WOMEN NEGOTIATING POWER IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH: THREE POLITICAL NARRATIVES FROM INDIA, SOUTH AFRICA AND BRAZIL

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DECLARATION

I, Nila Mohanan, hereby declare that this thesis represents work which has been carried out by me and that it has not been submitted, either in part or full, to any other University or Institution for the award of any research degree.

Place: Taleigao Plateau Nila Mohanan

Date :

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the above Declaration of Ms. Nila Mohanan is true and the work was carried out under my supervision and may be placed for evaluation.

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“Don’t think about making women fit the world – think about making the world fit women.”

- Gloria Steinem

(during a talk at Yale University on 1 February 2010)

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The gendered nature of the political arena is a dimension that has come to be widely acknowledged across the social science disciplines, inspiring incisive analyses and original insights of how the access of women to political power has been extremely restricted. This aspect comes even more sharply into focus when the all-male nature of political spaces begins to get altered with "the first woman walking in the door" (Connell 2016: xiv). With the increasing participation of women in politics, the interest in unearthing the hidden gendered assumptions that inform political institutions has grown exponentially. Despite a steady rise in the actual numbers of women entering the political sphere across countries, the gender inequality between men and women in politics is persistent and pervasive. As of 1 October 2023, the world average for women's representation in national parliaments is only 26.7%; at this rate, it is estimated that gender parity in national legislatures will not be reached before 2063 (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2023, IPU Parline 2023, UN WOMEN 2023). The rate of women's participation in national parliaments is considered as a significant indicator of the quality of democracies by scholars of democratization. There is consensus that the increased political participation of women is essential to deepen the roots of democratization and ensure inclusive access to political power (Lijphart 1999, Moisés 2016).

However, the question of gender and politics goes much beyond a mere numerical assessment of women's participation. It must necessarily engage with multifarious aspects that determine the nature, extent and impact of women as political actors on the institutions, discourse and practice of politics. This involves identifying the barriers affecting women's unhindered entry into politics and delineating the levels at which women are able to access political power, both as internal and external actors. It would also have to examine women's interventions in politics as comparable to, or distinct from, that of men. Women's global political empowerment has been defined in a recent work as "the enhancement of assets, capabilities, and achievements of women to gain equality to men in influencing and exercising political authority worldwide" (Alexander, Bolzendahl and Jalalzai 2018: 4). When viewed from such a holistic perspective, an

undeniable fact, which was brought out in one of the first cross-national, comparative studies of women's political participation from a feminist perspective, still remains: "In no country do women have political status, access or influence equal to men's. The sweep of women's political subordination encompasses the great variety of cultures, economic arrangements and regimes in which they live" (Nelson et al. 1994: 3).

Feminist political scientists recognize that "more than any other kind of human activity, politics has historically borne an explicitly masculine identity. It has been more exclusively limited to men than any other realm of endeavour and has been more intensely, self-consciously masculine than most other social practices" (Brown 1988: 4). Starting with the crucial insight that the personal is political, feminist scholarship has pushed the boundaries of explorations into the immutability of the fact of women's under-representation in political life. The dichotomy between the male citizen who belonged to the public/political realm and the woman non-citizen who belonged to the private/domestic realm that underlay mainstream political science scholarship has been incisively critiqued by feminist political scientists (Mouffe 1992, Lister 1997). Thus, politics came to be seen by feminist scholars as "in part an elaborate defence against the tug of the private, against the lure of the familial, against evocations of female power" (Elshtain 1981: 15-16). The branching out of the academic engagement with gender and politics has largely coincided with an "affirmation of the importance of politics" by feminists and women activists around the world and "the knowledge that to concede the political arena is to concede the crucial sites of power" (Lovenduski 1992: 612).

A significant highlight of feminist academic interventions in political science, as also across disciplines, has been its normative dimension. Even while developing a feminist theory and methodologies to interrogate the gender biases inherent in the key concepts and assumptions of political science, feminist scholars have looked at how these can in turn lead to increased participation of women in political life in meaningful ways that further the cause of women's empowerment and mainstreaming of the hitherto marginalized sections of society (McLure 1992, Ackerly, Stern and True 2006, Ackerly and True 2010). As Alison M. Jaggar and Paula S. Rothenberg define it, "a feminist framework is a comprehensive analysis of the nature and causes of women's oppression and a correlated set of proposals for ending it. It is an integrated theory of women's place both in contemporary society and in the new society that feminists are struggling to build"

(Jaggar and Rothenberg 1984: 17). A key insight of feminist epistemology that " 'knowledge is power' and therefore research—using any methods—is a political act…" informs the normative approach of feminist academic explorations (Ackerly and True 2013: 136). It creates the ground for a feminist praxis that enables critical explorations of politics as theory and practice from a gender perspective.

