

Gendering democratisation: women as change agents in transition contexts

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Resumen

Durante las dos últimas décadas, las mujeres políticas han emergido como agentes femeninos de democratización, es decir *agentes de cambio* como grupos de presión activos, que luchan y se organizan en pro de un cambio hacia el régimen democrático y al subsiguiente funcionamiento del sistema, a menudo con el seguimiento de las masas (incluso el único) –quienes con sus sacrificios personales, contribuciones políticas y sus legados, son enormemente pasadas por alto o refutadas en cuanto a democratización y estudios de género se refiere. Este artículo intenta evaluar de forma crítica hasta dónde los estudios de género han estudiado y analizado las contribuciones para con la democratización y la consolidación de la democracia llevada a cabo por mujeres como cabezas de Estado o de gobierno. Se sostiene que hay un fuerte *desideratum* respecto a América Latina, Europa, África Subsahariana y Asia. Una mirada a los diferentes estudios de casos de mujeres jefas de Estado y de gobierno en América Latina, Europa, África Subsahariana, y Sur y Sudeste de Asia se presentan como un esbozo del camino de la carrera, la agenda política y la relación de democratización de los respectivos agentes femeninos de la democratización. Sin embargo, una investigación sistemática y sustancial necesita ser realizada para permitir una profunda y apropiada valoración del cambio político y legado de los agentes femeninos de democratización en el último escalón del poder político. Estos estudios pueden contribuir a un mejor entendimiento entre los nexos de género y democratización, género y política mejor así como también a extender la solidez explicativa de las teorías democráticas en general.

Palabras clave: mujeres políticas, agentes de cambio, democratización, estudios de género.

Abstract

During the last two decades, women politicians have emerged as female democratisation agents, i.e. *change agents* who actively lobby, struggle and organize for a pro-democracy regime change and a subsequent functioning democratic system, often with a (or the only) mass following – whose personal sacrifices, political contributions and legacies are largely overlooked or contested in related democratisation and gender studies. This article aims to critically assess in how far democratisation and gender studies have systematically

studied and analysed the contributions towards democratisation and the consolidation of democracy made by women as head of state or government. It is argued, that there is a strong research desideratum with regard to this phenomenon despite statistical evidence in Latin America, Europe, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. An overview of different case studies of women heads of state and government in Southern and Eastern Europe, Latin America, South and Southeast Asia is presented, outlining the career paths, political agenda and democratisation record of the respective female democratisation agents. Nevertheless, systematic and substantial research needs to be conducted to allow a profound and appropriate assessment of the political performance and legacies of female democratisation agents at the top echelons of political power. These studies can contribute to a better understanding of the nexus of gender and democratisation, gender and politics as well as to enlarge the explanatory strength of democratisation theories in general.

Key words: women politicians, change agents, democratisation, gender studies.

INTRODUCTION

Michele Bachelet of Chile, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, Julia Timoshenko of Ukraine, Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma, Luisa Diogo Dias of Mozambique and Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan are women politicians whose names are currently in the spotlight of national and international media reports and public discussions. Along with many other colleagues from Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern and Southern Europe, South and Southeast Asia they are perceived as a novelty to a largely male-dominated field of pre –and post-transition policy- and decision-making. However, they are key representatives of a growing group of female *democratisation agents*– i.e. women or female *change agents* who actively lobby, struggle and organize for a pro-democracy regime change and a subsequent functioning democratic system, often with a (or the only) mass following – whose personal sacrifices, political contributions and legacies are largely overlooked or contested in related democratisation and gender studies.

This article aims to assess the state of the art of democratisation and gender studies with regard to the phenomenon of female political leadership in democratisation contexts as well as to present an overview of the frequency of female democratisation agents, their career paths and political contributions. The objective is to contribute to the understanding under which contexts and in which ways female democratisation agents participate (d) significantly in democratisation processes at the top level –as opposition leaders, prime ministers, presidents and/or ministers– from

1974 until today, from regime change until democratic consolidation. The study includes conventional as well as unconventional forms of political participation¹ of female top politicians which engaged personally, directly, visibly for the general public and in a steering or leading position. Due to space constraints, the article focuses primarily on case studies from Europe, Latin America and Asia. The forms and space of agency of female *democratisation agents* is expected to depend to a certain extent on the history and legacy of previous female political participation, the type of dictatorship and transition path as well as on the constellation of influential actors and the type of the new political, democratic system. As will be shown, an in-depth study of this growing phenomenon remains a desideratum for democratisation and gender studies and is, at the same time, an indispensable endeavour to the full understanding of gender and politics, gender and democracy/democratisation as well as democratisation processes in general.

ARE DEMOCRATIZATION STUDIES GENDER-BLIND?

The mainstream of transition and democratisation studies neglects the nexus of democracy/democratisation and gender in analyses of related processes since the start of the so called *Third Wave* (Huntington). But during this wave of democratisation in Southern Europe, Latin America, Southeast Asia and post communist Eastern Europe –when women possessed political citizenship on a worldwide scale as never before in modern history– one can identify in mere quantitative terms a frequent intervention of women politicians and other, civil society women agents in transition processes worldwide (cf. Fleschenberg, 2004: 80-87).

