The Gender Face of Asian Politics

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OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Preface

The political journey of women dates back to more than a hundred years when the first women were enfranchised—nowadays, their political empowerment is visible on the national, regional international level. This journey has been arduous, tiring and frustrating yet productive in its own dynamics. We stand at crossroads enquiring where we are, if it is where we wanted to be and where to go from here. Today this is our paradigm, which perplexes, yet motivates all those who have dedicated themselves, by commitment or conviction, to improve, strengthen, consolidate and further the cause of women in the political arena for a progressive impact.

Despite the relentless struggle for equity and equality of opportunities, women still constitute 70 per cent of the world's poor and almost two-thirds of them are illiterate. Their efforts constitute a large portion of undocumented, unreported and unappreciated socio-political economy. This exclusion ignores their role as catalytic agents of socio-political and economic change, which is a living indictment to modern day's claims to progress. The fact remains that gender equality is not a technocratic goal but a socio-political and socio-cultural commitment.

Women represent almost 50 per cent of the population of Asian countries. The political space available to them to be counted, participate, and influence political bodies constitutes an important parameter of political development and democratization in the Asian context. Mainstreaming women in politics and their subsequent representation in positions of power remains a crucial step towards obtaining a gender balance in politics. The Asian region has its own unique dynamics when it comes to mapping women in politics. Asian women have created, supported and furthered the political legacies and development to become charismatic leaders and role models.

In 2005, The Researchers (a research-based development organization of Pakistan) followed in the steps of three previously held conferences on *Women and Politics in Asia*, i.e. in 2003 at Halmstad University, Sweden; in 2004 in Colombo, Sri Lanka and in 2005 in Islamabad, Pakistan. The level of academic research and interest of activists and practitioners generated was such that these conferences became a catalyst of commitment to launch the *Women and Politics in Asia Forum* (*WPAF*, www.wpaf.org) as a platform and network to consolidate further research, exchange, cooperation and conferences.

The aim of WPAF is to observe, research, document and disseminate knowledge about experiences and best practices gathered related to different

dimensions of Asian women in politics. Through an international approach and concerted effort, WPAF attempts to examine the gender face of politics in its dynamics and implications for Asian polities. WPAF's future path is aligned to institutionalize mechanisms, which substantially enhance the political mainstreaming of women in the region and which create synergetic effects through (a) a kind of 'knowledge warehouse' focusing on problems, challenges and recommendations to advance the cause; and (b) providing a platform to women politicians to exchange experiences and best practices in order to create a much needed regional women politicians' caucus.

As a first step, this book compiles a selected range of papers from international and Pakistani specialists in the field of Women in Politics in Asia, which were presented during the 2005 WPA conference and which focus on women's diverse political roles and gendered political processes. The topics presented in the book are varied and range from women's impact on public policy, electoral gender quotas. Women in war and peace, to women and politics in Pakistan.

We would like to thank all the contributors for their valued contributions and time and the publisher for their commitment and cooperation to realize this project in record time. Finally, we would like to thank the staff of 'The Researchers' for extending all their help in making the book possible.

Aazar Ayaz
Dr Andrea Fleschenberg

Some Introductory Reflections

Andrea Fleschenberg

The chapters of this book originate from the conference proceedings presented at the Third International Conference on Women and Politics in Asia held in Islamabad, Pakistan, in late November 2005.[1] 'Discovering the Gender Face of Politics' was the overall topic of this two-day conference which dealt with experiences from different South and Southeast Asian countries, such as Bangladesh, Burma, India, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. The aim was to study different dimensions of Asian women in politics and to examine the implications of gender in political life throughout Asian countries.

So far so good?—A tentative assessment of women's political participation

Asian countries have been in the lead when it comes to women entering the top echelons of political power, with Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Indira Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto, Corazon Aquino, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Megawati Sukarnoputri and Khaleda Zia being just some examples of female political leadership throughout the region. In contrast, the history of active and passive voting rights for women in general, particularly their political representation on different legislative levels and thus their political citizenship status is characterized by exclusion and marginalization. The United Nations organization UNIFEM highlights the gendered nature of politics and polities, not only in Asia:

> Citizenship is inextricably linked to the political rights to vote and to stand for political office. On account of socially constructed gender roles, women face a greater number of obstacles in participating in political decision making activity than men. These obstacles need to be acknowledged by policymakers, lawmakers and electoral authorities when they determine the conditions of free and fair elections. Overlooking them will result in the conclusion that women and men are equally placed to participate in political life. This conclusion can lead to unfair discrimination on the grounds of gender...and an oversight of the unfair and deeply entrenched, systemic attitudes and stereotypes that assign women to the private, and men to the public domain.[2]

