



Unmaking Political Patriarchy through Gender Quotas?

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Policy Brief,
Publication Series "Reviewing Gender Quotas in Afghanistan and Pakistan"
2015

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Introduction

In this action research project, experiences with quota designs, challenges and achievements of quota parliamentarians, in terms of substantive representation, is reviewed in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The focus lies on the concept of political patriarchy, that is, an androcentric to sometimes even misogynist political configuration in relation to (i) power relations, (ii) socio-political culture and gender roles prescriptions, (iii) institutional setups, practices and discourses. This assemblage draws heavily on the subsequent structural constraints through gatekeepers and peers, recruitment and decision-making processes, institutional structures of voice and agency, that shape gender quota parliamentarians' forms and impact, to affect substantive political representation, as well as political effectiveness.

In both the case studies, conducted in Afghanistan and Pakistan, we highlight the national level parliaments and critically review quota designs, practices and experiences of women parliamentarians on both quota seats, as well as general seats. In doing so, we explore the confluencing roles of: individual and collective civil society representatives which liaise and lobby with the parliament and legislators, for example, women's organisations, human rights activists or electoral watchdogs; peers within the assemblies comprising heads of parliamentary groups, chairs of parliamentary committees / commissions; and gatekeepers and (potential) veto actors / spoilers, such as, political party leaders, ministerial bureaucrats, influential parliamentarians or government members inter alia. Guiding exploratory questions used to obtain information include: What quality, transversality, along with volatility characterises gender quota mandates in Afghanistan and Pakistan? What kind of 'imagined constituency' do gender quota parliamentarians conceptualise and aim to establish, including ensuring their own political mainstreaming and effectiveness beyond a quota regime? Do gender quota politicians advance a pro-women agenda? To what extent is this structured by a specific power configuration within formal and informal institutions, as well as by (in-) formal stakeholders within society and politics? What changes are required for institutional configurations, engagement with key stakeholders, as well as the quota system and electoral system design as such?

Logically contouring through the complex phenomenon, and for clarity, we will first review the perceived performance and impact of gender quota parliamentarians, within the ambit of: legislation; government oversight; and representation of constituents, in particular women (albeit neither a homogenous social group nor a coherent constituency). This is followed by investigating the constraints and barriers to gender quota parliamentarians' political mainstreaming and effectiveness by gatekeepers shaping the candidacy pool along with transversality of legislative mandates, recruitment-/decision-making and agenda-setting processes within political

parties and/or parliamentary groups, and political networks/coalitions. Not to mention that these foci are overbearingly influenced and determined by external actors and their transnational / global policies and interventions, influencing both Afghanistan and Pakistan at the level of a state-sponsored political patriarchy.

However, given the limited resources of the project, the focus of the analysis is confined to the internal dimensions of institutional constraints and the direct experiences of parliamentarians of both genders, with the gender quota system in place since the early 2000s, in both the countries. Secondly, both countries studied are marked by a high level of political violence and can be termed as conflict (or even intervention) societies, creating particular vulnerabilities for politically active women, who engage in public affairs marked by women's widespread invisibility in the public sphere. However, again, the focus lies not on the nexus of insecurity, politics and gender, but is rather understood as a potentially intervening variable.

Rationale

This comparative policy brief aims to highlight that gender quota parliamentarians are under constant scrutiny and pressure of justification by various sections of the society - be it the women's activists or the proclaimed feminists, accusing them for capitulating to the patriarchal state and male dominated political parties, and not representing women and their issues to the level and extent expected. Or be it by the conservative, predominantly male veto actors, both at the societal and political levels, for example, the male parliamentarians. Their renderings challenge the very notion of positive discrimination. These include resenting women's public participation and quota parliamentarianism and enjoying a similar political status, perks and privileges. The mindset remains ingrained despite the fact that women parliamentarians undergo and are subjected to the same electoral competitive process of building constituencies, as well as ensuring votes that qualify them for parliamentary mandate. Not to mention that the general media perception & portrayal and public scrutinising is harsher, often labelling them of not being 'true' representatives of people, or the female populace for that matter. These women representatives are also labelled as those belonging to asymmetric socioeconomic backgrounds, and are the target of judgemental statements like being: (i) more dependent from influential power brokers, having weaker political support systems; (ii) elite women belonging to influential political families, (ii) proxies and tokens for male power brokers and thus serving specific vested interests in addition to (iii) not being 'proper', 'decent'; (read: socioculturally 'authentic') women who comply according to dominant (patriarchal) gender roles prescriptions, values and subsequent behaviours in public.

Research Methodology

The study employed qualitative research methods for gathering information from a diverse group of state and non-state actors. Using semi-structured questionnaires, interviews were conducted with parliamentarians of both genders, members of political parties/groups and ministerial bureaucrats. While Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted to gather information from the civil society representatives liaising with parliamentarians and/or women's machineries. To allow for reliable comparability and equal representation, the same sample size and composition was drawn from both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The interviewees were provided with a choice to respond in a language comprehended with ease. In Afghanistan, respondents could choose to be interviewed either in Dari, Pashto and/or English, while in Pakistan the language used was either Urdu and/or English. Simultaneously, an in depth review of theoretical and empirical literature was conducted, including related studies and reports, press clippings (national and international), internet websites & blogs and other reference material .

Contextualising Women's Political Participation and Gender Democracy Deficit Worldwide

Overall, the data provided in Tables 1, 2, 3 and Graph 1 shows that the past decade of quota-induced increased political representation-cum-participation of women has still not led to decisively address the disconnect between women's increased presence in legislative bodies, in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Neither has it led women to rid themselves of the label 'second class citizenship status', that is, gender-based cross-sectoral discrimination and deprivation. This is amply demonstrated in the overall categorisation given in all the three indexes below: Human Development, Gender Development and Gender Inequality Index. Low human development, in particular in gender-specific disaggregation and comparison, leads to questioning the notion of women's empowerment through gender quotas.

Table 1: Country Rankings Human Development Index (HDI) and Gender Development Index (GDI)²

Country	1995	2000	2005	2014	Trends
Pakistan	GDI: 0.360 / rank 103 (out of 130)	GDI: 0.489 / rank 135 (out of 174)	GDI: 0.508 / rank 135 (out of 177)	GDI: 0.750 / rank 146 (out of 187)	Female school enrolment ↑ Female share of income ↗
	HDI: 0.483 / rank 128 (out of 174)	HDI: 0.522 / rank 135 (out of 174)	HDI: 0.527 / rank 135 (out of 177)	HDI: 0.537 / rank 146 (out of 187)	
Afghanistan	GDI: 0.169 / rank 130 (out of 130)	- no data -	- no data -	GDI: 0.602 / rank 169 (out of 187)	Female school enrolment ↑↑ Female share of income ↑↑
	HDI: 0.228 / rank 170 (out of 174)	- no data -	- no data -	HDI: 0.468 / rank 169 (out of 187)	

Table 2: Country Rankings Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) / Gender Inequality Index (GII)³

Country	1995	2000	2005	2014	Trends
Pakistan	0.152 / rank 114 (out of 116)	0.152 / rank 135 (out of 174)	0.379 / rank 135 (out of 177)	0.563 / rank 146 (out of 187)	Seats held in parliament, female ↗
Afghanistan	0.111 / rank 116 (out of 116)	- no data -	- no data -	0.705 / rank 169 (out of 187)	Seats held in parliament, female ↑

¹ The case study of Afghanistan is based on thirty-seven and the case study of Pakistan on thirty-five semi-structured interviews with parliamentarians, bureaucrats, civil society activists - be they human rights activists, women's activists or electoral watchdog and think tank members, journalists and academics. Two focus group discussions, per country case study, with civil society activists, be they women activists or working on youth, human rights and elections were also conducted. Legislators interviewed were selected representatively based on their political affiliations and experience level, ethnolinguistic and provincial origin as well as for first timers and re-elected parliamentarians, those in leadership positions (e.g. leading Members of Parliament (MPs) a per public perception, chairs or deputy chairs of parliamentary committees) apart from backbenchers. In addition, unsuccessful candidates in previous parliamentary elections were interviewed as well as those who decided not to run again for a mandate. For the case of Afghanistan, unfortunately, no score cards, transcripts or other reliable

data records on assembly debates, petitions, points/questions raised etc. are publicly available for researchers as well as parliamentary watchdogs for the case of Afghanistan. A number of civil society organisations monitor proceedings, but access to notes and data proved difficult to impossible. The non-accessibility has also been confirmed from a number of interview partners such as bureaucrats from the Office of Parliamentary Affairs, parliamentary and electoral watchdog organisations like Free and Fair Election Forum Afghanistan (FEFA), Transparent Election Foundation Afghanistan (TEFA), Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) etc. Therefore, in the study we need to rely on qualitative assessments and perceptions by experts concerned on issues such as legislative performance and government oversight, as outlined in the interviews conducted and reports reviewed.

² Earliest and most current comparative data indicated; retrieved and calculated on the basis of data provided from: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/global-reports> as of 27.10.2015.

Graph 1: Women in Parliament 1997-2015 - Worldwide Averages ⁴

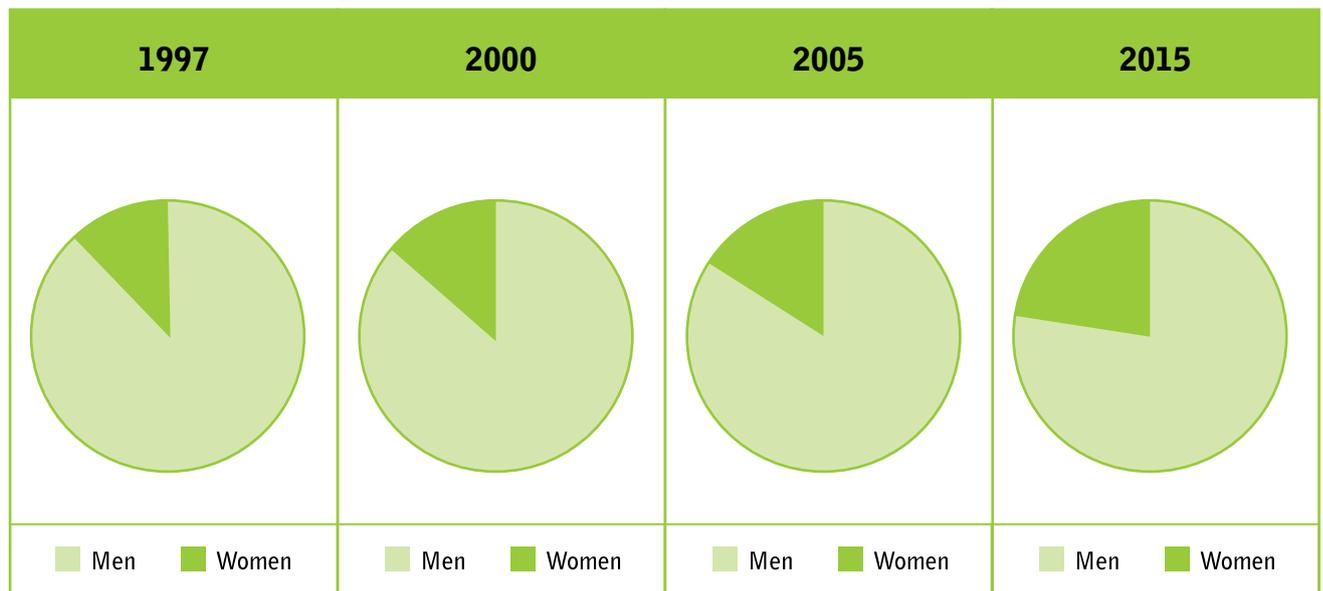


Table 3: Women in Parliament 1997-2015 - Regional Averages ⁴

	1997	2000	2005	2015
Americas	12,5%	15,1%	18,9%	27,2%
Europe	13,1%	15,9%	18,4%	25,5%
Sub-Saharan Africa	10,8%	12,6%	15,9%	23,0%
Arab States	3,6%	3,6%	15,5%	17,1%
Asia	13,2%	14,8%	13,9%	18,4%
Pacific	12,7%	13,6%	7,7%	15,7%

Given the quantifiable gender-specific democracy deficit persisting worldwide, in varying degrees, quotas became one of the preferred tools to generate an historic jump in women's political participation at different levels of a given polity. As of 2015, 125 countries employ one or the other type of gender quotas at the subnational or national level. With regard to the level of Lower Houses of bicameral or unicameral national parliaments, the following picture emerges: reserved seat provisions can be found in 23 countries, predominantly in Asia, Africa and MENA region; voluntary political party

quotas are used in 53 countries, predominantly in the Americas, Africa and Europe, while legislated candidate quotas are employed in 54 electoral systems across all the world regions. In Asia, 20 nations apply quotas as an enhancing support mechanism for women's political participation - five with voluntary political party quotas, nine with legislated candidate quotas and seven with reserved seat provisions and different ratios, ranging from 15 percent to 27 percent of women's descriptive representation in the case of the latter ⁶.