Interestingly, such female *democratisation agents* or *democracy champions* occur in societal and political contexts which oppose conventional suppositions of democracy and democratisation theories. Female *democratisation agents* take over leading roles in countries with (a) low level of human development (e.g. Burma, East Timor, Pakistan, Mozambique and South Africa), (b) misogynist and traditional gender ideology (e.g. in Muslim-dominated South and Southeast Asia or in *Machismo*-dominated

1. In accordance with Nohlen (2002:364) we can distinguish between five different forms of political participation: (a) representative-conventional (voting, party activities), (b) direct-conventional (referendum, strike), (c) non-constituted representative-conventional (citizen council, expert council), (d) non-constituted direct-conventional (citizen initiative), (e) non-constituted direct-unconventional (manifestation, «wild» strike, occupation).

Latin America), (c) highly stratified, barely egalitarian social structures (e.g. South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa) as well as in (d) military dictatorships and subsequent distinctively male-determined models of politics and leadership (e.g. Argentina, Bangladesh, Burma, Indonesia, East Timor, Nicaragua, Pakistan and the Philippines) (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2000a: 128).

Nevertheless, the phenomenon of frequent female political leadership and the significance of female democratisation agents have yet to be acknowledged and to be studied by representatives of democratisation studies in general and, to a certain extent, by representatives of gender studies and feminist political scientists (*cf.* Fleschenberg, 2004b and 2004c). *Gender* is an important cross-section category of and marker for the quality and development of democracy and democratisation –in its functional and structural sense. This becomes apparent from the essential meaning of *democracy*: if we understand democracy (Greek: *demokratia*) as rule or reign (Greek: *kratein*) of the people (Greek: *demos*)– or in the words of the famous Gettysburg Formula of Abraham Lincoln as *government of the people, by the people and for the people* (Merkel, 1999: 29-30) –it includes in the modern context, in particular since the end of the 2nd World War and decolonialization, beyond any doubt women as full-fledged, equal citizens with full *political citizenship*, i.e. rights for political participation. Yet, a gender-sensitive analysis of the widely applied criteria of Robert Dahl– *public contestation and the right to participate* (Merkel, 1999: 31) –is a desideratum in most of conventional democratisation studies. Consequently, representatives of gender studies and feminist political science are highly critical of such approaches and hence stress that democratisation processes are characterized by divergent gendered forms of political participation and for the most part marked by a gender-specific *democracy deficit*, i.e. paucity of women as executive and legislative policy– and decision-makers. (*cf.* Rai, 1994: 211, 221; Waylen, 2003: 163ff; Waylen, 1996: 10)

During the last three decades, the *state of the art* of democratisation studies concentrated on the question of stability of political systems and explanations for transition paths and processes which either focused on systemic, structural, actor-centred or culture-oriented approaches, or a synthetic combination of the before-mentioned in descriptive-empirical analyses. Central was the nexus (a) between socioeconomic development and democracy, (b) external, in particular international, influences on democratisation, (c) the role of elites as *transition agents* as well as (d) culture and democracy. This focus was enlarged in recent years by approaches to measure the status and quality / depth of democratisation /

democracy in *Third Wave* countries, given the progressing consolidation of various democracies towards liberal, constitutional or hybrid democracies. Various indices have been developed until today, for instance *Freedom House Index*, *Vanhanen Index*, *Polity*, *New Index of Democracy* (Lauth) or the *Bertelsmann Transformation Index* (BTI), through which analysts attempt to capture the «quality» of democratising societies and their political systems. Although several of these indices have been altered and reformed through the passage and progress of transition analyses, most of them use terms such as *statehood*, *political participation*, *rule of law*, *institutional stability* and *sociopolitical integration* mostly without evaluating the conceptional range and depth dependant on actor-related factors such as gender, religion, ethnicity and social status. This blind spot has been partly addressed by gendered analyses of transition processes, one of two pillars of democratisation studies, while the other, conventional/mainstream democratisation studies, mostly neglect forms of hybrid identities and agencies in their analyses.

Related gender studies so far focused primarily on the collective actor women's movement or women activists in social movements, on the one hand, and women in electoral politics of democratising political system, i.e. on *representation* rather than on *participation*, on the other hand. (cf. Waylen, 2007; Ross *et. al*, 2002; Bystydzienski/Sekhon, 1999; Reynolds, 1999)

In the most recent work of Norris and Inglehart, *Rising Tide* (2003), on gender equality and cultural change in worldwide comparison, the authors analyze in one section public perceptions of female political participation and leadership. Although both emphasize that «broader experience confirms that gender equality in elected office continues to lag behind in the transitional 'Asian tiger' nations, as well as in many high growth states in Latin America [which happen to be all countries of the Third Wave and after, A.F.]» (Norris / Inglehart, 2003: 5), Norris and Inglehart identify culture as the primary determinant for women's role in country-specific developments towards political change and democratisation. But if cultural change and related modernisation, including the democratisation of political systems, are understood as «necessary condition for gender equality» and as a «basis for the mass mobilization of women's movements» (*ibid*, 2003: 9), we still have to scrutinize in detail the agency of women in democratisation contexts. In particular, as both opinions that development stage and cultural heritage «proved to be one of the strongest predictors of attitudes» as well as of the level of democratisation (*ibid*, 2003: 43). In contrast to their assumption, *female democratisation agents* operated and suc-

cessfully struggled at the frontlines of political conflict predominantly in those countries which would not classify as gender just or equal societies in the eyes of both authors: *Machismo*-dominated Nicaragua, Chile or Argentina, in Muslim-dominated societies such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia or Indonesia² as well as in less developed countries such as East Timor, Mozambique or South Africa. Furthermore, women politicians played a bigger role in post-transition electoral politics than in many modern, egalitarian-oriented, industrialized post communist Eastern European countries and their respective political systems.