Patterns of Female Political Participation in Asia

Waylen points out that '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,'[3] despite different political and socio-cultural systems. At the same time, inter-regional differences between European and (East) Asian political participation derive from a still strong public-private-dichotomy in socio-cultural organization with the consequence of (East) Asian women being selectively integrated as *women* into politics (i.e. the extension of semi-official gender roles into the public realm of politics), while men are integrated as politicians. As a result, women politicians are even more constrained by problematic gender stereotypes limiting their agency to subordinate positions.[4]

In conventional politics, Asia's women participate rather equally in elections, attend public meetings and rallies, are members of elective bodies and political mass organizations and engage in political struggles and movements (e.g. independence and/or pro-democracy movements like in India, Pakistan, Burma, Malaysia and Indonesia).[5] Although they show an equal rate of participation, this does not tell us anything about the significance, effectiveness (i.e. interest articulation) and character of their political activity and their representation share in organs of decision and policy-making.[6] Often, women act in supportive roles, as 'unrecognised foot-soldiers than as leaders'[7] or less in formal than informal structures such as social reform movements, community organizations and NGOs.[8] Their increased number as women legislators started in the late 1990s when several Asian countries implemented quota provisions; in South Asia repeatedly in the form of reserved seats.

To mobilize women 'on an ad hoc basis to support specific cases and issues', and letting them loose as soon as the routine political game of power distribution starts, is quite a worldwide phenomenon.[9] Nevertheless, examples like Benazir Bhutto, Corazon Aquino, Khaleda Zia, Sheikh Hasina and Megawati Sukarnoputri seem to prove the contrary, as all of these women led pro-democracy movements/opposition parties in transition times and gained a normally elected top political office after the phase of power distribution. Furthermore, women politicians like Aung San Suu Kyi and Wan Azizah Ismail are recognized opposition leaders in a political transition context, which lasts, as in the case of the two, for several years and with male alternatives having been available. Currently, three out of fourteen elected women head of state or government come from Asia: Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (President of the Philippines since 2004), Hang Myung-sook (Prime Minister of South Korea since 2006) and Khaleda Zia (Prime Minister of

Bangladesh 1991–6, 2001–7). One out of five women vice presidents, Annette Lu from Taiwan (since 2000), operates in East Asia while, in contrast, Brunei Darussalam still does not grant voting rights to its female citizens.[10] Since 1945, one-fourth of women head of states or government worldwide took their office in Asia or the Pacific in very diverse socio-political systems and with very diverse political mandates. The latter ranged from interim head of state or government for some weeks to re-elected executive presidents or prime ministers, e.g. in the Philippines, India and Sri Lanka. The overall majority (59 per cent) served as prime ministers, some of them in various terms in Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan or New Zealand.

Table 1: Female Heads of State or Government since 1945
(number/per cent of total)

	Asia	World
Acting & Interim Head of State (President)	3/13.6	12/13.8
Acting & Interim Head of Government (Prime Minister)	2/9.0	6/6.9
Others (e.g. Joint Council of State)	–	10/11.5
President	4/18.2	19/21.8
Prime Minister	13/59.0	40/45.9
Total	22	87

(www.guide2womenleaders.com/Female_Leaders.htm, 20.10.2006)

The paucity of women in Asian politics prevails across the heterogeneous region of South and Southeast Asia, and even beyond. At the same time, the discrepancy is striking between successful female political top leadership vis-à-vis the systematic under representation of women politicians at lower legislative and executive levels.

In gender- and Asia-related literature, a specific socio-cultural and political context is perceived to engender severe constraints for female political agency and leadership. First, due to widespread, dominant male-related honour concepts, women and the 'integrity' of their bodies are essential bearers of cultural identity and socio-cultural boundary markers.[11] Subsequently, women are restricted from establishing protégé–patron relationships other than within the family cycle or kinship related networks. Potential political sacrifices such as imprisonment, possible abuse[12] and other threats to a woman's physical integrity lead to the notion that political agency is an inappropriate public field of female activity. As Rounaq emphasises, 'the

norms of *purdah*—gender separation and limiting women's physical mobility—are widely prevalent amongst all communities and classes in South Asia, making it difficult for women to seek [the] critical routes to leadership.'[13] Consequently, politics is perceived as a male domain due to its public nature, narrowing culturally acceptable female agency and participation options (e.g. mobility, social interaction, acceptance as leader or representative of a community). Political parties may be reluctant to choose a female candidate due to the perceived or alleged gender bias of the electorate (and political gate-keepers themselves), impairing a woman's potential as 'winning candidate' and complicating necessary financial (party) support for running an election.[14]

