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WOMEN IN POLITICS AND SOCIETY



■ **Continued Ascent Possible
– West African Women in
Politics and Society**

Elke Erlecke

■ **Women in Senegal's Politics
and Society – Priestesses,
Princesses, Presidents?**

Ute Gierczynski-Bocandé

■ **Turkish Women in Politics,
the Economy and Society**

Suna Güzin Aydemir

■ **The Rise of Women's
Political and Entrepreneurial
Power in Asia's Growing
Economies – Insights from
the Philippines**

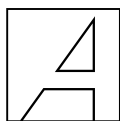
Carolina G. Hernandez

■ **Romania after the Elections
– A Country Searching for its
Path into the Future, and
Encountering its Past as it
Does so**

Sven-Joachim Irmer



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Content

4 | EDITORIAL

Women in Politics and Society

6 | CONTINUED ASCENT POSSIBLE – WEST AFRICAN WOMEN IN POLITICS AND SOCIETY

Elke Erlecke

24 | WOMEN IN SENEGAL'S POLITICS AND SOCIETY – PRIESTESSES, PRINCESSES, PRESIDENTS?

Ute Gierczynski-Bocandé

48 | TURKISH WOMEN IN POLITICS, THE ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

Suna Güzin Aydemir

75 | THE RISE OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL AND ENTREPRENEURIAL POWER IN ASIA'S GROWING ECONOMIES – INSIGHTS FROM THE PHILIPPINES

Carolina G. Hernandez

Other Topics

86 | ROMANIA AFTER THE ELECTIONS – A COUNTRY SEARCHING FOR ITS PATH INTO THE FUTURE, AND ENCOUNTERING ITS PAST AS IT DOES SO

Sven-Joachim Irmer



EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

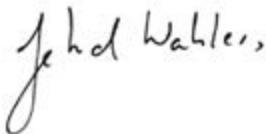
Various attributes have been assigned to the recent rebellions and upheavals in the Arab World and in North Africa in particular: rebellion by the young, by the disadvantaged as well as by those who had been barred or at least hindered from genuine participation in political, economic and social life. All these observations are valid, but they are not complete without looking at the other side of the coin: they also involved to a large extent females.

Young women were a strong presence in the demonstrations on the Avenue Bourguiba and in Tahrir Square. They conducted themselves peacefully, purposefully and assertively. To them, marking the end of autocratic rule was not only linked to hope for a new political system, but also particularly to the hope of seeing their own rights strengthened and valued as well as enforced. Since, in spite of their secular outlook, the old rulers tended towards patriarchal patterns of behaviour. From the very start the uprising was linked to a clamouring for greater rights and increased political involvement of women, which goes against the classic division of social spaces, according to which the exterior world is reserved for men while a woman's place is considered to be in the home. This is illustrated particularly strongly by the social media, which in the Arab world are used by disproportionately large numbers of young women. Women are demanding their place in society and in politics, and Arab societies need to realise that it is in their interest to enforce these rights. It would also be beneficial to the development of their countries.

Many countries in the region have already paid lip service to this. Egypt signed the anti-discrimination convention of the United Nations in 1981 and committed to increase the proportion of women in political posts as part of the Millennium Goals. However, on examination the makeup of the Egyptian parliament leaves one disappointed: Fewer than

two per cent of the representatives are women. In addition, there is an increasing apprehension that the Islamisation of the countries in the region, which is no longer merely a creeping phenomenon, may set the women's rights agenda back a long way, eroding the achievements of the past – which for the most part are modest as it is. Women's rights activists and female supporters of increasing Islamisation are diametrically opposed on this question.

Even Tunisia, which was regarded for decades as the model Arab state where women's rights were concerned, has experienced discussions over the last few months that have once again driven women onto the streets to demonstrate vociferously. The Tunisian women exemplify that standing up for rights is not a Western import, but that it is sustained by a strong demand from their midst. Tunisia has demonstrated the indispensable contribution to the country's development that women make. The same applies to the sub-Saharan countries, as the articles by Ute Gierczynski-Bocandé and Elke Erlecke in this issue illustrate. Our representative from Benin reports on the ongoing battle for equal rights fought by many women and the resilience that is needed to become for society as a whole what women are already in their families: the motor that drives development.



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CONTINUED ASCENT POSSIBLE

WEST AFRICAN WOMEN IN POLITICS AND SOCIETY

Elke Erlecke

When Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma was elected by the African Union as the first ever female Chairperson of the Commission, it caused quite a buzz in the international press. The media were quick to highlight her role as a figurehead for the emancipation of women in Africa. The women of West Africa in particular are in desperate need of this kind of positive message to give them some encouragement. Uncontested, of course, are their positions as custodian of the stove fire, mothers of many children and bearers of the brunt of the work in the fields. In many cases it is women who have the monopoly on informal small businesses. Although no opportunity is missed for governments and political parties to emphasise the importance of their role in their countries' future development, what is lacking, however, is the kind of recognition and political representation necessary to reflect their actual importance to society.

A MAJOR STEP FORWARD FOR THE WOMEN OF AFRICA: BEIJING AND ITS EFFECTS

Numerous international conferences have focused on improving the situation of women in Africa. One major milestone was the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, which denounced the lack of political and parliamentary representation of women around the world.¹ Subsequent to the Conference, efforts were made

1 | The outcome of the Conference also encouraged West African women's organisations in their struggle for the rights of women in their respective countries. This is how in Mali, for example, the Collectif des Femmes de Mali (COFEM) and the Association Pour le Progrès et la Défense des Droits de la Femme (APDDF) ensured that the influence of older Islamic leaders on the media was deterred..

in Africa to take measures designed to reduce discrimination against women and political strategies to improve their situation.

The 2003 Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa served to strengthen and expand the provisions of the 1981 African Charter on Human and People's Rights. For the very first time a document legally binding under international law addressed exclusively the situation of women in Africa and the promotion of their rights and protections. The signatory states were obliged to adopt all necessary measures to implement the protocol effectively and fully. When the protocol entered into effect in November 2005 it represented a major step forward in terms of international law. 26 of the 53 member states of the African Union have since ratified the Maputo Protocol. By 2004, 51 of the 53 countries had also signed the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

There is also no shortage of strategies to improve the situation of women at national level in western sub-Saharan Africa, mostly as a result of the Beijing World Conference on

Life for the majority of the female population remains difficult. Women are still very under-represented in the area of political participation.

Women. However, life for the majority of the female population remains difficult. Women are still very under-represented in the area of political self-determination and participation. The majority of leading positions are held by men. In light of this fact, most national governments and political decision-makers are agreed that something needs to be done in the medium and long term. As a result, various stakeholders in western sub-Saharan Africa are working towards the common goal of improving gender equality, including governments, individual parties, civil society and a growing number of committed women.

Thus it is worth inquiring in regard to Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger and Togo: What is life like for women in these countries? What kind of opportunities do political parties offer women who want to get involved? How can women attain positions of responsibility and leadership within these parties or in parliament? And last but not least, what obstacles stand in the way of women's progress in these countries?

ROCKING CRADLES AND COUNTING COINS: FAMILY AND FINANCES

An example from Benin: Colombe was born three days before Christmas 2012 in the business city of Cotonou. At the moment, she sleeps all day under a mosquito net on the floor of her mother Denise's small market stall. Her future is pretty much already decided. Her mother earns quite well from her small fruit and vegetable business, but not so well that she will be able to afford to send her daughter to a private school in Benin. If her mother's income should drop, it goes without saying that Colombe will have to be taken out of school in order to keep her older brother in.



"All girls to school": The reality in Benin often looks different. | Source: © Elke Erlecke.

Women like Denise have a particularly hard time in this structurally weak region of West Africa. Their standard of living defines their social situation and their opportunities. Low life expectancy, marriage at a young age,² high birth rates and high infant mortality combined with limited or expensive access to medical care all create a situation that makes it difficult, if not impossible, to break out of what

2 | More than one-third of all girls in Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Mali and Togo were married before reaching their 18th birthday.

appears to be a predetermined course.³ Forced marriages are still widespread in rural regions. Should a woman become widowed in these areas, she often finds her freedom of movement becomes severely restricted, not to mention her personal way of life (for example, she is not allowed to wash or cut her hair for several months).

Being poor can present a major obstacle to women's desires to improve their lot in life. Appropriate development cooperation programmes in combination with strategies undertaken by national governments are attempting to help women find a way out of this hopeless

situation and, if possible, help them create a degree of financial independence and hence a stepping stone to social emancipation. In Benin, for example, microcredits are helping to put women in a position to start on the road to financial independence by providing a small amount of start-up capital.⁴ The business world is male-dominated, with 74 per cent of all those employed in the formal work sector being men. It is the informal sector that is the women's domain. Officially registered businesses run by women are in the clear minority.⁵ Unemployment is also a predominantly female issue – there is a huge gap in the number of men and women out of work in all five of the countries in the region, with the result that women continue to find themselves in a position of dependence.

The business world is male-dominated, with 74 per cent of all those in work in the formal work sector being men. It is the informal sector that is the women's domain.

- 3 | One of the more negative determinants of women's lives remains that of violence, which is still prevalent in spite of the introduction of international and national laws to combat it. Domestic violence is still considered to be socially acceptable in many areas. The progress made in recent years in reducing the instances of genital mutilation should not lead us to lose sight of the fact that this is still considered acceptable in many parts of society. This practice, which can be life-threatening to the girls affected, is still a standard cultural practice amongst many ethnic groups and in the regions around Tillabéri, Diffa and the Niamey district. Sexual offences against women are often trivialised, especially in countries that have experienced armed conflicts in the past or in recent years. To add insult to injury, the victims are often socially stigmatised afterwards.
- 4 | In Benin, 94 per cent of those receiving microcredits are women. It should also be pointed out that President Boni Yayi made microcredits to women an important part of his platform during the presidential elections.
- 5 | In Niger, only 5.14 per cent of the businesses officially registered in 2007 were being run by women.

Family, job, raising the children – women's lives limit the areas where they can make their own decisions.⁶ Their decision-making opportunities are generally limited to the private sphere. Involvement in the political process is also largely dependent upon the legal status that government policies and society in general accord to them and there have been some significant changes in this area over the last 30 years.

WOMEN AT THE CENTRE OF AFRICAN LIFE: FORMAL STATUS VERSUS REALITY

In the 1990s, women's organisations throughout Africa were focused on bringing about constitutional changes to improve the legal status of women. West Africa was no exception. Since the turn of the millennium, the focus has been on safeguarding and strengthening individual women's rights as well as introducing additional measures to outlaw discrimination. This positive development in the legal rights of women is also reflected in the legislation being passed in the individual countries. In Benin, for example, the government is endeavouring to mirror in their national legislation the right embedded in their Constitution to equal treatment for men and women. Women have a key role to play in the country's development plans and the state is actively encouraging them in their role as private employees, for example, and is guaranteeing them the same rights as their male colleagues if they work in the public sector.⁷ Women also officially have equality with men in accordance with their Constitution and the *Code des personnes et de la famille*⁸ in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire.

6 | Even still, not all women in all parts of the sub region have a say in domestic affairs. In Niger, for example, most domestic decisions are made by male members of the family. What should and shouldn't be bought, how often the family should be visited, what kind of healthcare the family should have, what kind of family planning, if any, should be used, even sometimes what the family should eat – all of these things are subject to male decision-making. However, this situation changes considerably as soon as a woman has her own income: 85 per cent of women make their own decisions as to how the money is spent.

7 | Law No. 86-013, 26 Feb 1986.

8 | The Code actuel des personnes et de la famille du Burkina covers the rights and responsibilities of both spouses in terms of running the household (Art. 235). The law is popularly known as the "Code des femmes".



Togolesian women in agriculture. However, in West African factories, they are still underrepresented. | Source: flickr / undptogo (CC BY).

And yet, as so often, the devil is in the detail. So far, the countries in the region between the Sahel and the Atlantic have not always been successful in aligning their national laws with international conventions, even when these conventions have been officially accepted. Even when alignment is achieved, there is a tendency to lean towards traditional notions of the law that are heavily influenced by ethnic or religious thinking. In the conflict between the modern and the traditional, it is often the latter that wins out. Violations thereof are culturally sanctioned. There are also still occasions where concrete laws have been put in place that actually run counter to the country's constitutional provisions. This is especially the case in those areas that reflect the practical reality of many women's lives, such as family law. In the majority of the countries in the region, the man has the status of *chef de famille*. It is he who chooses where the family lives and who controls all their household goods. Laws aimed at protecting women can also sometimes have the opposite effect, albeit unintentionally. The ban on polygamy in many countries in the region, for example, has encouraged the widespread practice of *repudiation* and throwing women out of their homes. These women are then left with no protection. And even when modern laws try to positively discriminate in favour of women, old patterns of behaviour can still in practice be the norm. Quotas for political parties do not, therefore, always mean that there will be higher levels of female participation in politics, because women are often hindered through informal pressure put on them by men.

Niger is a good example of the difficulties that can be experienced in the Sahel region when it comes to implementing laws guaranteed under the constitution. At first glance, the position of women in Niger appears to be better than in many other countries. The country has not only signed most of the international conventions on human rights, but equality between men and women is also guaranteed under national law. The Nigerien constitution guarantees the equality of all of its citizens, irrespective of gender, social standing, race, ethnicity or religion. Jobs in administration, government, the diplomatic corps and state-owned companies are subject to a quota system. The position of Second Vice-President of the National Electoral Commission is reserved for a woman. Additional special laws also guarantee men and women equal access to services and resources.

However, when it comes to actually implementing women's constitutional rights, legislators frequently come into conflict with proponents of established common law and Islamic law, especially in the case of the *Droit de la Famille et du Statut Personnel*. The Nigerien state attempted to pass the *Code de la Famille* into law several times, but opposition from various Islamic organisations consistently succeeded in preventing the law from being

If a woman submits to the rules of established common law, she has no right to decide on the timing of or the number of pregnancies she will have, nor over her marriage or the dissolution of that marriage.

passed – first in 1976, then again between 1985 and 1989. The egalitarian approach of modern legislation conflicts directly with established common law, which has its origins in a patriarchal society whose rules are at odds with the rights of women as set forth in the constitution. If a woman submits to the rules of established common law, for example, she has no right to decide on the timing of or the number of pregnancies she will have, nor over her marriage or the dissolution of that marriage. The ability of the state to intervene in these areas is limited. The 2006 protocol of the *Charte Africaine sur les Droits des Femmes* came up against the same opposition as the *Code de la Famille* before it was finally signed by the National Assembly.

The full and effective legal implementation of existing laws is what currently stands in the way of true equality for men and women. Laws are not being fully applied

or implemented and sometimes new laws are not even made public. Sanctions against those who break the laws are often not considered and have little chance of being enforced. This means that tradition and cultural taboos continue to have the upper hand over efforts to improve the situation of women.

Table 1

Comparison of statistical parameters of countries in western sub-Saharan Africa

	Benin	Burkina Faso	Côte d'Ivoire	Niger	Togo
Women as percentage of over-all population in per cent	50.7	50.3	49.1	49.7	50.5
Life expectancy of women (2011)	58	56	57	55	59
Maternal mortality per 100,000 births (2010)	350	300	400	590	300
Births by women aged 15-19 in per cent (2011)	10.0	11.9	11.0	11.6	52.0
Births per woman (2011)	5.2	5.8	4.3	4	7
Literacy rate 15-24 year olds in per cent	45 (2010)	98 (2011)	62 (2010)	n.a.	75 (2009)

Source: World Bank Data Research.

Legislation allowing increased participation by women in the political process tends to come up against even stiffer opposition. In 1999 Niger ratified the Convention sur l'Élimination de Toutes les Formes de Discrimination à l'Égard des Femmes (CEDEF): this UN convention played a major role in the international codification of women's rights. It called for the same level of participation for women as for men in the signatory countries, in all areas of social and political life, in order to improve development opportunities. Yet, today Niger maintains reservations regarding the five articles that cover the full rights of women to participate.⁹

9 | Current political thinking still disputes that women have the same basic rights to participation as men. This is generally seen as self-evident by traditionalists and therefore requires no further explanation or justification.

TAKE NO SEAT: POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL PARTIES¹⁰ AND PARLIAMENTS IN WEST AFRICA

In the 1990s women in politics in Africa began to enjoy greater visibility, including West Africa. This was due in great part to better education, growing experience in dealing with the public and the cautiously positive signs demonstrated by various governments towards the participation of women in politics. Women began pushing for greater representation in parliament and in government. The focus of African women's organisations shifted away from developmental goals towards legislative and constitutional change. West African women too started to become actively involved in political reform movements.¹¹

As the parties play a key role in the articulation of the political will as well as in providing key political players, the quantitative and qualitative representation of women is an important indicator.

However, in spite of their undoubted willingness to become politically active and their strong representation in civil society organisations, women are still a *quantité négligeable* in West African politics. As the political parties play a key role in the articulation of the political will as well as in providing key political players, the quantitative and qualitative representation of women in the parties is an important indicator of their participation in the democratic opinion-forming process within their respective countries. The reason there is such a lack of female representation in

10 | There is often only out-of-date or incomplete data available on the representation of women in political organisations which is, in many ways, a reflection on many of the poorly structured parties themselves, with their weak policy-making and dominance by strong (male) leaders. This lack of data makes it difficult to carry out a proper analysis and for this reason we have added to the existing data with the ongoing monitoring of education initiatives introduced in 2012 plus a survey of the region's party functionaries and decision makers. The author would like to thank Jean-Baptiste Hounkpé, Anastasie N'Thoumon, Rodolphe Houedote, Eric Ouangré, Emmanuel Kouassi, Théophile Amouzou and Sylvain Zinsou for their support in conducting research. It should be noted that the fact that this report was being written has had the effect of making male leaders more aware of the question of women within their own parties.

11 | In Mali, women protesting against President Maoussa Traoré were shot. In Niger thousands of women demonstrated against the planned exclusion of women from the committee that was given the task of preparing for the National Conference in 1991.

the parties is attributable in part to the notion of what passes for (party) democracy within the various countries of the region.

The number of women contributing to the political process within political parties in West Africa varies markedly from country to country. Numbers range from “very many” in Côte d’Ivoire, through general under-representation in all of the Benin parties, to hardly any in Burkina Faso.¹² Burkinabe women argue that socio-cultural prejudices against party membership negatively influence women to refrain from becoming involved in party politics. If a woman were to join a party, it is believed she loses the connection to her family and neglects traditional duties. In addition, a lack of education makes it more difficult for women to join a party. This is also the case for many Burkinabe women who nevertheless decide to become involved in politics.

The question arises as to whether it would be less difficult for women to join parties if their interests were better represented. However, for this to happen the parties in the region, which are typically male-dominated, would have to be interested, in particular, in seeing women’s representation in the first place. It is worthwhile once again to consider Burkina Faso, in order to gain insight into the situation. Here, there are generally no specific women’s associations within the parties themselves. However, most of the women are usually members of other *associations* as well, often in leading positions. The Union pour la Renaissance/Parti Sankariste (UNIR/PS) party, a Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung cooperation partner in West Africa, does have a national women’s coordinator, but she is not solely responsible for women’s affairs and works with a (male) National Secretary for the Promotion of Women.¹³ Decisions on measures relating to women’s interests are in theory taken jointly, but in practice it is the Secretary alone who decides on policy and action.

12 | There remains an urgent need for accurate figures on the number of women involved in West Africa’s political parties.

13 | The cautious view of female members of the party is that the activities associated with this role could potentially extend beyond that of just coordination.

The situation is slightly different in Côte d'Ivoire. The country has 130 officially recognised parties, of which less than ten per cent are currently active. Each of these parties has a women's organisation. Female party members receive money for their activities on a case-by-case basis, though this is not a statutory requirement. Some of the party women are also members of the Union des Femmes des Partis Politiques. Meanwhile in Togo, most parties have a women's committee or at least a group of women, who get financial support on an ad hoc basis.

The fact that there is a general lack of representation of women's interests in the region's parties is often reflected in their manifestos. The political parties do call for better access to loans and land for women, promote measures

Parties' manifestos are often little more than empty words that praise these supposed lynchpins of society while happily abandoning their advancement to the progress of history.

to combat violence and discrimination, and improve employment and income-earning possibilities. However, their manifestos tend only to speak of women in politics in the general sense. Questions about women in leadership positions or their role in parliament are not usually accompanied by demands for more political action on these issues. They tend to analyse the situation of women, recognise their potential as supporters of the party and declare their belief in quotas. Whereas the manifestos stagnate at the level of lip service, lauding these supposed lynchpins of society while happily leaving their advancement to the progress of history.

One of the main triggers for women to become involved in party politics is the desire to contribute to their country's development. It is only in isolated cases that political role models are cited as reasons for becoming politically active.¹⁴ When women decide to become involved in specific political areas, it is more often than not in the fields of healthcare or economics. In Burkina Faso, elected officials and women from the leadership of the UNIR/PS,¹⁵ who

14 | When it came to role models, many of the women of the UNIR/PS party mentioned the life and thinking of revolutionary Thomas Sankara, who is still held in high regard in Burkina Faso.

15 | The women were questioned about their experiences during the nomination and election campaigns initially during the 2012 summer workshops for young party leaders, again in November 2012 before the local and parliamentary elections in Burkina Faso and for a third time at the end of 2012.

were asked several times over a period of eighteen months to give their assessment of the position of women in the party, claimed that the fight for emancipation, the abolition of discrimination and in many cases the struggle for peace were among their main objectives. Togolese women were even more specific: they want to influence the country's democratic development, participate to the same extent as their male counterparts and defend women's interests.¹⁶

Once the decision has been made to become involved, perhaps even to pursue a career within a party, most women then quickly learn which soft skills are needed to become successful in politics. This experience, which can have far-reaching consequences, is common to most politically active women from Zinder to Zongo. Although there are relatively few women at leadership level in the parties, they can still give us a clear indication of the kind of profile women need to succeed. They have to be married with several children, able to speak French and educated at least to college level. Financial independence can also be an advantage if the woman has no family to support her. What is perhaps not always appreciated is how important it is for the family to fully accept her political activities. This is where a break with tradition is required, as a woman's involvement in politics presents a significant challenge to the kind of traditional thinking that believes a woman's place is in the home.

Although there are relatively few women at leadership level in the parties, they can still give us a clear indication of the kind of profile women need to succeed.