1.1 GENDER AND POLITICS: AN OVERVIEW OF THE FIELD

1.1.1 Three stages of academic research

The political participation of women has been receiving scholarly attention ever since gender came to be acknowledged as a crucial factor in the theoretical underpinnings and actual practice of politics in the 1970s. Sara Childs and Mona Lena Krook have identified three distinct stages in which research on gender and politics has evolved over the years (Childs and Krook 2006). The first stage was characterized by critical evaluations of the exclusion of women as political actors from mainstream political science. In this stage, path-breaking studies about the deeply gendered nature of politics problematized the concepts of democracy and citizenship that not only failed in ensuring the equal political representation of women but were also based on a masculine perspective of the political realm as completely distinct and removed from the private sphere of women (Bourque and Grossholtz 1974, Jaquette 1974, Goot and Reid 1975, Sapiro 1983, Randall 1987, Pateman 1988, Young 1990, Okin 1991, Phillips 1991).

In the second stage, systematic analyses of the causes of women's exclusion that sought to "add women and stir" were taken up (Childs and Krook 2006: 20). The focus remained on the numerical imbalance in the representation of women in politics that creates a wide gender gap and the supply-side factors that impinge on it, like the availability of sufficient numbers of women with the will and ambition to enter the political arena, their qualifications and workforce participation experience, and the time and resources available at their disposal for serious political engagement (Carroll and Zerilli 1993, Sawer and Simms 1993, Darcy, Welch and Clark 1994, Matland and Studlar 1996). Feminist scholars critically analysed the sexual division of labour in society and the socio-cultural barriers that impede women's entry into mainstream political life. They

also looked at the ways in which societal norms were internalized by women, thereby preventing them from imagining the possibilities of increased political participation.

Academic research in the third stage has gone beyond exploring the traditional explanations of how women choose not to engage with formal politics due to their own socially shaped choices and political socialization, to look at how political institutions and practices have systematically and restrictively moulded these choices and societal norms. Thus, feminist research has shifted from an analysis strictly of the supply side factors towards examining the demand side factors that have an impact on women's political participation (Norris and Lovenduski 1993, 1995, Nelson and Chowdhury 1994, Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995, Inglehart and Norris 2003, Tremblay and Trimble 2003). The demand-side explanations for the gender gap as categorised by Miki Caul Kittilson and Leslie Schwindt-Bayer (Kittilson and Bayer 2012) are cultural factors, including religious beliefs and societal attitudes towards women in public life (Inglehart and Norris 2003), socio-economic factors such as educational and income levels, class and race backgrounds and employment status (Burns, Schlozman and Verba 2001), group membership in public bodies like trade unions that determines access to leadership positions (Burns, Schlozman and Verba 2001, Inglehart and Norris 2003, Ford 2011), the political context shaped by the impact of women's increasing entry into the realm of legislative and executive decision-making (Carroll 2001, Mazur 2002, Swers 2002, Caiazza 2004, Dodson 2006, Annesley and Gains 2010, Bauer and Tremblay 2011), and the role of political institutions in impeding greater political participation of women (Norris and Lovenduski 1995, Franceschet 2005, Krook 2010, Krook and Mackay 2011). Thus, the third stage of research in gender and politics is seeing feminist scholars fundamentally questioning the epistemology of mainstream political science, the ways in which politics is conceptualised, and the "gendered nature of political institutions and processes" (Childs and Krook 2006: 20).

1.1.2 Feminist redefinitions of power

Feminist scholars have also developed a fundamental critique of the concept of power that underlies political life, holding that the very essence of politics is that it is based on power relationships (MacKinnon 1987, Millet 1970). While mainstream/malestream classic formulations of power in political science have

conceptualized it as getting someone to do something that they would have otherwise resisted (Dahl 1957, Bachrach and Baratz 1962, Weber 1978), feminist scholars, drawing upon Hannah Arendt's work, distinguish between 'power over' and 'power to' (Arendt 1958, 1970). As opposed to the Weberian definition of power as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance…" (Weber 1978: 53), Hanna Pitkin traces the etymological roots of the word 'power' to the French word '*pouvoir*' and the Latin word '*potere*', which both mean 'to be able to', and defines it as "… a something – anything – which makes or renders somebody able to do, capable of doing something. Power is capacity, potential, ability, or wherewithal" (Pitkin 1972: 276). This feminist conception of power rejects the masculine idea of power and sees it as "energy and competence rather than dominance"; with transformative and empowering capabilities (Hartsock 1983: 224, 1996, Irigaray 1985, Miller 1992, Held 1993, Allen 1999). Even within the constraints of patriarchal frameworks, women negotiate "at the margins of power, sometimes constrained by but also resisting and even undermining asymmetrical power structures" (Fisher and Davis 1993: 6).