Another group of authors such as Rita Mae Kelly, Jane Bayres, Brigitte Young and Mary E. Hawkesworth (2001: 6), which analyse the nexus of gender, globalisation and democratisation, focus primarily on the aspect of *gender democracy* in post-transition systems.

[T]he struggle for democracy for women involves not only the transition of military dictatorships, communist regimes, and traditional monarchies or fiefdoms to political systems that uphold the rule of law, regular competitive elections, and accountable government, but also involves a struggle for the equal recognition of women in and the subsequent democratization of both state institutions, such as legislatures, state bureaucracies, courts, and local governments, and of nonstate institutions [...].

The authors relate to the phenomenon that women activists encounter themselves in a situation of socioeconomic and political marginalisation once a regime change occurred due to the fact that «a partial and thin democratization process may establish ostensibly democratic institutions that operate for men, but tends to exclude women from political participation and the process of democratic citizenship» (Kelly *et al.*, 2001: 6).

Over the past decade, women have been actively involved in the initial and most dangerous stages of democratization within nation-states, organizing against oppressive regimes, mobilising as citizens, to demand the transformation of the political system, and standing publicly against authoritarian rule. Women's presence in the democratization process, however, has often been quickly supplanted by women's marked absence from public life and from political roles in the phase of 'democratic consolidation'. As political parties, interest groups, civil society, and capitalist markets are reconstructed in emerging democracies, women have been markedly underrepresented in campaigns,

2. For Norris and Inglehart (2003:49) «an Islamic religion heritage is one of the most powerful barriers to the rising tide of gender equality». «Studies of political representation, legislative elites, and leadership recruitment have established that the type of religious culture acts as an important contextual factor inhibiting women's entry into elected office. In particular, recent cross-national studies have found that fewer women enter legislatures in predominantly Catholic and Islamic societies, controlling for many other common factors such as levels of economic development, democratisation, and types of electoral systems» (ibid: 50).

elections, and in elective offices. (Kelly *et al.*, 2001: 12; *cf.* Hawkesworth, 2001: 223-224, 229-230; Razavi, 2001: 202-203; Waylen, 1996: 85, 136)

But what are the determining factors and characteristics of such problematic developments? The above mentioned authors ponder more on the gendered outcomes of democratisation processes than on the role of women and their contribution to democratisation processes.

Another group of works revises women's contributions to decolonialization and independence movements, which were largely terminated at the beginning of the *Third Wave* in 1974 (with the exception of East Timor, which only gained its independence in 2000, and South Africa whose apartheid regime only ended in 1994) (*cf.* Jayawardena 2003; Waylen 1996; Afs-har 1996).

While representatives of gender studies explore various types of the nexus of gender and democracy as well as democratisation, mainstream or conventional democratisation studies omit analytical categories such as women, gender, female transition agents/elites or woman politicians (*cf.* Huntington, 1991; Merkel, 1999). The seminal work of Samuel Huntington only refers to *women* under the reference of *voting rights*, without acknowledging female contributions to anti-dictatorial struggles and the overthrow of autocratic regimes,³ transition and/or consolidation processes.⁴ Other influential works are equally gender blind, for instance Przeworski's *Democracy and Development* (*et.al.*, 2000), Linz and Stepan's *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe* (1996) or Potter *et al.* *Democratisation* (1997).

So far, a gendered analysis of women politicians who operate and struggle as executive and legislative *democratisation agents* represents a blind spot in democratisation studies but also, to a certain extent, in gen-

3. For instance, Burmese opposition leader and democratic icon Aung San Suu Kyi: Huntington does not mention her name nor her significant role in his descriptions of the events prior to the pro-democracy elections in 1990 (p. 177f). The only related reference can be found under «widows and daughter phenomenon: Heterogeneous opposition groups coalesced around the surviving female relatives of martyred national heroes: Corazon Aquino, Benazir Bhutto, Violeta Chamorro, Aung San Suu Kyi. These leaders dramatized the issue of good versus the evil of the incumbent regime and provided a magnetic symbol and personality around which all manner of dissident groups could rally» (Huntington, 1991: 181). The above mentioned women's years-long struggle for democracy, their leadership role in democratisation processes and their performance in post-transition contexts remains neglected – in addition to similar cases of female democratisation agents which would deserve to be assessed as a phenomenon of *Third Wave* transitions.

4. For instance Corazon Aquino and the gender-specific symbolism and agency of her democratisation campaign (the Filipino Mary) against a widely believed corrupt, repressive dictator Marcos remains ignored (Huntington, 1991:67, 84ff).

der studies which continue to focus primarily on women's movements and women in grassroots movements. However, female opposition leader and head of state or government are a more and more frequent phenomenon in diverse countries such as Chile, Liberia, Ukraine, Pakistan, Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Portugal, Lithuania, Poland, Mozambique or South Africa. The study of their contributions and legacies, career paths, forms of political participation, spaces of agency, political agendas and function as possible role models for other women might present fruitful and useful contributions not only to the study of gender and politics as well as gender and democracy / democratisation. If representatives of democratisation studies marginalize or exclude the worldwide phenomenon of female political leadership in their analyses, we have to question the value and explanatory strength of respective analytical frameworks and theoretical concepts. In this light, this article aims to present a modest preliminary assessment of such female top democratisation agents in the second part of this article.