> 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 it follows through the highest levels of national legislatures and parliaments.[15]

The United Nations' *Gender-related Development Index* and *Gender Empowerment Measure* calibrate women's societal status compared to men with regard to their socioeconomic life standards, access to social infrastructure, decision-making and leadership positions as well as income.[16] Earning on average half the income compared to men with the same job positions represents a striking strategic disadvantage with regard to their access to societal leadership positions where higher education, income and professional leadership experience are highly indispensable passage openers.

Throughout Asia, women's political citizenship rights are linked to their country's independence and full citizenship rights in the wake of post-colonial nation-building. In many countries, women entered the political floor as elected or appointed parliamentarians, ministers or councillors within the first five years after gaining the right to vote and to stand for election. In countries such as Singapore, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, women had to wait an average of one and a half decades before gaining access to power politics. But in both scenarios, their numbers remained negligible until recently, as Table 2 shows.

Table 2: Women's socioeconomic and political empowerment
(as of 2006, % of total)*

	GEM Rank—Value	Year women received voting rights	Women in Leadership Positions	Ratio of female to male income (est.)
High Human Development				
Japan	43–0.534	1945	10	0.46
Singapore	22–0.654	1947	26	0.51
South Korea	59–0.479	1948	6	0.48
Medium Human Development				
Malaysia	51–0.502	1957	23	0.47
Thailand	63–0.452	1932	26	0.61
Philippines	46–0.526	1937	58	0.59
Sri Lanka	72–0.370	1931	21	0.51
Cambodia	73–0.364	1955	14	0.76
Pakistan	71–0.379	1947	2	0.34
Bangladesh	79–0.218	1972	8	0.54

* Countries such as China, India, Indonesia, Laos or Vietnam had to be excluded since data was missing.
(*Source*: http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/, 20.10.2006)

At the turn of the millennium a significant change in the gender ratio of Asian parliaments was witnessed, as Tables no. 3 and 4 indicate.

Table 3: Parliamentary Gender Ratio in 1975 and 1998 (% of women)

Country	Lower/Single House 1975	1998	Upper House/Senate 1975	1998	Rank in 1975	Rank in 1998
Bangladesh	4.8	9.1	–	–	10	7
India	4.1	8.1	7.0	8.6	11	8
Indonesia	7.2	11.4	–	–	7	6
Japan	1.4	4.6	7.1	13.9	16	18
Malaysia	3.2	7.8	3.3	17.4	13	10
Pakistan	4.1	2.3	2.2	1.1	11	21
Philippines	2.8	12.4	12.5	17.4	14	5
Sri Lanka	3.8	5.3	–	–	12	15
South Korea	5.5	3.7	–	–	9	19
Total	4.1	7.2	6.4	11.7	–	–

(*Source*: Inter-Parliamentary Union)[17]

Yet until today, 75 to 90 per cent of legislators remain men; the gender ratio worsens with regard to executive positions in government and parliament. In response to this slow, incremental track of women's advancement into political positions, quota provisions have been introduced in many Asian countries within the last ten to fifteen years at the local, provincial and/or national levels. While some countries, in particular in South Asia, chose reserved seat provisions in order to ensure a certain electoral outcome, others opted for compulsory or voluntary gender quotas at the candidacy lists of political parties. The outcome is mixed, as shown by Tremblay & Steele and Dahlerup in their respective chapters.

Table 4: Parliamentary Gender Ratio after National Parliamentary Elections held 2001-2006

Country	Parliament				Senate			
	Election	Seats	Women	%	Election	Seats	Women	%
Afghanistan	09/2005	249	68	27.3	09/2005	102	23	22.5
Bangladesh*	10/2001	345	51	14.8	–	–	–	–
Cambodia	07/2003	123	12	9.8	01/2006	61	9	14.8
China	02/2003	2980	604	20.3	–	–	–	–
India	04/2004	545	45	8.3	06/2004	250	28	11.2
Indonesia	04/2004	550	62	11.3	–	–	–	–
Japan	09/2005	480	43	9.0	07/2004	242	34	14.0
Laos	04/2006	115	29	25.2	–	–	–	–
Malaysia	03/2004	219	20	9.1	03/2004	70	18	25.7
Pakistan	10/2002	342	73	21.3	03/2006	100	17	17.0
Philippines	05/2004	236	37	15.7	05/2004	24	4	16.7
Singapore**	05/2006	85	18	21.2	–	–	–	–
South Korea	04/2004	299	40	13.4	–	–	–	–
Sri Lanka	04/2004	225	11	4.9	–	–	–	–
Thailand***	01/2001	500	46	9.2	03/2000	200	21	10.5
Vietnam	05/2002	498	136	27.3	–	–	–	–
Total Asia				**15.5**				**16.5**