³ Earliest and most current comparative data indicated; retrieved and calculated on the basis of data provided from: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/global-reports> as of 27.10.2015. The GEM became the GII with the 2014 Human Development Report without substantial changes in terms of indicators, thus values were used in the same table. The value 1.0 amounts to maximum gender equality, the value 0.0 to maximum gender inequality (similar in the case of the Gender Development Index).

⁴ Earliest and most current comparative data used, retrieved from: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world-arc.htm> as of 27.10.2015

⁵ Earliest and most current comparative data used, retrieved from: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world-arc.htm> as of 27.10.2015.

⁶ Calculated with data provided by the Global Database of Quotas for Women, <http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/search.cfm#> as of 27.10.2015.

Contesting Arguments on Gender Quotas

Contra:

- undemocratic as violating principle of equal opportunity for all and other democratic principles, e.g. voters decisions are prime
- positive discrimination violates principle of meritocracy and qualifications in favour of gender concerns
- narrows women's political representation to women's constituencies and issues
- leads to conflicts within political organisations / institutions

Pro:

- democratic as quotas address the gender democracy deficit of politics - women as citizens have the right to participate in politics and elections primarily aim for people's representation, not male elite capture in terms of educational, political qualifications and capacities in political systems marked by androcentrism and patriarchy
- no level playing field - quotas thus address gender-specific structural and institutional barriers, also those by gatekeepers who control the candidacy pool
- creating critical mass and avoiding stressful experience of women as tokens
- inclusive - quotas allow for women's experiences and needs to be addressed in otherwise androcentric politics
- transformative and democratising - conflicts, if caused, are temporary and address (i) crucial societal inequalities, which are forms of everyday violence and conflict, and (ii) lack of accountability, formalisation and thus intransparencies of political nomination processes

Positive Discrimination and Notions of Equality

In her writings, leading gender quota scholar Drude Dahlerup contends: "Real equal opportunity does not exist just because formal barriers are removed. Direct discrimination and hidden barriers prevent women from getting their share of political influence. In general, quotas for women represent a shift from one concept of equality to another. The classic liberal notion of equality was a notion of 'equal opportunity' or 'competitive equality'. Removing the formal barriers, for example, giving women voting rights, was considered sufficient. The rest was up to the individual women. Following strong feminist pressure in the last few decades, as expressed for instance in the Beijing 'Platform for Action' of 1995, a second concept of equality is gaining increasing relevance and support: the notion of 'equality of result'. The argument is that real equal opportunity does not exist just because formal barriers are removed. Direct discrimination and a complex pattern of hidden barriers prevent women from being selected as candidates and getting their share of political influence. Quotas and other forms of positive measures are thus a means towards equality of result. The argument is based on the experience that equality as a goal cannot be reached by formal equal treatment as a means. If barriers exist, it is argued, compensatory measures must be introduced as a means to reach equality of result. From this perspective, quotas are not discrimination (against men), but compensation for structural barriers that women meet in the electoral process" (quoted from: <http://www.quotaproject.org/aboutQuotas.cfm> as of 27.10.2015).

Types of Quota Provisions

quotaProject distinguishes between three major types in existence worldwide: (i) reserved seats, i.e. a specific number of parliamentary seats is reserved as outcome of any elections as codified in a constitution or electoral laws; (ii) legal candidate quotas, i.e. a specific number of candidates must be woman as mandatory requirement codified in a constitution or electoral law; or as (iii) voluntarily agreed by political parties / electoral alliances in political party quotas. Quotas are not only used to ensure women's political mainstreaming, but a popular tool to engineer inclusive political representation and participation. "In some countries quotas apply to minorities based on regional, ethnic, linguistic or religious cleavages. Almost all political systems apply some kind of geographical quotas to ensure a minimum representation for densely populated areas, islands and the like. (...) Quota systems aim at ensuring that women constitute at least a 'critical minority' of 30 or 40%. Quotas for women entail that women must constitute a certain number or percentage of the members of a body, whether it is a candidate list, a parliamentary assembly, a committee, or a government. The quota system places the burden of recruitment not on the individual woman, but on those who control the recruitment process. The core idea behind this system is to recruit women into political positions and to ensure that women are not only a token few in political life. Previous notions of having reserved seats for only one or for very few women, representing a vague and all-embracing category of 'women', are no longer considered sufficient. Today, quota systems aim at ensuring that women constitute a large minority of 20, 30 or 40%, or even to ensure true gender balance of 50-50%. In some countries quotas are applied as a temporary measure, that is to say, until the barriers for women's entry into politics are removed, but most countries with quotas have not limited their use of quotas in time." (Quoted from: <http://www.quotaproject.org/aboutQuotas.cfm> as of 27.10.2015)

Both countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan, under review here, have reserved seats provisions to ensure women's substantive political representation - Afghanistan directly elected ones, decided province-wise by all voters; and Pakistan indirectly elected ones, decided by mostly male-only electoral college of party leaders.

Afghanistan follows a rarely employed majoritarian electoral system, Single Non Transferable Vote (SNTV), in which voters can cast one ballot in province-based multi-member constituencies. It has a bicameral parliamentary system, composed of the Wolesi Jirga (House of the People/Lower House, 249 seats) and the Meshrano Jirga (House of the Elders/Upper House, 102 seats). Quotas exist for two considered marginalised groups - women and Kuchi nomads. According to Article 83 of the 2004 Constitution and Articles 20 and 23 of the 2010 Electoral Law, at least 68 Wolesi Jirga seats are reserved for women. Of these, three are assigned to Kuchi female representatives, and shall not remain vacant or be regarded as a glass ceiling, because Article 23 of the 2010 Electoral Law stipulates that the remaining seats of the respective multi-member constituency are decided according to SNTV rules, regardless of a candidate's gender. In the 2010 parliamentary elections, 69 women candidates were successful and joined the Wolesi Jirga. In the Meshrano Jirga, two-thirds of its members are indirectly elected by the country's 34 provincial councils and one-third are appointed by the President with a gender parity clause applying for presidential nominees, according to Article 84 of the 2004 Constitution. The revised 2010 Electoral Law stipulates in Article 30 that at least 20 percent of the seats in provincial councils shall go to women. The remainder of the seats follows SNTV rules, again regardless of a successful candidate's gender, but is nevertheless a reduction from the previously codified 25 percent.⁷ Widespread electoral fraud, as well as disputes about electoral rules in previous elections, in 2010 and 2014, have led to an understanding among President Ghani and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah that no further elections shall be held without a substantive review and subsequent electoral reforms. For this purpose, a Special Electoral Reform Commission was set up in mid-July 2015, running until December 2015 with a potential extension period. The 30-member commission is tasked with (i) consulting key stakeholders of and experts on Afghan elections, (ii) reviewing laws, regulations, institutional setups and procedures, (iii) drafting short-, mid- and long-term recommendations for electoral reforms with regard to parliamentary, district council, presidential elections and the overall electoral setup. Ten of its short-term recommendations have been endorsed by a September 6th, 2015 presidential decree, including a unanimous declaration that the SNTV system is "outdated" and needs to be overhauled in order to strengthen political parties, accountability, socio-political stability and fair representation. Interesting, for the purpose of this study, are the gender-specific recommendations: (i) 25 percent of reserved seats for women in provincial and

district councils, (ii) voter registration processes to be made women-friendly, including the waver of specific identification documents, distribution of and access to polling stations. With 11 out of 13 commissioners in favour of a change in the electoral system at the national level, this will impact on women's descriptive representation, depending on the quota design ultimately upheld or revised, i.e. for political party lists and/or for individually contested seats only. The current set of recommendations of 65 seats for female independent candidates and three reserved seats for Kuchi women representatives appears to uphold the current constitutional provision in place, albeit removing the wording "at least", thus not necessarily ensuring that the quota will not be misapplied as a glass ceiling, as outlined before.⁸

Previous surveys by electoral and women's rights watchdogs have outlined a widespread support among stakeholders for electoral reform, as well as the perpetuation of gender quotas at various levels of the polity. In a recent study conducted by FEFA (Free and Fair Election Forum Afghanistan) among 121 Wolesi Jirga members, nearly half (48.76 percent) were in favour of a mixed system, 70 percent in favour of introducing a reserved seat for the Hindu minority and 53,71 percent in favour of maintaining the current 34 province-based constituencies. 40 percent of the MPs interviewed preferred the provincial council gender quotas to be abolished. Of the 60 percent of MPs favouring the continuation of gender quotas at the provincial level, 41 percent wanted the reinstatement of the 25 percent quota, while 19 percent of the MPs supported an increase to one-third of seats. (FEFA 2013)

A 2015 survey with 125 out of 249 members of the Wolesi Jirga found that 42 percent of all parliamentarians (and 55.8 percent of women surveyed) agreed that "conditions for candidacy must change for women candidates, given the social and economic barriers", like traditional mindsets and practices, non-refundable candidate deposit fees and/or copies of voters' registration cards as supporting candidacy files (FEFA 2015: 4) However, a majority of 58 percent (out of which 83 percent were male MPs) contended that there should be no positive discrimination to mitigate gender-specific vulnerabilities and disadvantages of female candidates. Similar to the 2013 survey, a majority of parliamentarians supported a change in the electoral system - 60 percent favoured an electoral system with political parties. (FEFA 2015: 4) In a large-scale public opinion survey in 2014 among 4040 Afghans, more than three-quarter of the respondents believed that women's political participation in upcoming elections is important, albeit regional differences with Southeast and Southwest provinces scoring up to 30 percent of respondents rejecting this notion. Reasons given were women's lack of information, cultural barriers and religious

7 <http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?country=4#sources> as of 27.10.2015.

8 Points 1 and 9 as outlined in: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Special Electoral Reform Commission (2015): Summary of SERC Reform Recommendations I, unofficial translation (unpublished); see also: UNDP/UNAMA, 21.09.2015, Briefing Powerpoint Presentation: Afghanistan's Special Electoral Commission (unpublished).

principles, among others. Only nine percent of the respondents favoured an increase in the number of female candidates, and only four percent agreed to an increase of gender quotas for female parliamentarians as measures to bolster women's political participation at the community level. (FEFA 2014: 58-60) One of the leading women's rights networks, Afghan Women's Network (AWN), conducted a survey in 2014 with a sample size of nearly five hundred respondents from eighteen provinces on women's political participation. These respondents comprised members of the business community, those from judicial, academic and medical sectors, religious leaders and common citizens. Analysis of the survey shows that the majority favoured gender quotas at the national and sub-national levels, given the conservative social setup and environment in Afghanistan. 68 percent of women and 60 percent of men surveyed considered quotas to be an important necessity. Equally, 63 percent of female respondents perceived women to be culturally accepted when participating in political, judicial and trade-related public affairs, while 47 percent of male respondents held an opposite view. (Karlidag 2014: 3, 15-16)

In contrast, Pakistan follows a slightly different model of reserved seats provisions in a mixed First-Past-the-Post electoral system and a bicameral Majlis-e-Shoora (parliament), comprised of the National Assembly (342 seats) and the Senate (104 seats). Women acquired the right to vote as a gift of independence of the country in 1947. There is no legal and constitutional bar on the participation and representation of women in Pakistan. However, in view of the historic exclusion of women as 'private citizens' in the public arena of politics, the legal provision for the reservation of ten seats was given in the first Constitution of the country in 1956. Again in the Constitutions of 1962 and 1973, six and ten seats were reserved for women, respectively. However, on an average, there were never more than three percent women's presence in the parliaments until 2001, when the military regime of Pervez Musharaf decided to substantially increase the reserved seats at different levels of the polity. Under the Devolution of Power Plan (2001), 33 percent of seats were reserved for women at the local government level, 17 percent of seats were reserved in both houses of the National Assembly and provincial assemblies, through the Legal Framework Order (LFO) 2001.

