ibid.). Interestingly, the two South Asian countries with long-time female political leadership, India and Sri Lanka, fall short of affirmative action on the level of national politics. There has been continuous struggle from Sri Lankan women's groups in recent years to include a 25 percent-quota in legislative bodies which met resistance from minority Tamil and Muslim parties claiming not to have sufficient candidates to fulfil the provision (ibid.). In late 2004 there have been renewed governmental declarations to draft a quota law of minimum 25 percent representation for women in all legislative bodies although no apparent further steps have been taken so far to implement such a move. The same is true for India where the ruling National Congress Party, especially its kingmaker Sonia Gandhi, promised to promote a regulation for reserved seats in the national legislative bodies Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. Already a decade ago the country successfully implemented a 33 percent provision for reserved seats in local bodies, including the same provision for seats reserved for the scheduled classes, (73rd and 74th Amendment) as requested by the women's movement which wanted a bottom-up process of bringing women into mainstream politics (see: ibid., Rai 2002, Raman 2002). Any proposals of



reserved seats for women on the national level have been so far unsuccessful given the resistance from the male-dominated legislative bodies whose politicians see their own constituencies and powers at stake (see *ibid.*). This leads to the fundamental problem of any affirmative action which usually needs to be passed by male-dominated legislative or executive bodies and can only be fully implemented when the necessary political will and commitment as well as the public support (e.g. in Latin America and Africa) is guaranteed. Otherwise any kind of quota regulations runs the risk of remaining a paper tiger and leading to mere window-dressing.

Given the rather misogyn and patriarchal character of public and political life where female political participation is often a disputed political symbol and sociocultural marker, reserved seats have been predominantly introduced in South and Southeast Asian nations to avoid that candidates have to run electoral campaigns which could challenge or violate perceived gender-prescribed rules, behaviours and values thus able to severely hamper a female candidate's success right from the start in a setting of highly personalized politics. Problematically, in most countries (e.g. Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan) those reserved seats are not filled through a direct electoral mandate, but indirectly (a) in the constituted parliament as electoral college or (b) in form of seat allocation to the parties in proportion to their overall share of votes via list or party-internal appointment. Consequently, those women parliamentarians are largely perceived to be "tokens" deficient of constituency-based legitimacy and political authority exercising a weak political mandate which seems to bind them even more to party power-holders and party policies. As the electoral modus does not clearly connect them to a specific constituency or electoral clientele, their policy-making, political responsibilities and accountabilities are often invisible for the electorate impeding gains of necessary public credentials and recognition for a possible re-election, notwithstanding autonomous budgetary competencies. Moreover, they are often perceived as "second class"-legislators by their female and male colleagues on general seats – an opinion not only prevalent in Asia, but also in African and Latin-American parliaments. They therefore face an uphill-battle to emancipate themselves and to successfully enter mainstreaming (power) politics. Chowdhury comments that "in a way, the word 'reservation' has a passive connotation in that it refers to numbers without much reflection upon the interface between numbers and outcome" (*idem*, 2002). In the case of Bangladesh, experiences with reserved seats were rather negative as they accentuated women's dependence in politics and reinforced their marginality (*ibid.*). Furthermore, the reserved seats were seen as the sole avenue for female legislators with the general seats remaining the monopoly of male legislators leaving the "entire electoral field open to male domination and control", respectively for politicians in control of the party machinery (*ibid.*). Hence the electoral mechanisms become crucial for perceptions about and acceptance of women on reserved seats, in particular to avoid "visibility without empowerment" (Chowdhury 2002). In contrast, Morocco avoided this legitimacy deficit for its reserved seats (30 out of 325, 9,23 percent) as those are filled from women-only lists via direct



election (www.quotaproject.org, Norris: 6-7). Although some might criticize such electoral provisions to narrow the mandate of women politicians to a perceived women-only representative, those are still free to contest general national seats (5 out of 295 in last elections won) and at least all do have a direct legitimization by the voters, resulting in the highest figure of female representation (10,8 percent compared to 0,6 percent in previous elections) in the Arab world (ibid.).

But it needs to be pointed out that provisions for reserved seats have been far from achieving a threshold representation of a critical mass of at least one third of women in parliament which would allow counterbalancing male-dominated structures, procedures and vested policy-making. Recent developments on the level of Asian and African local governments (usually a 25-33 percent-quota) seem to indicate a general shake up of dominant power structures, gender role perceptions and qualitative change in policy-making with women politicians successfully conquering the political space (see Chowdhury 2002, Drage 2001, Peschard 2002). But what will happen if these women find their way up the political ladder? Reserved seats on the national level have always been added up to the usual amount of a legislative seats thus preventing any substantial political competition with male contenders over a smaller share of general seats and the resulting need of mainstreaming women politicians right away. For election campaigns on a national level, financial resources and name recognition will be crucial, especially in political contexts of weak institutionalized party structures and plurality or parallel voting systems. Will the glass ceiling become permeable towards the top echelons of power even if those successful and then experienced women politicians do not originate from dominant classes or bring along the required educational qualifications (e.g. Pakistan, Thailand) and financial assets?

Outlook

Given the continuous gender-related democracy deficit in women's political citizenship after more than half a century of female enfranchisement worldwide, affirmative action seems to be an indispensable and viable tool having brought substantial increases in female representation and participation in legislative (and sometimes executive) bodies in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Europe. As already pointed out, any kind of gender equality policies in the political sphere need to be threefold addressing country-specific configurations of legislative, practical and normative institutions in mainstream politics. Nevertheless, changing the electoral modus remains a crucial option to create windows of opportunity for women. In regard to the prevalent gender and power composition of the political environment, in particular hybrid or failed democracies, a patriarchal gender-ideology, personalized and patronage-oriented politics plus weak organizational and democratized level of political parties, a straight change to a proportional system does not seem to be the ideal electoral solution. Given research findings and practical experiences gathered so far, a mixed election system is proposed for the case of South and South-



east Asia. To avoid visibility without empowerment and mere tokenism, seat allocation mechanisms should be split as follows: 50 percent of all seats with plurality voting in single or multi-member constituencies and the remaining 50 percent with proportional closed list voting with a mandatory parity clause implemented by the zipper-principle in electoral candidate lists and, preferably, on the majority-voting scheme, too. This would allow achieving a genuine threshold representation and thus substantial participation of women legislators generating interdependencies with intermediary organizations and socio-political institutions. Moreover, such an election modus would help to create equality in opportunities and outcome of legislative mandates in terms of attributed esteem and status. But such a reformative change would also lead to battle for power shares and would meet resistance from the traditional dominant power-holders whose privileges are contested. For such a significant step, which challenges common concepts of political power as personalized, patronage- and status-oriented, genuine liberalisation and institutional strengthening of political parties and legislative bodies are preconditions. Most of all, true political will and commitment by power-holders involved have been missing so far on a worldwide-scale unless women movements gained momentum in transition or post-conflict situations creating a historic window of opportunity or simply had the whip hand.

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