THE LONG ROAD TO POWER: WEST AFRICAN WOMEN EN ROUTE TO KEY ROLES IN PARLIAMENT AND POLITICS

The UNIR/PS party in Burkina Faso has 2,000 members, with a politburo made of up 114 members, of which 49 are women. Two women are members of the Secrétariat

16 | This unambiguous language is a clear reflection of the current involvement of Togolese women in the arguments between the government and the opposition. These daily arguments allow female politicians to give voice to their aims and goals, and female representatives of Togolese NGOs and parties are not above using unconventional methods to get themselves heard. Good examples would be the sex strike last summer or the protest march by thousands of women dressed in red from the Collectif Sauvons le Togo September 2012, demanding that the president not stand for election again in the 2015 presidential elections.

Exécutif National. In Benin, the number of women who have a say in party affairs varies between eleven and 27 per cent. In Côte d'Ivoire, the current *Grande Chancelière*, Henriette Diabaté, was long-time Secretary General of the Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR), the party of the

The influence of women on internal party institutional and power structures continues to be severely limited. The quest for an explanation for this phenomenon repeatedly leads to stereotypical cultural barriers.

current President, Allassane Ouattara. Togo also has women in the executive branch of their political parties. One of the 48 parties in Niger in 2008 was led by a woman, while in Togo two of the 100 officially recognised parties have female leaders. For these women to succeed, they needed a combination of experience, qualifications and a willingness to fight for what they wanted. And yet the influence of women on internal party institutional and power structures continues to be severely limited. The quest for an explanation for this phenomenon repeatedly leads to stereotypical cultural barriers that not only stop women from becoming fully involved in internal party dialogue and decision-making, but also mean that there is no meaningful place for them alongside the party leadership when they appear in public.

However, the growing number of women in national and local parliaments in the region is a fair indication that efforts to increase the number of women in elected positions continue unabated. Women's representation in Benin's parliament during the first four parliamentary terms after the switch to a multi-party democracy (1995 to 2008) was very low – ranging from six to twelve per cent. In the third of these four terms, there were only six female MPs out of 83. The number of female mayors in Benin went up from three per cent in 2002 to more than four per cent in 2008. The government is hoping this number will increase to 30 per cent in 2015. In Burkina Faso, 19 of 359 mayoral positions were held by women after the 2006 local elections.

Niger provides the best evidence in this regard of only slow improvement in women's representation in parliament and other important bodies. Currently, the country has one of the lowest rates of women's participation in politics in the world.¹⁷ At least there are some positive signs in terms of the number of seats in the National Assembly – in 2008,

17 | Ministère de la Promotion de la femme et de la protection de l'enfant, UNICEF, Institut National de la Statistique, Analyse de la situation de l'enfant et de la femme, Niamey, 2008, 232.

15 of 113 MPs were women. However, it is clear that in the local communities many key positions are still clearly reserved for men – something that is not unusual in the Sahel due to the traditional influence of Islam – and women are also under-represented on local advisory bodies. When women in Niger are involved in the decision-making process at a local level, it is more often than not in their role as organisers of savings associations (ton-tines). In 2007, 17 per cent of Niger's city councillors were women, which is a sign that numbers are gradually increasing. However, there were only six women among the 245 mayors that were elected. In 2003, the first female Sous-Préfet was elected in Niger. However, the hostility of the local population towards her appointment forced her to resign. But all is not doom and gloom: in 2005 the Communauté Urbaine of Niamey announced that it had had a female Préfet Président for two years.

In 2007, 17 per cent of Niger's city councillors were women, which is a sign that numbers are gradually increasing. However, there were only six women among the 245 mayors.

In addition to the actual number of elected female officials at local and national level, the number of women elected relative to the number who actually stood for election also gives us an indication of the level of acceptance of female candidates amongst the general population. In the 2006 presidential elections in Benin, there were two female candidates, Marie-Elise Gbédo and Célestine Zanou, while only Gbédo stood at the last election. Neither of them got more than 0.4 per cent of the vote. In Côte d'Ivoire 100 women stood as candidates for parliament in 2010. Only ten per cent of them were elected. In 2010, Marima Cissé, Vice President of the Nigerien Human Rights Commission, was the first female presidential candidate in Niger's history. In the parliamentary elections of December 2012¹⁸ in Burkina Faso 981 women stood for election (out of a total of 6,074 candidates) and competed for 127 seats in the National Assembly. 23 women were elected, 15 of them directly. The remaining eight were chosen because the elected deputies were promoted to government positions. Without exception, the decisive factors for the election of these women candidates were their social position, the status of their families and their roots within the population. Even more important (and decisive) were the reasons not to

18 | There are no definitive results for the latest local elections in Burkina Faso as in some constituencies the elections need to be repeated due to irregularities.

elect women. Once again the same old prejudices were in evidence – non-acceptance of women working in the public eye and the over-stepping of cultural boundaries. Some of the women were also hampered to an extent by having held positions in the public sector before, and were accused of having been accomplices in previous corrupt systems.

LOST IN GENDER: FEMALE AFRICAN MINISTERS AND THEIR DEPARTMENTS

Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso each have five, while Togo has seven – female ministers, that is. In Benin, the proportion of women in government positions ranged between ten and 27 per cent from 1991 to 2007. Today the number of women in the executive is less than 25 per cent. There are 26 men and only seven women in Thomas Boni Yayi's current cabinet,¹⁹ and the women generally have positions that might be thought of as appropriate to their gender.

It is not only in this former model democracy that the distribution of cabinet posts appears to have been made along traditional lines. In Benin, as in West Africa as a whole, the poor representation of women in government stands in stark contrast to the significant presence women have in civil society organisations and political parties.²⁰

THE DEBATE OVER QUOTAS: DRASTIC REMEDY FOR ELECTIONS AND PARTIES ALIKE?

The fact that West Africa's parliaments, parties and ministries are still to a large extent free of female influence and leadership raises the question as to whether the people as a whole consider this to be a problem. The fact that the issue of quotas for both parties²¹ and elections keeps raising its head would suggest that this may be the case.

19 | By only appointing seven women, the president is renegeing on his promise to have 30 per cent women in his government.

20 | In Benin, Rékya Madougou, Minister of Microfinance and Youth and Women's Employment is an exception to the rule. Before she became a minister, she played an important role in civil society and even though she is now a minister, she still keeps in contact with her former colleagues.

21 | For a discussion on the value and effectiveness of women's quotas: Antonie Katharina Nord, "Mehr Geschlechtergerechtigkeit? Zur Frauenquote in Afrika", *GIGA Focus*, 5, 2012, http://giga-hamburg.de/dl/download.php?d=/content/publikationen/pdf/gf_afrika_1205.pdf (accessed 17 Feb 2013).

Burkina Faso has no women's quotas in the political parties, while in Côte d'Ivoire it is left to the parties to decide whether or not they want to apply quotas.

There are also some differences when it comes to elections. A law stipulating a 30 per cent quota for local and parliamentary elections was passed in Burkina Faso in 2009. Côte d'Ivoire, on the other hand, decided against quotas for election candidates. Togo

is currently discussing a potential parity law for election candidates. It could in theory be applied in time for the local elections in March/April 2013. Benin had the same discussion the previous year. Leading non-governmental organisations are also calling for the introduction of a parity law for women in decision-making positions and in government and parliament.

A law stipulating a 30 per cent quota for local and parliamentary elections was passed in Burkina Faso in 2009. Côte d'Ivoire, on the other hand, decided against quotas for election candidates.

It would seem then that quotas are generally considered a potentially effective way of improving women's representation in politics. However, the parties still appear to be somewhat reticent when it comes to introducing quotas themselves.

GREY EMINENCES: DETOURS TO POWER

West Africa has very few women in top political positions. As a result, women who are keen to advance in politics have a lack of role models in the political parties and society. Women who are successful in business or civil society are all the more important in this respect. Many of these role models have good contacts within political circles and a certain amount of influence as a result of their success in other areas. These kinds of women can be found in all the countries of West Africa examined for this study. They can have an influence on important political decisions, whether by endorsing a particular candidate during an election or using their financial resources to save a party from economic ruin. In the eyes of these women, who may be prevented by social conventions and traditions from taking leading roles in the parties or in parliament, this kind of informal influence on the country's politics, without the necessity of being directly involved, can be very attractive.

There are many examples of such women. One of them is the Nana Benz of Togo – the wholesalers who buy colourful Dutch wax cloth and act as distributors, making a fortune along the way. At the head of their association is their president Ayélé Creppy. Other examples include 2010 presidential candidate Brigitte Kafui Adjamagbo-Johnson and Claudina Akakpo, head of the Togolese press agency. Candide Leguede, President of the Association of Women Business Owners in Togo and board member of the Togo Chamber of Industry and Commerce, and Ingrid Awade, head of the country's tax authority, have also made a name for themselves when it comes to having a regular influence on public opinion. Their sister in Burkina Faso would be Alizèta Ouédrao, the president of Burkina Faso's Chamber of Industry and Commerce and a self-made woman who became wealthy dealing in leather and animal skins. Today she is the head of several businesses thanks to her links with the president's family – she is the mother-in-law of the president's younger brother. The status of these women in society guarantees them a certain degree of political influence that may have escaped them if they had opted for a political career.



Women in Togbin: The Nana Benz in Togo have made a fortune selling colourful Dutch wax cloth. | Source: © Elke Erlecke.

WOMEN AND POLITICS IN WEST AFRICA – A NEVER-CHANGING STORY?

This is a man's world: politics in West Africa continues to be a domain dominated by men. The reasons for this can be traced back to childhood when girls are taught to be subordinate and passive. Later, being tied to house and family generally ensures that there is simply no time to pursue a career in politics. If a woman does take the step of entering the dangerous world of politics, it is often their "sisters" who end up causing their career to fail. The efforts made by Marie-Elise Gbédo, candidate in the 2006 and 2011 Benin presidential elections, to improve the lot of the country's women, did not receive sufficient support from the female voters she was trying to help.

It's the same old story. The women lack everything they need – resources, political experience, upbringing, political education and, because of being tied to house and family, the kind of political contacts that would make entering politics easier. Women who want to stand for election have an even harder time recruiting supporters and successfully running an election campaign requires a substantial amount of money.

Socio-cultural discrimination and stereotyping can also be decisive in frustrating their efforts. Social exclusion – "a woman does not speak in public" – is a serious obstacle to the integration of women in political organisations. Women are basically seen as inferior beings who should not be allowed to express their views.²² Permanent lobbying offers a way to overcome the ongoing marginalisation of women in decision-making roles along with the influence of successful role models such as the new Chairperson of the African Union Commission Dlamini-Zuma. Her tip for the progress of women in politics in Africa is "keep at it!" That the women of West Africa have the determination to go the whole way is clear. What is also clear is that they will need every bit of that determination.

22 | The conviction that they should not sit in the same meetings as men is often shared by the women themselves.



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WOMEN IN SENEGAL'S POLITICS AND SOCIETY

PRIESTESSES, PRINCESSES, PRESIDENTS?

Ute Gierczynski-Bocandé

“Heroines du quotidien” is how Senegalese film-maker Sembène Ousmane described the women of his country – heroines of everyday life. Their position in Senegal, one of the poorest countries in the world, is often unenviable – as in many countries, they are always the first victims of poverty, violence, injustice and oppression. Women are discriminated against in Senegalese family law and have no rights to land ownership.¹ The country’s laws are in need of intensive revamping in order to reflect the gender equality that has been trumpeted by both the outgoing government of President Abdoulaye Wade and that of his successor Macky Sall. Despite the many mechanisms of discrimination in all areas of Senegalese society, it still possesses the fundamental requirements to achieve the effective and efficient participation of women in its political, social and economic development. One of these fundamentals, and an important one, is the status of women in Senegal’s pre-colonial history. As in many other countries in Africa, during this era women were held in high esteem. They were considered to be the bedrock of society and often held high positions as priestesses and rulers.

1 | Traditional and Muslim inheritance law is responsible for this discrimination, cf. Adama Coulibaly, “Acces des femmes à la terre au Sénégal. Trois femmes sur quatre n’ont pas accès à la terre”, <http://cncr.org/spip.php?article441> (accessed 18 Feb 2013).

THE ROLE AND STATUS OF WOMEN IN PRE-COLONIAL SENEGAL

In the past and still today, women have played their part in Senegal's society and politics, but in very different contexts. Senegal's population is extremely diverse, consisting of over 20 distinct ethnic groups with very different social structures. The north, an area that in terms of both climate and society is considered part of the Sahel region, is dominated by strictly hierarchical social structures. The largest area of present-day Senegal was ruled by the ancient West African empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhai.² In the 17th and 18th centuries they were replaced by smaller Senegalese kingdoms that form the basis of the country's current 14 regions: Walo and Futa Toro in the north, Diolof, Kayor and Baol in the central north and Gabu, Sine and Saloum in the central south. The empires and kingdoms were all run on a caste system that was partly the result of the division of labour, as in medieval Europe. Such caste systems continue to thrive among certain ethnic groups of the former empires, particularly the Manding, Wolof, Toucouleur and, to some extent, the Serer. However, the strict hierarchical system was combined with a traditional form of democracy.³ From the 7th to the 19th centuries, women often played important, even leading roles in the societies and governments of these realms,⁴ particularly as the mothers, wives and sisters of kings,⁵ but also as queens in their own right and later as fighters against the forces of colonialism.

The empires and kingdoms were all run on a caste system that was partly the result of the division of labour, as in medieval Europe.

The southern part of Senegal (the present-day regions of Casamance and part of Kedougou), was and remains home to many ethnic groups with largely egalitarian social structures, such as the Diola,⁶ Balante and Mankagne in

2 | Cf. Joseph Ki-Zerbo, *Die Geschichte Schwarzafrikas*, Peter Hammer Verlag, Wuppertal, 1979, 137-153; *Histoire Générale de l'Afrique IV.: L'Afrique du XII^{ème} au XVI^{ème} siècle*, UNESCO/NEA, 1985.

3 | Cf. Pathé Diagn, "De la démocratie traditionnelle", *Présence Africaine*, 97, 1976.

4 | *Ibid.*, 32.

5 | Boubaçar Barry, *Le Royaume du Waalo. Le Sénégal avant la Conquête*, François Maspéro, Paris, 1972.

6 | Cf. Françoise Ki-Zerbo, *Les sources du droit chez les Diola du Sénégal*, Karthala, Paris, 1979.

the lower Casamance and Guinea-Bissau, and the Bassari,⁷ Beydik and Coniagi in the Kedougou region and in Guinea. They have a fundamentally democratic concept of political participation that also includes women. The votes of older men and women are afforded greater importance because society holds them in great regard. Older women are considered to be the guardians of tradition and often serve as priestesses. Succession is generally matrilineal, (through the mother's line). This has been the subject of intensive research within Diola⁸ and Bassari⁹ societies, and explains why women in ethnic groups with egalitarian or matrilineal structures play a significant role in all political, economic and spiritual decisions. For example, it was and still is quite common for women to be priestesses in Diola society.¹⁰ Women often play an important role as mediators between the spiritual and material worlds, but they are also indispensable in mediating social conflicts such as the separatist fighting in the Casamance.¹¹

Before Islam became the predominant religion in West Africa, matrilineal succession was common amongst many of the region's ethnic groups. Even today, many Senegalese identify themselves by their maternal line.

In contrast to matrilineal succession, where the male successor of the king's sister inherits the throne, in the matriarchal system women control both power and resources.

In pre-colonial society, matriarchal rule was also widespread among many Senegalese groups. In contrast to matrilineal succession, where the male successor of the king's sister inherits the throne, in the matriarchal system women control both power and resources. They often allowed their eldest son to administer these resources, but they had the final say.¹² The Senegalese lawyer Fatou Kiné Camara has

7 | Cf. Pierre Gnanga Boubane, "Impacts des valeurs et des religions traditionnelles dans la promotion de la citoyenneté", *Dakar, Le dialogue interreligieux*, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), Dakar, 2012, 10.

8 | Cf. Odile Tendeng Weidler, "Développement social dans la société diola", in: *Religion et développement social*, http://kas.de/wf/doc/kas_31260-1522-3-30.pdf (accessed 18 Feb 2013), 34.

9 | Cf. Jean Girard, *Les Bassari du Sénégal. Fils du Caméléon*, Harmattan, Paris, 2000.

10 | Cf. Odile Goerg (ed.), *Perspectives historiques sur le genre en Afrique*, Paris, Harmattan, 2007, 198.

11 | Cf. Séverine Awenengo Dalberto, "Ethnicité Joola et genre: femmes et constructions identitaires en Casamance au XX^{ème} siècle (Sénégal)", in: Goerg, n. 10, 209.

12 | Cf. Issa Laye Thiaw, "Le matriarcat, source de l'acquisition des biens et de légitimation des pouvoirs politiques dans le ▶

conducted research on how female power is legitimised by their spiritual power, and stated: “Women are the guardians of knowledge. The power of knowledge (both scientific and mystical) and the position of women in Africa are closely linked, women hold the command staff (or royal sceptre) as a sign that it is they who have the knowledge.”¹³

PRE-COLONIAL AND ANTI-COLONIAL HEROINES

When history lessons in Senegal turn to the question of powerful women, the first names mentioned are those of Queen Ndieumbout Mbodj and her sister, Queen Ndate Yalla, who ruled over the kingdom of Waalo on the Senegal River in the mid-19th century. They were

forced to defend their kingdom against invasions by the Maurs from the Trarza region of present-day Mauretania and against the advances of the French colonial forces.

Although power officially lay with her husband, it was Linguere Ndieumbout who actually headed up the government and signed the treaties with the French.

Although power officially lay with her husband, it was Linguere (Queen) Ndieumbout who headed up the government and signed treaties with the French. After her death, Linguere Ndate Yalla took over as head of state and ordered a military campaign against the French invaders under General Faidherbe. But she was defeated and forced into exile in the neighbouring kingdom of Kayor, where she died just one year later – the last queen of Waalo.¹⁴

“Death is better than slavery” was the motto of the “Amazons of Nder”,¹⁵ who set themselves on fire on a Tuesday in November 1819 in order to escape slavery. During an attack by Maur invaders, the women of the village of Nder dressed up in their absent husbands’ clothes and fought against the soldiers, forcing them to retreat. Their pride wounded, the soldiers marshalled their forces and returned. The women gathered in a large hut and set themselves on fire, driven by their desperation to become heroines and symbols of national pride.

Sénégal d’autrefois”, *Projet de Temple des femmes initiées*, COSEF, CREDILA, IDHP, Dakar, 2007, 30.

13 | Cf. Fatou Kiné Camara, *Pouvoir et justice dans la tradition des peuples noirs. Philosophie et pratique*, Harmattan Etudes africaines, Paris, 2007, 193 (translation by the author).

14 | Barry, n. 5.

15 | Cf. Sylvia Serbin, *Reines et heroines d’Afrique*, Sepia, Paris, 2011.

The passenger ferry that links Dakar with the southern region of Casamance bears the name of a heroine from the colonial era: Aline Sitoé Diatta. During the early years of the First World War, this royal priestess from Kabrousse

Aline Sitoé Diatta sparked a civil resistance movement across the whole of the Casamance region and was finally imprisoned in 1943 and deported to Timbuktu, where she died shortly afterwards.

in the Casamance called on the people of the region to resist French colonialism and to refuse the compulsory surrender of part of their rice harvest to the colonial troops. She sparked a civil resistance movement across the whole of the Casamance region and was eventually imprisoned in 1943 and deported to Timbuktu, where she died shortly afterwards. Aline Sitoé Diatta has become a symbol of the resistance, but also of cultural pride. Among the Diola, the king is also a priest, which explains the high symbolic value of Aline Sitoé Diatta for the status of women in Diola society.¹⁶

But recalling the many women who held positions of power in pre-colonial times should not blind us to the fact that women have been and remain severely under-represented in Senegalese politics. However, after a gender parity law was passed by the National Assembly on 24 May 2010, they now make up almost half of all MPs in the Senegalese parliament. But forty years went by between Caroline Faye Diop, the first female MP (1963-1978), later Senegal's Social Minister and the country's first female Prime Minister, Mame Madior Boye (2000-2001). Three women have been candidates for the presidency: in 2000, Marième Ly was the first, and for a long time the only, female presidential candidate in Senegal. However, she withdrew her candidacy shortly before the election. It was not until the elections in 2012 that two women stood for the presidency: law professor Amsatou Sow Sidibé and fashion designer Diouma Dieng.¹⁷

16 | Cf. Fatou Sarr, "De Ndaté Yalla à Aline Sitoé, un siècle de résistance", Communication faite au Musée de la femme de Gorée, 2007, http://senggenre-ucad.org/Ndatt%E9_Yalla%20_%E0_%20Aline_Sitoye_Diatta.pdf (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

17 | Yandé Diop, "La présidentielle de 2012 Les sénégalais pas prêts à confier les rênes à une dame", 7 Feb 2012, Rewmi.com, http://rewmi.com/_a56303.html (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT UNDER SENGHOR, DIOUF, WADE AND SALL

The number of women at ministerial level is still very low. The first governments of the socialist Senghor era (1960-1980) had only two women cabinet members, while under the (also socialist) administration of Abdou Diouf (1980-2000) three to four women were given ministerial posts. The proportion of women increased slightly but not significantly in the liberal governments, increasing from five to eight. In view of the fact that the Senghor cabinets were smaller (20 ministers), whereas later under President Wade they expanded to 40 ministers, it is clear that the numbers of women in government actually stagnated. It is, however, to the credit of Senegal's third President, Abdoulaye Wade (2000-2012), that he appointed Mame Madior Boye, an internationally-renowned lawyer and Senegal's Justice Minister since 2000, to the position of Prime Minister in 2001.¹⁸ But perhaps the fact that Boye was not a member of a political party contributed to the fact that she was replaced just two years later. She and her government also attracted strong criticism after the "Diola" ferry capsized¹⁹ in September 2002.

It is to the credit of Senegal's third President, Abdoulaye Wade, that he appointed Mame Madior Boye, an internationally-renowned lawyer and Senegal's Justice Minister since 2000, to the position of Prime Minister in 2001.