Women can choose to contest one of the 272 general seats, either as an independent or political party candidate, as well as contest one of the 60 reserved seats. According to Article 51 of the Constitution, quotas exist for women, non-Muslims and technocrats on a provincial-based system - 35 reserved seats for women in Punjab, 14 in Sindh, 8 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 3 in Balochistan, determined via an indirect selection process of political parties. Prior to elections, every political party needs to submit a list of women candidates to the Election Commission, and reserved seats are thus allocated according to proportional representation of general seats secured by the respective political party at the provincial level. For the Senate, all members are subjected to indirect

elections from provincial and national assemblies, using SNTV and maintaining a reserved seats provision of four female senators per province plus one for the Capital Territory of Islamabad. At the sub-national level, Articles 32 and 106 of the Constitution foresee reserved seat provisions for three marginalised groups: women, workers and peasants at the local government level. All provincial assemblies have reserved seats for women, with a similar allocation modus at the national level, albeit differing in ratio due to province-based electoral laws.⁹

"The provinces of Sindh and Punjab adopted local government laws in 2013 with reduced numbers of seats reserved for women: 1 out of 9 in the directly-elected first tier of local government in Sindh, and two in every 13 in the Punjab. At higher, indirectly elected tiers, Sindh law provides for 22 percent of reserved seats for women and Punjab has legislated for about 10 percent of reserved seats for women at that level. Legislation is under preparation in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with proposals to set the minimum number of seats reserved for women at 33 percent, which carries the same standard that previously applied to all local councils in all provinces, as set by the Devolution of Power Plan (DPP), adopted in 2000 and expired in 2009."¹⁰

In the last three parliaments of 2002, 2008 and 2013, 60 women were selected in each parliament as public representatives on reserved seats. In the National Assembly of 2008-2013, a total of 14 women were elected on general seats, reduced to nine in the current parliament of 2013-2017, among them three first timers include: Shazia Marri, Shamsun Nisa and Shazia Moubasher. The indirect modality of election on quota seat has been identified as the key mechanism through which women dependence on male leadership of political parties has been reinforced. It strips women off any opportunity to develop their own constituency/power base. Instead of selecting women on merit, political leaders prefer women who could toe the party line rather than pushing a women's agenda. Despite compelling evidence of women's active participation in the parliamentary business, they continue to face credibility issues, as detailed below.

In the study, Violence against Women in Politics, reviewing evidence from 2003 to 2013 and conducted by the Centre for Social Research and UNWomen, a third of respondents believed that due to gender-based violence, gender roles prescriptions and other institutional constraints, politics remains a predominantly male domain. Reasons provided include notions like purdah (i.e. practice of female seclusion) and public mobility, need for women to obtain male / family consent in order to participate politically (45 percent of respondents agreed) or need for women politicians not to neglect household chores once in office (endorsed by 78 percent). Two-third majority of those interviewed opined that law enforcement agencies such as the police do not uphold women's citizenship rights for "violence-free politics" - a major

9 <http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?country=178> as of 27.10.2015.

10 <http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?country=178> as of 27.10.2015.

obstacle for women to obtain male consent for political participation, as well as a great motivational barrier for many women. (HRCP 2015: 211-212)

With regard to the above mentioned, this Comparative Policy Paper sets out to understand the potentially ambivalent reality of women's substantive political representation through the prism of multiple theoretical frameworks and empirical insight. It intends to shift the focus from individual agency and performance of women parliamentarians to contextualising it within existing sociopolitical structures and institutions. This shift is important as the latter can be considered to imperil women's substantive political representation, in terms of establishing and/or perpetuating gender-specific opportunity structures and spaces, or handicaps/detriments for this matter. Therefore, we problematise the focus on women's political performance and agency alone as a basis of assessing such gender interventions. Part of the same equation are other decisive variables that determine women's political effectiveness, as outlined in the seminal work *No Shortcuts to Patriarchy* by Goetz and Hassim (2003). They 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 for voice 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.

Gender quota parliamentarians encounter myriad,

often intersecting and interdependent challenges that need to be taken into account when discussing women's substantive political representation. Without clearly mapping, reflecting and discussing these socio-political structural and institutional barriers and constraints, it will be difficult to understand the impact of gender quotas for women's political mainstreaming, in particular, and on the existing political patriarchy, in general.¹¹ Consequently, we argue here that quotas might not be a sufficient mode of intervention to allow for a quantitative and qualitative decrease in the gender democracy deficit, and for subsequently dismantling the encompassing political patriarchy, alive and kicking in most socio-political institutions of both countries under review.

Furthermore, a detailed comparative analysis of female and male parliamentarians' political performance is beyond the scope of this study and hence poses a considerable analytical-cum-argumentative limitation. This, in particular, is pertinent for ultimately addressing the patriarchal pressure for justification of women being there in the first place. The constant focus on whether quota parliamentarians deliver obscures the necessity to ask whether male parliamentarians are scrutinised on an equal footing in terms of political performance and representation, thus merit their somehow presupposed place in the sun that tends to go without questioning given the centuries-long legacy of androcentric politics.

¹¹ For a more detailed discussion see Fleschenberg 2015, pp. 6-15.

It's all in the Rules of the Game - Theorising Women's Substantive Political Representation

The nexus between specific modalities of gender quotas and the quality of gender quota legislators is one of the key determinants of women's political effectiveness. In other words, the quality of women's political agency to navigate through structural constraints is central and critically important in promoting women's interests, among others. Therefore, we investigate whether the current setup of rules, formal or informal, enshrined structures, dynamics and practices of candidate recruitment and selection, transversality of mandate and performance impact on patterns and degrees of women's substantive political representation and, ultimately, political mainstreaming. We challenge the dichotomy of women's participation/

representation, and the subsequent focus, primarily on women's agency, as not only recruitment patterns and quota provisions have a determining effect on the ability of women parliamentarians to deliver on substantive concerns, but also other environmental variables in the shape of socio-political institutions, contestations and barriers. Although, it is beyond the scope of this paper to engage in detailed deliberations on the state of the art and its research findings and debates, we, nevertheless, would like to sketch some theoretical insights that guide and/or infuse this action research.

But first things first: when talking about political representation and political participation, some terminological clarification and references are required. The seminal work of Pitkin (1967) outlines four dimensions of political representation - formal, descriptive, substantive and symbolic - and coined the difference of delegate and trustee when reviewing understandings of parliamentary mandates and agency. Building on this, Mansbridge (2003) 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, representing constituents beyond one's own spatial electoral basis and of those whose values, identities one shares; (iii) anticipatory, based on what one thinks constituents will approve at the next election and not what has been promised previously in electoral campaigns/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? Where, how and why does the SRW occur?" and thus regarding representation as "dynamic, performative and constitutive". (Celis/Childs/Kantola/Krook 2008; Franceschet 2011)¹²

As argued elsewhere (Fleschenberg 2013, 2009; Celis et al. 2008), the frequent heterogeneity of women parliamentarians in terms of interests, policy priorities, support systems or party obligations and dependencies, ideological differences or other societal cleavages, as well as the influence of multiple institutions - be they parliamentary practices, political cultures, gender ideologies, work cultures - and predominant political discourses shape women's substantive political representation. Consequently, Celis et al. (2008) stress that we need to search for critical actors of both genders within and outside political institutions and key arenas, explore possibilities of competition, conflict, cooptation, 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 political behaviour and performance of women parliamentarians - be they on quota seats or not.

The feminist institutionalist approach offers a crucial insight into the gendered nature of institutions, inclusion and exclusion along with the interplay of formal and informal rules and norms. Institutional feminists argue that gender, as the organising principle of social relations, constitutes institutions and social structures. "Not only are gender relations seen to be 'institutional', these are institutionalised embedded in particular political institutions and constraining and shaping social interactions" (Mackay et al.

2010: 580). Thus, power and gender inequalities in social relations do not operate in a vacuum, but are structural, systemic and institutional. The approach explains the political recruitment process of women shaped by masculinist gender norms embedded in formal and informal party rules (Kenny 2013). It draws our attention to the wider context of the 'nested' systemic, practical and normative political institutions and how this institutional configuration impacts on the recruitment processes of women in politics, as well as beyond when it comes to gender quota parliamentarians having to operate and perform, to politically compete, negotiate and meet expectations of stakeholders such as constituents, civil society representatives, fellow politicians and/or community leaders.

Razavi and Jennichen (2010) 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. The impact of unwritten constitutions - be they of 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.

"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." (Waylen 2013: 2)

While feminist institutionalists' scrutiny exposes the gendered nature of institutions and institutional power that privileges men, Carol Patman's theory of the "Sexual Contract" (1988) historicises the gendered nature of the institution of the state through her critique of the original "Social Contract" and claims that classical contractarian theorists chose to tell half the story of the social contract between the state and its citizens. The sexual contract, preceding the social contract, is omitted in the analysis of "political fiction of the original contract", leading her to argue that women did not enter it as individuals but as dependents of men. Therefore, the "new civil society [...] created through the original contract is a patriarchal social order" that established men's political rights over women (Pateman 1988: 1).

These theoretical approaches provide insights on the gendered nature of political institutions and

12 In addition, such an understanding opens up the concept of political representation in terms of spaces, actors, agency and manifestations, considering legislative arenas as well as other arenas of politics, a wide range of actors, sites, goals that inform political processes, highlighting diversity in probabilities, levels, ways, strategies, locations, attempts and expressions / articulations "to act for women as a group" (or not), Celis et al. (2008) argue. Substantive female political representation thus needs to be considered to take place and to be negotiated at different 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, 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 focus upon women's policy machineries, state feminism and women's movements. (Celis et al. 2008).

how this reproduced gender power in recruitment and performance processes of women in politics. However, nowhere do feminists argue that these structures are stable, fixed or unchangeable; the role of agency and structure is seen as dynamic and mutually constitutive. The trajectory of institutional change is the contestation of conflicting interests of institutional actors. Self-interested actors through their strategic actions puncture institutional resistance. Women politicians on gender quota, thus can, and do attempt to influence and transform male dominated political structures through their parliamentary performance, caucusing and networking with the women's movement - with quota provisions being one factor, but not the only or sufficient one to do so.

Consequently, Franceschet, Krook and Piscopo (2012: 4) argue that (i) "quotas may interfere with existing gendered dynamics"; (ii) "public controversies surrounding quota adoption may shape expectations about who 'quota women' are and what they will do once they reach political office"; and (iii) diverse designs and implementation practices generate "diverse effects on the composition of political elites". They contend that this "may influence the capacities of quota women to pursue legislative change and may shape the broader meaning of quotas for democratic legitimacy and women's political empowerment" (Franceschet, Krook and Piscopo 2012: 4). In their review of the research literature at hand, they summarise that the introduction of gender quotas can generate ambivalent outcomes and dynamics - ranging from (i) a feminist turn among male politicians to a gender-conservative or even misogynist backlash and obstructive legislative behaviour among male politicians, from (ii) increased effectiveness and unity of smaller numbers of women MPs due to a lower threat perception of women's concerns in terms of dismantling male dominance to a large and diverse number of women elected, increasing the heterogeneity of interests and positions on women's issues (ibid.: 8).