WOMEN POLITICIAN'S ROLES IN WORLDWIDE DEMOCRACY PROJECTS

In a first overview, one can identify women politicians in steering and leadership roles in various kinds of transition types as well as in various stages of transition processes: (a) in contexts of successful democratisation and subsequent democratic consolidation (e.g. Portugal, Poland, Lithuania, Chile and South Africa), (b) in contexts of hybrid democracies in Latin America, South and Southeast Asia (e.g. Argentina, Nicaragua, Bangladesh, Indonesia or the Philippines), (c) failed democratisation or democratic consolidation attempts with a subsequent autocratic regression (e.g. in Burma, Malaysia and Pakistan) and (d) in post-conflict contexts with or without external intervention such as in East Timor and Mozambique. At the top political level, women engaged as opposition leaders, (leading) members of resistance movements and opposition parties, prime ministers and presidents in transition politics with varying outcomes and degrees of success as *democratisation agents*.

2.1. Interim female heads of state and government – crisis manager or change agents?

During the last five decades, sixteen female top politicians took over the political leadership of their respective countries as interim heads of state or government, predominantly to ensure the transition towards new/democratic elections or in times of constitutional/political crisis. Examples are Sabine Bergmann-Pohl, interim president from 5th of April to 2nd of October 1990 in the wake of German reunification; Ertha Pascal Trouillot, interim president from 13th of March 1990 to 7th of February 1991 in Haiti in the moment of a state crisis after diverse coups; Renata Ivanova Indzhova,⁵ interim prime minister from 16th of October 1994 until 25th of January 1995 who led a transition government of technocrats in Bulgaria; Ruth Perry, interim head of the state council from 3rd of September 1996 until 2nd of August 1997 who was appointed in the context of a long civil war in order to ensure a democratic transition; or Nino Burjanadze who acted as interim president from 23rd of November 2003 until 25th of January 2004 after former president Shevardnadze was ousted by mass protests in the so called revolution of the roses in Georgia. One of the first cases of female democratisation agents was Maria de Lurdes Pintassilgo, the *Grand Dame* of Portuguese Politics and, so far, the only female top politician of her country. During a decade of political instability after the revolution of the carnations, the independent Maria Lurdes de Pintassilgo became prime minister in 1979, leading an interim government of technocrats until new elections could be held. She had previously been an active opposition member against the dictatorship of Salazar and Caetano and consequently refused the offer of a parliamentary mandate until the end of one of Europe's longest autocratic regimes (Opfell, 1993: 82-85; Tavares da Silva, 1998: 306).

For five months, Pintassilgo presided over an all-male, 16-member cabinet described as mostly moderate. Only two women held government posts. She had invited several to participate, but had received only negative answers. She later commented, 'Women who are very competent in their fields feel that political life is less pure, that they're going to make compromises on an intellectual or moral level'.

After five months in office, she later on became advisor to president

5. After her mandate, she presented herself as a candidate for the post of mayor of Sofia, Bulgaria's capital and ran in 2001 as presidential candidate. Since 2001 she is head of the party *Democratic Alliance* (www.guide2womenleaders.com/Female_Leaders.htm).

Eanes (1981-1986) before she contested unsuccessfully presidential elections in 1986 (ibid: 87). The feminist politician Pintassilgo (1995: 127-128) was well aware of the symbolism of the first female prime minister in Southern Europe:

In 1979, the appointment of a woman prime minister created a strong reaction in my country. Many expressed support and solidarity, speaking of new hope, a 'fresh breeze', another style and concept of politics. But many others rejected the idea in the most violent way. I will never forget the undisguised loss of control of most members of the conservative parties when, in the Parliament, I denounced the lies they had used to attack the program of my government. It went so far that some of the house-desks cracked under the fury of their fists! [...] Through the appointment of a woman prime minister it was clearly demonstrated that such a tradition would no longer be an exclusively male heritage. [...] Seen from that perspective, the fact of a woman as prime minister was a totally logic result of the participation of women on equal footing with men in the revolution.

Most cases of interim presidents and prime ministers occurred in post communist Europe after 1989 (37.5%) when relatively instable (coalition) governments, frequent elections and political crises accompanied the process of socioeconomic and political transitions. This phenomenon is less frequent in Latin America, Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. The majority of women (56.5%) took over as interim president rather than as interim prime minister (43.75%); none of them could continue their work as president or prime minister after the following elections. But crisis managers such as Irena Degutienė (Lithuania) and Radmila Sekerinska (Macedonia) occupied this interim position several times. While only one woman politician (Natasa Misić, Serbia) remained more than one year in power, the majority of interim female head of state or government occupied their position in-between one to six months. Given the fact that many of those women politicians (37.5%) took charge in contexts of leadership or power vacuum, their political mandate and authority was of a rather short-term and weak nature which hardly allowed taking fundamental political decisions or introducing political change. This constellation is similar to that of another group of women politicians (one fourth of the cases) who took over in contexts of political or state instability resulting from repeated or threatened coups or democratic revolutions. Another group of women politicians found their way into top executive posts in moments of political leadership crises caused by scandals, impeachments or disaccord over pivotal political issues. These female crisis managers could hardly become democratisation or change agents in their own right and implement sustainable steps towards (gender) democracy, given the

temporary and rather weak mandate as well as the volatile political context. Due to the lack of systematic studies, we can hardly assess their contributions and legacies and little is known about their career paths and political programs other than being a crisis manager in service of upholding and ensuring democratic principles and rules. Most probably, many were compromise candidates which were understood to be integrative / consensual and non-confrontational / threatening to opposed political camps. Others came to power through normal democratic procedures as parliamentary presidents or vice prime minister / president in moments of political vacuum.