After the change of government under Macky Sall in October 2012,²⁰ seven women were given ministerial posts.²¹ Two key ministries are now headed up by women. Third in the political hierarchy, lawyer and human rights activist Aminata Touré is proving to be a fresh breeze for the Senegalese judiciary. She has taken some difficult and unpopular

18 | Cf. "Les femmes au Sénégal", *Cahiers de l'Alternance*, Centre d'Études des Sciences et Techniques de l'Information (CESTI) and KAS, Graphi Plus, Dakar, 2006, 83-84.

19 | Cf. Ute Gierczynski-Bocandé, "Regierung Senegals gerät nach Schiffskatastrophe ins Wanken", KAS-Länderbericht, 7 Feb 2002, <http://kas.de/senegal-mali/de/publications/897> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

20 | Government of the Republic of Senegal, <http://www.gouv.sn/-Le-Gouvernement> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

21 | The government of 26 Mar 2012 comprised 25 ministers, since 12 Oct 2012 it has been 31, but the proportion of women remained unchanged.

decisions,²² particularly with regard to the criminal prosecution of high-ranking members of the Wade regime. The lifting of parliamentary immunity for three former ministers in order to investigate their alleged appropriation of state funds sent shock waves across Senegal at the beginning of 2013. These accusations are now being vehemently contested by the former ruling PDS party, which is now in opposition.²³



Former Prime Minister Mame Madior Boye was harshly criticised after the “Diola” ferry capsized in September 2002. Here she meets survivors. | Source: © Seyllou / picture-alliance / dpa.

Next in the hierarchy comes the Health and Social Minister Awa Coll Seck, who, like Aminata Touré has had an international career and is a widely-respected expert. She has set clear and systematic goals for her health reforms and is keen to work closely with the trade unions that have shut down some parts of Senegal’s health system for weeks on end.²⁴

22 | B. Dione, “Aminata Touré ministre de la justice: ,Il n’y a aucune dimension politique ou politicienne”, *Le Soleil online*, 18 Dec 2012, http://lesoleil.sn/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=23623 (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

23 | Cf. Agence de Presse Sénégalaise (APS), “Les Libéraux et démocrates veulent faire annuler la levée de l’immunité parlementaire de trois députés”, 10 Jan 2013, http://www.aps.sn/articles.php?id_article=107724 (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

24 | Eugène Kaly, “8^{ème} congrès du SUTSAS: Awa Marie Coll Seck demande aux syndicalistes d’arrêter la rétention des données sanitaires”, *Le Soleil online*, 22 Dec 2012, http://lesoleil.sn/index.php?id=23730%3A&option=com_content&view=article (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

Three female ministers from the socialist era were reinstated after the election victory of the liberal Macky Sall as part of a grand coalition formed before the presidential election in order to stand against Abdoulaye Wade. Aminata Mbengue Ndiaye, the socialist mayor of the state capital Louga was appointed Minister of Animal Husbandry. Responsibility for agriculture was split away from this post, and such politically-motivated actions explain the country's large number of ministries. Khoudia Mbaye of the former communist LD MPT party was appointed Minister for Urban Development and Habitat, and former socialist luminary Mata Sy Diallo, who is now a member of the Social-Democratic party, looked after trade and industry for the first three months of the government, but had to step down for health reasons. With his appointment of Arame Ndoye as Minister for Regional Planning and Administration²⁵ Macky Sall sent a message: his colleague of many years on issues of decentralisation and a committed member of the Alliance pour la République APR Yakaar, Macky Sall's party (APR) was to be the person who would reform Senegal's decentralisation policy and streamline the regional authorities. This appears to be laying the foundations for the continued success of the APR Yakaar at the local elections in 2014.

Aminata Tall served for many years as a minister and Chief-of-Staff under Abdoulaye Wade and was also mayor of Diourbel. Over recent years she has stepped away from Wade, setting up her own political group, which then merged with Sall's APR.²⁶ After his election victory, he once again appointed the experienced politician and administrator as Chief-of-Staff, a move that astonished and even enraged some of his party colleagues.²⁷ When

25 | Interview with Arame Ndoye about the challenges of the regional authorities: "Mme Arame Ndoye, ministre de l'Amenagement du Territoire et des Collectivites locales: 'Le Sommet Africites permettra de situer le rôle et la place des territoires dans la construction du continent africain'", *Le Soleil online*, http://lesoleil.sn/index.php?option=com_content&id=23204 (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

26 | Cf. Arona Basse, "Fusion entre Apr et Set Sellal: Aminata Tall et Macky Sall, pour le meilleur et pour le pire", *Seneweb.com*, http://seneweb.com/news/Politique/_n_81960.html (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

27 | *SenewebNews*, "Aminata Tall sur les attaques dirigées contre sa personne: 'J'ai demandé à ma base de ne pas réagir'", *Seneweb.com*, http://seneweb.com/news/Politique/_n_81556.html (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

the President of the Economic and Social Council died in the middle of January, Macky Sall quickly appointed Aminata Tall as his successor.²⁸ Now a woman is heading up the country's second most important institution, as since the Senate was abolished in October 2012, the Economic and Social Council has been expanded to become the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, making it the most important body in Senegal after the Parliament.²⁹ Before last year's elections, Aminata Tall was viewed as a possible presidential candidate – the future will show how her career develops.



Awa Coll Seck, minister for health and social security, has set clear and systematic goals for her health reforms. | Source: Robert Scoble / flickr (CC BY).

WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT

Caroline Faye³⁰ was the first MP to take a seat in Senegal's National Assembly. The elementary school teacher and wife of MP and Minister Demba Diop was elected into parliament

28 | Cf. APS, "Aminata Tall portée à la tête du Conseil économique, social et environnemental", http://aps.sn/articles.php?id_article=108065 (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

29 | The members of the Council are hand-picked by the Head of State and appointed for a five-year term to act as counsellors to the government, Parliament and the courts. The selection of its members is not impeccably democratic, but then this was also true of the now defunct Senate, where two-thirds of senators were appointed by the President and one-third by the so-called "big voters" with close ties to the regime.

30 | Cf. also: CESTI and KAS, n. 18, 78.

during the second legislative period of independent Senegal in 1963 and for many years was the only woman among 80 MPs. Caroline Faye was also the only female board member of the political office of the Bloc démocratique sénégalais (BDS), the forerunner of the PS, the Socialist Party of Senegal under the country's first president, Léopold Sédar Senghor. Later she was Chair of the Socialist Women's Association of Senegal for many years. In 1964 she became Deputy Secretary-General of the Pan-African Women's Association and Vice-President of the Senegalese Women's Union. In 1978 Senghor made the widow of Demba Diop – who was assassinated in 1967 – Minister for Women and Social Affairs.³¹

In 1973, exactly ten years after Caroline Faye entered Parliament, Awa Dia Thiam³² became the second woman to win a seat.³³ She had also honed her political skills in the Socialist Party, which was effectively the only party in Senegal at the time. After another ten years, the “Mother of the Socialist Party”, Adja Arame Diene,³⁴ joined the National Assembly, where she represented the interests of Senegalese women until 2001, just four years before her death. The Chair of the Socialist Women's Association was the first MP to push for the national Wolof language to be allowed in parliament. Until then, the sole official language was French, despite the fact that it was spoken by only ten per cent of the population. With this, Arame Diene made a significant step towards greater linguistic democracy in parliament and society.

Adja Arame Diene, was the first MP to push for the national Wolof language to be allowed in parliament. Until then, the sole official language was French, despite the fact that it was spoken by only ten per cent of the population.

In 1978, the liberal Coumba Ba was the first opposition female MP to be elected to parliament. She entered the house immediately after the liberal Parti Démocratique

31 | Ben Cheikh, “Hommage: Caroline Faye, pionnière de l’émancipation de la femme”, *Le Soleil online*, 23 Mar 2011, http://lesoleil.sn/?option=com_content&view=article&id=2751 (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

32 | Cf. CESTI and KAS, n. 18, 81.

33 | APS, “Awa Dia Thiam, deuxième députée du Sénégal: Une grande militante tombée en politique par un curieux hasard”, 27 Jun 2012, http://aps-sn.net/articles.php?id_article=98525 (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

34 | Dakar actu, “Adja Arame Diène, la fidélité érigée au rang de culte”, 21 Jun 2012, http://dakaractu.com/_a25638.html (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

The next generation of female politicians had rich parliamentary and ministerial careers, among them Aminata Tall, the current Chair of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council.

Sénégalais (PDS) was founded by former opposition politician and later president Abdoulaye Wade, and she represented the party in parliament from 1978 to 1983 and again

from 1988 to 1998. The next generation of female politicians had rich parliamentary and ministerial careers, among them Aminata Tall, the current Chair of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council. Like Awa Diop and Aida Mbodj, she was to become one of the first really strong women of the liberal regime, and indeed had already held ministerial and parliamentary posts before Abdoulaye Wade came to power in 2000.³⁵

Although strong women in the major parties have played their part in parliamentary debates and decisions and the proportion of women in politics has grown steadily, it is still clear that up until the last legislative period in the National Assembly women were very under-represented.³⁶ The figures speak for themselves: in 1963 the proportion of women stood at 0.8 per cent, by 1983 it had grown to seven per cent and to 13 per cent in 1993. By 2010 the figure still remained below 25 per cent. It was only with the passing of the gender parity law in 2010 that the number of women in the National Assembly rose to 43 per cent.³⁷ The legislative proposal was passed by the National Assembly on 24 May 2010, followed by the Senate shortly afterwards, stating that at least half of the candidates parties put up for election had to be women.³⁸ However, absolute gender equality was not achieved due to various procedural difficulties. Thus, for example, in the 2012 parliamentary elections only one party had a woman at the top of their list of candidates. Women continue to be the minority in the Executive Committee of the National Assembly, making up just six out of 16 members.

35 | Cf. CESTI and KAS, n. 18, 87-89.

36 | Cf. Aissatou De, "Femmes à l'Assemblée nationale du Sénégal", *Démocratie, où est tu?*, COSEF, Dakar 1999, 63-70.

37 | Cf. Ute Gierczynski-Bocandé, "Parlamentswahlen in Senegal", KAS-Länderbericht, Jul 2012, 2, http://kas.de/wf/doc/kas_31564-1522-1-30.pdf (accessed 21 Jan 2013); Souleymane Faye, "Percée des femmes à l'Assemblée nationale", Inter Press Service (IPS), 12 Jul 2012, http://ipsinternational.org/fr/_note.asp?idnews=7122 (accessed 21 Jan 2013); AFP, "L'Assemblée nationale adopte la loi sur la 'parité absolue'", *Jeune Afrique*, 15 May 2010, <http://jeuneafrique.com/Article/DEPAFP20100515185422> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

38 | AFP, *ibid.*

WOMEN IN POLITICAL PARTIES – FROM MAYOR TO PRESIDENT?

The political parties reflect social structures, so it is hardly surprising that the active members of many political parties tend to be men. In some of the parties, strong women have become “figureheads”, such as Aminata Mbengue Ndiaye and Aissatou Tall Sall in the PS or Aida Mbodj and Aminata Diallo in the PDS. Their real political weight tends to become obvious in the local elections. The aforementioned politicians were mayors of their cities or towns,³⁹ but it is still the case that only seven women hold mayoral office across Senegal’s 166 towns and communes.

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At least the number of women on city and local councils has increased slightly over recent years. But it remains to be seen whether the gender parity law will lead to a significant rise in the number of women elected in the local elections due to be held in 2014. The Vice-President of the Regional Council in Thies, Elene Tine, was for many years the party spokesperson for the Alliance des forces de progrès (AFP), led by the current President of the National Assembly, Moustapha Niassé. But when this popular and charismatic politician failed to be given a ministerial post or the top position on the party list, she stood for election as the second candidate for the party under Marabouts Djamil Mansour Sy and was elected to parliament.⁴⁰

The real work takes place at party level. As long as almost all the party leaders and chairs are men, equality for women in Senegalese politics is still a long way off. There is only one female party leader: Marième Wone Ly founded the Parti pour la Renaissance Africaine (PARENA) in the 1990s. In 2000 she was the only woman to stand against President Wade, but withdrew her candidacy. However, her failed attempt to gain the Republic’s highest office did not dent her success as a political opinion-former. Ly supported Wade during his whole term of office and after Macky Sall’s victory in 2012 she let it be known that she was once again

39 | Koffigan E. Adigbli, “Les femmes toujours marginalisées dans les élections”, IPS, 2 Apr 2009, http://ipsinternational.org/fr/_note.asp?idnews=5287 (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

40 | Cf. Gierczynski-Bocandé, n. 37, 3.

prepared to work with the government.⁴¹ In this way she showed herself to be a politician who was open to compromise, but in doing so demonstrated a lack of clear profile. She also has no local political base, as was the case with two other female candidates in the 2012 presidential elections.

Amsatou Sow Sidibé failed to achieve even two per cent of the vote in the presidential elections in 2012, and other female candidates such as fashion designer Diouma Dieng also lagged well behind the two per cent mark.

In the run-up to the 2012 presidential elections, the law professor and Director of the Senegalese Institute for Human Rights and Peace at the University of Dakar (Institut des droits humains et de la paix, IDHP), Amsatou Sow Sidibé, took over as head of a citizens' movement without party status and represented them as a presidential candidate. But Sow Sidibé failed to achieve even two per cent of the vote, and other female candidates such as fashion designer Diouma Dieng also lagged well behind the two per cent mark – to no-one's surprise. Observers were more astonished to see how the utterly politically inexperienced Diouma Dieng made it onto the list of candidates, whereas Amsatou Sow Sidibé and her Organisation CAR Lennen⁴² (Convergence des acteurs pour la défense des valeurs républicaines/Convergence of stakeholders for the defence of republican values) had been on the political scene for some time before these elections.⁴³ Amsatou Sow Sidibés' commitment to equality for women, peace and the fight against injustice was not rewarded with success in the presidential elections, but she is now involved in the political decision-making process as an advisor with ministerial status.⁴⁴

41 | Cf. "Transhumance: Marieme Iy wone de parena veut abandonner abdoulaye wade pour Macky Sall", *Seninfos.com*, <http://seninfos.com/index.php/actualite/7745> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

42 | Cf. Sénégal 2012, "Amsatou Sow Sidibé Profile Page", <http://sunu2012.sn/index.php/component/comprofiler/userprofile/91.html> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

43 | Cf. Mansour Ndiaye, "Amsatou Sow Sidibé reparle de sa candidature en 2012: 'Je ne joue pas!'" (Amsatou Sow Sidibé spricht über ihre Kandidatur: 'Das ist kein Spiel für mich!'), *L'office*, 9 Mar 2011, <http://loffice.sn/AMSATOU-SOW-SIDIBE-REPARLE-DE-SA.html> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

44 | Cf. Tapa Tounkara, "Amsatou Sow Sidibé nommée ministre-conseiller de Macky Sall" (Amsatou Sow zur Beraterin mit Ministerrang ernannt), 9 May 2012, *Rewmi.com*, http://rewmi.com/_a61444.html (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

It appears likely that Senegal will have to wait some years to have a female president, as there seem to be few obvious candidates among the younger generation of women in the political parties. But the situation can quickly change. More and more committed young women are beginning to emerge to the forefront of political parties and civil society organisations.

LAW AND RELIGION:

WHAT IS THE POSITION OF WOMEN?

In view of the high status afforded to women in the pre-colonial and pre-Islamic societies of West Africa, it is clear that the colonial era and the spread of Islam have both played a major role in diluting the economic role of women. In Senegal, depending on the particular situation, three different legal systems apply in family and land law:⁴⁵ traditional, Islamic and modern, the latter of which being arguably the most influential. This is problematic, since the laws are based on French family law from the de Gaulle era and on the Code Napoléon.

The colonial era and the spread of Islam have both played a major role in diluting the economic role of women.

Therefore, in Senegalese family law the husband is still the head of the household. He makes all the family decisions such as where to live. The massive spread of Islam across the country, particularly since the 19th century, has also led to discrimination against women in cases relating to family and land. In Senegal, inheritance is governed by modern laws, but, if the family desires so, it can also come under Sharia law. According to experts, this Islamic law represented progress for the position of women in Arab societies during the Middle Ages.⁴⁶ But in the modern state of Senegal with its matriarchal traditions,⁴⁷ the parallel application of different legal systems no longer seems appropriate.

45 | Cf. Serge Guinchard, "Le mariage coutumier en droit sénégalais", *La revue internationale de droit comparé*, 1978, Vol. 30, No. 3, 811-832.

46 | Cf. Abdou Aziz Kebe, "Islam, droits de l'Homme et famille", *Communication au Forum universitaire régional, Famille et droits de l'Homme en Afrique de l'Ouest francophone*, Université de Ouagadougou, 25-28 Feb 2008.

47 | Cf. Fatou Kiné Camara, "Les femmes et le pouvoir politique dans la tradition noire africaine", *ANKH*, No. 18/19/20, 2009/2010/2011.

Thus, in practice it is not uncommon for a woman's inheritance to only be half that of a man.

Senegal's women lawyers⁴⁸ of the Association des Juristes Sénégalaises (AJS), the Senegalese Women's Council Conseil Sénégalais des Femmes (COSEF) and numerous other women's organisations have long been fighting for equality before the law. The prestigious Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire (African Institute of Basic Research, IFAN)

Senegal has signed countless international conventions on women's equality but implementation has so far been inadequate.

attached to Dakar University set up a gender laboratory⁴⁹ under the feminist professor Fatou Sow Sarr. In 2009 the AJS organised a symposium on family law with the aim of harmonising Senegalese family law. Senegal has signed countless international conventions on women's equality but implementation has so far been inadequate.⁵⁰ There have been one or two successes, such as the requirement for equality on party lists, but there remains a great deal to be done. Women still do not have the same rights to agricultural land as men. Many practices considered normal in the past⁵¹ were complicated by the introduction of colonial and Islamic laws. Among the Serer and Diola, women had always managed the land, whereas nowadays it is difficult for them to have any land control at all.

The AJS is pressing for changes in the law to allow women and men the same rights to agricultural land, and they are raising awareness among lawyers, certain politicians and women's organisations across the country. They have had some successes in a range of areas. The President of the AJS, Marie-Delphine Ndiaye, stresses that their work has led to women now being able to insure their husbands and children, and to children being permitted to take their mother's nationality.⁵² The current Minister of Justice,

48 | Cf. *La Citoyenne. La revue de l'Association des Juristes Sénégalaises*, Dakar, Jul 2007, 7.

49 | Cf. Laboratoire Genre et Recherche scientifique à l'Institut Fondamental D'Afrique Noire (Ifan), <http://www.ceafri.net/site/spip.php?article39&artsuite=3> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

50 | Symposium sur l'harmonisation du code de la famille avec la constitution et les conventions. Signées, ratifiées et publiées par le Sénégal Rapport scientifique du symposium organisé par AJS, FKA et UN droits de l'homme, Dakar, Jul 2009.

51 | Cf. Thiaw, n. 12.

52 | Cf. AWA, "L'AJS pose la problématique de l'accès des femmes à la terre", <http://awa-net.net/L-AJS-pose-la-problematique-de-> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

Aminata Touré, is an active and committed member of the AJS, along with the former Chair of the Constitutional Council, Mireille Ndiaye, the former Chair of the Supreme Court, Andresia Vaz, and of course former Prime Minister Mame Madior Boye, who is currently working for international organisations. The African Union Commission appointed her Special Representative for the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, and she also often acts as a mediator in African conflict regions.

Penda Mbow, a university professor in medieval and religious history, has been working for women's equality for many years through her commitment in the association "Citizens' Movement" (Mouvement Citoyen) and her academic activities. She has particularly opposed the attempts by fundamental Islamist organisations to impose Sharia law on family law: "Islam and modernity are not incompatible. If we approach the texts with a 'reflexive method of interpretation', then Islam allows Muslims to make their own personal interpretations that reflect the changes taking place in society. Faith is not the abdication of intelligence; on the contrary, Islam is a religion of knowledge. The development of the family, women and the relationship between Islam and politics cannot and should not be challenged."⁵³

The activist professor, who has often come under attack by Islamist extremists because of her bluntly expressed opinions, was awarded the Pope John Paul II Peace Prize⁵⁴ in 2011 for her outstanding contribution to inter-religious dialogue and to understanding between religions and nations. In Senegal, Mbow is treated as a figurehead for civilians' movements because she has been working for greater grass-roots democracy, transparency and participation since the Senghor era. Trust Africa singled her out for praise for upholding these principles.⁵⁵ After the election

53 | Cf. Penda Mbow, "Contexte de la Réforme du Code de la Famille au Sénégal", *Droit et Cultures. Revue internationale interdisciplinaire*, L'Harmattan, Paris, No. 59, 2010.

54 | Cf. Foreign Office of Senegal, Embassy in Vatican, "Penda Mbow reçoit le Prix Jean-Paul II pour la paix", <http://ambasenromevatican.over-blog.org/article-penda-mbow-re-oit-le-prix-jean-paul-ii-pour-la-paix-74466794.html> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

55 | Cf. OMD3 de TrustAfrica, "Penda Mbow Sénégal", Mar 2011, <http://omd3blog.trustafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Penda-Mbow.pdf> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

of Macky Sall she declared her readiness to work constructively with the new government, and she was appointed the President's personal representative to the International Organisation of La Francophonie.⁵⁶

Although the often blind association of traditional and modern law and religion has frequently led to discrimination against women, it should also be noted that women have played their part in Senegal's religious sphere. The patriarchal, Abrahamic religions are of course male-dominated in terms of their hierarchies, and the name of the Casamance ferry is all that is left of the pre-colonial high-priestess. But in reality, women are a driving force behind Senegal's religious life, as much for Muslims⁵⁷ and Christians⁵⁸ as for the traditional religions. Within their organisations they are working to achieve greater democracy, more dialogue and an active civil society.

In reality, women are a driving force behind Senegal's religious life, as much for Muslims and Christians as for the traditional religions.

Many women's groups are involved in the fight against the genital mutilation of girls, child marriage and early pregnancies. In the south east and south of Senegal, female genital mutilation is still a common traditional practice. Although it has been illegal for over ten years, the custom has not died out.⁵⁹ A solution to this problem can only be found by synergising the actors and actions of the legal system and by raising awareness.⁶⁰ Countless civil society

56 | Cf. "Sénégal: Penda Mbow nommée Représentant personnelle de Macky Sall à la Francophonie", *Diasporas.fr*, 22 Dec 2012, <http://diasporas.fr/senegal-penda-mbow-nommee-representant-speciale-de-macky-sall-a-la-francophonie> (accessed 21 Jan 2013); *Afrik.com*, "Femmes et religion au Sénégal: quel espace aujourd'hui?", 14 Mar 2009, <http://afrik.com/article16421> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

57 | Cf. *Afrik.com*, *ibid*.