"Women elected through quotas report feeling obliged to act for women, as a group (...) and are inspired to bring new issues to the table (...). However, others have sought to disassociate themselves from the quota and women's issues to demonstrate that they are 'serious' politicians (...). At the same time, many have been accused of acting only as proxies for men (...) and of being excessively loyal to party leaders (...). In part, this is because quotas are often not rooted in processes of constituency formation (...), preventing quota women from gaining skills that would make them less vulnerable to manipulation (...). In other cases, the situation is more complex: quota women may support women's rights legislation but tread carefully in response to harassment, intimidation, or security concerns (...)." (Franceschet, Krook and Piscopo 2012: 11)

Additional food for thought, in this regard, is provided by feminist political theorist bell hooks (2000: 86) who argues that women obtain transformative power more than often within existing systems, leading to diverse positions and behavioural patterns, for example, as parliamentarians, adopting imitation, cooptation, corruption, difference, transformation or incorporation, to name a few. This means for hooks

(2000: 87, 89) that women might "not conceptualise power differently" than men and might "focus their attention on gaining as much power and privilege as they can within the existing social structure". At the same time, she contends that "[w]omen, even the most oppressed among us, do exercise some power. The powers can be used to advance feminist struggle", understanding power as the "ordered use of power to disbelieve" (hooks 2000: 92). This disbelief must ultimately be one of patriarchy, and political patriarchy for that matter - an invasive power system "based on control as core principle around which entire societies are organized", entailing "dynamic relationships between fear and control" and whose engine is mostly "driven by how men both cause and respond to it", often resorting to misogyny (Johnson 2001: 95, 97, 103). Thus, resorting to a primary focus on women to dismantle patriarchal institutional setups, norms and practices do not address the core issue at hand, argues Johnson (2000: 100), as the control of women is "neither the point of patriarchy nor the engine that drives it", making male members of a given society, or male political stakeholders for the matter of our research focus, liable as prime targets and agents.

Reviewing the state of the art, Franceschet, Krook and Piscopo (2012: 13, 26) conclude that gender quota provisions potentially generate divergent and multiple effects within different polities and societies as "based on current theories and evidence - quotas may have positive, mixed, and sometimes even perverse effects on women's political representation", because

"[t]he features of each country's political, institutional, and cultural background play a central role in shaping the effects of quotas on all aspects of women's political representation. The relevant factors that emerge (...) can be classified into three broad categories: (1) the degree of democratisation and, in some cases, the path a country takes towards democracy; (2) the types of political institutions, including both formal rules and informal norms; and (3) the social and cultural norms associated with gender equality".

With our own case study based empirical research, we intend to contribute to this debate, reviewing evidence from Afghanistan and Pakistan in terms of political performance, constituency-building along with gatekeepers and institutional constraints of women's substantive political representation.

It's Performance that Counts - Exercising a Mandate as Quota Parliamentarian

Discussing gender quota parliamentarians' quality of mandate and political performance, in terms of legislative work, government oversight, constituency work, as well as participation in political and public debates, a similar quantity-versus-quality debate emerged in Afghanistan and Pakistan, thus reflecting on the question: how far has descriptive political representation converted into a substantive one? There are a number of similarities among both case studies, as well as differences, reviewed in detail below. In both cases, gender quota politicians were attested as having acquired a high level of performance, and attendance of legislature work sessions, along with an increased acceptability of gender quotas among most interviewed, despite some calls for modalities to change, mostly from male parliamentarians. Women parliamentarians perceive a number of achievements, as well as challenges in terms of performance. These relate to a continued male-dominated mindset, issues of dependency and resource differences, challenges in voice (albeit in different manifestations), lack of unity among women as a policy-making group, as well as limited caucusing and networking, and, thus, ultimately a limited level of support to advance women's issues. Differences are generated by the role of political parties - a key gatekeeper in the case of Pakistan, where party leaders decide who is coming or not, either on reserved or general seats. This leads to a different credibility challenge of subsequently selected gender quota parliamentarians and gender-specific perceptions of performance, as well as political party support for one's performance and access to leadership positions, highly moderated by the gender quota modality in place and dynamics generated. In the case of Afghanistan, security was a key issue of concern, penetrating debates on political performance to a very different extent and level than in neighbouring Pakistan. But let us review the evidence of both case studies in greater detail, separately and individually.

Afghanistan

There seems to be no controversy that women's presence had an impact, changed the rules of the game and traditions to a certain extent despite conflict legacies and a politicised, volatile environment. But no consensus emerged in terms of women parliamentarians' performance within the fields of legislative work, government oversight, constituency work, as well as participating in parliamentary and public debates. More than often, it can be described as mixed, difficult to rate or opinions differ to a great extent from one interviewed partner to another. This became apparent in both focus group discussions held

with ten to twelve civil society activists each, most of them involved in parliamentary watchdog, electoral or women's advocacy efforts, with assessments ranging from "zero, zero, zero", "50/50 performance rate" to good achievements in terms of legislation, government oversight, level of overall activity and constituency work. Having said that, a consistent public image emerged of a small number of about 10 to 25 women MPs, who were always assessed as good, transformative and/or outstanding performance, of bringing change, understanding politics and contributing on an equal footing. This leads AWN director and women's activist Hasina Safi to question women's performance in parliamentary and public debates provided that "they were just some faces; some very limited faces which we could see everywhere".¹³ Simultaneous to these opinions and impressions, there were others who shared their objection to the fact that women's performance was always the focus of criticism while, more than expected number of male non-performing parliamentarians were ignored or were not the object of such criticism. Concerns were shared that these male parliamentarians were often worse, more absent, less committed and engaging, and were equally challenged by a lack of political literacy and legislative proficiency.¹⁴ While admitting that a scrutiny of women's substantive representation is important and timely, one should also not forget to compare and contrast, and thus also investigate the track record of male parliamentarians, to dot how they served their own constituents: both men and women alike, who voted them into power.¹⁵

A high ranking official from the Office for Parliamentary Affairs, a liaising and lobbying institution between all three pillars of power, Syed Abdul Latif Dadshani, testified positively on women's political performance, based on frequent interactions with women MPs. His performance assessments bracketed them as (i) doing well in the field of reviewing and reporting on budgetary issues and implementation, (ii) well connected and aware of different ministerial departments and projects, (iii) receiving crucial and meaningful information from whistleblowers within the government and from people, (iv) accepted as visible in the political leadership positions assumed, and

¹³ Interview conducted in Kabul, April 2015. Women's activist Nargis Nehan problematises female parliamentarians gender-related substantive representation as being vested interest-driven for many, who rather follow personal agendas. Nevertheless she contends that despite women MPs not meeting expectations, they have made a difference in terms of changing traditions by demonstrating male colleagues that women are equal as politicians, as parliamentarians. (Interview conducted in Kabul, April 2015).

¹⁴ "It's not fifty-fifty, it's, you're generous. (...), we haven't just women in parliament, we have also men in parliament [who] don't know their job, for what they are in parliament (...)" (opinion raised during focus group discussion with women's activists held at AWN, Kabul, April 2015).

¹⁵ A number of interview partners from within parliament as well as civil society problematised this particular focus and scrutiny and lack of comparative performance assessments of male and female legislators alike, among them two members of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission as well as former MP, civil society activist and member of the Special Electoral Reform Commission Sabrina Saqeb (interviews conducted in Kabul, April 2015).

thus, exerting an impact, despite multiple challenges faced. While constituency work might be, more than often, difficult to realise on ground due to the security situation, Dadshani verified that women MPs were in touch with constituents, employed communication technology and were accessible in Kabul. While serving well, as stated, and contributing to making a difference, the stakes are indeed high for female legislators, be it in terms of the sheer number of policy issues and problems to be addressed, or paucity of resources, capacity, or just simple struggling or grappling with the deep-rooted systemic corruption or power-grabbing.¹⁶

In the overall context, perceived obstacles to performance in Afghanistan comprise of an alleged visible lack of capacity in legislation-making, lack of awareness and understanding of adequate levels of policy-related knowledge, influence and even direct interference from religious clergy in parliamentary proceedings and debates, political mafias and their interests in the weak functioning of parliament as an institution to further their own corrupt, illicit and/or patronage-driven interests. However, most interview partners were more critical of the paucity of government oversight by the Wolesi Jirga, in particular during the Karzai administration. They regarded it as a weak performance point by the parliamentarians, bureaucrats and civil society representatives alike. In addition, a frequent concern was the overall level of corruption within the political system, Parliament being no exception to the rule - be it in terms of allegations that cabinet nominees buy votes to secure their endorsement (including claims of male MPs that a number of female colleagues benefit heavily in this process, hinting towards a perceived weaker power status and capacity), chairs of parliamentary committees being paid-for and mounting to money-making positions (e.g. in public tenders), and other forms of misuse of authority, leading to a failure in oversight and policy-making.¹⁷

Last, but not least, the lack of unity, caucusing and networking among women parliamentarians to operate as a joint force on women-specific issues seems to have led to infighting among women MPs themselves, increased levels of tokenism along with individual-based and/or adhoc networking. This also appears to have tarnished public perceptions and expectations of due diligence, in terms of gender-specific representation as quota politicians.¹⁸ A negative consequence is a lack of legislative strength to counter misogynist legislation and policy measures curtailing women's rights and post-2001 achievements as in the case of the Provincial Council Quota revisions, Marriage Law, Shia Family Law or the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) Law, where it took a national and international outcry-cum-lobbying pressure on President Karzai and other key stakeholders to revert or mitigate decisions passed in Parliament. Ultimately, it is a failure in sustainable interest aggregation, which

could translate in more sustainable and empowered substantive representation, hence questioning, to a certain extent, the use and function of gender quotas per se - exacerbated by the electoral system in place which enables a fragmented parliament. In contrast, despite a similar socio-cultural heterogeneity and ideological diversity of male legislators, their political networking and alliance-building appears to be more resourceful and successful, thus translating into their "control of the agenda, the oversight, everything in their hands".¹⁹

Women parliamentarians are well aware of the need to perform and to demonstrate quality performance. They are also cognisant or wary of other women parliamentarians who they perceive as lacking political motivation, intellectual capacities, and experience along with the necessary support system to perform, particularly when it comes to representing women's interests within parliament. This is yet another indicator for the perceived precariousness and volatility of gender-specific achievements, and may serve as bargaining chips in post-2014 peace negotiations and power brokerage. A number of women parliamentarians described themselves as active in all the four dimensions of parliamentary work outlined above, often also vis-a-vis their male counterparts - whether in terms of representing people/constituencies and subsequent problem-solving, being trusted, being punctual and present in parliamentary sessions²⁰. MP Zakia Sangin, in the interview for this study, shared that unlike before entering politics, she now enjoys a higher social status, can confidently communicate with men and travel, even abroad. The same expressions were outlined by a number of other women parliamentarians interviewed. They also mentioned that an increased societal acceptance, political empowerment and exposure has earned them trust, respect and support from men, who also now listen to them.²¹ Pondering on her experiences in the legislature and as head of the Parliamentary Anti-Corruption Caucus, Humaira Ayoubi sees a changing environment. She is of the view that women's performance has improved manifold as compared to the first post-2001 Wolesi Jirga. She said, women parliamentarians are now comfortably assuming leadership positions, which was not the case before. However, talking about herself, she mentioned that despite the feeling of being respected, with voice and agency, she has not become a member of a parliamentary group or a political network, simply out of the sheer fear that warlords-turned-politicians might not accept such female participation given their gender conservatism and reservations while dealing with parliamentary women.²² This mixed assessment, linking achievements in substantive representation, with experiences of significant hurdles set up, as either

16 Interview conducted in Kabul, April 2015.

17 Interviews conducted with parliamentarians and representatives of parliamentary watchdogs, Kabul, April 2015.

18 See Fleschenberg 2009, 2010, 2012; reconfirmed in interviews conducted in Kabul, April 2015.

19 Interview with MP Shinkai Karokhail, Kabul, April 2015.

20 Many media reports as well as civil society representatives and analysts interviewed, strongly criticise the widespread and enduring absenteeism of significant numbers of parliamentarians, leading repeatedly to a lack of quorum to pass legislation or engage in other parliamentary deliberations and decision-making.

21 Interview with MP Zakia Sangin, Kabul, April 2015.

22 Interview with MP and Caucus Chair Humaira Ayoubi, Kabul, April 2015.

discursive practices or actions from male colleagues and counterparts in government, were common in interviews. In the words of deputy chair of the parliamentary commission on women's affairs, MP Shireen Mohseni, "women are very active and, yes, we have many people in parliament that are against us".²³

While male parliamentarians appeared far more confident and assertive in the portrayal of their mission and vision, women parliamentarians seemed more concerned with practical reflections about achievements and failures, more embattled in securing an ever shrinking political space. This amounts most likely to an expression of who speaks from a position of societal authority and power, with a more secure support system, and who is still reminded of being a novel entrant into the field of androcentric public affairs, in addition to pervasive societal conservatism as overarching parameters of the given political system, and a limited number of visible, invulnerable success stories.