* In 2004 parliamentary seats were raised from 300 to 345 to accommodate 45 reserved seats for women. These quota seats were allocated in proportion to political parties vote share in the 2001 elections.

** According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) ten additional seats will be appointed when parliament convenes for its first session in late 2006 (last assembly: 15 out of 94 seats were held by women, equal to 15.95 per cent).

*** Last available data. Parliament dissolved by military junta in autumn 2006 (last elections held in April 2006).

(Source: www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm, 20.10.2006)

In summary, on a regional level, socio-political structures and institutions severely obstruct women's engagement in politics. Hence decision-making in politics, economics and other social functions survives as men's business throughout Asia. 'Guns, goons, gold and patriarchy' are common characteristics, combined with a parochial political culture, the lack of substantial devolution in contrast to powerful male-dominated elites and institutions which manipulate democracy without allowing greater participation to the people in day to day democracy and governance. Marriage of crime and politics and the use of unfair means in invariably all countries of the region have lowered the esteem of public representatives, politics and political parties and often lead to violently reinforced authoritarian tendencies.[18] Furthermore, no trickle-down-effect has been 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. This partly needs to be blamed on the female politicians themselves, who often came to power with the support of women organizations and lobby groups, but failed to initiate women-friendly policies and to build their own second line of female leadership in the respective executives and legislatures. But although the political patriarchy is still quite firmly in place, some significant rifts will be seen in the case studies of this book. The crucial question remains; what steps can be taken to break up this widespread phenomenon in order to build genuinely inclusive, gender-sensitive democracies with women occupying their equal share in the mainstream of politics and polities.

Transforming the Gender Face of Asian Politics—some Propositions

Conference recommendations called for more interactive and participatory research to be conducted on a comparative level linking academics with women politicians and activists to understand the parameters of women's political participation and to develop best practices. For this purpose, more gender-segregated data of women's development, empowerment and political agency parameters is said to be required to fully evaluate and understand the gendered nature of Asian politics and to develop mechanisms for improvement. Several speakers called for a fast-track policy to women's political advancement, i.e. institutional provisions to achieve a *critical mass* at various decision-making levels in times of peace, in transition contexts after a regime change or in post-conflict situations. To achieve this purpose, many speakers, academics, activists and women politicians, stressed that *institutions matter*: the composition of the political gatekeepers needs to be changed while at the same time democratic settings are required to ensure that women are empowered and their interests are represented and addressed at the various

levels and dimensions of political life. *Femocrats* from both sexes have to enter the echelons of power and decision-making to change the traditional face of androcentric politics.

Numerous participating South and Southeast Asian scholars, politicians and activists emphasized the necessity for women parliamentarians, especially those entering male-dominated spaces via quota provisions, to enlarge and to be innovative about their means of political agency. They need to enter the political mainstream rather than remaining sidelined on reserved seats and in women's wings of political parties. To avoid gaps in representativeness and accountability, women politicians' policy-making options lie inside as well as outside of political institutions, e.g. parliamentary caucuses, grass roots alliances with civil society, and as a contextual measure in the field of rule of law to ensure effective, institutionalized and universally implemented citizenship rights. Any kind of discriminatory legislation, such as the Hudood Ordinances in Pakistan, which downgrade women to second-class citizens, have to be abolished as a precondition for gender equality and genuine female political participation.

While quotas and other affirmative actions are important to enhance women's political participation, they do not necessarily guarantee substantial representation of women or accountability to women voters, their interests and needs. To maximize their effectiveness, quotas should ensure that elected women have their independent power base to advance their own political agenda, i.e. an improved socioeconomic status, sufficient funding allocation and capacity building as prerequisites of electoral politics; apart from gender sensitization trainings for all kinds of relevant decision-makers and opinion leaders. This applies especially to the media which should not present women politicians as models, but as role models, covering their success stories and not only their outfits and failures.