58 | Interview with the President of the Catholic Women's Association, Clémentine Diop: "Les femmes catholiques plaident pour le retour du dialogue", *Seneweb.com*, 18 Feb 2009, http://www.seneweb.visiobooks.com/news/Societe/_n_21237.html (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

59 | Cf. Ute Gierczynski-Bocandé, "Recht haben oder Resultate? Der schwierige Kampf gegen Mädchenbeschneidung in Senegal", *KAS-Länderbericht*, 20 Apr 2010, http://kas.de/wf/doc/kas_19375-1522-1-30.pdf (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

60 | Cf. "Abandon de l'excision, programme conjoint: L'Unfpa engagé dans le processus d'abandon total de l'excision d'ici 2015", *Le Soleil online*, 5 May 2012, http://lesoleil.sn/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14877 (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

organisations, particularly women's organisations, are active in this area, and are also tackling the issues of child marriage, early pregnancy and school enrolment for girls. For example, FAWE Senegal is working with teachers and providing girls with scholarships and other incentives to stay in school.⁶¹

WOMEN ARE ORGANISING

Various women's associations have come together to form federations, such as the Fédération des Associations des Femmes du Sénégal (FAFS),⁶² in order to promote the interests of women and girls in a focused and effective way. They are working to improve female representation in specific areas and in positions of power generally, along with promoting access to the full range of school education for girls. The association also fights for equal opportunities in all areas and for more education and awareness-raising with regard to social issues, healthcare and politics.

At grass-roots level, in the villages and towns, just about all the women are organised. Every village has women's groups in the form of savings or credit clubs that are now involved with greater or lesser success

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in the economic life of the community. Even the women pounding the millet, washing the clothes and cleaning the houses in the slums of Dakar have come together to form self-help groups. These groups are quite necessary, because life for women in Senegal is extremely hard. It is appropriate to echo the well-known Senegalese film-maker Sembène Ousmane and call them all "Heroines of everyday life": these washerwomen of Dakar, salt prospectors of Fatick, roadside peanut sellers and the village women who haul water, wood and food for miles in order to feed their families.⁶³

61 | Cf. ExcelAfrica, "FAWE-SENEGAL: Une force de plaidoyer pour la réussite des filles à l'école", 3 Feb 2011, <http://excelafrica.com/fr/2011/02/03/education-fawe-senegal> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

62 | Courants de Femmes, Fédération des Associations de Femmes Sénégalaises (FAFS), http://courantsdefemmes.free.fr/Assoces/Senegal/FAFS/fafs_senegal.html (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

63 | Cf. "Les damnées de la capitale", in: CESTI and KAS, n. 18, 111-125.

Small groups often join together at a higher level in order to receive educational and other assistance. Village groups organise themselves into district groups and district groups into regional groups. One example of the way groups have worked together to form an efficient production and distribution network is Groupe de recherche et d'appui aux initiatives féminines (GRAIF).⁶⁴ It began with just a few groups coming together and now comprises more than 100 women's groups with over 6,000 members. The initiative began with three women's groups that planted beans together during the rainy season, selling the harvest at a profit and investing the proceeds. This resulted in an association headed up by Josephine Ndione that offered its members educational opportunities in areas such as literacy, family planning, health, civic education and leadership. Over the last few years it has been successfully running the production and distribution network for local produce in three of the country's regions.⁶⁵ The training in political leadership has also led to an increase in the number of women on the local councils in the areas involved – proof positive that education and information not only improve women's standards of living but also result in increased political representation.

WOMEN IN THE MEDIA

Media reporting makes a significant contribution to changing people's perceptions. Certain women have had a major influence on the Senegalese media and have played an important role in improving the image of women.

The fact that the public image of women in Senegal has changed over recent years is also in part thanks to the media. Media reporting of course makes a significant contribution to changing people's perceptions of the needs, problems and rights of women.

Certain women have had a major influence on the Senegalese media and have played an important role in improving the image of women in society, including Annette Mbaye

64 | Cf. Joséphine Ndione and Séverine Benoit, "Critères, conditions et démarche d'appui du GRAIF (Thiès, Sénégal)", Jun 2001, <http://base.d-p-h.info/fr/fiches/premierdph/fiche-premierdph-5599.html> (accessed 21 Jan 2013); see also: Ute Gierczynski-Bocandé, "Forum über die Rolle der Frauen in der Sozialen Marktwirtschaft. Mehr als 2,000 Kleinunternehmerinnen feierten ihren Erfolg in Wirtschaft und Politik", KAS conference paper, Mar 2010, http://kas.de/wf/doc/kas_19090-1522-1-30.pdf (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

65 | Cf. CESTI and KAS, n. 18, 130 et seq.

d'Erneville,⁶⁶ Eugénie Aw and Diattou Cissé Badiane. The 87-year-old D'Erneville has been a trailblazer for women and for Senegal's media. She was one of the first women of the colonial era to study in Senegal and France. After returning home she was for many years programme director of the national radio station, RTS, even before the country gained its independence.⁶⁷ In 1957 she founded the first African women's magazine, *Femmes du Soleil* (Women of the Sun), which was later to change its name to *Awa* (Eva). She also wrote children's stories⁶⁸ and contributed to various magazines, and in 1994 she established the Henriette Bathily Women's Museum on the former slave island of Gorée.⁶⁹

The journalism academy at the University of Dakar Centre d'Études des Sciences et Techniques de l'Information (CESTI) was headed up for six years by the internationally-renowned journalist Eugénie Aw – the first woman to be appointed head of a major university institute. Eugénie Aw has had an eventful career: she was imprisoned twice when she was a young politician in a banned party, went on to study journalism in Paris and was one of the first female journalists to work on the national daily newspaper *Dakar Matin*, later renamed *Le Soleil*.⁷⁰ For the catholic magazine *Afrique Nouvelle* she investigated the conflict regions of East and Central Africa. As a renowned expert on women in communication, media and conflict, community radio and

66 | Cf. Senegal Célébrités, "Biographie Annette Mbaye d'Erneville", <http://senegalcelebrities.com/biographie-annette-mbaye-d-erneville.html> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

67 | The University of Western Australia (archive), "Annette Mbaye d'Erneville", 23 Dec 1995, <http://aflit.arts.uwa.edu.au/MbayeErnevilleAnnette.html> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

68 | Radio France Internationale (rfi), "1. Annette Mbaye d'Erneville (rediffusion)", 30 Dec 2011, <http://rfi.fr/emission/20111230-1-annette-mbaye-erneville-rediffusion> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

69 | Musée de la Femme Henriette Bathily, <http://mufem.org> (accessed 21 Jan 2013). D'Erneville's son, the film director William Mbaye, produced the documentary film "Mère bi" (The Mother), painting an impressive portrait of this media pioneer in Senegal. Cf. "Annette Mbaye d'Erneville: Mère-bi", African Women in Cinema Blog, 21 Sep 2010, <http://africanwomenincinema.blogspot.com/2010/09/annette-mbaye-derneville-mere-bi.html> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

70 | Bassératou Kindo, "Eugénie AW Rokhaya, Directrice du centre d'étude des sciences et technique de l'information de Dakar (Sénégal): 'J'ai fait la prison deux fois dans l'exercice de mon métier'", lefaso.net, 7 Oct 2010, <http://lefaso.net/spip.php?article38839> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

development⁷¹ and as the chair of many journalists' and media experts' organisations, Aw is a clear example of how the role of "media woman" can make a lasting contribution to changing society's perception of women.



Eugénie Aw is considered to be a media pioneer. She directed the Academy of Journalism, CESTI, in Dakar from 2005-2011. Depicted here (on the right) with graduates (left and middle) and the author (second from the left) at a graduation ceremony in 2010. | Source: © KAS Dakar.

Diattou Cissé Badiane, the third outstanding example of a woman in the Senegalese media, was head of the media union SYNPICS.⁷² Under her leadership, SYNPICS grew to become one of the country's most influential trade unions and achieved many goals that no-one had even dared to imagine just a few years before. These included fair collective wage agreements for journalists in all media and their use in various press outlets; improvements to the position of women in the media; and the expansion of press freedom while still respecting journalistic ethics. On TV, the journalist also did not mince her words when defending the interests of women in the media and society.

71 | WorldCat Identities, "Aw, Eugenie", <http://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-no2010-95634> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

72 | Ndèye Fatou Diouf, "Diattou Cissé sort par la grande porte", *Sud Quotidien*, 5 Dec 2012, http://sudonline.sn/diattou-cisse-sort-par-la-grande-porte_a_11485.html (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

Simply by being role models, these three media pioneers have contributed to changing perceptions of women by the media and in the media – and also in politics. During the colonial era and shortly after independence, women were considered to be somehow tarnished if they expressed themselves in public, particularly if they went up against prevailing opinion. But these committed women broke down taboos, in the process enduring mockery and derision, prison sentences and threats – and in the end achieved greater freedom and rights for the women of Senegal.

Senegalese women authors have also played their part in the struggle for women's rights. In her award-winning novel "Such a long letter",⁷³ Mariama Bader crafted a monument to the liberation of women from family constraints and polygamy.⁷⁴ Research and teaching at Senegalese universities is still male-dominated, but more and more women are gaining professorships, and some of these female professors have become internationally renowned. But it is still likely to be a long time before the University of Dakar has a female rector.

BUSINESSWOMEN AND MORE

Businesswomen are both rare as well as common in Senegal, depending on one's understanding of the term. As previously mentioned, Senegal has many women's groups that produce, market and even export local products. In this area, women are much more active than their male colleagues – they initially organise themselves in order to improve their family's standard of living, and sometimes they achieve remarkable results. But in "big business" businesswomen are rarities. Almost all the country's large corporations are run by men and there are very few female managers. The largest national employers' association, the Conseil National du Patronat (CNP) has one association of businesswomen among its members – a first for Senegal. This association includes a woman who runs a successful

Senegal has many women's groups that produce, market and even export local products. In this area, women are much more active than their male colleagues.

73 | Cf. Mariama Ba, *Une si longue lettre*, NEA, Dakar, 1979 (En. *So Long a Letter*, Virago Press, 1982).

74 | See "Mal an der Reihe", *Der Spiegel*, No. 8/1981, 16 Feb 1981, <http://spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-14326804.html> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

road construction company and over 60 company founders and managers of small and medium-sized enterprises.⁷⁵

One woman achieved a great deal of power and influence in the business world during President Wade's time in office: Aminata Niane,⁷⁶ Director of the National Agency for Investment, Promotion and Major Projects (APIX). She lost her job when the new government took over, but shortly afterwards was appointed as an advisor with ministerial status to President Macky Sall, focusing on investment and economic issues.⁷⁷

CONCLUSION

Although women are under-represented in large corporations, the political parties and the media, they still represent an economic force in Senegal that should not be underestimated – and not just as consumers. Their engagement in all areas means that women are driving the country's development. Women's initiatives at both top and grass-roots level have led to some unexpected

successes. The lasting economic success and

Mothers are determined to educate their children, and particularly their daughters. As a result, more women from poorer sections of the population are gaining positions of power.

entrepreneurial creativity of women in the lower rungs of society have allowed them to improve their standards of living. Mothers are determined to educate their children, and particularly their daughters, who are now

entering professions that were previously the exclusive domain of men. As a result, more women from poorer sectors of the population are gaining positions of power and working to improve women's rights and rural development. This trend will not be threatened by temporary problems such as the crisis in Mali. Over decades of effort, women have succeeded in raising awareness of women's rights and they are prepared to fight to see them become reality.

75 | Several businesswomen's associations are listed, including an advisory organisation for businesswomen linked to the CNP. Cf. Trade Point Sénégal, "Liste des organisations patronales et syndicales", <http://www.tpsnet.org/OrganisationPatronale.asp> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

76 | "Aminata Niane (Sénégal)", *Les Afriques*, <http://lesafriques.com/100-africains/aminata-niane-senegal.html?Itemid=195?articleid=9633> (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

77 | "Macky allonge la liste des ministres-conseillers: Aminata Niane ex-Dg de l'Apix consacrée", *Senego*, 14 Sep 2012, http://actu-senegalaise.senego.com/macky_36028.html (accessed 21 Jan 2013).

However, it is still true that women are most affected by extreme poverty, along with exploitation, abuse and violence. Despite these and all the disadvantages women face when taking up higher positions in society, the situation of women in Senegal is steadily improving. There are countless signs that over the years to come women will continue to gain economic power and political influence. It is not entirely absurd to suggest that the next President of Senegal could be a woman. As Fanta Diallo, deputy mayor of the Dakar's Point E district says: "Angela Merkel in Germany, Helen Sirleaf Johnson in Liberia – we're right behind you!"

With these words, she sums up the success story of modern women – and for African women this also means looking back at the role of women in pre-colonial times. Women were priestesses, they were princesses, and now they are casting an eye at the office of president. But having a woman in a top position is not what really counts. The most important thing is providing truly equal opportunities for women and men from urban and rural areas alike. Many women would of course be delighted to see a female president. But real success is ensuring that every girl goes to school, is given the ability to make her own decisions about what she wants from life and is enabled to play an active part in her country's development.



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TURKISH WOMEN IN POLITICS, THE ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

Suna Güzin Aydemir

In Turkey, the status occupied by women has repeatedly emerged in current debates. The issue of the Islamic headscarf in particular has troubled the Turkish public. The prohibition on wearing the *hijab* at universities has been lifted in practice without any statutory regulation whatsoever. This did, however, incite a debate on the *hijab* at secondary level in schools and in public office. With the elimination of the obligatory school uniform in 2012 and the associated regulations regarding the dress code for female pupils, this debate gained an added dimension.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a professed opponent of the headscarf ban, takes every opportunity to express the view that it is absolutely essential for Turkey's future that every woman in Turkey bear three children. At the latest women's conference of his party on 27 May 2012, he explained his opposition not just to abortion but also to caesareans, triggering vigorous discussion. The school reform undertaken by the current 61st Turkish cabinet, generally described by the formula "4+4+4", has also elicited a heated debate with respect to women's rights. Some sectors of society fear the twelve-year compulsory education divided into three sections will result in an increase in the number of underage girls getting married.¹ Against the backdrop of frequent assaults on women, the question of domestic violence and how to prevent it is also an issue that the media repeatedly come back to.

1 | See the explanation provided by Güler Sabancı, one of the most influential personalities of social and economic life in Turkey: "Sabancı'dan 4+4+4 açıklaması: Kaygı; çocuk gelin ve çocuk işçilerin artması", *Zaman*, 24 Feb 2012, http://zaman.com.tr/_1250177.html (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

The fact that discussions about problems affecting women continue to be on the agenda is due to overlapping interests. For one, the decisions women make about their own lives and the degree to which these decisions are accepted by society play an important role in view of Turkey's negotiations with the European Union regarding full membership, which have been ongoing since 2005. The discussions on the discrimination relating to women's dress exemplified by the *hijab* must be seen against this backdrop.

Secondly, Turkey experienced a change from absolutist rule to a secular nation state at the beginning of the 20th century under the leadership of Kemalist cadres, which entailed a radical modernisation project. The country thus represents an exception in the "Muslim World". Although not entirely without problems, the principles of the rule of law, the division of powers and multi-party democracy are reality in Turkey, and important steps have been taken during the last decade to overcome the remaining issues. When measured by the criteria of a modern state, Turkey is the most advanced country of the region. Turkey also offers stability where politics and economics are concerned. For these reasons, and in view of the wave of revolutionary upheavals which led to the end of dictatorships also referred to as the Arab Spring, there is talk about Turkey's ability to act as a model state. But at the same time the question arises as to what extent Turkey is being influenced by the Islamist movements that are gaining momentum in the region.² In the search for an answer to this question, the policies of the governing party AKP, which has Islamist roots and defines its current profile as "not Islamist, but conservative democratic", represent a kind of barometer on women's issues. This background must be borne in mind when considering the discussions

When measured by the criteria of a modern state, Turkey is the most advanced country of the region. Turkey also offers stability where politics and economics are concerned.

2 | On 21 Dec 2011, a workshop entitled "Regional Meeting on Women's Empowerment In The Economic, Social and Political Transformation of the Middle East" was held in Istanbul, held jointly by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and the KAGIDER association; the aim of the workshop was to gain an understanding of the involvement of the women in the Middle East and North Africa amidst this fundamental shift. In follow-up to the workshop, a report (in English and Turkish), the session minutes (in English) and a collection of articles (in English) were published: http://kas.de/wf/doc/kas_31725-1522-1-30.pdf (accessed 25 Feb 2013).

surrounding endeavours relating to a new abortion law and education reform.

LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AREA OF GENDER EQUALITY IN TURKEY

The CEDAW convention on women's rights has the status of a binding contract. Whether the contracting states fulfil the associated obligations is checked by a CEDAW Committee on the basis of status reports drawn up by the contracting states every four years.

By ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1985, Turkey committed itself to gender equality. The CEDAW convention on women's rights has the status of a binding contract. Whether the contracting states fulfil the associated obligations is checked by a CEDAW Committee on the basis of status reports drawn up by the contracting states every four years. The CEDAW convention is known as one of the international agreements with the greatest participation, but also with the greatest reservations on the part of the contracting parties. Turkey withdrew its reservations in September 1999.³ It ratified the binding Optional Protocol to the CEDAW on 30 July 2002. The European Social Charter is a further agreement whereby Turkey has agreed to terms in the area of gender equality. In addition, the country has signed numerous agreements of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).⁴ The last agreement in the area of women's rights, to which Turkey has acceded to date, is the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, which was signed in Strasburg on 7 April 2011. Turkey was the first state to ratify this important document, the first contract of this kind that entails the power to impose sanctions.⁵

3 | Cf. İkinci Kadın Devrimi, "Feminizm, İslam ve Türkiye Demokrasinin Olgunlaşması", Avrupa İstikrar Girişimi – European Stability Initiative (ESI), İstanbul/Berlin/Brussels, 2007, 8.

4 | Cf. "Türk Siyasetinde Kadın: Çok Oluyoruz!", Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırmalar Kurumu (USAK), USAK report No. 11-05, Ankara, 8 Jun 2011, <http://www.usak.org.tr/rapor.asp?id=123> (accessed 15 Feb 2013). According to the Action Plan of the governing party AKP of 2010 on policies regarding women and employment, Turkey does have to sign the ILO agreement No. 183 on safeguarding maternity rights, but there has been no visible progress in this matter to date.

5 | Nazan Moroğlu, "Kadına Yönelik Şiddetin Önlenmesi 6284 Sayılı Yasa ve İstanbul Sözleşmesi" (law on the prevention of violence against women No. 6284 and Istanbul agreement), http://portal.ubap.org.tr/App_Themes/Dergi/2012-99-1169.pdf (accessed 25 Feb 2013).

Through the judicial reforms of the past decade, Turkey has created a legal framework in line with the fundamental guidelines of the CEDAW convention. These reforms represent a great achievement, for which civil society organisations and the independent women's movement in particular can take credit. Two changes to the constitution, dating back to 2004 and 2010, are of great significance for gender equality. In 2004, the following statement was added to Article 10: "Men and women have equal rights and the State is responsible for the measures to implement those rights." In 2010, a further addition was made to the same article: "Measures taken for this purpose shall not be interpreted as contrary to the principle of equality." This means that Turkey is one of the few countries where positive discrimination is enshrined in the constitution. Women are involved in endeavours to draw up a new constitution, which began after the parliamentary elections of 12 June 2011, through the founding of a "Women's Platform for a New Constitution", which has already made various submissions to the commission.⁶

There have also been changes at the level of ordinary law, starting with the first civil code enacted on 17 February 1926, which represented a milestone for gender equality in Turkey. The achievements it entailed include the enforcement of monogamy and marriage by law, women's right to divorce and custody of the children and equal treatment in terms of inheritance shares. However, the civil code also contained some discriminatory provisions which would come to be unacceptable in the late 20th century. Once Turkey had withdrawn its reservations about the CEDAW convention in 1999, women's rights organisations intensified their lobbying activities for a reform of this legislation, in which they were also supported by the EU. As a result of the efforts made by 126 women's organisations from all over Turkey, the new Turkish civil code was enacted on 22 November 2001 and entered into effect on 1 January 2002. One change meant that provisions relating to the "head of the family" and associated gender inequalities were removed from the legislation.

The first civil code enacted on 17 February 1926 represented a milestone for gender equality in Turkey: it includes the enforcement of monogamy and women's right to divorce.

6 | "Eşitlikçi, Demokratik ve Özgürlükçü Bir Anayasa. Anayasa Kadın Platformunun Talepleri", http://ka-der.org.tr/tr/images/belgeler//Anayasa_kadin_platformu_talepler.pdf (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

Family courts were set up with effect of 1 January 2003, which are responsible for family law in general and for proceedings relating to domestic violence.

The greatest achievement brought about by the reform is that assets acquired during a marriage would in future be divided equally in the event of divorce. This acknowledges the contribution the wife makes in managing the household by assigning it material value and is indicative of a paradigm shift. As part of the reform, family courts were set up with effect of 1 January 2003, which are responsible for family law in general and for proceedings relating to domestic violence. In addition, Labour Law No. 4857 was approved on 22 May 2003. Employers are now under an obligation not to discriminate on the basis of gender. In addition, sexual harassment by the employer was defined as an activity that represents sufficient grounds for the employee to terminate her employment without notice. A further important innovation of the new labour law is a provision stating that female employees must be granted eight weeks' maternity leave both before and after the birth of a child.⁷

With the law on protection of the family that entered into effect in 1998, domestic violence was defined as a criminal offence for the first time, and measures such as restraining orders excluding the perpetrators from the home laid down in law. Although the scope of the law was expanded in 2007, that revision did not go far enough which meant that a new law was required. Law No. 6284 about the protection of the family and prevention of violence against women entered into effect on 20 March 2012.