Despite the difficulty in rating, overall, the 69 women parliamentarians, marked by sociocultural heterogeneity and diversity in political performance, many describe themselves as being well-known to the general public and more accessible than men, having earned trust, being more involved in constituency work, such as development projects or having an agenda mostly based on community and grassroots-oriented issues, with direct relevance for constituents in areas like education, health, employment, infrastructure and development. Men are described to have higher levels of security, but are less accessible, likely not to answer their phones, and are less involved in grassroots affairs. They rather tend to attune themselves to with "big issues/politics".²⁴

Pakistan

The performance of gender quota parliamentarians in the last three parliaments has been closely monitored by (inter-)national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the country, such as, the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN), Aurat Foundation, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT) and Pattan. The move to subject women legislators under strict scrutiny by civil society and the media was greatly resented by some women parliamentarians as similar accountability and performance assessments have not been conducted for their male counterparts.²⁵ One woman Member of the National Assembly (MNA) got quite irritated when questioned about the performance of women parliamentarians:

"Why [is] everyone interested to assess our performance? How about men? They don't even bother to attend parliamentary sessions. What have they done? Why

no assessment is being done on their performance?".²⁶

There is consensus in reports of various organisations that gender quota parliamentarians actively participate in parliamentary business. The 12th National Assembly (NA) saw the highest number of women legislators (76) in the parliamentary history of Pakistan. Sixty women came on reserved seats (17 percent) and 16 were elected on general seats, with the majority being first-timers in parliament, with limited knowledge of parliamentary functioning and lack of political skills to participate in parliamentary business. Nevertheless, the performance assessment of women parliamentarians in this respective legislative period (see Mirza and Wagha 2008), shows a remarkable contribution women made in parliamentary functioning, having moved 27 percent of total questions, 30 percent of total calling attention notices, 24 percent of total resolutions and 42 percent of total private members bills. Legislative performance of gender quota parliamentarians remained high in the 13th and currently ongoing 14th National Assembly legislative periods²⁷. In the last two parliaments, nine extremely important pro-women legislations were passed. All the bills were moved by women parliamentarians on gender quota. Interestingly, women legislators who won on directly elected general seats are not as active in the parliament as those on gender quota. In contrast, male parliamentarians' record of moving legislation on women's specific issues has been extremely low across the parliamentary history of Pakistan. The performance assessment from June 2014 to February 2015 shows that women legislators contribute a 50 percent share in the conduct of parliamentary business (FAFEN 2015). Women legislators performed much better in legislative work than compared to the fields of government oversight and constituents' representation.

Performance assessments can also be linked to the issue of assignments to leadership positions within government and parliament. Standing committees in the parliament have the role to oversee the functioning of the government; however, all 31 parliamentary standing committees are chaired by men. In the given political culture of patronage and clientelism, these positions on the standing committees allow male legislators to enjoy extra perks and privileges being the chair of the committees, which are crucial resources and capital in electoral competition scenarios and constituency work. Additionally, a downward trend is noticed in the number of women ministerial positions as compared to the previous government, led by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which gave seven women legislators ministerial positions, including important portfolios such as Minister of Information (Sherry Rehman) and State Minister of Foreign Affairs (Hina Rabbani Khar), and Dr. Fahmida Mirza assigned as the first female speaker of the National Assembly. Despite women's proven capabilities to serve on ministerial posts, the present government of Pakistan Muslim

23 Interview with MP Shireen Mohseni, Kabul, April 2015.

24 Interviews with MPs Shinkai Karokhail, Shireen Mohseni, Shukria Barakzai, Humaira Ayoubi, Farida Kochi, Zakia Sangin, among others, conducted in Kabul, April 2015.

25 FAFEN monitors and reports regularly on the performance of all male and female legislators, see <http://parliamentfiles.com/> as of 27.10.2015.

26 Interview with women MP, conducted in Islamabad, June 2015 (anonymised by the author).

27 According to FAFEN's Parliamentary Watch monitoring project, it is documented that women legislators excel in their participation in the parliament as compared their male colleagues.

League (N) (PML (N)) appointed only two women, Saira Afzal Tarar, who came on a directly elected seat, as Minister of Health and Anushe Rehman as State Minister of Information, Technology and Telecom. Furthermore, the ideology of political parties seems to have an impact on acceptance and women's inclusion in political positions of power. Political parties with liberal credentials, such as the PPP, are relatively more open to accept women in political roles than conservative and centrist parties like the PML (N).

Women parliamentarians rated their own performance in the legislature far better than that of men. Male parliamentarians have divided views on women's role and added value in the parliament, distinguishing between 'serious' women legislators with core competencies and 'non-serious' ones. They referred to the fact that several women MNAs did not participate in any form of parliamentary business over the last three years, whereas a small number of women lawmakers played an extremely active and important role. Interestingly, women's high level of attendance of parliamentary sessions is also viewed negatively by some of them, although the National Assembly is constantly faced with a consistent problem of lack of interest and low attendance of male lawmakers. On several occasions, during the last three years, the speaker had to postpone sessions due to lack of quorum. The quorum requirement of a minimum of 86 parliamentarians to proceed in the parliamentary session, however, is often only met due to the presence of women lawmakers. One leading male legislator while gauging women's presence in the parliament critically stated:

"Women parliamentarians have plenty of time in hand. They do not have to go out to do any constituency work. It is easy for them to leave home and come and sit in the comfortable environment of [the] Assembly. They enjoy the status of being parliamentarians but do not have to do any hard work like us. They have nothing to do at home, so they get ready and come to the Assembly while we have to spend time in our constituency".²⁸

Women's role inside the parliament is seen as 'easy' and less valuable as opposed to men's constituency work outside the parliament. The dichotomy of inside/outside and value attached to the outside public sphere continues to devalue women's inside work in the Lower House.

Across political parties, the majority of women legislators mentioned common problems of male resistance and lack of support within the party, except for Ayesha Syed (Jamaat-e-Islami, JI) and Monazza Hassan (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, PTI) who reported receiving full support from their respective political parties. Most female colleague raised issues, such as, being ignored by their party whips, as well as by the Speaker of the Assembly for not giving them the floor, taking up resolutions and motions moved by them. In spite of shared problems of gender discrimination faced by women legislators across androcentric political parties and a gender biased parliament, this has not led to a stronger caucusing and networking

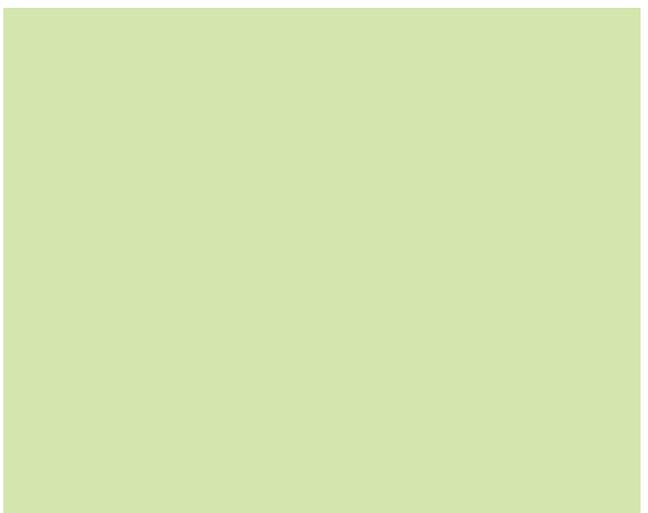
28 Interview with male parliamentarian from PML (N), conducted in Islamabad, June 2015.

among women legislators, rendering the Women Parliamentary Caucus fairly weak in the present Parliament as compared to the previous one under the leadership of Fahmida Mirza, which was quite active. In the present parliament, out of 60 women on gender quota, 31 belong to the ruling PML (N) and a majority of 45 women MPs are inexperienced first-timers, some of them not very active in the parliament. Concerned with the perceived low quality of women legislators in the 14th National Assembly, leading woman MP Nafisa Shah expressed the following concerns:

"I think this government sees women as 'extras' and extras do not have much to do. They are made to sit on the back benches. It is only women lawmakers from opposition who are vocal and doing our bit, but when it comes to treasury benches, all women sit on the back benches, mostly cheering their leaders".²⁹

There is no support system within parliament or political parties available for first-timers on quota seats to enable them to perform actively in legislative business - no party supports political/leadership trainings of women in parliamentary business except for, interestingly, the right of centre religious party Jamaat-e-Islami.

Women legislators continue to suffer from a lack of credibility - almost all women legislators interviewed felt that they were not treated equally in the Parliament by their male counterparts. Quota seats are viewed as 'candy' seats. And while women MPs continue to face male resistance to accept them as equal, in addition to being denied development funds, as gender quota parliamentarians needed to engage in constituency-building and -work, this is despite the fact that they consistently performed high(er) in the House since 2002. Ultimately, women parliamentarians have become fully aware about the significance of having a constituency base and whilst there is no consensus amongst them on the need of retaining quota seats, all of them favour a change in the indirect modality of s/ election. They feel that a direct election will provide them with a constituency and subsequent power base.³⁰



29 Interview conducted in Islamabad, June 2015.

30 Gender quota parliamentarians interviewed proposed several options for a direct election modality for gender quota seats (see for more details the following section). Interviews conducted with women parliamentarians, Islamabad, June 2015.

Entering the Political Mainstream - Building Constituencies

Constituency-building has been identified as a key feature of women's sustainable political mainstreaming, rendering quotas ultimately, a temporary feature of positive discrimination to address systemic political inequalities. Reviewing the evidence provided below from both countries, using reserved seat provisions with different election modalities, it becomes evident that almost all women parliamentarians in both countries envision and target a broad constituency in addition to displaying a distinct gender consciousness in representation claims. They also share their concerns of gender-specific asymmetries of resources, access to support systems along with patriarchal norms on dress and mobility that ultimately negatively impact their constituency-building. Other challenges are different, given gender quota modalities, as well as specifics of the given political system. Gender quota parliamentarians in Pakistan refer to the accountability and necessary support of political parties and cannot access development funds, usually only available for those on general seats, but crucial in generating visible outcome and impact at the constituency level. Prime concerns of constituency-building in Afghanistan are, among others, the challenges of increasing insecurity, as well as widespread political and societal corruption, obstructing a level playing field of constituency-building to develop, and to matter in electoral competition.

Afghanistan

As in previous research findings³¹ and similar to their male counterparts in both houses of Parliament, women legislators imagine their constituency to be (i) members of their community - mostly defined at the district or provincial level, (ii) specific social groups, predominantly women, as well as often youth, along with an otherwise across-the-board claim of (iii) representing 'people', 'the whole country', 'everyone' who approaches them for problem-solving, regardless of which part of Afghanistan constituents come from.

There are limitations to constituency-building which are of a structural nature. One key issue is influential ethno-linguistic identity politics and close-knit electoral communities, whose members will only vote for a candidate of their kind and no one else "even if you are superwoman or superman they will never"³² accept an outside candidate. Secondly, highly fraudulent elections, marked by corruption of various kinds and insecurity, money, goons and guns, circumvent a level playing field in particular for progressive, pro-democracy candidates and for performance-based track records of candidates to decisively matter. So the issue is not so much if quota politicians managed

to build their own constituencies, but that if they find a suitable political environment in which their own political capacities and performance parameters do play a role or if so called political mafias and violent power brokers can manipulate the electoral pool of candidates and electoral success to ensure their proxies to be voted into power. Thirdly, Afghan politics is still marked by conflict features and legacies of previous political regimes, amounting to influential conservative power brokers and former conflict actors shaping voters' preferences. Change agents like a number of outspoken women parliamentarians thus pose a significant threat to such traditional stakeholders who have no interest in altering the system and hence loosing power and privilege or facing prosecution. Fourth, some outline that constituency-building can also be marked by gendered connotations of leadership and representation, as not all communities equally accept and endorse women politicians as their national representative, regardless of previous constituency work either as social worker, provincial council member, parliamentarian etc.³³

A number of women politicians reiterated, during the course of the interview, that they were able to achieve a high number of votes, sometimes referring to building a sustainable constituency to rely on in upcoming elections. Not actually being quota politicians, they, many a times referred to obstacles in reliable constituency-building and emphasised the need for the quota system. Contrarily, different is the confidence and conviction of the first timer MP Farkhunda Zahra Naderi on the issue of quota. She has reservations about the perceptions and dynamics created around quotas in Afghanistan, as this has led to unskilled, inexperienced women being elected who have to confront a sophisticated political game they need to learn and master. Considered as one of the leading figures among female legislators, she nevertheless remains a strong defender of quotas for women, for leadership positions across various public affairs sectors. In her opinion:

"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".³⁴

The theme of 'education' and the concern with the nexus of illiteracy, political awareness and citizen's capacity to take adequate decisions in governance processes, such as elections, is mirrored in a number of interviews with leading women parliamentarians, who, as understood, were able to build their own constituencies. A case in point is Shinkai Karokhail who describes her constituency as "different or

31 See Fleschenberg 2012 and 2009.

32 Interview with MP Shinkai Karokhail, Kabul, April 2015.

33 Interviews with parliamentarians, election analysts and civil society representatives, Kabul, April 2015. In the words of MP Shinkai Karokhail: "And these people are very conservative. I am a threat because I will never ever support what they want".