Feminist International Relations scholars have also contributed to redefining notions of power. In her critique of the canonical 'Six Principles of Political Realism' laid down by Hans J. Morgenthau (Morgenthau 1948), J. Ann Tickner argues that the masculine realm of the abstract, universal, rational, and objective state showcased as the only legitimate actor in mainstream/malestream International Relations, one that has to maximise power to ensure its survival, is ideated by keeping it strictly away from the personal and the private feminine realm, a dichotomy that "is based on the need for control; hence objectivity becomes associated with power and domination" (Tickner 1988: 432). She further argues that "power as domination and control privileges masculinity and ignores the possibility of collective empowerment, another aspect of power often associated with femininity" (Tickner 1988: 438). Cynthia Enloe has demonstrated how mainstream notions of power in International Relations theory are strictly state-centric, thus ignoring the power that emerges from within the state and on the margins, and oversimplifying the nature of the international political system. She states that "it is only by delving deeper into any political system, listening more attentively at its margins, that we can accurately estimate the powers it has taken to provide the state with the apparent stability that has permitted its elite to presume to speak

on behalf of a coherent whole" (Enloe 2004: 42). Seen from a feminist perspective, women's entry into politics gives them access to power that in turn creates opportunities for them to play a transformative role by redefining the masculinist terms that have historically dictated the practice of politics.

1.1.3 Forms of political representation

Drawing from Hanna F. Pitkin's important distinction of the two forms of representation as "standing for" and "acting for" (Pitkin 1967: 11-12), feminist scholars have differentiated between the descriptive and substantive representation of women. Descriptive representation implies "the presence of elected women in parliaments and assemblies in numerical terms", while substantive representation implies "the expression of women's interests, particularly in policymaking both by women in elected bodies and perhaps more significantly within other institutional mechanisms and structures" (Mackay 2004: 101). Some scholars have also drawn linkages between descriptive representation and the third form of symbolic representation posited by Pitkin, which points toward altering gendered ideas about the roles of women and men in politics, raising awareness of what women can achieve, legitimating women as political actors, and encouraging women to become more involved in politics themselves as voters, activists, candidates and leaders (Pitkin 1967, Schwindt-Bayer and Mischler 2005, Franceschet, Krook and Piscopo 2012). They argue that with more women becoming visible in politics, a virtuous cycle is initiated; it sends out the message both to other women and to men that women are capable of governing and taking up leadership positions, and this in turn results in redefining the rules of the political game, making it more and more accessible for women (Burrell 1996, Mansbridge 1999, Campbell and Wolbrecht 2006, Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007, Alexander 2012, Barnes and Burchard 2013, Lombardo and Meier 2014, Alexander and Jalalzai 2020). However, the findings of certain other studies have been quite different. For instance, a study of the attitudes towards women in politics in Latin America brought out that after the initial effect of the outsider status of women freshly entering into politics wears out, they cease to be seen as alternatives to existing faulty structures of representation. Furthermore, with the rise in the number of women in politics, there is a backlash against them due to the increase in their economic opportunities (Morgan and Buice 2013). A recent analysis of women candidates running for executive office globally has concluded that even in the case of

high-profile, competitive women candidates, there have been no noticeable symbolic benefits to women, possibly because these women candidates take a stand that distances themselves from women's issues, or because of their family linkages and/or dependence on male predecessors (Carreras 2017). Other scholars have demonstrated that though symbolic representation helps change attitudes towards women in public life, it does not significantly alter perceptions of women's private roles in the household and in social life. For instance, a study of women's political participation at the Village Panchayat level of rural self-governance in India has shown that wherever the seats are reserved for women candidates, there is a reduction in the gender bias towards women leaders amongst men as well as women, but this does not impact on the sexist assumptions that dictate women's roles within the home or in the community (Beaman, Pande and Cirone 2012). In her study of the impact of gender quotas in Rwanda, the country with the highest percentage of women in the national parliament at 61.25% (IPU Parline 2023), Jennie Burnet identifies certain backlash effects in society, like a perceptible rise in male resentment against women and marital discord (Burnet 2012).