The old Turkish penal code, which was in effect from 1926 to 2004, had originally been formulated by adapting Italy's penal code of 1889 to Turkish values and traditions, and it contained a number of problematic sections, particularly with respect to the evaluation of sexual crimes. Rape was regarded in the context of the violation of honour, which is why rape within marriage in particular was not recognised as a criminal act; at the same time, a man perpetrating a rape was exempt from criminal prosecution if the woman agreed to marry him; if a woman was actually raped by several men, it was sufficient for her to marry one of them

7 | Nazan Moroğlu, "Kadın ve Yurttaş Hakları" (women and civil rights), Türk Üniversiteli Kadınlar Derneği, <http://tukd.org.tr/makaleler.asp> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

for the accusations against the other men to be dropped. While the kidnapping of an unmarried woman was punished by imprisonment for up to three years, the same offence involving a married woman carried a penalty of at least seven years' imprisonment (because of the damage to the husband).⁸

The new penal code was enacted on 26 September 2004 and entered into effect on 1 June 2005. It contained changes to a total of 35 articles relating to women's rights and sexual freedom. With this reform, sex crimes against women were taken out of the context of "offences against social morality" and classed as "violations of personal rights". In concrete terms, the following changes were effected with the reform: life imprisonment due to aggravated circumstances in the case of premeditated murder "motivated by honour"; "imprisonment of up to three years for sexual harassment in the workplace"; "recognition of rape within marriage as a criminal offence upon official complaint by the rape victim"; "exclusion of the provision for non-prosecution in cases of rape if the woman marries the perpetrator/is married off to him". In addition, continual use of domestic violence is classed as a criminal act of "physical abuse" under the new provisions.⁹

The changes made to the penal code represent some of the most important achievements made by the independent women's rights movement. The associations Women for Women's Human Rights – New Ways (Kadının İnsan Hakları – Yeni Çözümler Derneği), İstanbul, and Flying Broom (Uçan Süpürge), Ankara, jointly coordinated a highly effective campaign. However, one cannot maintain that the legal framework created with these reforms is reflected fully in reality as one aspect has been consistently ignored:¹⁰ Although the age at which men and women can get married was harmonised in the course of the reform of the civil code, setting the minimum age at 17 has had serious

8 | Devrimi, n. 3, 13 et seq.

9 | Moroğlu, n. 7.

10 | Cf. Feride Acar, "Türkiye'de Kadınların İnsan Hakları: Uluslararası Standartlar, Hukuk ve Sivil Toplum" (Women's human rights in Turkey: International Standards, Law and Civil Society), İstanbul, 2010, http://insanhaklarimerkezi.bilgi.edu.tr/Books/khuku/turkiyede_kadınların_insan_hakları_uluslararası_standartlar.pdf (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

consequences. This is because marriages where one of the parties is under 18 are defined as “child marriages” in the agreements to which Turkey is also a signatory.

Deficiencies of mechanisms to ensure gender equality can be put down to the fact that the persons involved in the legislation process did not consider these changes to be necessary.

The mechanisms to ensure gender equality are not defined in sufficient detail in the labour legislation. There are no provisions regulating important aspects such as promotion modalities and the availability of inter-

nal training opportunities. According to Feride Acar, the deficiencies and irregularities, which already became obvious when the legislation was being drawn up, can be attributed to the fact that the persons involved in this process did not consider these changes to be necessary or did not believe in the purpose of this legislation. This shows that there is a direct link between the repeatedly displayed weakness of the legislators in issues of gender equality and the small number of women actively involved in politics.

Institutional Developments

The institutional opening up of Turkey through the development of projects for gender equality did not become possible until the signing of the CEDAW convention, which made the implementation of certain political measures for equality between men and women a prerequisite.¹¹ Institutes for women's issues were set up at universities. In the individual provinces, women's authorities were established under the auspices of the governors. Many legal chambers established women's rights committees. The national statistics authority included statistics relating to women in the statistics catalogue. Women's refuges were opened,¹² as was an art and information centre for women. “Women's Law” was included in the curriculum in law faculties (e.g. in the law faculty of the Yeditepe University in Istanbul). In the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, the national parliament, an Equal Opportunities Commission was established and an investigating committee for “crimes motivated by tradition and honour” was set up.

11 | Moroğlu, n. 7.

12 | You will find more details on developments regarding the setting up of women's refuges in Turkey in section “Gender Conflict in Turkey: Difficulties Experienced by Women in Society and Family”.

The greatest achievement at the institutional level is represented by the General Directorate on the Status of Women (KSGM), which was set up in 1990 under the auspices of the Ministry for Labour and Social Security. No doubt, the most far-reaching development since its inception was the abolition of the State Ministry for Women and Family Affairs simultaneously with all other ministries on 8 June 2011. The abolished ministry was replaced by the Ministry for Family and Social Policies. The abolition of the “women’s ministry” elicited protests both from women’s rights organisations and other NGOs. The signatories of a joint declaration, in which the measure was described as a retrograde step, included important organisations such as Women for Women’s Human Rights – New Ways, the Turkish doctors’ association, KADER, the Turkish CEDAW Secretariat and Human Rights Watch.¹³ Women intellectuals from Islamist groups close to the AKP have also criticised this development.¹⁴ There is a broad consensus that the KSGM has lost in terms of significance and effectiveness through this institutional change. However, there has been one measure in the opposite direction, namely a doubling of the budget of the government agency just recently.

The abolished “women’s ministry” was replaced by the Ministry for Family and Social Policies, which elicited protests both from women’s rights organisations and other NGOs.

WOMEN IN TURKISH POLITICS

The first discussions on women’s rights in Turkey took place after the Tanzimat reforms by the former Ottoman Sultan (1839), i.e. in the early days of the era of modernisation. The topics discussed most frequently at that time were women’s education and the disadvantages of polygamy. After the second constitutional reform (“overthrow of 1908”), the first women’s organisations were founded. This laid the foundations for a movement that promoted gender equality and even demanded a “women’s revolution”. The organisation Mudafa’a al-Huqûq an-Niswan (Defence of Women’s Rights), for instance, addressed the issue of

13 | “Women for Women’s Human Rights: ‘We Oppose The Closure Of The State Ministry Of Women’s Affairs!’”, *Kadının İnsan Hakları – Yeni Çözümler*, <http://kadinininsanhaklari.org/kategori/haberler/29968/kadindan> (accessed 25 Feb 2013).

14 | For an example of criticism by “Muslim women” see Özlem Albayrak, “AK Parti ve kadın”, *Yeni Şafak*, 5 Jun 2011, <http://yenisafak.com.tr/yazarlar/OzlemAlbayrak/ak-parti-ve-kadin/28088> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

women's active and passive suffrage in 1921.¹⁵ However, it would take until the time of the republic's foundation for women's demands for political rights to be fulfilled.

The most significant developments regarding women's political rights in Turkey took place during a period of twelve years from when the republic was proclaimed in 1923. The first parliamentary debate on the issue was held in the very year the republic was founded, but did not initially yield any results.¹⁶ On 16 June 1923, a party named People's Party of Women (Kadınlar Halk Fırkası) was founded. However, the women's attempt at organising as a party was not successful in view of a lack of state authorisations.¹⁷

Table 1

Number of female representatives in the National Assembly by election year

Election year	Number of seats	Held by women	Proportion (per cent)
1935	399	18	4.5
1939	429	16	3.7
1943	455	16	3.5
1946	465	9	1.9
1950	487	3	0.6
1954	541	4	0.7
1957	610	8	1.3
1961	450	3	0.7
1965	450	8	1.8
1969	450	5	1.1

15 | Mustafa Çadır, "Kadının Siyasal Yaşama Katılımında Siyasi Parti Kadın Kollarının Rolü", TC. Başbakanlık Kadının Statüsü Genel Müdürlüğü, Ankara, 2011, http://kadininstatusu.gov.tr/upload/kadininstatusu.gov.tr/mce/eski_site/Pdf/uzmanlik_tezleri/mustafa_cadir_tez.pdf (accessed 25 Feb 2013).

16 | Kadın, n. 4, 10.

17 | Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, in: Yesim Arat, *Türkiye'de Modernleşme Projesi ve Kadınlar* (Modernisation project in Turkey and women), 1998, 82-98; Beatrice Gorawantschy, "Türkei – Zwischen Tradition und Moderne" (Turkey – between tradition and the modern era), *Die Frau in unserer Zeit* (The woman in our times), Vol. 4, KAS, 1994, 45-50.

Election year	Number of seats	Held by women	Proportion (per cent)
1973	450	6	1.3
1977	450	4	0.9
1983	399	12	3.0
1987	450	6	1.3
1991	450	8	1.8
1995	550	13	2.4
1999	550	23	4.2
2002	550	24	4.4
2007	550	50	9.1
2011	550	79	14.3

Source: Turkish Statistics Office (TÜİK), 2001; USAK, n. 4, 12.

Women were granted active and passive suffrage for the first time at local level. In 1930, they were able to vote and stand as candidates in the elections for mayors and municipal councils, in 1933 also in those for village councils and councils of elders. In 1934, women were granted the right to stand for parliamentary elections and to vote in them. After the first elections that women were allowed to participate in in 1935, female members of parliament numbered 18, which equated to 4.5 per cent.¹⁸ This proportion was not equalled again in subsequent elections until 1999. During the intervening 64 years, the number of female members of parliament remained vanishingly small, reaching a low point in 1950 at 0.6 per cent (Table 1). This can be explained as follows: Turkey encountered multi-party democracy with the elections in 1946. At that time, topics such as the market economy, the democratic constitutional system, the configuration of a multi-party landscape and industrialisation had top priority. Women's participation in politics and their relatively low representation in parliament were pushed far into the background by these topics, and the proportion of women in parliament went down steadily not least due to competition between the parties.¹⁹

18 | Kadın, n. 4, 11.

19 | Çadır, n. 15, 36.

With currently 79 seats in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, women have achieved the highest proportion since the republic was founded (14.3 per cent). But their share is far below the worldwide average. The women's proportion in the Turkish parliament has developed in line with that in the Arab states, which are at the bottom of the worldwide ranking. Discussions about possible measures to ensure gender equality in parliament always focus on the term "quota". Turkish women's organisations keep demanding the introduction of suitable measures. But there are no provisions for positive discrimination, either in party legislation or election legislation. In fact, the only provision with a regulatory remit aimed at increasing the proportion of women at the level of state institutions emerged from the Capital Markets Board (SPK), which issued a regulation stating that the board of directors of any stock company, whose shares are traded on the open market, must include at least one woman.²⁰

The low representation of women in the Turkish parliament is an indication of the problems existing with respect to women's participation in political life in Turkey generally.

The numbers of women in local politics confirm this realisation. During the 2009 local elections, only 3,709 of the 301,759 persons voted onto the local representative bodies were women, corresponding to 1.22 per cent. There were only 27 women among the nearly 3,000 people elected mayor. In the 81 provincial capitals

During the 2009 local elections, only 3,709 of the 301,759 persons voted onto the local representative bodies were women. There were only 27 women among the nearly 3,000 elected mayors.

of Turkey, only two women were elected mayor. Women made up just 3.25 per cent of the provincial councils, 4.21 per cent of municipal councils. However, it should also be pointed out that there is a positive trend apparent in this area. Compared to 2004, the figures for 2009 represented an increase of around 100 per cent.²¹

In the final declaration of the first UN World Conference on Women held in Mexico City, equality in political participation was defined as "equal participation of women and men in all political structures and processes shaping public policies". Against this backdrop, the figures for 2011 and

20 | Cf. KAGİDER and KAS, n. 2.

21 | Çadır, n. 15, 42-43.

2012 published by KADER are giving cause for concern.²² Women accounted for only one of 26 ministers, 26 of 2,924 town mayors, 65 of 34,210 village mayors, one of 81 governors, five of 103 university rectors and 21 of 185 ambassadors. Women were equally poorly represented in the managing bodies of the bank supervisory authority, among high court judges and at the national audit office as well as in the upper echelons of the most important trades unions.



"Does one have to be a man to make it into parliament?" Billboard of the 2007 KADER campaign. | Source: © KADER.

When you look at the proportion of women in the central executive committees of the four parties currently represented in parliament, you see entirely different results: While women make up 42.8 per cent of the central executive body of the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), the figure is just 5.2 per cent for the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). The proportion of women among the top echelon of the governing AKP is 15 per cent. Women make up 23.5 per cent of the leadership of the second strongest

22 | "2012 Kadın İstatistikleri" (Women's Statistics 2012), Kadın Adayları Destekleme Derneği (Association for the Support and Education of Female Candidates, KADER), İstanbul, Mar 2012, http://ka-der.org.tr/tr/down/2012_KADIN_ISTATISTIKLERI.pdf (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

party in parliament, the Republican People's Party (CHP).²³ While the BDP achieves its high proportion by applying a women's quota, a women's quota of 30 per cent is applied in practice in the provincial party organisations of the AKP according to its women's organisation.

The women's organisations of the political parties in Turkey experienced a severe setback through the military coup of 12 September 1980. Because during the subsequent 15 years right up to 1995, women's and youth organisations affiliated to political parties were banned. In view of this, the high degree of organisation that the women's organisation of the AKP has achieved is astounding. Membership of the AKP women's organisation stood at 3,237,742 on 15 January this year. This means that the AKP has the largest political women's organisation in the world. This fact has to do with the political history of the AKP and the vision of its leader Erdoğan with respect to the organisational structures of his party. When Erdoğan was the provincial leader of the Islamist Welfare Party (RP) in Istanbul, he expanded the party structure at city district level in unrivalled form and achieved this success to a large extent through the social connections of his party's female followers. By the mid-1990s, the RP had approx. one million female members.²⁴

The ability of the Islamist and now post-Islamist/conservative democratic movement to mobilise women for politics through party activities is remarkable and has already been the subject of several studies. It is worth noting, however, that women's organisations in Turkey are not involved in actually furthering women's participation in politics.²⁵ They should not be viewed as associations where current politics are discussed and implemented and where strategies to foster gender equality are developed, but instead they aim predominantly at attracting new members and increasing the voter potential for elections. The activities of the women's organisations are not so much political as social in nature. They engage in activities that make it easier for the party to reach the people, such as neighbourhood meetings, craft fairs and fundraising. There is not a great deal of desire amongst the women's organisations to put up candidates for political decision-making

23 | Cf. KADER, n. 22.

24 | Devrimi, n. 3, 10.

25 | Çadır, n. 15.

positions. The women who are active in the parties' women's organisations also frequently have a similar profile. A large number of these women have obtained their secondary school diploma or an equivalent qualification, or they are housewives or pensioners. The great majority of the women who are active in the women's organisations have a husband or close relative who is also in the party.²⁶ For women in Turkey, involvement in a party still depends to a large degree on support from within the family.

There are a number of different factors that make political participation difficult for women. Social and economic problems and the associated difficulties for women to benefit from educational opportunities as well as a culture of gender discrimination and division of labour affecting women in virtually all areas, most notably politics, all play a role. A study conducted by the KADER association in collaboration with research institute KONDA has shown, however, that at a social level this discriminatory culture does not actually present a great obstacle for women to participate in political affairs.²⁷

Social and economic problems and the associated difficulties for women to benefit from educational opportunities as well as a culture of gender discrimination and division of labour make political participation harder for women.

For this study, personal interviews were conducted with 5,434 people in 36 Turkish provinces. 72 per cent stated that they were in agreement with the statement: "It does not matter whether one is a man or a woman when it comes to working in politics or taking political responsibilities such as being an interior minister, parliamentary speaker or national security minister". 56 of the respondents stated they believed Turkey would develop and become a better society if the number of female politicians increased. 71 per cent of the respondents were not in agreement with the statement that there was "no need for women to take a bigger part in politics and the parliament". A similar assertion was: "Even if women take part in politics, they cannot have opinions on subjects such as the economy, finance, international relations and national security." 65 per cent of the respondents did not agree with that statement. Among all the possible solutions offered for measures to allow women to play a larger role in politics, 23.7 per cent of the subjects

26 | Cf. Çadır, n. 15, 155-57.

27 | "Siyasette Kadın Temsili Araştırması", KONDA, Mar 2011, http://ka-der.org.tr/tr/down/SIYASETTE_KADIN_TEMSILI_ARASTIRMASI.pdf (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

opted for the application of quotas, 49.1 per cent for more advantageous conditions for women candidates. Only 19.3 per cent said there was no need for special treatment.

WOMEN IN THE WORLD OF WORK IN TURKEY

The high growth rates the Turkish economy has achieved over the last few years are remarkable. Turkey is in 16th place in the world ranking of economic power. It is generally thought that the sustainability of this growth depends on an increase in the employment rate and in particular on a quantitative and qualitative increase in women's employment. It is thought that a five per cent increase in women's employment would equate to a 15 per cent reduction in poverty.²⁸ However, the positive effects of economic growth on the job situation for women have been very limited to date. In terms of the participation of women in economic development, Turkey is ranked 131st out of 134 countries, trailed only by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Yemen. The share of women in economic wealth is also low. Women own only nine per cent of land in Turkey.²⁹

Besides the employment rate, the labour force participation rate³⁰ is one of two fundamental parameters to quantify participation in gainful activities.³¹ When you examine the historic development of this parameter, you see that the participation of women in the labour force went down in Turkey between the mid-1950s and around 2005. The most important reason for this is the decreasing role played by the agricultural sector in the economy as a whole and the urbanisation that this has entailed. While 81.5 of women worked back in 1950, the proportion dropped to 23.3 by

28 | Short film about Turkish women in the economy: TÜSİAD, "Çalışma Hayatında Kadın", YouTube, 8 Mar 2012, http://youtu.be/GZiY7fGZ_O8 (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

29 | Ibid.

30 | Labour force participation rate = $\frac{\text{employed} + \text{unemployed}}{\text{labour force}} \times 100$. See e.g. European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder) Faculty of Economic Sciences, http://www.wiwi.europa-uni.de/de/lehrstuhl/fine/econpol/lehre/downloads/eabp/Definitionen_zur_Arbeitslosigkeit.pdf (accessed 25 Feb 2013).

31 | Data regarding the quality and quantity of women's employment in Turkey were taken mainly from: İlyas Karabıyık, "Türkiye'de Çalışma Yaşamında Kadın İstihdamı" (Employment of women in the world of work in Turkey), <http://iktisat.marmara.edu.tr/iysdosya/iktisat/iibf%20dergisi/2012-1/12-karabiyik.pdf> (accessed 25 Feb 2013).

2005. The first increase since then, which was an increase of 4.3 per cent to 27.6 per cent, was seen in 2010.³² Like the representation of women in the Turkish parliament, the employment rate of women is far below the international average and shows a development in line with that in North African countries and the states of the Middle East. Figures from the Turkish Statistics Office TÜİK for 2012 show the large gap between the participation of men and women in economic activities. According to these figures, 30.1 per cent of females aged 15 to 24 are employed, while it is 71.9 per cent of men.³³ There is obviously a lack of political measures in Turkey to further women's employment.

Table 2

**Women's employment rate worldwide,
by region (in per cent)**

	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
World	48.6	48.9	48.9	48.9	48.6	48.1	47.8
Developed Economies (incl. EU countries)	48.0	48.4	49.0	49.5	49.7	48.9	48.6
Central and South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) and CIS	44.0	44.1	44.5	45.1	45.3	44.7	45.1
East Asia	67.1	65.7	65.6	65.6	64.8	64.6	64.6
South-East Asia and Pacific	55.6	54.3	54.4	55.1	55.5	55.5	55.5
South Asia	33.4	35.2	34.7	33.6	32.5	31.4	30.5
Latin America and Caribbean	42.9	46.1	46.5	47.2	47.7	47.5	48.4
Middle East	13.2	15.3	15.1	15.1	14.3	14.5	14.8
North Africa	17.5	18.2	18.6	19.8	19.9	19.8	20.0
Sub-Saharan Africa	56.4	58.3	58.5	58.6	58.8	58.8	58.7
Turkey	31.2	20.7	21.0	21.0	21.6	22.3	24.0

Source: ILO Global Employment Trends, 2012, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2012, 94.

32 | Cf. "Türkiye İşgücüne Katılım Oranı", Turkish Statistics Office (TÜİK), Ankara, 2012, <http://tuik.gov.tr> (accessed 15 Feb 2013). According to 2010 figures, women's employment rate in rural areas (36.6 per cent) is larger than in urban areas (23.7 per cent). However, approx. 84 per cent of women in rural areas work in agriculture and 77 per cent of those as unpaid family labour.

33 | Ibid.

According to the TÜİK figures, the employment rate increased from 24 per cent in 2010 to 25.6 per cent in 2011. The unemployment rate during the same period was 11.3. (The equivalent figures in the E-27 were 58.2 per cent and 9.8 per cent respectively). The particular significance of unemployment among women in Turkey is illustrated by a report of the research institute of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK-AR) from July 2012. According to this report, women who have at least a secondary school qualification are affected by unemployment almost at twice the rate as men.³⁴ The number of unemployed women academics actually increased by 55,000 by June 2012, which equates to a jump in unemployment from 12.9 to 15.5 per cent. Tallying with these figures are the gender pay gap of 25 per cent and women's poverty rate among household members, which is around 19 per cent.³⁵

Table 3

Women's employment by status (in per cent)

Year	In paid employment	Employer	Working on own account	Unpaid family labour
1990	21.6	0.4	8.7	69.2
2010	50.7	1.3	12.8	35.2

One of the main reasons for unemployment among women is poor access to childcare and care for the elderly. Only twelve per cent of working women are able to access care facilities for their children.³⁶ The proportion of children between three and six who are in preschool education is 44 per cent. In Turkey, only 0.5 per cent of the elderly (one in 191) are cared for in a nursing home.³⁷ The fact that some sections in Turkish politics have recognised the problem is illustrated by a campaign of the Ministry for Family

34 | "İşsizlik Verilerinde Tehlike Sinyalleri", Confederation of progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK), <http://disk.org.tr/default.asp?Page=Content&ContentId=1430> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

35 | Cf. Sabancı, n. 1.

36 | TÜSİAD, n. 28.