2.2. Female heads of state and government in Eastern Europe – in-between post communism and recently gained independence

In the course of post communist democratisation processes, women politicians took over governmental responsibility in moments of political instability and/or newly gained independence, for instance in Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, Bulgaria and the Ukraine. Many remained in their executive leadership position for a short period, but mostly remained active in politics – as ministers, parliamentarian, head of a political party, opposition leader or ambassador. Three women prime ministers, Kazimiera Prunskiene of Lithuania, Hanna Suchocka of Poland and Julia Timoschenko of Ukraine are exemplary democratisation agents at the top level of post communist politics.

Kazimiera Prunskiene was the first post-independence prime minister for ten months in the early 1990s. She became soon a very popular politician; later on founded the Lithuanian Women's Party (currently New Democracy/Women's Party) and is considered to have encouraged many women to become active in public and in male-dominated politics (Kano-piene/Tureikyte, 2004: 66). Her career is exemplary for many politicians in post communist transition years: she started as a member of the communist party, minister and delegate of the *Soujet*, but switched sides in 1988 as a founding member of *Sajudis*, the leading independence movement (Opfell, 1993: 162). Her premiership was marked by an economic blockade from the Soviet Union's government in Moscow as a response to the country's independence aspirations. Prunskiene introduced controversial market economy reforms and followed a more pragmatic, reconciliatory course vis-à-vis the Soviet government – differently to president Landsbergis. After demonstrations against price increases resulting from her economic reforms and a subsequent parliamentary intervention, Prunskiene

resigned as prime minister (Liswood, 1995: 30; Opfell, 1993: 165, 168). After her election, she became minister of agriculture and contested unsuccessful presidential elections in 2004.⁶

In contrast, her Polish colleague Hanna Suchocka refused to join the Communist Party although this affected her professional career as lecturer. (Liswood, 1995: 35). Her selection to become prime minister occurred in a context of a fragmented parliament and enduring governmental crises – Suchocka was understood to possess a pragmatic political position which would allow bridging the divide between conservative and progressive camps within a great coalition.⁷ Similar to her Lithuanian colleague, Suchocka's government reformed the centrally planned economy towards a market economy which led not only to high economic growth, but also to high unemployment and social hardship for senior citizens, farmers and public employees. An unemployment rate of fifteen percent was one of the major reasons for losing parliamentary elections in which the majority of voters opted for a slower reform course under the Communist Party (Liswood 1995: 34–36). A devoted catholic and conservative in questions of reproductive rights, her selection as prime minister was seen rather critical by the Polish women's movement (*ibid*); Suchocka became the ambassador to the Vatican in 2001.⁸

Yet on the rise is the political career of former Prime Minister and heroine of the 2004 Ukrainian Orange Revolution, Julia Timoschenko. Like her Lithuanian colleague, she started her career as manager, technocrat still under the Soviet regime and is one of the few female post communist oligarchs, gaining substantial financial capital of agricultural products, oil and electronics. While her first tenure as prime minister was rather short, she was soon after (unsuccessfully) designated for a second tenure and her party became second in the recent parliamentary elections in September 2007. She is a Member of Parliament since 1996, was appointed vice Prime Minister in 1999 and was briefly imprisoned after the end of the presidency of Kutschma before becoming a «dissident of the oligarchy» and the most prominent voice of the Orange Revolution (Cheterian 2006). As her government program she proclaimed economic reforms, the fight against corruption, a stronger integration into the European Union and a drastic reform of the state and its role (BBC News 2005). Her tenure was marked by increasing fights between the former allies of the Orange Revolution, in-

6. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kazimiera_Prunskiene

7. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanna_Suchocka

8. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanna_Suchocka

ternal differences on government plans and corruption charges (ibid; Myers, 2005). Timoschenko was considered impulsive and populist (Ther 2006). Her fiscal and economic policies were criticised due to high state expenses, administratively regulated prices for energy and meat as well as her attempt to mandate oil companies to sell oil and petrol below world market prices which led to reduced production and price hikes. Her former and apparently future ally, president Juschtschenko, intervened and ordered the liberalisation of both economic sectors (*Ibid*). Nevertheless, Julia Timoschenko managed to triple the votes for her party *Batkyvchina* in the 2006 elections and became second in the recently held parliamentary elections in September 2007 – a good position to attempt for a second tenure as prime minister although the political impasse and power struggle in-between the two opposing camps of the former revolutionaries and the camp of former president and prime minister Janukowitsch remains open, for the third consecutive year and rather diametric to democratisation efforts...