In many of the still highly stratified, fragmented or segmented Asian countries, quota provisions even need a 'quota within the quota' to encourage and allow women from marginalized backgrounds to successfully enter politics. The paucity of social diversity is echoed by a certain gender-blindness of Asia's female top politicians, on the one hand, and the serious elite bias and ascendancy among female legislators at different levels of the polity, on the other hand. Both should not be apprehended per se as victims of androcentric power politics, since their significant representation share reflects the desire of societal elites to hold on to power and privileges. In such a socio-political mind-set, gendered structures are seldom taken into account to advance genuine democratization towards gender-inclusive democracy.

Studying the Gendered Dimensions of Asian Politics and Polities

Do women matter in overcoming the democracy deficit became *the* question prevailing in all sorts of discussions on the topic.[19] The aim of this book is to study different dimensions of Southeast and South Asian women in politics and to examine the gendered nature of political life in various countries of this heterogeneous region. Consequently, the authors of the different chapters try to evaluate which inroads to the political mainstream women parliamentarians achieved so far, focusing on their socio-political impact, their ability and efforts to transform the political set-up, agenda-setting and policy-making.

A Cartography of Women in Asian Politics

Kazuki Iwanaga and Patricia Loreskär follow the question whether women politicians matter in public policy-making as suggested by feminists and gender scholars. The central aim of their study is to explore the generalizability of findings regarding whether women legislate differently than men in Asian settings, in particular if women who have only token representation in several national legislatures are able to pursue a legislative agenda related to 'women's issues'. Four case studies serve as examples for their analysis: Taiwan, Thailand, the Philippines, and Sweden (the latter is often classified as *the* role model for gender-inclusive democracy and women's empowerment). The Asian case studies show tendencies both to enhance 'women's issues' as well as tendencies not to enhance it to any significant degree despite different gender ratios in political representation. In contrast, the example of Sweden seems to prove that the greater the number of women legislators, the more considerable and faster legislative and policy changes take place and women's specific policy agenda and interest is taken into consideration.

Claudia Derichs criticizes traditional transition theories as gender-blind although women have proved to be important agents of social and political change in several Asian countries. She analyses the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) as an example of a consolidated attempt to measure transformation and change with regard to the gender sensitivity of its normative framework and indicators. Indonesia and Malaysia serve as case studies for analysing the importance of elites and civil society for political change and a gender perspective on transition and change which is still neglected in respective indices such as the BTI.

Drude Dahlerup reviews the widespread use of electoral gender quotas, implemented in order to enhance women's political participation in various countries worldwide. A particular focus of her analysis lies on the question

of 'tokenism' or 'proxy women', which is very central to the discussion of women's empowerment, especially in South Asia. She discusses the specific effects for female legislators of being elected on the basis of gender quotas. She contradicts the one-sided perception that only 'quota women' will be tokens and points to the fact that male politicians are also highly dependent on party leaderships and family connections. For quota systems to serve as a window of opportunity for women, they need to match the electoral systems in the individual countries.

Manon Tremblay and Jackie Steele develop in their chapter a comprehensive categorization of electoral gender quotas and evaluate the Asian experiences with such quotas, using similar experiences from elsewhere around the world. In their comparative analysis they find that despite the early introduction of gender quotas in Asia, such measures have not served as an efficient path for feminizing parliaments. Moreover, write Tremblay and Steele, electoral gender quotas in Asia are primarily a symbolic or rhetorical (rather than a practical) measure to promote gender equality through the feminization of legislatures to levels enjoyed by male citizens.

In contrast, the chapter of *Khalida Ghous* focuses on the grassroots level, investigating displacement and the status of Afghan refugee women in Pakistan and its implications for humanitarian assistance, women's status and gendered conceptions of peace and security. In her opinion, soft or failed states and their weak and fractured state capability further exacerbate governance and development responses to political crises as well as its failure to protect its people as in the case of Afghanistan.

Dynasties' Daughters or Asia's Roaring Tigresses?

Moving in focus up the political ladder, the following chapters scrutinize the career paths, leadership skills and political agendas of female heads of state/ government as well as opposition leaders in the Philippines, India and Burma.

For Lourdes Veneracion-Rallonza, the current crisis in political leadership of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Philippines, has brought into question (once again) the integrity of the country's political institutions and its leaders. Through the lens of Guy Debord's concept of the *Spectacle*, she studies three women politicians—President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, former President Corazon Cojuangco-Aquino, and Susan Roces, a veteran actress who happens to be the widow of a defeated presidential candidate, Fernando Poe, Jr.—in their quest for political legitimacy within the framework of the country's wider democracy project and its gender dimension. According to Veneracion-Rallonza's findings, the reproduction of feminine images of the three women politicians is a mere reiteration of the masculinized character

of Philippine politics which does not contribute toward an authentic societal transformation.