37 | Ibid.

and Social Policies entitled “My mother’s job is my future”, which aims at creating childcare facilities in the industrial areas.³⁸

The scope of the problems of gender inequality is also illustrated by women’s working conditions as well as the quality of women’s participation in economic activities. The greatest problem indicated by these figures is the low number of female entrepreneurs, who make up just 1.3 per cent. The second largest problem is the high number of women performing unpaid family labour. 35.2 per cent were working in these circumstances in 2010. There is some hope due to the fact that there seems to be a clear trend noticeable since 1990 towards paid employment and away from unpaid family labour. During the period from 1990 to 2010, the proportion of women in paid employment has more than doubled, rising from 21.6 to 50.7 per cent. At the same time, the proportion of unpaid family labour amongst women dropped from 69.2 to 35.2 per cent.³⁹

Unfortunately, the fact that the number of women performing unpaid family labour has decreased by one half and that of women gainfully employed has simultaneously doubled over the last 20 years has not brought about a commensurate increase in the proportion of women paying social security contributions. 58 per cent of employed women in Turkey work without being registered with any social insurance agency. This has a direct impact on women’s poverty.

In view of the low numbers of women in employment and the great inequalities between women and men in the area of employment, the AKP-led government published a circular entitled “Increasing Women’s employment and achieving equality of opportunity” in 2010. There is a study by the Women’s Labour and Employment Initiative (Kadın Emegi ve İstihdamı Girişimi, KEİG) available on the practical implementation of this guideline. The report shows that the circular is entirely unknown in numerous state authorities

38 | TC Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı (Republic of Turkey, Ministry for Family and Social Policies), <http://www.aile.gov.tr/tr/html/4925/Organize-Sanayi-Bolgelerine-Kres> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

39 | İlyas Karabıyık, “Türkiye’de Çalışma Yaşamında Kadın İstihdamı”, Marmara University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, bulletin, Vol. 32, No. 1, 245-246.

There has been a noticeable increase in projects to expand employment among women, but the indications for a successful implementation of these projects are not promising.

and among many officials. Positive discrimination in favour of women and granting them special consideration in the workplace thus remain dependent on the individual initiative of the decision-makers. According to KEİG, there has been a noticeable increase in projects to expand employment among women, but the indications for a successful implementation of these projects are not promising. The projects, which are generally financed from state sources and EU subsidies, tend to lack effective coordination. Nor is there any monitoring of the impact of the projects once they have come to an end. For this reason, the expectations of what these projects can achieve in the medium and long term are modest.

Despite many problems women face in the world of work in Turkey there have been some notable encouraging developments. The proportion of female CEOs in Turkey, for instance, lies above that in Europe and the rest of the world. While women only occupy five per cent of the CEO posts worldwide, it is as much as twelve per cent in Turkey, which places Turkey in fifth place worldwide.⁴⁰ Furthermore, 23 per cent of executives at board level, 22 per cent of division and department managers and 21 per cent of lower-level managers are women.⁴¹

PROGRESS IN EDUCATION POLITICS

The creation of the 8-year primary schools, merging what was previously the primary and middle schools, represented an important advance in terms of girls' right to education. In the school year of 2001/2002, 92.4 per cent of all children attended school at the primary level, the figure for boys being 96.2 and for girls 88.4. By the school year of 2011/2012, the numbers had virtually balanced out at 98.77 per cent for boys and 98.56 for girls. In this area, one must acknowledge that the AKP governments of the last few legislative periods have achieved much in the field of education in collaboration with different social institutions.

40 | "Kadın CEO'lar dünyaya meydan okuyor", BUGÜN, 2 Jun 2011, <http://ekonomi.bugun.com.tr/kadin-ceo-lar-dunyaya-meydan-okuyor-157081-makalesi.aspx> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

41 | Survey among female executives (Kadın Yöneticiler Anketi), TİSK, Sep 2009, http://tiskweb.com/isveren_sayfa.asp?yazi_id=2629&id=118 (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

During the same period, the proportion of girls attending secondary school has increased by 20 per cent. In higher education, too, the proportion of women has more than doubled over the last ten years. 45 per cent of students enrolling at university for the academic year 2010/2011 were female.

However, when considering the subject of gender equality in education, school attendance and university student numbers only represent one side of the coin. The other side is the illiteracy rate. According to figures from the Ministry of Education, there were 3,825,644 persons living in Turkey in February 2012 who could neither read nor write. 81.6 per cent of these were women. In a report by the General Directorate on the Status of Women (KSGM) entitled "Status of Women in Turkey – as at December 2010", the proportion of illiterates in Turkey is around eight per cent of the population. This means that there are approximately 900,000 illiterate men to four million illiterate women; 2.5 million of these women are 50 or over. In the six to 24 age group, there are 220,000 girls and women in total who are classed as illiterate.

The educational statistics underscore the inequality women have been subject to in terms of development. In a country in which four million women cannot read or write, the proportion of postgraduate students is 40 per cent. In view of these figures, the most serious accusation raised by civic society is that a considerable proportion of girls were being pushed out of education at the secondary level. There are even concerns being voiced that the school reform which entered into effect in 2012 will exacerbate this development further. Because in the new system, the school age has been reduced to five, which means that pupils will be able to leave the regular school system from age 13 by participating in distance learning or evening classes. The concern is that girls reaching puberty will be taken out of school and shut away at home. This is the point where the debate about child brides begins.

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DEBATE ABOUT “CHILD BRIDES” AND ABORTION

In Turkey, weddings involving underage persons are widespread. One of five weddings involves a person under age.⁴² A study of the demography and health of the population conducted by Hacettepe University makes even more disturbing figures available. According to this study, the proportion of underage persons getting married in Turkey is 28 per cent. This is subject to regional variation, constituting 37 per cent in Central Anatolia and as much as 40 to 42 per cent in East and Southeast Anatolia.⁴³ Political countermeasures are urgently required.



Poster of the project against child brides of the Turkish Association “Flying Broom”. | Source: © Flying Broom.

42 | TÜİK, n. 32; Cf. “Çocuk gelin sayısı artarsa’ endişesi”, *Milliyet*, 23 Oct 2012, <http://gundem.milliyet.com.tr/-cocuk-gelin-sayisi-artarsa-endisesi/gundem/gundemdetay/23.10.2012/1615893/default.htm> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

43 | “Uçan Süpürge Erken Evlilikler/ Çocuk Gelinler Politika Notu” (early marriage / child brides report by Uçan Süpürge), 2012, <http://ucansupurge.org/veri/dosyalar/%C3%87ocuk%20Gelinler%20politika%20notu.doc> (accessed 25 Feb 2013).

Abortion legislation is also a controversial topic of discussion in Turkey. This subject greatly concerned the Turkish public during the second half of 2012 because of several statements made by Prime Minister Erdoğan. There have been regulations on abortion in Turkey since the inception of the republic. In the penal code of 1926, abortion constituted a criminal offence. In Law No. 557, enacted in 1965, the strict prohibition was modified and curettage permitted if the mother's life was in jeopardy. In the 1970s, new discussions about abortion regulations were instigated in Turkey by developments elsewhere in the world. Concerns about women's health were being voiced (proper performance of abortions, hygienic conditions and state control), which in turn brought about demands for the abortion ban to be lifted. On 14 April 1983, a law entered into effect which meant that an abortion performed within the first ten weeks of a pregnancy would no longer be subject to criminal prosecution.

Prime Minister Erdoğan voiced his criticism of abortions and caesareans for the first time on 25 May 2012 and confirmed his opinion at the 3rd regular women's convention of his party on 27 May. Shortly afterwards, it became known that preparations were being made for a draft bill that envisaged the period for legal abortions to be cut from ten to four weeks, thereby practically prohibiting abortion. But vociferous protests by civil society organisations and women's rights advocates resulted in this legislative initiative being withdrawn.

However, according to the platform "Abortion is a right, it is up to the woman to decide",⁴⁴ it is virtually impossible in Istanbul today to find a state hospital that will perform abortions, and the number of privately funded clinics that offer abortions is apparently also declining rapidly.⁴⁵

According to women's organisations it is virtually impossible in Istanbul today to find a state hospital that will perform abortions. The number of privately funded clinics that offer abortions is apparently also declining rapidly.

Because of the widespread protests against the attempts to reduce the period for legal abortions, the government's legislative initiative has changed its approach. A commission

44 | Kürtaj haktır, karar kadınların, <http://kurtajhaktir.com/anasayfa> (accessed 8 Feb 2013); Interview mit Selin Dağıtlanlı: Nacide Berber, "Kadınlar ,Kürtaj Yasası' nın Takipçisi", *bianet*, 25 Nov 2012, <http://bianet.org/bianet/toplumsal-cinsiyet/142307> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

45 | *Ibid.*

made up of representatives from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry for Family and Social Policies has apparently drawn up a new bill. The aim of the new legislation is said to be “making abortions possible and safer and curtailing their numbers”. According to these proposals, the ten week period would remain untouched, but pregnant women or prospective parents would have to undergo compulsory counselling before terminating a pregnancy. In addition, a “cooling-off” period of two to four days is envisaged. Rather than making abortion a virtually unattainable alternative, the plan apparently is to extend statutory paid maternity leave from eight weeks to six months. However, this draft bill has not yet been presented to parliament.⁴⁶

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

As is the case in the rest of the world, domestic violence makes up a large proportion of violence against women in Turkey as well. The most reliable data on this subject comes from the “National Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey” by the Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies in Ankara (2008). Accord-

Throughout the country, 39 per cent of married women suffer physical violence. 73 per cent of women who are divorced or separated report physical and 44 per cent sexual violence.

ing to this study, 39 per cent of married women throughout the country suffer physical violence, which frequently goes hand in hand with sexual violence.⁴⁷ The figures are particularly disturbing for women who are divorced or separated and who report having experienced physical or sexual abuse; 73 per cent of this group report physical and 44 per cent sexual violence.

46 | “Kürtaj yasaşının ayrıntıları belli oldu”, internethaber, 18 Jul 2012, <http://internethaber.com/kurtaj-yasasi-kurtj-tasarisi-recep-akdag-ensest-iliskiler-siniri-ertesi-gun-hapi-443748h.htm> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

47 | Approx. 20 per cent of women and five to ten per cent of men worldwide report having suffered sexual abuse as children. In addition, between 0.3 per cent and 11.5 per cent of women worldwide report having been exposed to sexual abuse by a stranger at some time. Cf. “Türkiye’de Kadına Yönelik Şiddet”, USAK, USAK report No. 12-01, Ankara, 8 Mar 2011, <http://www.usak.org.tr/rapor.asp?id=143> (accessed 25 Feb 2013). It follows that sexual abuse to a large extent takes place within the family. Rape crisis centres, which play a very important role in combating sexual abuse and rape, were first set up in Australia in 1976 and in the UK in 1977. In Turkey, there are still no such institutions in existence. Cf. interview with Aksu Bora: “Cinsel Şiddetle Mücadelede Nereye Geldik”, bianet, 12 Sep 2009, <http://bianet.org/bianet/kadin/117024> (accessed 25 Feb 2013).

If you examine the frequency of acts of violence by region, Northeast Anatolia stands out most strongly at 57.1 per cent. At 26.2 per cent, the western area of Marmara is the region with the lowest rate of violence against women in Turkey. Violence against women is most noticeable in the cities. The proportion of women living in urban areas who suffer physical violence is 42 per cent higher than that of women living in rural areas. In view of this distribution, one can assume a certain impact of the continuing urbanisation and rural exodus on the prevalence of violence against women.

Violence can affect women of all levels of education. However, the frequency of violence against women decreases clearly as the level of education rises. According to the findings of a study conducted in 2007 entitled "Study on Violence against Women in Turkey",⁴⁸ women who contribute more than their husband to the household income are twice as likely to suffer domestic violence. Two out of three women in such an income scenario suffer violence at the hands of their partner. Although violence against women is thus a problem that is common to all social strata, the figures show that a large proportion of the women experiencing violence (47 per cent) come from the lower income brackets. The numbers for sexual violence also increase in reverse proportion to rising income.

The general figures on violence against women must be seen in connection with data on the problems relating to a lack of awareness.

Women who suffer this type of violence often don't have any concept of violence against women being a social problem. In Turkey, half the women suffering violence at the most disclose the fact to someone within their immediate environment. 92 per cent of women keep silent about the violence they have suffered and don't inform the authorities.⁴⁹

Women who suffer domestic violence often don't have any concept of violence against women being a social problem.

The data on the numbers of murdered women published by the Ministry of Justice in August 2010 also give cause for concern. These cases have increased considerably in the period from 2002 to 2009. While the number of murdered

48 | Cf. Altınay and Arat, n. 17.

49 | Cf. USAK, n. 47.

women was 66 back in 2002, the figure went up to 1,011, 806 and 953 in the three years from 2007 to 2009.⁵⁰ In 88 per cent of the cases the perpetrator was known to the murdered woman. The proportion of women who were killed by their husband or former husband rose by 193 per cent. Three women were killed following a decision by a family council. In this context, honour killings represent an important aspect.⁵¹ A large proportion of these murders are perpetrated with the intention of concealing preceding sexual violence. A KAMER study shows that 63 per cent of women in danger of an “honour killing” have experienced sexual violence. KAMER stresses in this context that all suicides by women should be considered with reservations.

The Turkish state bases its strategy to combat violence against women on action plans, which are drawn up in coordination with the General Directorate on the Status of Women (KSGM). According to the action plan for the period from 2007 to 2009, various protocols were signed by the Ministry for Women’s and Family Policies and the departmental ministries about training for ministry person-

nel, based on which joint efforts were made by the Authority for Religious Affairs, the General Staff of the Armed Forces, the Police High Command and the Ministry of Justice. Training was thus provided to 71,000 police personnel, 65,000 healthcare workers, 326

prosecutors and judges and 17,000 religious officials. In line with the action plan for 2012-2015, new protocols were signed. One of these is a signed agreement with the Ministry for Work and Social Security for the creation of new employment opportunities for women who have become victims of violence.

Some of the most important mechanisms for the protection and support of female victims of violence are women’s refuges and advisory services. In 2011, there were a total of 51 women’s refuges attached to the Ministry for Family and Social Policies. In addition, there are 24 women’s refuges

In line with the action plan for 2012-2015, new protocols were signed. One of these is an agreement for the creation of new employment opportunities for women who have become victims of violence.

50 | “Kadın Cinayetleri 14 Kat Arttı”, bianet, 15 Sep 2011, <http://bianet.org/bianet/kadin/132742> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

51 | The unpublished study of the platform “We Will Stop Women’s Murders” about the killing of women in Turkey in the period from 2008 to 2011.

run independently by local administrations and three run by a private legal advice organisation. Advisory services for women who have become victims of violence or require assistance are offered by numerous organisations, such as ministries, private institutions, local authorities and legal chambers.

The efforts that have been made in Turkey on the part of the state and private organisations to stop violence against women have resulted in a shift in awareness and attitude amongst women. The number of women who have sought protection and shelter from the state has clearly risen since the new law on the "Protection of the Family and Prevention of Violence against Women" entered into effect on 8 March 2012. Izmir tops the list amongst the large cities. Here, 4,650 women have sought protection and shelter from state institutions in the last eight months.⁵² The police headquarters in Izmir has set up a special unit for women who have become victims of violence.

CONCLUSION

On the *Global Gender Gap Index 2012* of the World Economic Forum (WEF), Turkey is ranked 124th of the 135 states listed. Data from the areas of politics, business, education and family life indicate the reasons for this poor performance. There is a noticeable gulf between the de jure and the de facto situation regarding gender equality in Turkey.⁵³ However, there is adequate potential in Turkey for rapid advances in the area of gender equality. Women were actually entitled to take high office before this was possible in many Western countries.⁵⁴ Striking is the disparity in parallel developments. While roughly every fourth woman in Turkey is still illiterate, one of four professors at

52 | Cf. Hasan Çilingir, "Kadına Şiddet Sıralamasında İzmir Birinci, Ankara İkinci", *Zaman*, 31 Oct 2012, http://zaman.com.tr/_2009234.html (accessed 5 Feb 2012).

53 | Serap Çileli, Ursula Männle, Angelika Niebler and Hans Peter Raddatz, "Women in Turkey – between legal equality and patriarchal tradition", *Politische Studien*, 401, Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung, 2005, <http://hss.de/downloads/PolStudien401.pdf> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

54 | According to figures from February 2012, 14.2 per cent of the members of the constitutional court and 16.6 per cent of heads of department were women. Cf. KADER, n. 22.

Turkish universities is female.⁵⁵ The situation is similar in the workplace, where 39 per cent of all women contributing to the gross domestic product work as “unpaid family labour” while the proportion of women working in highly qualified jobs in law, medicine and other academic fields is almost 40 per cent.⁵⁶ With a proportion of women in top managerial positions of twelve per cent, Turkey is hot on the heels of Finland, the leader in the worldwide ranking.

A high economic standard, political institutions based on democratic principles, a legal infrastructure created through the tradition of a secular state with a constructive legal system and modern standards of gender equality – all these goals might actually be easier for Turkey to achieve than for many other states.⁵⁷ In this context, the existence of a women’s movement, which is to be taken seriously and which continues raising its voice in admonition and succeeds in making itself heard, is a further source of hope for Turkey. The Turkish women’s rights organisations have proved their capability through concrete achievements, particularly in the period since 2000, during which the changes in the social and political spheres in Turkey have gained momentum. The independent women’s movement in Turkey has sufficient substance to be able to act as a contact in discussions with political actors from within the country and abroad. At the same time, it can work towards reducing violence against women and help to make gender equality in Turkey reality.

55 | There are two women among the 15 members of the Higher Education Authority. According to figures from the Higher Education Authority, 27.6 per cent of professorships and 41 per cent of academic posts had been awarded to women in the period 2010-2011. KADER, n. 22.

56 | 37 per cent of all lawyers were women in 2010, for instance. “Number of Lawyers According to Bar Associations”, Türkiye Barolar Birliği, 31 Dec 2010, <http://www.barobirlik.org.tr/Detay.aspx?Tip=ENGHaber&ID=9360> (accessed 25 Feb 2013).

57 | Cf. Acar, n. 10.

THE RISE OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL AND ENTREPRENEURIAL POWER IN ASIA'S GROWING ECONOMIES

INSIGHTS FROM THE PHILIPPINES¹

Carolina G. Hernandez

Long confined to the home for a variety of reasons, women have been moving into new arenas including in the professions, in business and in politics in many parts of the world in recent years. Asia is no different from other regions in this respect. Although the Philippines is perceived as diverging from the regional norm in regard to the role of women in society generally speaking, it shares some of the disadvantages suffered by women elsewhere in the Asian region on account of gender. For instance, until the 1950s to the early 1960s, breaking the professional ceiling was still a challenge for Filipino women. Until then, the legal and engineering professions remained male domains. It would take a few more years before Filipino women would break the ceiling in the professional domain. Even at present with the rise of women's entrepreneurial and leadership power, Filipino women remain disadvantaged in the country's laws pertaining to persons and family relations, for example. Traditional values, including religious ones, inhibited the serious consideration of adopting a law governing women's reproductive health until lately.²

Asia, particularly East and Southeast Asia, is the home of the world's fastest growing economies. Before the Asian financial crisis of 1997, Southeast Asia was regarded as



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- 1 | A paper inspired by a panel on this theme at the 3rd International Women Entrepreneurship and Leadership Summit, 8-9 Nov 2012, Istanbul, Turkey.
- 2 | The Reproductive Health (RH) Law was signed into law during the 2012 Christmas Holidays by President Benigno S. Aquino III. This law was preceded by a hugely hostile and divisive debate across Philippine society and government.

the world's most economically dynamic region transformed as such by Japan's earlier economic rise as the world's second largest economy. Japan has been replaced in this position by China as of 2010. Amidst the overall decline of the North American and European economies as well as the ongoing global financial and economic crises, Asia has shown not only great resilience, but also continuing economic dynamism. The Philippines shares in this regional economic growth by posting a 7.1 per cent

Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the IMF, hailed the Philippines as being among the world's best economic performers during a visit in November 2012.

growth in the third quarter of 2012, the highest among the countries that form part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).³ Its National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) also recently projected that the country's economy will grow in 2012 by a higher percentage point than it originally projected. The International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Managing Director Christine Lagarde during a visit in November 2012 hailed the Philippines as being among the world's best economic performers, having posted a fairly high growth and having become a creditor to the IMF.⁴ Has economic growth led to a rise in women's entrepreneurial and leadership power in the Asian region in general and in the Philippines in particular? How can the role of women in these rising economies be described?

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURIAL AND LEADERSHIP POWER IN ASIA

It is fairly well-acknowledged that women constitute a key driver in economic growth. Citing statistics from a number of sources, the Economist Intelligence Unit argues that most of the world's developed economies were driven by the entry of women into the labour force during the second half of the 20th century, adding almost two percentage points to economic growth in the case of the United States, and accounting for one fourth of Europe's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth since 1995.⁵ In the Asian region, the shift from manufacturing to services led to an increase in

3 | See National Economic Development Agency (NEDA), "Exports continue positive growth in Oct. PHL among top Asian performers in first 10 months of 2012", Press Release, 11 Dec 2012.

4 | Cf. Edith Regalado and Aurea Calica, "Philippines is Asia's Rising Tiger – World Bank", *The Philippine Star*, 6 Feb 2013.

5 | Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), *Women's economic opportunity 2012*, 4.

women's participation in the labour force, thereby boosting economic growth in the region.⁶ Yet, women are the world's most undeveloped source of labour with nearly 50 per cent of working age among them remaining outside the formal sector. Outside they have less access to resources and income than men. Often being less productive than men, their exclusion from the formal sector holds the economy down. Thus, in order to boost the global economy, it is important for this group of women, all 1.5 billion of them worldwide, to join the labour force in an enabling environment where the legal, social, financial and educational constraints blocking women's productivity are dismantled.⁷

Recent studies about the role of women in Asian societies, however, show an increasing rise of their entrepreneurial and leadership power. In the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis of 1997, a study of six East and Southeast Asian economies⁸ acknowledged the disappearance of the gender gap in secondary education though not at the university level in countries like South Korea, documented the steadily increasing proportion of women in the total growth of the labour force in the region, cited the view expressed by some quarters "that the labour-intensive export-led industrialization drives in Asia would not have been possible without the participation of women",⁹ and concluded generally that "Asian women have played an increasingly important role in economic growth".¹⁰ The study also concluded that "[w]hile the proportion of working women who hold professional, technical, and administrative positions has increased in recent decades, it is still quite low".¹¹ For example, during 1960 to 1990, the proportion of working women holding such better-paid positions increased from five to 13 per cent in Japan and from one to four per cent in Thailand. Indeed, while there was an increase, the numbers remained low.