34 Interview with MP Farkhunda Zahra Naderi, Kabul, April 2015.

multiple” - composed of “tribal, traditional society” and a majority of illiterate people who “give me support and they trust me. The most important: they choose me among the warlords, among the strong politicians (...) - the women, [who] have no money, [who don’t] have any[thing]”, along with a more urban-based, highly educated and ideologically divergent group of (potential) constituents, composed of civil society activists, in particular women activists. Though the peril with the latter group is that they generally have a lower voter turnout or propensity to participate in elections, thus, not necessarily translating into reliable electoral support for women politicians like herself.³⁵

A number of women MPs are confident that they were able to establish a positive public image due to their services provided to constituents, or at least the efforts made thereof.³⁶ However, many parliamentarians, males and females alike, pointed towards challenging expectations from constituents - from finding jobs for family members, changing school or university exam results, seeking medical appointments or asking to be shown/served first (i.e. jumping the waiting queues) in hospitals. Other demands include social security and service provisions in a fragile, volatile state with limited functional state institutions, outreach beyond urban centres into the rural spaces, where the majority of constituents live, and a legacy of patronage driven politics and clientelistic service provisions.³⁷ Moving mountains or the sun - a blatant example of exaggerated expectations and demands by constituents is a case narrated by one female MP who was visited by a group of women in her office and complained to her that their houses, built on a hill side, don’t get enough sun, expecting her to address this issue beyond human capacity.

In conclusion, key issues of sustainable constituency-building for re-election bids, repeatedly pointed out by a number of women parliamentarians interviewed are:

- fraud and vote-buying by competitors in an uneven level political playing field; enabled or exacerbated by a
- structural lack of resources of women candidates - be it financial/economic or sociocultural capital; along with
- mobility issues due to reasons of political instability, outright insecurity and conflict, as well as sociocultural constraints imposed by family and/or community members, political power brokers and/or religious stakeholders, among others.³⁸

35 Interview with MP Shinkai Karokhail, Kabul, April 2015.

36 Deputy Chair of the Committee for Women’s Affairs, Shireen Mohseni argued “if people see you try, but can’t solve the problem, they know and understand it” (Interview conducted in Kabul, April 2015, see also interview with MP Shukria Barakzai, Kabul, April 2015).

37 Interviews with male and female parliamentarians, Kabul, April 2015.

38 Working at one of the leading Afghan electoral watchdogs, FEFA, women’s activist Wazhma Azizi, among others, highlighted that “mosque[s] do not let women get out from their home, meet”, that women at the district level don’t have enough access to other women or need the support of family members to access voters, to campaign on their behalf, be it due to sociocultural constraints or the prevailing overall

Pakistan

As highlighted before, the gender quota design in place means that those on reserved seats have no command on a direct constituency-cum-electoral power base. Depending on women parliamentarians’ gender awareness and political ambitions, their imagined constituencies include (i) all voters in the area to which they originally belong (in terms of family domicile); (ii) political parties and their respective membership, which brought them into formal political institutions on a gender quota seat; and/or (iii) all women of Pakistan; apart from unspecific, diffuse claims of representing (iv) ‘the entire country’.

Pakistan’s constituency-based parliamentary politics are shaped by a largely patrimonial society where social and economic formations are still tribal, feudal, influenced by class-based capitalist relations of production, which heavily rely on primordial loyalties, factionalism, money, biraderi (read: kinship) networks and other forms of patron-client relationships, replicated in formal political institutions, as well as the ministerial bureaucracy. In this traditional, gendered socio-political order, women do face structural and institutional constraints in developing their political constituency base, such as:

- lack of social capital, as traditionally women do not head family households, kinship groups and/or networks;
- lack of autonomous access and disposal of economic resources, of crucial importance in patrimonial settings, as well as in contexts of increasing corruption, criminalisation and commercialisation/corporatisation of politics;
- gender-specific, androcentric voters’ bias to elect women candidates due to the patriarchal gender regime in place; along with a
- reluctance of political parties to assign women party tickets to contest general seats; exacerbated by
- weakening ideological bases of party politics where money and power trump meritocratic considerations; in addition to
- poor governance, corruption and a subsequent culture of sifaarish (read: recommendation/intercession), i.e. constituents’ expectations and pressurising of elected representatives to address their issues and problems through direct personal interference with concerned authorities.

Furthermore, Pakistan’s colonial legacy interwoven with the ongoing experiment with liberal democracy has resulted in projects of decentralisation and power devolution, such as via the 18th Amendment, endorsed in 2008. Instead of generating a democracy dividend, it strengthened hierarchical local power configurations and perpetuated the elite capture of parliamentary politics. Every election held has thrown the dominant classes in the guise of land owning elites, tribal leaders and members of the urban rich business class into parliament and government. Accordingly, political parties prefer to work with local power

insecurity (interview conducted in Kabul, April 2015).

brokers, considered winnable candidates who bring a block vote with them and can tap into above mentioned patron-client networks to secure a competitive edge. Such a distortion of electoral competition means that women politicians are unable to compete with male contestants for party tickets (or would have to rely on such predominantly male patrons-cum-power-brokers, making them dependent in constituency-building, political representation and agenda-setting). Many gender quota parliamentarians interviewed expressed their desire to contest general seats on a party ticket but have little hope of succeeding. They believe that their respective party leadership will never risk of giving them a ticket for a winnable seat (i.e. secured by the party in previous election rounds) or in unseating an incumbent, even if they consider the female candidate far more capable and with a higher performance level, as exemplified in the following quote.

"It is not the gender. The dynamic here is who could win. Yes, I would like to contest on general seats. Last time, I tried but could not get the party ticket. I will try again but [am] not sure whether I will get it. Parties always look for winnable candidates. In my particular case, as they already have a winnable candidate on that particular seat, they do not see any reason to shift, whereas I am sure if they give me [the] ticket, I will win them the seat. But I stand no chance."³⁹

While it is not unusual for political parties to calculate and minimise their odds, it also means that only those women with a particular socioeconomic pedigree are granted tickets as they are thought of being able to win, fortifying the dynastic elite capture of parliamentary politics. Class or political family trumps gender in that regard: of the nine women elected on general seats in the 2013 elections, all of them belong to powerful political families, and all of them inherited social capital from male members of their families.

With the fading of ideology-fused politics in the country, the criteria for candidature is further shifting in favour of money, power and influence, aggravating women's claim for political power. While several gender quota politicians are engaged in serious constituency

work without the support of their respective parties, and many among them interested in contesting a general seat, they are certain that this constituency work most likely will not pay off under the rules of the game in place. Parties' leadership is, hence, understood as a key barrier and unsurmountable gatekeeper to women's sustainable political mainstreaming when not allowing them to crossover from (dependent) quota seats to general ones, despite having delivered.

This, however, might change if the party leadership assesses it has nothing to lose and might give it a try in a less favourable level playing field. Gender quota parliamentarian Nafisa Shah explains: if a party has no winning candidate and thinks that a woman can win, then they might concede a party ticket to a woman like in the case of Shazia Marri.⁴⁰ Before winning national elections on a general seat, Shazia Marri was twice (s)elected on gender quota to the Provincial Assembly of Sindh. In the following interview quote, she clarifies the key to her electoral success story:

"I am proud to say that it was my sheer hard work to win a constituency that traditionally belongs to Pir Pagara. Defeating this religious-political giant was a huge victory for me and for the people in my constituency. Thirty percent [of the] population in the area consists of Hindu population. [They] dispose great trust and confidence in me. On the day of my victory, they came to me and said 'Pakistan got independence on 14th of August, but we got independence on 22nd September', at the day of my victory".⁴¹

There is a stark realisation amongst aspiring women politicians that within this larger disempowering socio-economic and political context, building a constituency without the support of political parties is quite challenging. Therefore, the majority supported the retention of gender quota, while at the same time, calling for reforms in the gender quota design with reserved seats to be filled through a similar process of direct elections, as adopted for general seats.

39 Interview with gender quota parliamentarian, conducted in Islamabad, June 2015 (anonymised by the author).

40 Interview conducted in Islamabad, June 2015.

41 Interview conducted in Islamabad, June 2015.

Unmaking Political Patriarchy? - Engaging with Gatekeepers and Institutional Constraints

Given prevalent patterns of socio-cultural inequality, manifested in gender roles prescriptions and practices, systemic and institutional constraints translate in the political arena in divergent asymmetries and vulnerabilities, because the scale of men's autonomy and capacity to negotiate and navigate such a political environment appears to be significantly higher than that of women. This might be due to predominantly androcentric political support systems and access to resources, cultural norms for agency and mobility, along with gender-specific requirements of protection in volatile environments.⁴² In both case studies, respondents highlighted perpetuated and pervasive male-dominated institutional cultures, linked to a lack of support/response from the government, technical staff in parliament and/or from the ministerial bureaucracy. Consequently, a mistrust remains vis-a-vis states' commitment and seriousness to advance women's political mainstreaming and a pro-women agenda, marked by perceptions of precariousness and volatility instead of substantive, sustainable gains achieved in the past decade. This goes hand in hand with a perceived lack of political clout to enforce the state's commitment, e.g. to international covenants signed or National Action Plans agreed upon, along with a pro-women government orientation and functioning women's machinery. Rather perceptions of a disconnect and gender gap, rhetorical or mere symbolic lip service paid, as well as continued patriarchal state institutions and their functioning dominate, despite achievements made and inroads carved. This is further exacerbated by two conflicting and somehow contradictory trends: on the one hand, an increased societal acceptability and visibility of women politicians and, on the other hand, increased pressure from extremist and misogynist counter movements and veto actors. As outlined in detail below, in the respective case studies, there are differences in (i) the impact of urbanisation trends, (ii) the role and impact of political parties as gatekeepers, (iii) perceptions of change and space, as well as (iv) the shape, extent and impact of international intervention contexts on gender-specific institutional constraints to women's substantive political representation.

The dismantlement of political patriarchy, its discursive power, practices and structures has to start from within formal and informal institutions, as well as from the outside, as referred to and outlined

42 Along with other Afghan women MPs and analysts interviewed, MP Farkhanda Zahra Naderi termed it "the vulnerability of the women in [...] politics", alleging that so called political mafias find it easier to capture women MPs as their victims, manipulate them for their own agendas in addition to exploiting a number of women legislators' need for political support and protection (conducted in Kabul, April 2015).

above by Goetz and Hassim's model of political effectiveness. In light of the findings below, we argue that strategic essentialism is one critical way forward. Women politicians, be they on gender quota or not, have to move beyond difference and competition within political parties/alliances/ networks, parliament and state institutions. Transforming androcentric, undemocratic and often dynastic political parties, 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 agency power of marginalised communities. Gender quota politicians could lead the way by cracking, and ultimately unmaking, patriarchal political institutional structures to deliver on women's substantive representation.

Afghanistan

Civil society activists, in particular women's activists and electoral watchdogs, identify security as one of the key challenges not only for their own lobby and advocacy work, but also specifically for outspoken and active women parliamentarians. This holds true in the public arena, given the existence of numerous violent actors or within parliament the existence of powerful political players, such as, mullahs and warlords who reject women's political presence and refuse to accept them as serious political actors (or ultimately they do, thus identifying them as targets). Secondly, it also holds true given the lack of government and societal support for the outspoken, publicly visible women and for the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming as well as women's machineries, which remain precarious, limited and highly dependent on international funding and pressure-cum-intervention.