In India, the Nehrus and Gandhis have been dominating politics at least since the late nineteenth century. Lately, however, it has been the women of the dynasty who have drawn the attention, with Indira and Sonia Gandhi being the two most important ones. Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam compares both these female politicians and addresses the question what 'female rule' has meant for India and India's women in general. With regard to the already second generation of female leaders in India (and Sri Lanka), her analysis emphasizes, among others, two points: first, gender and (even more) dynastic descent play a significant role; secondly, once in power, different women are endorsed or rejected for different and individual character traits and policies—features that are difficult to predict. Even if those women politicians have been picked as symbols, writes Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam, they become political players in their own right who can succeed and fail.

In contrast, Aung San Suu Kyi is the unchallenged leader-in-waiting of Burma's democracy movement, remaining popular throughout her decade-long house arrest. Andrea Fleschenberg looks into the challenges of a female democratization agent operating in one of the last remaining praetorian regimes in Asia with moral capital and symbolic politics as one, if not the only available, leadership tools. Given the continuous firm grip of the ruling military regime under General Than Shwe, the author concludes, it seems unlikely for Aung San Suu Kyi to be able to determine her political fate by herself in the near future unless an unpredictable window of opportunity opens like it does quite often in the history of democratization.

Beyond Numbers: From the Grassroots towards Top Political Power?

Marion R. Müller applies the framework of the 'voice-to-representation-to-accountability' relationship, developed by Goetz. In her case study on Pakistan, Marion Müller questions whether the devolution of power process promoted female participation or opened up space for the translation of women's representation into political influence. A hostile institutional environment limits the support available to women's political effectiveness due to the highly patriarchal structures and conservative nature of the state and its political system. Rhetorical gender equality and affirmative action policies need to be accompanied by measures that support women in demanding these rights and overcoming traditional power relations which also requires a joint strategy and strong links with civil society.

Shahnaz Wazar Ali, herself a former politician in Pakistan, gives a brief overview of the progress made in female political representation at different

tiers of executives and legislatures in Pakistani politics since the introduction of the reserved seats provision. In her assessment, advances have been made with regard to women's political representation, but, due to their personal background as novel entrants into politics, a male-dominated party system and lacking interaction mechanisms between women parliamentarians at different legislative and executive levels as well as within parties, 'women continue to face challenges that hinder the full realization of their potential as active interlocutors of policy-making and implementation processes'.

An account of women parliamentarians' inroads at the local government systems in Pakistan is presented by *Riffat Munawar*. She argues that despite the institutionalisation and legitimisation of reserved seats for women as well as their significant quantitative number, a more conducive, a violence-free environment is paramount. She suggests several changes to the current election and quota set up: Local government elections should be party-based with each political party fixing its own women quota for candidacy lists. Furthermore, quotas should also be introduced for administrative positions at the local government system (such as mayors) to ensure effective female role models and a continuous change of traditional gender role perceptions.

Social change generally occurs at a slow, incremental pace and unfortunately not, as desired by most activists, in 'historical jumps', write Fleschenberg and Ayaz in their introduction to the last chapter of this volume which presents voices from female Pakistani politicians themselves. Coming from different political parties and social backgrounds, women legislators (and their experiences portrayed through five of their representatives in this chapter) certainly differ on issues and agenda-setting strategies, but generally agree on what problems women parliamentarians face. In this chapter, transcriptions are given of manuscripts of speeches delivered by Pakistani female legislators and politicians Tehmina Daultana, Kashmala Tariq, Begum Jan, Fauzia Wahab and Samia Raheel Qazi during the WPA conference in 2005 in Islamabad.

NOTES

1. All conference proceedings can be downloaded from the website of the *Women and Politics in Asia Forum*, available at http://www.wpaf.org/wpafhome.aspx.
2. Quoted in: Milena Pires, Enhancing Women's Participation in Electoral Processes in Post-Conflict Countries. Experiences from East Timor, EGM/ELEC/2004/EP6, Rev. 7. Online. Available: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/meetings/2004/EGMelectoral/EP6-Pires.PDF.
3. Georgina Waylen, *Gender in Third World Politics* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), 10.
4. Ilse Lenz, 'Modernisierung der Ungleichheit? Zur selektiven politischen Integration von Frauen in Ostasien,' in *Frauen-Los? Politische Partizipation von*