6 | Theresa W. Devasahayam and Sri Ranjini Mei Hua, "Empowering Women, Boosting Economies: Examples from the Asian Region", *Gender Perspectives*, Vol. 3, No. 3, Mar 2011, 1 et seq.

7 | EIU, n. 5, 4.

8 | These economies are Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia.

9 | As cited in "Women are Key Players in the Economies of East and Southeast Asia", *Asia-Pacific & Population Policy*, East-West Center Program on Population, No. 44, Jan 1998, 2.

10 | *Ibid.*, 1.

11 | *Ibid.*, 2.

Some countries experienced great strides towards gender equality. Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Mongolia are among the top five.

This record has changed in an uneven fashion throughout the Asian region. Some countries experienced great strides towards gender equality, while others lagged behind or achieved only incremental improvements. For example, the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report 2011* (GGG)¹² puts the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Mongolia among the top five Asia-Pacific countries (the other two are Australia and New Zealand) in overall performance in narrowing the gender gap, while the bottom five are Pakistan (133rd out of 135 countries assessed for gender equality), Nepal, India, South Korea, and Cambodia. In the area of women leadership, the Philippines joins Australia and New Zealand as the three highest-ranked countries, while in senior management, female advancement, remuneration, and wage equality these three top performers are joined by Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Mongolia. Surely, the election on 19 December 2012 of South Korea's first female president, Park Geun-hye, daughter of former strongman Park Chung-hee, would alter this country's performance in the next GGG report. There are also "laggards" in overall GGG rankings such as Malaysia (97th out of 135 countries in the 2012 GGG Report), Japan (98th), Cambodia (102nd), South Korea (107th), India (113th), Nepal (126th), and Pakistan (133rd).¹³ It is also noteworthy that there is no correspondence between a country's performance in the 2011 GGG and the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI). The *UNDP Human Development Report 2011* assessed 187 countries and grouped them into four categories: very high, high, medium, and low human development countries. Japan, South Korea, and Singapore belong to only 47 out of 187 countries with very high human development,¹⁴ yet the 2011 GGG Report ranked them lower in overall performance than the Philippines which is assessed as being only among the medium human development group of countries.

12 | World Economic Forum (WEF), *Global Gender Gap Report 2011*, Geneva, 2011.

13 | Ibid.

14 | Cf. Table 4: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Gender Inequality Index and related indicators", *Human Development Report 2011. Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All*, UNDP and Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2011, 139-142.

THE PHILIPPINE CASE

The Philippines is regarded as an anomaly in a region whose overall performance in gender equality still leaves much to be desired. Having had some form of matriarchy in its pre-colonial past, gender equality in the post-colonial era probably had a less hostile ground on which to grow. Local opposition to Spanish rule saw women rebel leaders – some of whom fought against Spain alongside their husbands – at the forefront of anti-colonial struggle. Others carried on the anti-Spanish struggle after the death of their husbands. An important example is Gabriela Silang, wife of Diego Silang, who took up armed resistance against the Spanish colonial forces in her native Ilocos Norte Province in Northern Philippines after her husband died. This uprising came in the aftermath of the British occupation of Manila following Spanish defeat as an ally of France during the Seven Years War. GABRIELA, the present progressive feminist group in the country, is named after her. A noted figure in the Katipunan, the prime mover of the 1896 Revolution is Melchora Aquino (no relation to the current Philippine president). Already 84 years old when the revolution was launched, she became known as Tandang Sora, Grand Woman of the Revolution. She provided assistance to the revolutionaries including medical attention to the sick and wounded, encouragement, and prayers. Many tributes in her honor are visible in the Philippines, and even in San Francisco, California, USA, where a street bears her name.

Filipino wives as the family's depository of funds including the husband's salary must have strengthened the social status of women in the Philippines. This is symbolically integrated in Filipino weddings where the groom pours several silver or gold coins into the bride's cupped hands while imploring that she manage the family finances well and vowing to provide for the family's material needs. Moreover, by practice and tradition, most Filipino households have mothers as the keeper of family funds including the husband's earnings from which a monthly budget is allocated to the husband. Wives know the amount of their husbands' regular income, but in general are unaware of bonuses and other incomes. Thus, husbands are still able to finance personal interests such as tennis, golf or fishing.

Tradition and Roman Catholicism have bound wives even to philandering husbands in the past. Thanks to a new Family Law that is largely based on Canon Law and was enacted after the end of the Marcos dictatorship in the mid-1980s, discontented couples can avail themselves of an annulment of their marriage and a separation of property for cause. Most of the annulment cases are based on psychological incompatibility. Children from annulled marriages are considered legitimate and entitled to inheritance. Annulment creates the myth that the marriage is void from the start, but even so, it has freed many oppressed and discontented spouses of their marital bondage. A divorce bill is currently being pushed in the lower house of the Philippine legislature. It is seen by many women as the next logical step to annulment.

A divorce bill is currently being pushed in the lower house. It is seen by many women as the next logical step to annulment based largely on Canon Law.

In an agricultural economy, the role of women in the farm is incalculable. The Philippines shares this situation with many agricultural societies. Although the economy has been undergoing transformation with manufacturing and new service sectors opening up to women, the latter's old workplaces, such as farms, continue to witness the persistence of gender inequality caused by "the gender division of labour that assigns care of the home and the children to women and because agricultural activities of women are routinely under-reported".¹⁵ It is usually the case that in Filipino households with small farms, women constitute a vast majority of unpaid workers. At the same time, the spread of manufacturing activities into the rural areas reduced the jobs in the agricultural sector, impacting adversely on women agricultural workers.

The country's integration into the global economy has enhanced the economic value of women in the labour force. The global division of labour influenced Filipino labour deployment abroad beginning in the late 1970s-early 1980s originally to the Middle East for massive infrastructure construction amidst that region's revenue from oil exports.¹⁶

15 | Asian Development Bank (ADB), *Paradox and Promise in the Philippines: A Joint Country Gender Assessment*, Asian Development Bank, Manila, 2008, 30.

16 | Cf. e.g. Jorge V. Tigno, "International Migration as State Policy: the Philippine Experience as Model and Myth", *Kasarinlan*, Vol. 6, No. 1-2, 1990, 73-88; "The Politics of International Labor Migration: Philippine Labor Foreign Policy Towards >

The composition of Filipino labor deployed abroad has been changing such that by the 1990s an increasing number of Filipino women were working abroad, including in the Middle East, in Western Europe, and other countries in South-east Asia.¹⁷ Since its initial temporary adoption in the Marcos period, labor deployment has become an institutionalised policy of the Philippine Government.¹⁸ In the Philippines, the remittances migrant workers send home have contributed to the country's economic growth and perhaps saved the Philippine economy from certain foreign exchange crises in the past.¹⁹ For this and other reasons, a new label has even been coined to dignify the status of migrant laborers in the term *Bagong Bayani* (New Hero).²⁰ At the same time, this label recognises the contribution of migrant workers – an increasing number of whom are women – in the country's economy. While they were able to enter the formal sector, they faced enormous challenges both in their host and home countries.

Remittances being sent home from abroad have contributed to the country's economic growth and perhaps saved the Philippine economy from certain foreign exchange crises in the past.

The plight of Filipino migrant workers in the host country is seen in celebrated cases such as that of Flor Contemplación. She was hanged in Singapore in March 1995 for having killed a fellow domestic worker and the latter's young ward. The case caused a suspension of the diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Singapore, home and host countries of Contemplación respectively. Reports of domestic helpers, mostly women, being subjected to inhumane and/or criminal treatment, including long working

Saudi Arabia (1979-1989)", unpublished MA Thesis, Department of Political Science, University of the Philippines, 1992.

17 | Cf. e.g. Jorgen Carling, "Gender Dimensions of International Migration", in: *Global Migration Perspectives*, Global Commission on International Migration, 2005.

18 | For an account of the evolution and deregulation of Philippine labor deployment, see Jorge V. Tigno, "Governance and Public Policy in the Philippines: RA 8042 and the Deregulation of the Overseas Employment Sector", unpublished PhD Dissertation, National College of Public Administration and Governance, University of the Philippines, 2003.

19 | Cf. Alvin Ang, "Workers' Remittances and Economic Growth in the Philippines", paper presented at the 2nd Development Conference of the Economic and Social Research Group (GRES), Bordeaux, 23 Nov 2006.

20 | Cf. Jean Franco, "The Bagong Bayani Discourse: Constituting Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) and the Politics of Labor Out-Migration in the Philippines", unpublished PhD Dissertation, Department of Political Science, University of the Philippines, 2010.

hours, inadequate salaries, physical violence, and rape are common in newspapers especially in the sending countries. At home, they can be victims of domestic violence from suspicious husbands, verbal abuse by in-laws who often care for the migrant workers' children, and insubordination by children no longer used to their mothers' presence in the home.²¹

In the political arena, the Philippines is rather remarkable in Southeast Asia for having ranked among the highest in political empowerment – based on women to men ratio in ministerial-level and parliamentary positions as well as the number of years as president or prime minister – according to the GGG Report 2011. Those in the Asia-Pacific region that ranked higher are Sri Lanka, New Zealand, and Bangladesh. With regard to “Years with Female Head of State” the Philippines was bested only by Sri Lanka, India, and Bangladesh.²² Since 1986, the Philippines had two women presidents who had served longer than most of their male counterparts, Corazón Aquino from February 1986 to June 1992, and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo from January 2001 to June 2010.²³

Since the local and national elections of 2010, women hold 22.5 per cent of the seats in the lower house of Congress.

The Philippine Commission on Women reports that the results of the May 2010 national and local elections show that 18.4 per cent of all elected positions were won by women candidates, up from 17 per cent in 2007. Moreover, more women ran for the twelve senatorial positions which two out of 14 women candidates won; women members (65 out of 289) of the lower house of Congress represent 22.5 per cent of its total membership; 14 (25 per cent) out of 56 elected Party-List representatives in the House of Representatives

21 | Cf. e.g. Robyn Rodriguez, “Domestic Insecurities: Female Migration from the Philippines, Development and National Subject-Status”, Working Paper No. 114, The Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California San Diego, 2005; Hector B. Morada, “Left-Behind Households of Overseas Filipino Workers”, *Philippine Labor Review*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1, Jan-Jun 2003, 118-143.

22 | WEF, n. 12.

23 | Mrs. Aquino governed under a Revolutionary Government from February 1986 until the adoption of the 1987 Constitution that set a six-year term of office for the President, while Mrs. Arroyo served the three years unserved term of the ousted Joseph Estrada (Jan 2001-Jun 2004) and her own six-year term from July 2004 to June 2010.

were women and since 2004, a women's rights organisation (GABRIELA) has been represented as a Party-List member of the House of Representatives; women voter turnout (75.7 per cent) was higher than men (74.4 per cent) and the national average (75 per cent); and the participation of women in the judiciary has been slightly increasing (from 32 per cent in 2007 to 34 per cent in 2010).²⁴

Despite these gender gains in political empowerment, it is still the case, as in other Asian countries, that Filipino women who became chief executives and many of those occupying elective positions in the legislature and local governments acquired political power due to the male politicians with whom they were related either as daughters, wives, or sisters. As an aside, membership in political clans or political dynasties also account for male politicians' success in Philippine elections; although in 1986 and shortly thereafter, a handful of new entrants into political leadership in the country had no political leadership lineage until that time. The current Vice President, Jejomar Binay, for example was a human rights lawyer when appointed by President Corazón Aquino as officer-in-charge of the country's financial capital, Makati City. He has since built his own political clan. Although family ties are applicable to male politicians, it is nevertheless the case that in contemporary Philippines, women in political leadership positions tend to serve as an alter-ego of their male relatives, or convenient vehicles to skirt the country's election laws prohibiting self-succession of incumbent parliamentarians and local government executives. Incidentally, the first Filipino to become a member of the International Criminal Court (ICC) is a woman.

Women in political leadership positions tend to serve as an alter-ego of their male relatives, or convenient vehicles to skirt the country's election laws prohibiting self-succession of incumbent parliamentarians.

Apparently, the Philippines also do very well among countries in the Asia-Pacific region in regard to narrowing the gender gap in the economic dimension. Using data from the WEF GGG Report 2011, a report on women's leadership in Asia ranked the Philippines the highest in the region in terms of narrowing the advancement gap not only among

24 | Philippine Commission on Women, "Women participation in politics and governance", 10 Feb 2012, <http://pcw.gov.ph/statistics/201210/women-participation-politics-and-governance> (accessed 8 Jan 2013).

legislators and senior officials, but also among managers, professional and technical workers.²⁵ However, with regard to the remuneration gap (estimated earned income), it is only tenth out of twelve Asia-Pacific countries for which data was available, although it is fifth in regard to wage equality.²⁶ Drawn from Fortune magazine's list, there is no Filipino woman in the report's figure on Women among Asia's Rich and Powerful.²⁷ In a survey of 12,000 business leaders in 40 economies about women in senior management positions, the wealthy G7 countries fell below the global average, scoring 18 per cent of women holding senior posts. Southeast Asia ranks the highest with 32 per cent of women participation in senior management positions.²⁸ The Philippines and Thailand ranked second in this category where 39 per cent of senior management positions were occupied by women.²⁹

CHALLENGES TO WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Despite clear gains in narrowing some aspects of the gender gap, Filipino women share many of the challenges facing women in Asia in general. While women participation in the labour force has been increasing in part due to the shift from agriculture to manufacturing, the increase remains quite low. Moreover, Asian women continue to dominate the informal sector disabling them from formal remuneration and thus, their income and contribution to the economy remain largely unreported. This constrains their access to resources relative to male workers with consequent negative impact on the productivity of female workers. Failure to absorb women into the labour force in the Asia-Pacific region, for example, is said to have cost the regional economy between 542 billion U.S. dollars and 546 billion U.S. dollars annually.³⁰ Gender equality in education and health appears to have enhanced the empowerment

25 | See Tables 10 and 11: Astrid S. Tuminez, *Rising to the Top? A Report on Women's Leadership in Asia*, The Asia Society and the Lee Kuan Yew (LKY) School of Public Policy, New York and Singapore, Apr 2012, 30-31.

26 | See Tables 15 and 16: *ibid.*, 35-36.

27 | *Ibid.*, 38.

28 | As cited *ibid.*, 40-41.

29 | See Fig. 5: *ibid.*, 38

30 | From a report by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific as cited in: Devasahayam and Mei Hua, n. 6, 3 et seq.

of Southeast Asia's women, including in the Philippines. Yet without policies to remove discriminatory practices against women in the labour force, the benefits of access to education and health by women and girls are not likely to generate the greatest benefits to them.³¹

The rise of political leadership of Asian women, including Filipinas, tends to be related to the careers of male relatives. In South Asia, women chief executives such as India's Indira Gandhi, Bangladesh's Khalida Zia, Sri Lanka's Srivamo Bandaranaike, and Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto benefited from their male relatives who preceded them in political leadership positions in their respective countries. Corazón Aquino became president in 1986 in the heels of her husband's assassination in 1983. He was the country's principal political opponent of the dictator Marcos. Gloria Macapagal Arroyo was a daughter of former President Diosdado Macapagal. And South Korea's newly-elected President Park Geun-hye was the daughter of the assassinated strongman Park Chung-hee. Therefore, the challenge for women political empowerment is the achievement of political credentials independently of their male relatives. This has yet to occur in Asia in general and in the Philippines in particular. Putting an end to political dynasties established by male political leaders could be an important beginning in the Philippine case where the constitutional prohibition against political dynasties has yet to be put in place through an enabling legislation.

The role of women in rising economies and promising lands such as the Philippines is changing. It is fairly reasonable to agree with studies in the region showing that the contribution of women in the region's economic growth is considerable. Despite the increase in the participation of women in the economy, including in new and old workplaces (i.e., manufacturing, service, and agricultural sectors), the increase has been modest and incremental. The same trend applies to the rise in the political role of Filipino women which remains tied to that of their male relatives. Policy intervention profusely abundant in extant policy studies on gender equality at all levels of governance is required to narrow or eliminate the gender gap not only in the Philippines, but also worldwide.



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ROMANIA AFTER THE ELECTIONS

A COUNTRY SEARCHING FOR ITS PATH INTO THE FUTURE, AND ENCOUNTERING ITS PAST AS IT DOES SO

Sven-Joachim Irmer

In December, the Romanians elected a new parliament – half a year after Romania's prime minister, Victor Ponta, caused international alarm by attempting to force the country's president to step down. The degree of indignation felt by the Romanian population can be judged most of all by the low turnout in the elections, if not in the election result itself. Ponta's governing PSD party was by no means punished, on the contrary: In spite of its questionable methods and inadequate efforts to achieve reforms, which are regularly commented on by the Commission of the European Union, the government was returned by the electorate with a commanding majority. To understand this voting behaviour, it is necessary to look into the past and in particular to the events of December 1989, when a revolution took place in Romania which doesn't deserve this name.

THE PATH TO THE EVENTS OF 1989

The history of Romania is comparable to the fate of other countries which suffered under the domination of the Soviet Union following 1945, and which were forcibly recast in the Soviet image. Deportation, murder and expropriation of the old elites were the order of the day. The deposition and banishment of Romania's King Michael I was a mere matter of form, as was the prohibition on centre-right parties and the formation of a party of unity, the Romanian Workers' Party, out of the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party, which had exerted little influence up to that point. In 1948, the newly founded Workers' Party declared the People's Republic of Romania. The nation's leader was the

now almost forgotten Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, who had been appointed General Secretary of the Communist Party on Stalin's order in 1945. Over the course of his political career, he advanced from prime minister to first secretary of the party and ultimately became the President of Romania (1961 to 1965). It was he, as a convinced communist, who built up the infamous Securitate and was one of the drivers of forced collectivisation in agriculture. During the 1950s and 1960s, he was also responsible for the torture of political prisoners, which remains notorious to this day. Gheorghiu-Dej also launched Romania on a special path in the Eastern Bloc during his time in government, thereby significantly angering the powers in Moscow. The spark for the first tension between Bucharest and Moscow was the incomplete implementation of land reform in Romania. The political leadership realised that pushing ahead with full land reform would have a detrimental effect on the supply of foodstuffs to the population, and that the resistance to the central government would weaken the new political system in the long term. In spite of Romania's special path, it was impossible for the government in Bucharest to avoid becoming a member of the Warsaw Pact.

Gheorghiu-Dej died in 1965, shortly after having been re-elected as the country's president. He was followed as president by the still notorious dictator, Nicolae Ceaușescu. Initially, however, he was the first secretary of the central committee of the Workers' Party, which he renamed immediately after his election as the Romanian

Communist Party. Ceaușescu came from a humble background and was an apprenticed cobbler. During the Gheorghiu-Dej government, he advanced from being a member of the communist youth movement to deputy minister of defence and membership of the polit bureau of the Communist Party. Like his predecessor, he attempted to liberate Romania from the "stranglehold" of Moscow and to establish the country as an independent partner for other western countries. He was helped in this by achievements during the industrialisation of the country and improvements in living conditions. To underscore Romania's unique path, he opened diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany in 1967. This brought him great popularity, especially within Romania. Over the

Like his predecessor, Ceaușescu attempted to liberate Romania from the "stranglehold" of Moscow and to establish the country as an independent partner for other western countries.

following years, he repeatedly refused Moscow's demands such as for Romanian troops to intervene in the Prague spring or for breaking off diplomatic relations with Israel as a result of the Six-Day War. This presumed critical posture towards Moscow opened doors for him in Europe and the USA. The visit by U.S. President Richard Nixon in 1969 and the award of the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1971 underlined his popularity within Romania and abroad.



Until the 1970s, western states were on good terms with Ceaușescu. Here he is shown with German chancellor Willy Brandt at a state visit in 1973. | Source: © Online communism photo collection, Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes in Romania (IICCR), Cota 25/1973.

The dramatic change in Ceaușescu, and thus in Romania, started in the 1970s. It is assumed that during a visit to North Korea, he was inspired by the idea of a personality cult which he introduced into Romania over the following years. He appointed relatives and very close friends to important government posts – a habit which is ubiquitous in present-day Romania as well. He officially took up his position as the country's president in 1975, after the constitution had been altered in his favour. From that point on, he ordered that he would be addressed as leader – *Conducător*. The infamous Securitate secret service was also comprehensively established and sowed fear and consternation amongst the population through a network of informers, assaults on opposition members and show

trials. Even today, it remains to be conclusively clarified how many people worked for the organisation officially and unofficially. The historian Marius Oprea speaks of approximately 40,000 official and 400,000 unofficial employees.

Ceaușescu's popularity evaporated in the following years as quickly as it had emerged. The pitiless industrialisation of Romania and associated decline in agriculture presented the population with an unprecedented struggle for existence. This extended so far that produced foodstuffs were used for export in order to pay off national debts. At the same time, enormous and costly prestige projects such as the Danube-Black Sea Canal and construction of the Palace of the Parliament in Bucharest were pushed through. These projects led to the population going hungry and a stagnation in wages, which indeed could no longer be paid in some cases.

Discontent amongst the population grew steadily until the straw that broke the camel's back came in December 1989 when it was reported that an opposition priest from Hungary had been abducted by the Securitate, an act which incited popular revolt. In response, the dictator deployed helicopters against the insurgents. This brutality produced a chain reaction which Ceaușescu had obviously not reckoned with. On 21 and 22 December, he attempted to make a public address in Bucharest in front of a crowd of more than 100,000 people, aiming to present his visions of the future for the country, to placate the masses and to win them over to his side once again. However, the attempt failed and the mood amongst those present tipped from initial shouts of jubilation to calls for protest and storming of the party headquarters. Ceaușescu and his wife failed in their attempt to flee. They were arrested and a court sentenced them to death by firing squad on 24 December. The pictures went around the world, amongst other reasons because he was the only Eastern Bloc ruler to receive this sentence. To the very last, the secret service attempted to gain control of the situation, not even shying from lengthy exchanges of fire in Bucharest's city centre. The fighting claimed several hundred fatalities; more than a thousand people are reported to have been killed during the revolution.

The backgrounds behind the so-called revolution remains to be revealed even today. More than 50,000 files on people in politics and administration remain to be opened.

Even today, there are many opinions in Romanian society as to why the regime fell so quickly. One of the most frequently stated is that the KGB was responsible for the events, and staged both the revolution and the shootings. According to this view, it was the government's objective to depose the unpopular and megalomaniac leader, replacing him with a new pro-Soviet government.