"No matter how strong [a] woman you are, like a politician, at the end of the day, the way they look at the woman politician and the man politician is different. (...) we have to risk as women to bring changes in women's life, in gender issues. We have to take risks and go to the streets and risk our lives to bring the change. (...) So, women's movement and gender-based works are not institutionalised in this country."⁴³

Gender-specific, often threatening or even violent contestations in previous election rounds have been observed, documented and highlighted by electoral watchdog activists such as Naeem Asghari from FEFA, who stresses that there are a number of veto actors responsible, "because there [are] not just warlords, the male candidates also create problems for them [female candidates] and warlords intimidate both women and men, depend[ing] on the warlord. They don't want women's existence in [the] parliament so [that] they could have the seats [for themselves]. (...) they intimidate their family, (...)".⁴⁴

Many are deeply concerned and disturbed by an apparently increasing shrinking space for civil society activism and for raising women's concerns.⁴⁵ In the

43 Interview with former MP, civil society activist and member of the Special Electoral Reform Commission Sabrina Saqeb, Kabul, April 2015.

44 Interview conducted in Kabul, April 2015.

45 Interviews conducted with civil society activists such as Nargis

light of the recent events in Kunduz and the temporary Taliban takeover of the city, where deliberate attacks and virtue policing efforts were under way against the city's women's radio stations, a girls' college and the women shelter run by Women for Afghan Women. This also includes recent threats against Tolo TV and 1TV, those alerting and warning the wider (inter-)national public are more than proven right. Not to mention the years-long deliberate campaign of insurgent attacks against publicly outstanding women, serving in different sectors and capacities, such as, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, security forces, media or civil society organisations.

The majority of women parliamentarians narrate frequent experiences of hegemonic patriarchal institutional practices or outright misogyny and/or ideological challenges from formal and informal political institutions, often powerfully manifested and legitimised under the garb of religion and declared indigenous, read Afghan, values - in contrast to alleged 'foreign', 'alien' or 'Western' values, imposed by intervention actors or Afghans understood to be marked by Westoxification. Sabrina Saqeb experienced this not only as a young, progressive and outspoken woman parliamentarian from 2005 to 2010, but also now as working from within the framework of civil society, liaising with the government at the central level, with female members of the province-based Peace Councils, as well as local community members.

"(...) especially because it's women's issues, human rights issues, they are very sensitive towards these values. I think there is a misperception among, like, in the society when we talk about women's issues. And they always are concerned that they will create problems for them, like by raising the awareness among the women (...). Of course their demand will be higher, they are more educated, more knowledgeable, and then they will question their activities, you know, at the centre of the capital. And this will cause [a] challenge for the government itself. (...) Even from my experience in Parliament, the first challenge that I was facing was that we had [to] prove ourselves that we are Muslims, that we are not doing anything against our own cultural and religious values. So I think, religion always was a challenge when you are taking on women's issues, and this is difficult."⁴⁶

Many perceive Afghan politics to be still marked as male-dominated, based on regional ethno-linguistic politics-cum-networks and being outright traditional, despite inroads made by women parliamentarians who demonstrated strong debating skills on various issues in parliament and in media, of "women in Parliament [being] part of different hot debates like [the] EVAW Law".⁴⁷

Nehan, Soraya Parlika, Hasina Safi, Wazhma Azizi, Aziz Rafiee as well as focus group discussions at AWN and at hbs, Kabul, April 2015.

46 Former MP Sabrina Saqeb, member of the Special Electoral Reform Commission, works with the think tank Research Institute for Women, Peace and Security, and faces this tagging as Westerner when working on women's issues such as political participation, peace and security (interview conducted in Kabul, April 2015).

47 Interview with MP Farkhunda Zahra Naderi as well as with former MP, civil society activist and member of the Special Electoral Reform Commission Sabrina Saqeb, among others,

In addition, the post-2014 withdrawal of international forces and the decrease in civilian commitment, as well as international media attention, is interpreted by a significant number of stakeholders and traditional power brokers as a potential turning point or lowering of thresholds in value-based commitments made vis-a-vis calls for a political conflict solution. Consequently, this leads to increasing perceptions of women's rights and quota achievements being jeopardised or becoming bargaining chips along with repeated experiences of threats against and actual attacks on being publicly visible, outspoken and active quota politicians in what appears to be deliberate campaigning against empowered and publicly active women across different sectors.⁴⁸

The list of challenges faced by women politicians from male colleagues includes (i) not letting women MPs speak and not listening to them; (ii) not allowing or supporting women MPs taking up leadership positions, (iii) explicit gender stereotyping (e.g. domestic chores-related comments, sexism, dress code/appearance), (iv) harassing or demeaning behaviour (e.g. not extending greetings, not communicating) or (v) negative remarks about gender quotas, considered as either too high in percentage of overall seats or men deserving the seats due to votes cast for respective candidates.⁴⁹ Such widespread reports, experiences and perceptions shared by women parliamentarians, women's activists and some male civil society activists stand in contrast to those of a number of male civil society activists, most male parliamentarians and bureaucrats who negate having observed or experienced gender-based discrimination of quota parliamentarians.⁵⁰

A crucial dimension of substantive representation is voice, being acknowledged as/to be listened to, to being included in political deliberations, decision- and policy-making processes beyond one's symbolic presence and rhetorics of gender equality and women's rights. What women parliamentarians often describe are experiences of silenced political emergencies, having to shout not be silenced, not to be overheard, of being recognised apart from addressing and representing the interests, problems and needs of women as prime constituency group: "they shout at us and they destroy us on legislation; (...) they take revenge (...). They shout and whisper (...) and I shout louder that a mullah did that"⁵¹.

Challenging experiences described above are further exacerbated by an overall political environment which is problematic for male and

Kabul, April 2015.

48 See also Fleschenberg 2012 in more detail. The attack against outspoken and active women working either in Parliament, the police or for the Department of Women's Affairs has continued as have attacks against women and girls on a more endemic level of violence against women, with the mob killing of Farkhunda Malikzada being the last prominent case, but not the only one as a number of media reports reviewed for the period of 2014 to mid-2015 indicate.

49 Interviews conducted with former and current women parliamentarians, conducted in Kabul, April 2015.

50 Interviews conducted with former and current male parliamentarians and male political analysts and officials, conducted in Kabul, April 2015.

51 Interview with MP Raihana Azad, Kabul, April 2015.

female parliamentarians alike. Systemic obstacles of parliamentary work highlighted were in particular: (i) criminalisation of politics, (ii) disconnect, lack of cooperation and patronage politics among political institutions, (iii) ineffective capacity-building programmes for MPs, (iv) conflict legacy of mistrust, identity politics and subsequent fragile social fabric, along with (v) intervention-related rentier mentalities, monetarisation of politics and “projectification” of public and private lives.⁵²

Pakistan

When gender quota politicians enter the public domain of politics as ‘private’ citizens, all the structural constraints that militate against them entering politics through mainstream political processes remain in place. The major stumbling block to women’s political mainstreaming-cum-empowerment are mainstream political parties as gatekeepers to formal political institutions, characterised by male domination, misogyny, authoritarianism, corruption, mafias, criminalisation and dynastic politics.

As Pakistan’s mainstream political parties do not keep membership records, it is hard to assess what percentage of women have joined political parties, however, the common observation is that an increasing number of women is joining, aspiring public office. All national mainstream political parties have separate women’s wings, with the exception of the Awami National Party. The marginality of women’s wings within political parties has been documented in earlier works (Zia and Bari 1999) and only few substantial changes occurred during the past one and a half decades: while women play an active role in party politics, their activism, however, is not matched with a corresponding status within the decision-making structure of their respective parties, along with appointed women’s wings lacking any political power to influence party policies (Zia and Bari 1999). Conspicuous was the 2014 large scale female participation in the months-long Dharna (protest), mostly of lower and middle class women, mobilised for the protest turned sit-in in the capital Islamabad, over allegations of fraud in the 2013 parliamentary elections, called for by Tehreek-i-Insaf and headed by cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan. As a matter of fact, key figures during the Dharna were predominantly male party leaders and members speaking and rallying, relegating women to support functions for further and continued political mobilisation, social media activism, as well as serving as an ensured, enthusiastic audience for the large-scale daily protests at the protest camp site.

With regard to women’s inclusion in politics, political parties have shown contradictory trends: women are increasingly seen as a constituency but are not supported sufficiently when seeking candidacies and/or exercising a political mandate. To attract women voters, commitment to gender equality and women’s empowerment is reflected in party manifestoes of all

major parties, including religious-political parties in the past elections. In reality, though there is hardly any change in the attitude, behaviour and political practices of party leadership towards women’s rights, women’s voters, female party workers and female candidates. In lieu thereof, one can identify a clear mismatch between women’s political aspirations and parties’ responses, reflected in the growing number of women contesting as independents on general seats with a phenomenal increase in the number of women candidates: from 54 in 2002, 64 in 2008 to 161 in the 2013 National Assembly elections, while in the provincial assemblies the number grew from 116 in 2008 to 355 in 2013 provincial elections. Comparing data from the 2008 and 2013 elections, the overall number of women candidates rose by 246 percent for National Assembly and by 306 percent for Provincial Assemblies. Out of 116 women who contested elections on general seats in 2013, 95 ran as independent. (UNWomen 2013) Within the political context of Pakistan, the wide gender gap in supply and demand for parliamentary office does not support the political recruitment model outlined by Norris and Lovenduski, based on the correlation that “the outcome of particular parties’ selection process can be understood in terms of interaction between the supply of candidates wishing to stand for political office and the demands of party gatekeepers who select the candidates” (Meryl 2013: 16).

While there appears to be an increasing recognition amongst party leaderships that women command political capacities and competencies, patronage structures meanwhile intercede with most major parties’ decisions of candidate selection for general seats. Based on considerations of who could get work done for their voters and supporters, who could win them a seat, business as usual is followed with little space and chances carved out for women as novel and different entries to patrimonial-cum-androcentric politics.⁵³

“Political parties make tall promises for women’s equality and empowerment. But when party is expected to overturn the gender status quo to appoint women in decision making position or give them party tickets, I do not see much change. At the party round table where core decisions are taken, I could think of just one woman who makes it there and the rest of us are still behind.”⁵⁴

While women are better positioned within the ideological space of politics, the overall political trends in Pakistan move into different directions with significant implications for gender-specific barriers and institutional constraints to women’s issue-based agenda setting and political mainstreaming. Significant

52 Compiled from interviews, informal conversations and discussions with political and societal stakeholders in Kabul, April 2015.

53 While most women parliamentarians in the current parliament joined pro status quo parties, however an interesting dynamic emerges: given their experiences of marginalisation, rejection and relegation to a weaker political status and mandate - be it by male colleagues or party whips -, an increased oppositional gender consciousness develops and a desire to change androcentric political structures and practices, be they within parliament and/or political parties (interviews conducted with women parliamentarians, Islamabad, June 2015).

54 Interview with leading woman parliamentarian from PPP, conducted in Islamabad, June 2015.

forces and trends are the rise in religious extremism, political violence along with political parties moving towards identity politics, constricting women's space in politics, concurrently either using women's bodies and gender policies as sites and bargaining chips of political contestations or de-prioritising them. Be it that political parties often drop gender equality concerns for short-term political gains, be it that for purposes of political expediency, prior to elections, cross-parties alliances are often struck to bar women from voting in order to entertain and maintain local patriarchy. Perpetuating political patriarchy in terms of values, discourses and practices is not the hallmark of religious political parties; it is just as well discernible in liberal parties. Consequently, women's spaces and opportunities in politics are continuously shrinking due to religious militancy, security concerns and growing gendered societal conservatism as a way of thinking.