2.3. Latin America – guerrilleras, women's movement and democratisations

In the fight against autocratic regimes, women engaged as *guerrilleras*, in social movements, grassroots organisations and civic protest initiatives using explicitly their mother – and womanhood (Potthast, 2003: 331, 338; Jaquette/Wolchik, 1998: 5). The symbol of the protest movement became cooking pans (*la cacerola*) – a symbol of social misery as well as a combination of the private and the public. *Democracia en la casa y en el país* became the slogan in Chile and subsequently in Brazil, Mexico, Uruguay, Peru, Columbia and Argentina (Potthast, 2003: 361–362). Probably one of the most famous collective female democratisation agents are the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*: mothers who demonstrated weekly against the disappearances of their children, a non-violent vigilance and protest against the excesses of a repressive military regime. Their vigils, hunger strikes, collection of signatures and lobbying travels abroad pressurized the dictatorship and helped to strengthen the opposition (*ibid*, 364–368). Many female democratisation agents opted against entering conventional political institutions in the new democracies and their movements and organisations subsequently lost political influence and leverage in the course of democratic consolidation (Jaquette/Wolchik 1998).

Other women with a similar political legacy opted to enter parliaments and governments – prime example is Michelle Bachelet, current president of Chile. She experienced imprisonment and exile after her father was tor-

tured and later on died due to his injuries under the dictatorship of General Pinochet. Upon her return from exile in the early 1980s, she specialised in public health and was active in pro-democracy non-governmental organizations (NGO). From 1986 until 1990, she was head of the NGO PIDEE which was active in the defence of the rights of children of torture victims. After the democratic transition in 1990 she worked for the health ministry before opting for a degree in military sciences. In 2000 she first became minister of Health and later on Minister of Defence under president Lagos.⁹ Her appointment as Minister of Defence was quite symbolic – as a woman, socialist and victim of the Pinochet regime (Perger 2003). Her election as president – with more votes than her predecessor Lagos – breaks with the conventional pattern and image of politics and politicians in a society still characterized by conservatism and *Machismo* (Quiroga, 2006: 1-3; *El País*, 16.01.2006). Lagos stated her election as a «triumph for democracy» besides positive responses from national media which stressed her election as a result of civil and democratic maturity and a historic milestone for the country (BBC News 2006). In her first public speech as president she announced a new style of government, characterized by more citizen participation, care and consideration as well as a gender-balanced cabinet (*El País*, 16.01.2006; Rohter, 2006). Ten of twenty cabinet posts are held by women, including defence, economy, health, planning and ministry of state (BBC News 2006a). Her political agenda aims on reform, continuity of the previous political course of her party, social balancing and societal modernisation with a focus on the social marginalized in a highly stratified country.¹⁰ Announced steps are a reform of the private pension system, more child care facilities for working parents, an improved public education system, electoral reform and, consequently, a more just, equal and tolerant society (BBC News 2006b; Haubrich 2006; Kaltwasser 2006: 6; Quiroga 2006: 5; Südhoff 2006; The Korea Herald 17.01.2006, S. 12). The handling of the first internal crisis – caused by huge manifestations of students in favour of a reform of the education system – brought her a lot of criticism (*cf.* Haubrich 2006; Rohter 2006a). Also in her first year in office occurred the death of former dictator Pinochet in December 2006 whom she refused a state funeral and national mourning (The New York Times, 14.12.2006). It is so far too early to assess her political performance and contribution towards a further democratic consolidation in Chile.

9. www.bachelet.cl, 10.05.2006

10. «My commitment is that by the end of my government in 2010 we will have consolidated a system of social protection that will give Chileans and their families the tranquillity that they will have a decent job» (Bachelet cit in *The Korea Herald*, 17.01.2006).

2.4. South and Southeast Asia – dynastic female democratisation agents

There has been quite some debate, although little scientific research conducted, on the phenomenon of frequent dynastic female political leadership in South and Southeast Asia, predominantly during the decade of the late 1980s until the late 1990s in the context of democratisation attempts, liberalization and reform movements in diverse countries such as Bangladesh, Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and the Philippines. Those female top politicians «inherited» their political mandate and legitimacy from male relatives, predominantly fathers who were important figures in the countries struggle for independence, its subsequent founding years or moments of national crisis. The descent from an important political family (dynasty) paved their way to the high echelons of power in countries marked by a general and systematic paucity of women in public decision-making. All started their political career as opposition leader and a counter-model against illegitimate, repressive, corrupt and power-hungry dictators and an androcentric establishment, with the former being supported by a wave of mass following. All female democratisation agents took a high political and personal risk: many were imprisoned or put under house arrest, lost relatives or were confronted with slander campaigns aiming to question their moral integrity and political ability and commitment. Not all could crown their engagement for regime change and democratisation with a subsequent leadership position in politics or civil society. Their leadership performance, contribution to better gender relations, women's status and further democratization of their respective countries social, political and economic systems is highly contested and controversial. Remarkably though, all women politicians qualified for their political post via (more or less) free and fair elections and, at the end of their tenure, handed over their mandate in a rather peaceful way or were re-elected – not a common phenomenon in a region marked by authoritarianism and putsch (attempts) as not only the recent cases of Thailand and Pakistan highlight. A crucial question lingers: have democratization processes been stalled due to female political leadership – or rather due to dynastic female political leadership? What have been their contributions towards (gender) democracy, if any, and why?

Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina Wajed of Bangladesh, Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma, Megawati Sukarnoputri of Indonesia, Wan Azizah Wan Ismail of Malaysia, Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, Corazon C. Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines are former heads of states or go-

vernment which also acted as democratisation agents in the course of their political career with divergent outcomes and legacies. Most of them rose to top political leadership as leader of the major opposition movement in times of sociopolitical, often violent crisis and upheaval in the shadow of dynastic politics and absent democratic political institutions (or legacies thereof). Another common feature is a high level of corruption within the different subsystems and even the female politicians did not escape this deeply embedded societal and political malaise. Two women prime ministers stumbled over corruption charges against their government, themselves or a close male relative as the case of Benazir Bhutto in 1990 and 1996 as well as Megawati Sukarnoputri in 2004 (in addition to charges of mismanagement and weak leadership).