The backgrounds behind the so-called revolution have yet to be revealed even today. More than 50,000 files on people in politics and administration are in the possession of the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives (CNSAS), the counterpart to the Commission for the Stasi Archives in Germany, and remain to be opened. The Council only received all of the two million files from the former secret service in 2007, presumably in connection with the upcoming EU accession at the time.

Coming to terms with the communist past is proceeding at a snail's pace. One reason for this is the low level of funding for the responsible authorities; another is the slow pace of justice. Even today, scarcely any progress has been made on addressing the past and embarking on the associated court proceedings. This should certainly be no surprise because, after all, there was never a true political rebirth in Romania after 1989. The first free elections in May 1990 were won by the electoral alliance of the National Salvation Front (FSN), the chairman of which, Ion Iliescu, was himself a minister under Ceaușescu. During his time in office, he frequently used the Securitate, whether to put down protests, to consolidate his power or to protect the old communist elites. In the economy too, the networks formed at the time remain the determining factors, as a result of which there have still not been any signs of serious, observable privatisation tendencies, for example.

In the 1990s, Romania's political path was significantly set by the Partidul Social Democrat (PSD). Ion Iliescu was a PSD member, just like the former Prime Minister Adrian Năstase, who is still in prison today on corruption charges. The parties in Romania have always struggled bitterly with one another for power in the country. In this process, there have been various constellations, involving Social Democrats, the National Liberal Party (PNL) and the

Democratic Liberal Party (PDL). In spite of all the political trials and tribulations, all governments and presidents have followed a pro-European and pro-democratic course. In 2004 and 2007, Romania achieved two important political milestones in the recent history of the country: NATO membership and accession to the European Union. Whereas the NATO membership was scarcely noticed by the general population, EU accession was of measurable importance for the country. The accession negotiations which started as far back as the year 2000 dragged on because even at the time Romania had difficulties in meeting the required EU standards for judicial reform, criminal prosecution, competition and combating corruption – a list of deficits which is also revealed in the latest EU report.¹

EU accession was of measurable importance for the country. The accession negotiations dragged on because even at the time Romania had difficulties in meeting the required EU standards.

POLITICAL CRISIS 2012

In 2012, Romania once again attracted the attention of decision-makers in Brussels and other European capitals. People in Romania did something they had not done for a long time – they demonstrated. Normally, Romanians are regarded as having a great capacity to endure suffering, but nevertheless the announcement by the government at the time under Prime Minister Emil Boc (PDL) of urgently required reforms to the health system, constitution and education system were regarded as simply too much of a threat. The government proved unable to explain to the population the reasons for the reforms which were also demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the EU Commission. In the course of the reform discussions, the demonstrations escalated into violent clashes in Bucharest and other cities in the country.

The majority relationships in parliament began to shift slowly but surely from this point on. A series of parliamentarians from the previous PDL governing party changed sides in response to lucrative offers made by the PNL and PSD. On 27 April 2012, the defectors enabled Victor

1 | Cf. European Commission, “Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on progress in Romania under the co-operation and verification mechanism”, Brussels, 30 Jan 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/cvm/docs/com_2013_47_en.pdf (accessed 12 Feb 2013).

Ponta (PSD) to be elected prime minister. It is not unusual in Romania for politicians to change parties on a whim. Changing sides is made all the easier because none of the parties in Romania possesses a true ideological framework. As a result, the change from the PDL to the PNL and back can take place without difficulty.

The unprecedented political turf war started with a verbal exchange of political blows between the young, social-democratic prime minister, Ponta, and the centre right-oriented president, Traian Băsescu.

What followed over the subsequent months was a political turf war like none ever experienced in Romania, let alone in other EU countries. It began with a verbal exchange of political blows between the young, social-democratic prime minister, Ponta, and the centre-right aligned president, Traian Băsescu – a dispute which is part and parcel of Romanian political life. The conflict between Ponta and Băsescu was not centred, as has frequently been described, on removing the president from office, but rather on the independence of Romanian justice and its institutions. From the start of his term in office, Ponta sought to populate the relatively independent judicial system with his cronies. Indirect access from the public prosecutor's office and constitutional court would have spared Ponta and his governing PSD/PNL coalition many ongoing trials against party members. The most prominent "victim" of the public prosecutor's office was the former prime minister, Adrian Năstase (PSD), who is also the political patron and doctoral advisor of Victor Ponta. In January 2012, Năstase was sentenced to two years' imprisonment due to illegal party financing. In a bid to escape this punishment, he staged a suicide attempt with the help of police officers, doctors and the media. Ponta used his press conferences to accuse the president and the public prosecutor's office, supposedly beholden to the president, of complicity in the suicide attempt. This further exacerbated the aggressive mood towards the president and the PDL, which was loyal to him. The political disputes culminated in the referendum on impeachment of the president being held on 29 July 2012. This failed on grounds of insufficient participation by the citizenry – not least because the PDL and the president had called for a boycott. Furthermore, the referendum was characterised by electoral fraud, which is still being investigated by the public prosecutor's office today.



Temporarily suspended with a majority of 256 votes: Romanian president Traian Băsescu, here shown during a visit to Afghanistan in 2010 remained in office after all. | Source: Daryl Knee / flickr (CC BY).

However, the events leading up to this were also an object lesson for observers in Brussels regarding the status of the rule of law in Romania. Earlier governments, too, had played “fast and loose” with the constitution, and been able to turn the weak Romanian constitution to their own ends. So-called emergency ordinances issued by the prime minister of the day were used time and time again for sidestepping awkward regulations. The same occurred in this case: On 5 July 2012, the Law on the Organisation of Referendums was changed by a corresponding emergency ordinance. The participation threshold of 50 per cent plus one vote for confirmation of the referendum was abandoned, from that point on the president could be forced to step down by a simple majority of the votes cast. On this basis, the USL moved a motion in parliament for impeachment. The president was accused of “serious unconstitutional actions”. The PNL Chairman Crin Antonescu demanded that the constitutional court submit a consultative “opinion” within 24 hours. In its opinion stated on the next day, the constitutional court failed to confirm any of the seven accusations raised by the parliamentary majority. The process continued unabated, and the president was suspended after a vote which returned a majority of 256.

FOREIGN REACTION

There were strong reactions to these events from the EU as well as from the USA. In fact, they were so severe that the “putschists”, as Ponta and his supporters were dubbed by elements of the press and civil society in Romania, had to take a step back. The justification for the severe reaction was the threat to the state under the rule of law, the danger presented to the pro-European policy of the country and the abandonment of European values in favour of a political caste.

At this time, the regular report by the European Commission on judicial reform in Romania made first mention of the risk that former reforms in Romanian justice could be rolled back. The clarity with which key European politicians such as José Manuel Barroso, Angela Merkel and Martin Schulz, as well as the American ambassador in Romania, Mark Gittenstein, spoke out in favour of the state under the rule of law was something that Ponta had not predicted. At the same time, however, this was received very positively amongst the population. In the international arena, the steps taken by Ponta’s government were only welcomed on Russian radio.

Ponta suffered his next setback in the run-up to the referendum when he was obliged to reintroduce the quorum requirement under pressure from the European Commission. He also had to adopt a position on eleven requirements from the EU for upholding the state under the rule of law. In advance of the referendum, Ponta and the organisers of the referendum fought tooth and nail to achieve the highest possible levels of voter participation and defamation of the president. Mobile polling stations were set up in the holiday resorts on the Black Sea. Vacationers were able to vote directly on the beach or in restaurants. The prime minister invited the press to view the recently renovated official villa of the president and to take this opportunity to find out about the horrendous costs of the renovation. At the end of the tour, he gave an interview in the reception hall, during which he repeatedly emphasised the level of luxury in which he regarded the president as living, whilst pensioners and public servants were having to cope with harsh cuts in their income levels.

Nevertheless, only 46 per cent of the electorate took part in the referendum on impeaching the president, as a result of which it was declared invalid. The president's supporters boycotted the referendum in order to prevent the necessary quorum from being reached.

However, about 7.5 million voters did vote in favour of the impeachment, and about 800,000 against. The USL government coalition invoked this result in its efforts to have the referendum declared valid. Ministers from Ponta's cabinet subsequently attempted to manipulate the number of people eligible to vote, or to initiate an improvised census of the population.

The extent to which the feeling of insecurity within the judicial system had spread within a short time can be seen in the procedures followed by the constitutional court. Despite the situation after the referendum being beyond dispute, the constitutional court was unable to finally settle on a clear verdict (which requires at least six of the nine judges' votes), and initially postponed its decision until mid-September. Surprisingly, however, the court then reached a decision on 21 August according to which president Traian Băsescu would remain in office. To date, it is unclear why the judges went against their previous announcement and were indeed able to reach a rapid judgement.

During the time between the referendum and the court's verdict, public debate was influenced by discussions regarding electoral lists, voting eligibilities and electoral fraud. At present, the public prosecutor's office is investigating the districts which reported an above-average voter turnout. 500 criminal proceedings are still under way to prosecute various kinds of electoral fraud.

The impeachment attempt against Băsescu was the result of a strategy pursued by his political opponent for a very long time. Even before Ponta took power, Dan Voiculescu, the eminence grise of the USL, spoke about a 60-day plan to remove Băsescu from office. Also, both of the parties in government made it clear that cohabitation would be impossible. The so-called 60-day plan was immediately implemented by the USL with full force after the prime minister took office.

The president's supporters boycotted the referendum in order to prevent the necessary quorum from being reached. However, about 7.5 million voters did vote in favour of the impeachment, and about 800,000 against.

THE ELECTIONS IN DECEMBER 2012 – PONTA ACHIEVES A THREE QUARTERS MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT

Immediately following the referendum, it became clear that the centre-right parties around the president and the PDL would be campaigning in the parliamentary elections from a position of weakness. The result of the election confirmed these fears. The electoral alliance of Victor Ponta, the USL, achieved a clear three-quarters majority in both chambers of parliament. It received 69.3 per cent of the votes in the chamber of deputies, representing 273 seats. The recently formed centre-right electoral alliance, the Alianța România Dreaptă (Right Romanian Alliance, ARD) formed by the PDL, Forta Civica, PNTCD and Noua Republica, achieved a meagre 14.2 per cent (56 seats). Polls had forecast 30 per cent of the vote. The PPDD party led by the populist Dan Diaconescu, achieved an impressive 11.9 per cent (47 seats). This was the first time that this owner of a TV channel had taken part in the parliamentary elections. The Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) achieved 5.4 per cent (18 seats). National minorities received 18 seats. In total, there are 412 deputies in the chamber, a number unparalleled since 1990. The situation in the senate is similar: USL 69.3 per cent, corresponding to 122 out of 176 seats. Here too, the ARD only achieved a 13.6 per cent (24 seats), the PPDD 11.9 per cent (21 seats) and the UDMR 5.1 per cent (nine seats).

Political struggles regarding influence on the public prosecutor's office and the constitutional court have further sapped public confidence that Romania is involved in a promising transformation process.

The most shocking result of the election was the voter turnout, at 41.76 per cent. It is in particular the age group between 18 and 35 that places no trust in either parties or politicians, and largely refused to take part in the elections. This is scarcely surprising given the political disputes. The young generation regards all parties as lacking content and accuses them of cronyism. Political struggles regarding influence on the public prosecutor's office and the constitutional court have further sapped public confidence that Romania is involved in a promising transformation process towards becoming a state under the rule of law and a democracy, factors which are last but not least of decisive significance for ongoing European integration. A climate of frustration prevails in society, because none of the important reform projects in the political arenas of

education, finance, municipalisation, health, constitution or privatisation have been tackled.

The population is responding with increasing alienation from politics. Furthermore, the situation is exacerbated because there is currently no functioning opposition. The ARD alliance has officially broken up, i.e. each party is fighting for itself. The former PDL governing party is searching for a role for itself in opposition, and experiencing significant difficulty in making a substantive fresh start. This is hardly surprising, because politics is only really lucrative in Romania if there is something to be shared out, and the PDL cannot offer this at present. Comprehensive provision for party friends and the resulting cost-intensive encephalisation of the government apparatus at the same time as the state's coffers are empty further undermine the population's confidence in political decision-makers. The new government has 26 ministers, the old one only numbered 18. The prime minister justifies the increased number around the cabinet table as being due to orientation towards the EU Commission which even has 27 commissioners. In addition to the new ministers, additional jobs have been created for secretaries of state. Many of the new ministers do not have a fixed portfolio, and will probably not receive one either.

USL IS BENEFITING FROM PDL WEAKNESS

The strengthening of the USL in the parliamentary elections is chiefly due to the weakness of the centre-right parties and, in particular, to the weakness of the PDL. The PDL was formed in 2007 by the merger of the Liberal Democratic Party under Theodor Stolojan and the Democratic Party under Emil Boc, who later became prime minister. Ever since the party was founded, it has been closely linked to the country's president, Traian Băsescu. He himself was a member of the Democratic Party. The Liberal Democratic Party only emerged in December 2006 as a splinter from the ruling National Liberal Party of former prime minister, Călin Popescu Țăriceanu.

Under Boc's leadership, the PDL was regarded even shortly after its foundation as the hope for change and a shift in political culture in Romania. It was Boc himself who

contributed to this, since he was regarded by the population as a “clean” politician and enjoyed a good reputation as a scientist. Boc was a lateral entrant into politics when he embarked on his political career at the end of the 1990s. He then made a name for himself as the mayor of Cluj-Napoca (2004-2009) and, from 2005 onwards, as chairman of the Democratic Party (PD). In this function, he steered through the party's exit from the Socialist International and, in 2006, joined with President Bănescu to push ahead with joining the European People's Party. By taking this step, the intention was finally to establish the party as a centre-right force in Romania, at the same time as gaining popularity with new, positive values. This new image subsequently helped the PDL to score a narrow electoral

victory in 2008 and enter a governing coalition with the PSD. The coalition only held for a short time, and broke up ahead of the presidential elections in 2009. The reason for this was Boc's dismissal of the interior minister, who was a PSD member, and his replacement

The narrow victory achieved by Bănescu in a run-off vote appeared to support the PSD's claims, as a result of which the formerly comparatively good image enjoyed by Boc and the PDL was significantly besmirched.

by a PDL politician. For many observers, the timing chosen for the new appointment was not surprising, because after all the interior minister is also responsible for preparing the presidential elections. For the PSD, this represented a favourable opportunity to leave the coalition which it did not like in any case and to accuse the PDL of supporting the president in planned electoral manipulation. The narrow victory achieved by Bănescu in a run-off vote appeared to support the PSD's claims, as a result of which the formerly comparatively good image enjoyed by Boc and the PDL was significantly besmirched. On top of all this, the global economic and financial crisis struck Romania completely unprepared. Whereas Boc's government had promised massive increases in wages for civil servants and higher pensions during the election campaign in 2008, the country then had to embark on negotiations with the IMF regarding obtaining special loans in order to secure payment of civil servants' salaries and pensions. The IMF made its loan conditional on strict economy measures including redundancies in nationalised companies, reductions in civil servants' salaries and pensions, as well as a reduction in the level of government involvement in the Romanian economy. Later, this was followed by an increase in value-added tax and cuts in emergency services. The popularity of the PDL,

which only remained managerially in office in a minority government between October and December 2009, sank with each further belt cinching. It only became possible to reappoint Boc as prime minister following the re-election of Băsescu as president. He formed a new government with the UDMR (Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România), the party of the Hungarian minority, in a coalition which held until its final collapse in April 2012.

Today, despite its successes and progress achieved in integrating the country within the EU, the PDL is regarded to an unparalleled extent in Romania as responsible for the deterioration in civil servants' and pensioners' standard of living. Boc's unbridled hunger for power is also regarded as a negative feature of the party, since he was only able to secure his hold on power by means of the country's president who has close links to the PDL. This makes it clear that the election result of almost 34 per cent during the parliamentary elections in 2008 did not come about through any fundamental strengthening in the centre-right forces, but rather was due to protest votes and voters shifting allegiances. The PDL has not fulfilled the hopes of young voters in particular who are looking for a new political culture without cronyism. Instead, it is now perceived by many as a party like any other, however associated with particularly painful savings measures.

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Another reason for the surprising result achieved by the USL concerns the low turnout in the elections, and the associated disappearance of young voters. The USL benefited hugely from its core voters going to the polls, because these are predominantly drawn from the area of civil servants and pensioners, as are the core voters of the PSD, and thus represent those groups of the population who were hit by the PDL's savings measures. As a result, the parliamentary elections functioned as a new settling of accounts with the PDL and the president who had played a positive role in the economy measures and in Boc's government.

A LONG TO-DO LIST FOR THE GOVERNMENT

It remains to be seen how responsibly the USL will treat its three-quarters majority when it sets about reforming the constitution. This will be particularly interesting with regard to the future role and the powers of the president. Ponta would probably prefer it if the president had less influence in future, and were to undertake tasks of a more representative nature. This attitude is not opposed by the junior coalition partner, the PNL, and its chairman Crin Antonescu. Antonescu sees himself as a natural successor

to Băsescu, not least because he was already the presidential candidate of the PNL in 2009.

PSD representatives are arguing that the PSD as the largest party in the governing alliance should be entitled to appoint the president. This is where many observers already identify a potential rift within the USL.

As a result, he is currently also promoting a marked curtailment of presidential powers, as well as for the president to be elected by parliament. At the same time, however, some

PSD representatives are already arguing that the PSD as the largest party in the governing alliance should be entitled to appoint the president. This is where many observers already identify a potential rift within the USL, and one which could lead to further changes in the current year or a splintering of the alliance by early 2014 at the latest.

It is not by chance that the USL's government programme is very elaborate, after all, almost all the government's resources have been concentrated on the struggle for political power since mid-2012, leaving urgent reform projects by the wayside. Now, the objective is to undertake an administrative reform alongside the constitutional reform. It remains to be seen how this will look in detail and how it will be financed. It is the declared goal of the government to improve household incomes, combat tax evasion and tax fraud as well as to pass a new health law. It is also intended for major infrastructure projects to be undertaken such as the expansion of the motorway network, completion of the Danube-Bucharest Canal and construction of high-speed rail lines. The government also intends to improve income conditions for workers and to reduce the burden on employers. The minimum income should increase to 1,200 RON (270 euros), while social security payments by employers are to be reduced by five per cent. The flat-rate income tax of currently 16 per cent is to be replaced by a graduated model with bands of eight, twelve and 16 per

cent. Ponta also announced that the VAT rate which had been increased to 24 per cent by Boc's government (PDL) will be reduced to 19 per cent. This package of measures could be implemented step-by-step by 2016.

It is undisputed that Romania will need funds in order to put these electoral promises and reform projects into effect. Therefore, the government wishes to push ahead on continuing agreements with international partners such as the IMF, the EU and the World Bank. This will not happen voluntarily, but only under pressure from outside. The representatives of the IMF, the World Bank and the EU Commission attested to the performance of the Ponta government during meetings held in Bucharest in November 2012, stating that it had not done its "homework" adequately. In particular, IMF chief negotiator Erik de Vrijer made it clear that no specific commitments regarding the urgently required loans or an emergency loan would be given to the Romanian government as long as there were no successes apparent in structural reforms, privatisation and budget consolidation.

Economically speaking, Romania has its back to the wall. It is short of 5.1 billion euros which the country is obliged to repay to the IMF for an emergency loan received in 2010. The economic figures are not rosy either. Economic growth sagged from 0.7 per cent in the second quarter of 2012 to 0.2 per cent in the third quarter. As if that was not enough, the EU also responded to the government's inaction by carrying out its threat to put EU structural funds for the country on ice. Furthermore, at the end of September 2012, it was announced that foreign direct investments only amounted to 1.1 billion euros. It is hardly likely that these problems can be resolved without fundamental reforms, which will be painful for many people in Romania. Of course, it will also be necessary for the government to make an attempt at absorbing EU subsidies from Brussels that have scarcely been used so far. It remains to hope that they will reach those areas where they are needed.

At the end of September 2012, foreign direct investments only amounted to 1.1 billion euros. It is unlikely that Romania's economic problems can be resolved without fundamental reforms.

STARTING POSITION IN 2013

The attempt to make a forecast for the following months is difficult, and by no means hopeful, given the starting position as described. It is hardly likely that the political situation will calm down or that a political structure will spread in such a way as to permit discussion of content-driven solutions to problems. All the players are already too focused on the EU elections and presidential elections in 2014 for this to be the case. More than the EU elections, the battle for the presidential office will set the tone of political disputes. Following the events in summer, it is hardly imaginable that these will pass off peaceably. However, it should be noticed as a positive point that Băsescu and Ponta have signed a "peace treaty". In doing so, both figures have taken a new political step in Romania.

The timing of the signing was also remarkable, coming as it did immediately before the reappointment of Ponta as prime minister. In the signed document, both sides undertake to deal with one another in a civilised manner, and to refrain from personal and political attacks. It is quite

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likely that this act is not to the liking of many in the USL, because it means that head-on attacks on the president are taboo for the moment – assuming the agreement is taken seriously. With his USL, Ponta currently has a free run to reshape the country according to his own ideas and to bring about a constitution that is tailor-made for him. The weak and quiescent opposition in parliament will help him indirectly in this. Furthermore, civil society is ossified, rejects the political class and is, in part, resigned. The weakness of the system is Ponta's opportunity to establish himself as the strong man in Romania. It is improbable that he will make the same mistakes as last summer. He has learnt a lot, and in particular that it is better to act quietly so that he only comes to the attention of the EU through the presentation of progress reports. This is the way his predecessors behaved, and thus succeeded in bringing Romania into the EU despite its inadequacies.

What remains is the realisation that the last democratic enclave in Romania is currently the public prosecutor's office and a fragile constitutional court. During the short time that Ponta and his USL have been in office, it has been

demonstrated that there is no functioning mechanism in the country to protect democracy and the state under the rule of law according to European standards. In this way, we have an answer to the ever-recurring question as to whether Romania meets the criteria of a European state under the rule of law today. There is one question which has not been asked enough, and is only rarely raised: What would have happened if Romania had not joined the EU in 2007? No matter how painful and unpleasant the aforementioned observations have been, it is clear today that the EU has done well as a guardian of the basic principles of democracy and the state under the rule of law. The report by the EU Commission published at the start of the year concerning progress in Romania as part of the verification mechanism² once again describes a lengthy series of jobs that have not been done.