This is mirrored by and linked to the overall patriarchal nature of the Pakistani state and its institutions, identified as another significant structural barrier to women's substantive representation. Pakistan's state bureaucracy is completely dominated by men - only a negligible 17 percent of women are working in senior management positions (Government of Pakistan 2009). Women legislators frequently mention experiences of male domination, masculine bias and rude attitudes of ministerial bureaucrats towards them and the majority of women legislators interviewed complain that bureaucrats and local administrators do not take them seriously. Previously serving as Nazima (mayor) in the district of Khairpur (Sindh Province), outspoken and active gender quota politician Nafisa Shah complained that "[t]he general attitude of bureaucracy towards women is either condescending or indifferent. They do not take you seriously, so you really have to speak up. You have to show them that you really understand them and see through the things they are saying; then they take you

seriously".⁵⁵ Similarly, another woman legislator from PML (N) expressed her frustration in dealing with bureaucracy:

"Bureaucracy does not take us seriously and positively. Maybe media has built this perception and people say there is political interference. I ask: where is the political interference? They do not allow any political interference because they do not listen to us. Women are never taken seriously".⁵⁶

Interestingly, the response of bureaucrats interviewed in the course of this study spoke very highly of women legislators, finding them extremely competent and committed.⁵⁷

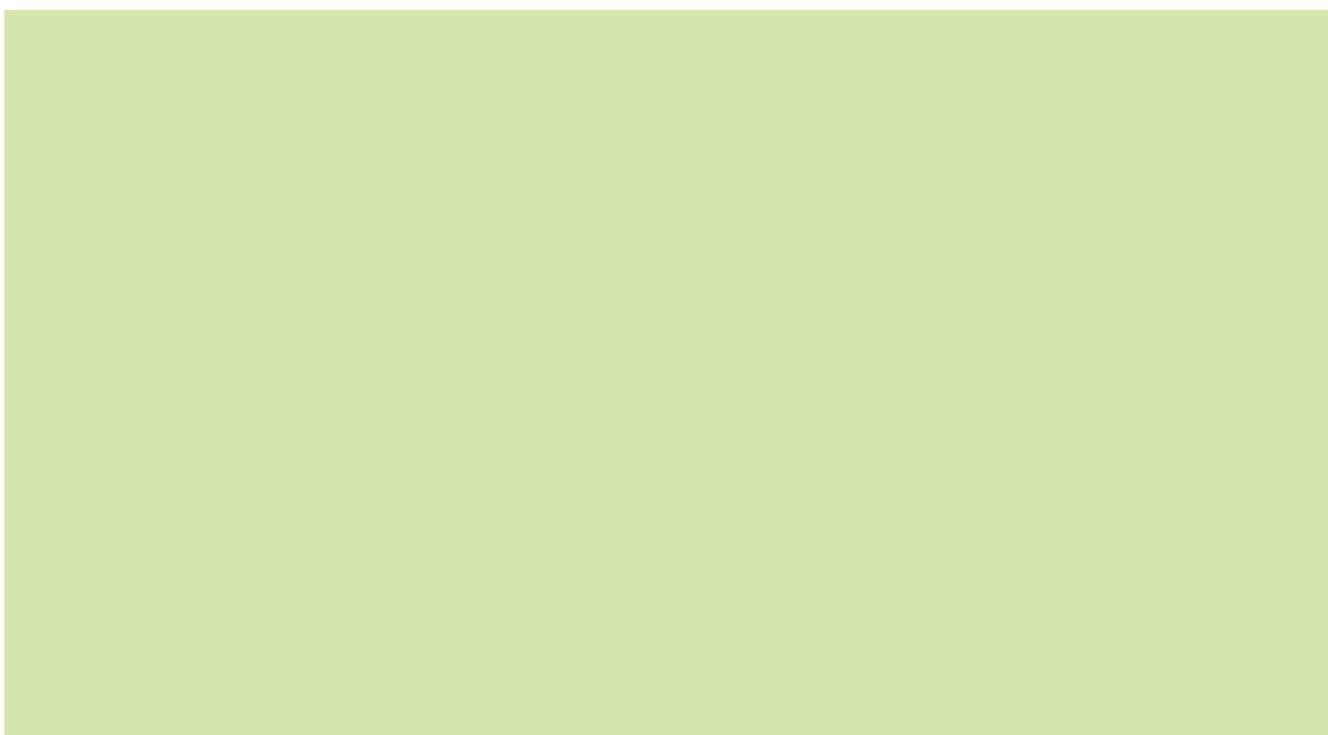
Generally, the majority of women parliamentarians interviewed expressed a lack of satisfaction with the state's commitment to gender equality, but regarded societal change towards women's political representation as varying from area to area with an overall growth in the sociocultural acceptability of women in political roles.

Women utilise different pathways to reach to the highest forum of decision making of the country. Their presence in the National Assembly epitomises the rupturing of the discursive divide of public-private and symbolically asserts women's claim of voice in policy and decision-making. By entering a historically male-dominated sphere of politics, women legislators are now confronted with patriarchal political structures and institutions that continue to drown their voices and imperil their political effectiveness as parliamentarians. The burden of public expectation to act on behalf of women and the self-motivation of gender quota politicians to command equal voice in the political arena calls for strategic thinking.

55 Interview conducted in Islamabad, June 2015.

56 Interview conducted in Islamabad, June 2015.

57 Interviews conducted in Islamabad, June 2015.



Beyond Vulnerabilities and Volatilities Towards Women's Substantive Political Representation - Some Tentative Conclusions

Writing at the time of the Beijing+20 process review, quotas are accepted and employed worldwide as a tool for women's political mainstreaming, which lead us to conduct this research on gender quota track records and experiences in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to investigate dynamics and factors behind the acknowledged gap between descriptive (quantitative) representation through quotas and the paucity of diffusion in addressing women's interests and achieving substantive (qualitative) representation and political mainstreaming of gender quota politicians. Shifting from a focus on women politicians' agency and performance alone, we argue that quotas are not a sufficient mode of intervention to allow for a quantitative and qualitative decrease in the gender democracy deficit and, for subsequently dismantling the encompassing political patriarchy, alive and kicking in most socio-political institutions of both Afghanistan and Pakistan, the two countries under review. But first things first - let us review the key findings and considerations for both case studies at hand before proceeding to food for thought.

Conclusions with regard to Afghanistan

Afghanistan's post-2001 trajectory is primarily marked by the experience of a continued international intervention with ambivalent implications for state- and institution-building. Afghanistan's democracy in the making is characterised by:

- Fragmented elites, absence of political parties and consolidated political institutions;
- Overshadowing insurgency and security challenges;
- High levels of corruption along with powerful, violent and often misogynist power brokers inside and outside political institutions;
- Nascent and precarious, widely donor-dependent civil society and women's movement with limited societal outreach;
- Endangered post-2001 gender achievements which might become once again a bargaining chip of political transition, be it via peace negotiations and/or power sharing agreements.
- Quota provisions in place are a result of that very international intervention and have generated the following key experiences:
- Gender quotas are generally accepted by civil

society and many key political stakeholders albeit continued resistance from a significant number of male MPs and government members.

- Women aspire for political leadership roles and participation at various levels of the polity.
- Women's political performance so far is of a mixed track record in terms of legislative work, government oversight and constituents' representation, but generally more acknowledged than that of male colleagues.
- The nature of electoral politics and political culture allowed only a very limited number of women parliamentarians to build a sustainable constituency and become part of the political mainstream.
- Electoral politics and institutional proceedings are marked by a high level of volatility and hybrid political institutions, leading to ambiguity and constant renegotiation of legislative agency and performance.
- Inroads in terms of space and agency carved out by women MPs remain precarious, contested and in need of outside solidarity and support.

Key challenges identified are, among others, the:

- High conflict intensity and insecurity along with a misogynist culture of key institutions and power brokers, negatively impacting on pro-women representation and interaction with constituencies;
- Failure in achieving strategic essentialism due to intra-gender divisions, polarisation and heterogeneity on prioritising 'women' as quota-based constituency within a wider context of sustained political conflict and insurgency.

Conclusions with regard to Pakistan

Pakistan's trajectory towards democracy is characterised by:

- Elite capture;
- Military interventions;
- Lack of democratic roots of key political institutions due to feudalism, dynastic politics, lack of intra-party democracy and patriarchal institutional cultures; combined with
- Weak, fragmented social movements, in particular the women's movement suffering from NGO-isation; further exacerbated by an
- Increase in religious orthodoxy and extremism.

Quota provisions in place are problematic, as an indirect selection for reserved seats takes place by the male leadership of parliamentary political parties, generating the following key experiences:

- Women aspire for political leadership roles and participation at various levels of the polity, in increasing numbers.
- There is a high level of legislative performance of female MPs (as compared to male colleagues), although political credibility

challenges persist.

- Gender quota politicians' performance was higher in legislation than in government oversight and constituents' representation.

Key challenges identified are, among others:

- The quota modality in place leads to (i) elite capture and a lack of mirroring societal diversity (e.g. in terms of class, ethnicity, religion, age, rural-urban divide) along with (ii) restrictions in the accumulation of political capital and sustainable constituency-building, undermining the quality of gender representation and women's political mainstreaming.
- Agency constraints in terms of government oversight and pro-women policy-making are due to male-dominated parliamentary culture and androcentric state institutions.
- Male-dominated political parties serve as key gatekeepers and obstacles to women's substantive political representation.
- There is a failure in achieving strategic essentialism due to intra-gender divisions, polarisations and heterogeneity on prioritising 'women' as quota-based constituency.

Food for Thought

First, in the light of the above findings, we argue that gender quotas do work, but that their impact can and should be increased substantially, to further democratisation processes and governance concerns, to address the disconnect between women's descriptive representation, promoting and safeguarding women's citizenship rights, issues and interests. Inroads have been made with the existing quota provisions in terms of (i) role models created, (ii) higher levels of cultural acceptance of women as politicians and leaders, (iii) higher levels of public recognition of women's political capacities and participatory rights within key political institutions (e.g. political parties, ministerial bureaucracies), along with public discourses in place. In addition, we could identify, in both case studies, an increased and distinct gender consciousness of women politicians that more than often developed out of their experiences of marginalisation, rejection and attempts of relegation to a weaker political status and mandate - be it by fellow male MPs, party whips, ministerial bureaucrats and government members. This is paired with a desire to change androcentric political structures and practices, be they within parliament and/or political parties by a significant number of women MPs in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Secondly, quota modalities matter, as do electoral systems, hence the rules of the game need to be right and subsequently reformed to allow for women's sustainable political mainstreaming. Most politicians, civil society activists, bureaucrats and experts interviewed in Afghanistan and Pakistan endorse the necessity of quotas, with many endorsing either a strengthening in numbers and/or modalities. This goes along with a call by some for an equal growth in women's share in socio-political leadership positions in other areas and sectors of public affairs, such as the judiciary, ministerial

bureaucracy, political parties etc. And, in the case of Pakistan, for an increased gender commitment of political parties who play a crucial role as gatekeepers to women's political participation and political effectiveness once in elected office. In addition, there is a need to address the elite capture of parliamentary politics and thus for intersectional concerns, i.e. more socioeconomic diversity among gender quota politicians, in particular, in terms of class and rural-urban divide, among others. In both cases, there was a call by some to increase gender quota provisions to 33 percent (Pakistan) or even parity levels (Afghanistan). Given the political setup and gender quota modality in place in Pakistan, there were calls for a direct election modality, as well as changes in the Political Party Act to include a mandatory provision of 10 percent of party election tickets to be given to women, along with a third of positions within political parties. In both countries, women parliamentarians would benefit from a provision of research and technical support for policy-making and legislation by either a functioning, qualified research service or personally assigned, proficient research assistants. While Afghanistan, as well as Pakistan have gender quota provisions for government institutions in place, the implementation seems to be the problem. As we have highlighted, the nexus of women's political effectiveness with other support mechanisms and institutional setups - including a greater linkage with supportive social movements and civil society organisations, this commitment to implement gender quota provisions across state institutions is the key to develop a conducive environment and opportunity structure. Therefore, we reiterate the frequent call by interview partners in Afghanistan and Pakistan for not only implementing existing gender quota provisions, but also for appointing/electing more women to leadership positions, be it in parliament (e.g. to chair commissions/committees), in government (e.g. to cabinet positions) or in ministerial bureaucracies' senior management.

Third, a paradigmatic shift is needed - moving beyond numeric concerns along with issues of presence and visibility towards (i) critically reviewing quota provisions and gender policy interventions and their impact on women's political empowerment and mainstreaming, in addition to (ii) moving from a focus on individual women's agency and capacities towards structural and institutional constraints.

Fourth, we argue that strategic essentialism is one key way forward. Women politicians, be they on gender quota or not, have to move beyond difference and competition within political parties/alliances/networks and state institutions. Transforming androcentric, undemocratic and often dynastic political parties, 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 agency power of marginalised communities (be they diverse as they may). 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.

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