Due to space constraints, only three female democratisation agents and (former) leaders of democratic opposition or reform movements will be analysed exemplarily for this diverse group: Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma, Megawati Sukarnoputri of Indonesia and Wan Azizah Wan Ismail of Malaysia.¹¹

2.5. From democratisation agent, opposition leader to head of state / government?

Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and Aung San Suu Kyi, two female Southeast Asian democratisation agents, continue politically marginalized despite their various reform and liberalization attempts with a significant mass following. Both regimes proved too strong and adaptable enough to external and internal pressures for regime change – one due to successful socioeconomic modernization and economic policies (Malaysia) and the other (Burma) due to secrecy, systematic and widespread repression and neighbouring countries with no interest for a change in the status quo, in particular China and Thailand. On the other hand, Megawati Sukarnoputri managed to rise from opposition leader to the first female president of a Muslim country, but failed in terms of leadership performance leading to an unsuccessful re-election attempt in 2004 where many of her massive following deserted her highly disappointed of her governance and alleged corruption charges.

11. The biographies were conducted during the three-year long research Project *Dynasties and female political leadership in Asia* of the Universities of Duisberg-Essen and Erlangen-Nürnberg; two book publications are forthcoming: Thomposn/Derichs (eds) and Hellmann-Rayana-jagam/Fleschenberg (eds) (cf Derichs/Thompson, 2005; www.uni-duisberg-essen.de/oapol/dyn_leaders_profiles.html). Please contact the author for further details.

The democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi – She is the daughter of Burma's slain independence leader and national hero Aung San and the first Burmese female ambassador Daw Khin Kyi. Living in India, the USA and United Kingdom for long years, she only returned to Burma in 1988 in the moment of student protests and a growing popular movement for democracy and human rights on which the military junta responded, once again, with a violent crackdown and huge numbers of imprisonments, including Aung San Suu Kyi who remains most of the time in house arrest since 1989 regardless of her party's (*National League for Democracy*, NLD) landslide victory in the 1990 parliamentary elections and repeated international calls for her release. Aung San Suu Kyi received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 for her non-violent pro-democracy struggle and continues to be the country's opposition movement leader and democracy champion. Whenever not under house arrest (1995-2000, 2002-2003), she managed to re-organize the NLD and gather a huge mass following among the heterogeneous population – Burmans and members of ethnic minorities alike. This massive public support represents a significant challenge for the leadership claim and authority of the ruling militaries and subsequently led to attacks against her and her followers in May 2003. Her political philosophy follows the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi and Vaclav Havel and she states a strong commitment towards a market democracy, inter-ethnic reconciliation and recognition, embedded in Buddhist democracy values. Since 2003 she remains isolated and silenced once again – a legitimated political leader in (only?) temporary retirement...

Reformasi I – Megawati Sukarnoputri – She is the daughter of the founding father of independent Indonesia, Sukarno who lost his power in a military coup by later dictator General Suharto and died in house arrest. His standing for democracy was projected on his daughter during the late 1980s and early 1990s emerging *reformasi* movement whose top candidate she became in 1987. Remaining head of the opposition, her political career rose to new heights after the end of the Suharto regime when she became first vice president in mid-2000 and later on president in 2001. Her performance is highly contested: perceived lack of leadership and management qualifications which manifested themselves in problems in the field of economics, fight against corruption and terrorism and a stalled institutional democratisation. Criticism increased due to her apparent unwillingness to communicate with the media and the general public and her apparent unwillingness to implement political reforms apart from corruption charges against cabinet members and her husband. Consequently, her party lost a third of the votes in the 2004 parliamentary elections (compa-

red to 1999) and she lost her presidential election bid two months later against her political rival former General Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

Reformasi II – Wan Azizah Wan Ismail – The former housewife Wan Azizah Wan Ismail entered politics as an accidental politician after the ouster and imprisonment of her husband, former vice prime minister and reform actor Anwar Ibrahim. His brutal treatment when imprisoned and the charges of alleged corruption and sodomy were understood by large sections of the general public as a pretext to get rid of a political rival and to respond reactionary to internal reform pressures. Wan Azizah Wan Ismail took over the mantle of her husband (as a place-keeper) and headed the Malaysian *reformasi*-movement in the late 1990s which aimed to reform and liberalize the political system. Core values of her political agenda were justice, fairness and a societal change. For this purpose she founded in April 1999 the *Parti Keadilan Nasional* (National Justice Party, now *Parti Keadilan Rakyat*, PKR) which she heads since then. Under the umbrella of the opposition coalition *Barisan Alternatif* (Alternative Front), she joined efforts with other pro-regime change parties in the 1999 and 2004 parliamentary elections. But her party lost significantly support in the 2004 elections where only she herself could secure a parliamentary mandate. The political marginalization of her party and herself as democratisation agent was further enhanced when her husband was released from house arrest in September 2004. Her political aspirations and activities are overshadowed by the widely anticipated and intended political comeback of her husband Anwar Ibrahim, only an advisor and not a member of her own political party. He is barred from candidacy for political posts until 2008, but his return into national politics takes the spotlight and space of agency away from Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, the accidental politician and place keeper.

2.6. Democratisation barrier female democratisation agents / political leadership?

According to the *Freedom House Index*,¹² the South and Southeast Asian women politicians' record as democratisation agents during the 1990s is of a mixed nature (*cf.* Merkel, 2003: 99-111). The case of the Philippines is particularly exemplary with two female presidents – Corazon C. Aquino (1986-1992) and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (GMA), the current president.

12. The autor is well aware that the *Freedom House Index* contains significant problems in terms of methodology and intransparency of ranking criteria. But no other comparative index is available for the period of the late 1980s until end of 2006; the *Bertelsmann Transformation Index*.

The Filipino political system developed from a sultanate-autocratic regime in the mid-1980s to a hybrid democracy at the threshold of a *polyarchy* (democracy) (*cf. ibid.*: 85) although the governance of GMA questions and endangers this development trend since the problematic elections in 2004 and the alleged coup in spring 2006 and the quite repressive government crackdown. After the end of the Suharto dictatorship 1998, Indonesia followed a long-drawn-out, complex and partly contradictory democratisation process from a former military-sultanate regime towards a more liberal one with similar ranking results as Sri Lanka or Nepal as well as Taiwan and the Philippines in the early 1990s (*cf. ibid.*: 85).

Apart from Indonesia, the country with the biggest jump in political and civic liberties according to the Freedom House Index ranking is Bangladesh which transformed under female political leadership from an autocratic military regime in the early 1990s to a hybrid democracy (*ibid.*). The democracy and governance record of both Khaledia Zia and Sheikh Hasina Wajed is currently under constitutional scrutiny given the violent mass demonstrations and upheaval at the end of 2006 and early 2007 when both battled once again over election procedures and leadership claims for the upcoming national elections. Their two decades long personal feud culminated in an intervention by other political forces within the system which implemented a caretaker government and somehow stalled upcoming elections and hence questions the quality and depth of democratisation efforts since the end of the military dictatorship under General Ershad in the late 1980s.

With regard to a preliminary data analysis of the Freedom House Index, we can attest a positive democratisation trend in most of the countries under female political leadership, but an in-depth analysis would be necessary to assess in how far the government policies and political leadership of respective female head of states and government correlate with this outcome and in what sense and depth these women politicians qualify as democratisation agents. The same question poses itself in both countries with a negative trend. Pakistan deteriorated in its ranking from «partly free» to «not free» (*ibid.*: 85), in particular due to the failures of civil governments under Benazir Bhutto (1988-90, 1993-96) and Nawaz Sharif (1990-1993, 1997-1999) as well as a military coup and a subsequent autocratic regime under General Perwaiz Musharraf since 1999. In the most current events, a new edition of the political elite «round dance» is in the making: a widely perceived fraudulent presidential (re-)election of General Perwaiz Musharraf in early October 2007 and a seasoned, perceived power-hungry Benazir Bhutto willing to cut a deal with the president-*cum*-military chief «for

the sake of Pakistan's democratisation», to end judicial corruption charges against herself and to allow her return from self-imposed exile in mid-October 2007 to possibly head the country as prime minister for a third time... The consolidated and successful semi-authoritarian regime in Malaysia got under political pressure during the Asia Crisis of 1997/1998, but – in contrast to developments in Indonesia – the regime managed to consolidate and stabilize rapidly after the ouster of the reform agent Anwar Ibrahim and continues to rank as «partly free» (*ibid.*: 85, 89). The *reformasi*-movement under the leadership of Wan Azizah Wan Ismail was not able to significantly increase the public pressure for reforms and political liberalisation. Only the military dictatorship in Burma did not change its ranking (*cf. ibid.*: 85), remaining one of the world's most repressive and secretive dictatorships and willing to crack down brutally on any kind of public dissent or challenge from the pro-democracy opposition movement as the current events and scores of killed or imprisoned dissident monks and youth of September 2007 bring to light.

A preliminary data analysis of relevant indicators suggests that none of the countries under female leadership deteriorated in the ranking of its democracy/democratisation state. At the contrary, both countries –Pakistan and Malaysia–, which are marked by a deterioration in the dimension of political and civic liberties, experienced a military coup and a purge in the male-dominated hegemonic party regime. Three third of all South and Southeast Asian countries with (former) female political leadership are classified as electoral democracies at the end of 2000– although mostly with a hybrid character, i.e. democratic deficiencies or autocratic features in sub-dimensions of the political system (*cf. ibid.*: 98-99).

A TENTATIVE OUTLOOK

As the different case studies outlined, female democratisation agents engaged in different ways and with divergent performance, legacies and outcomes in democratization projects worldwide. Many took high personal and political risks when struggling for regime change and democratisation. Few have turned into successful long-term democratisation agents and top politicians – partly due to autocratic regressions, a highly volatile and instable political system, power struggles and/or coups, a weak mandate received or missing / deficient personal leadership and management qualifications. But as become apparent in this brief overview, few systematic biographical and political performance studies have been conducted

so far. It remains to be studied which factors – systemic, structural, cultural, economic, social, political or personal – led to successes and failures of female democratisation agents' political records in order to allow a full understanding of their contributions, the nexus of gender and democracy/democratisation and an inclusive, gendered understanding of theoretical concepts and assumptions of worldwide democratization processes since 1974.

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