The distinction between the descriptive and substantive representation of women has given rise to debates on whether women do politics and wield power differently than men and what, if any, are the consequences of women's political participation on altering the gendered norms, structures and policies in society as a whole (Childs and Krook 2009, Celis and Childs 2012). Early scholarship on these two concepts of representation drew a linear and causal relationship between them, holding that increased descriptive representation would in turn lead to more substantive representation of women, drawing upon the politics of presence paradigm developed by Anne Phillips (Phillips 1995). As per this paradigm, women representatives who have a shared and lived experience of being women are more likely to act for women than male representatives (Mansbridge 1999, Dovi 2002). In the earlier stages of research, questions pertaining to the numerical or descriptive representation of women dominated (Diamond 1977, Vallance 1979, Carroll and Strimling 1983, Darcy, Welch and Clark 1994). However, the focus has shifted to the nature and quality of substantive representation, and enquiring whether women's increased representation in the policy process has corresponding policy impacts and whether women in politics are able to challenge and subvert the masculine rules of the game (Mackay 2005).

As part of this questioning, scholarship on gender and politics has also come to problematize the concept of a critical mass, which denotes the presence of a sufficient enough percentage of women in elected office, pegged at between 15% to 30%, to start making an impact on the shaping of political institutions, policies and legislative agendas. Once this tipping point is reached, it is held that women political representatives can have a transformative impact on the power configurations and patterns of political behaviour (Dahlerup 1988, 2006, Saint-Germain 1989, Thomas and Welch 1991, Thomas 1994, Stevenson 1999, Mansbridge 2005). Proponents of the critical mass theory hold that the increased numerical presence of women in legislatures have led to more debates and policy focus on women, children, families, cuts on defence spending, and reducing militarization (Kittilson 2008, Schwindt-Bayer 2010a, Koch and Fulton 2011). Drude Dahlerup, who introduced the concept first to the study of women's political participation, proposed that attaining a critical mass of women in politics would bring about six possible types of change: (i) in the reaction to women politicians, (ii) in the performance and efficiency of women politicians, (iii) in the political culture, (iv) in the political discourse, (v) in the political decisions, and (vi) in the empowerment of women (Dahlerup 1988: 283-284). The way in which the concept of critical mass has often been used to posit a straightforward, simplistic relationship between descriptive and substantive representation has increasingly come under critical scrutiny by some feminist scholars who have pointed out the role played by contingent factors that affect substantive representation. These factors include gendered institutional contexts or institutional sexism (Studlar and McAllister 2002, Childs and Krook 2006, Celis and Childs 2012), the nature of the political party that the woman political representative is part of, i.e., its ideology, the presence of an intra-party women's wing and the level of party discipline (Lovenduski and Norris 1993, Swers 2002, Kittilson 2006, McLeay 2006, Sanbonmatsu 2008, Erzeel and Celis 2016, Clayton and Zetterberg 2021), and the characteristics of the political culture of the country (Reynolds 1999a, Jaquette 2001). For instance, women are often relegated to the bottom of the ranks within Parliament, be it in the allocation of ministerial portfolios or in the membership of important committees that have a decisive role in policy making, even in countries where they have significant numerical representation (Lovenduski 1986, Randall 1987, Schwindt-Bayer 2006, Bolzendahl 2014, 2018, O'Brien 2015). Feminist studies have revealed instances of how an increase in the number of women legislators has resulted in a backlash from their male counterparts in some countries like the U.S. and New Zealand that has affected women politicians'

readiness and opportunities to act for women (Kathlene 1994, Grey 2006). There are also cases of women legislators experiencing that with their numbers increasing, their work is devalued more (Kanthak and Krause 2012). Women who have been elected through quota systems have been stigmatized by being tagged as 'quota women' and thus being denied enough opportunities to initiate new legislation or debates on women's issues (Francheschet and Piscopo 2008).

As an alternative to critical mass, some scholars have introduced the terminology of critical acts, "focusing on individual initiatives rather than collective action... (that) has appeared especially useful in single-country case studies of policy change" (O'Brien and Piscopo 2019: 56-57). Notable examples include the role played by female MPs in radically reforming the customary laws in Turkey (Ayata and Tütüncü 2008) and Rwanda (Devlin and Elgie 2008), the passing of significant legislation pertaining to sexual health in Argentina (Piscopo 2014), and the reduction of Value Added Tax on Sanitary Products by the British Parliament (Childs and Withey 2006). Another approach has been to identify alternate sites away from the legislatures, where women's substantive representation is more effective (Weldon 2002, Sawer 2006). A group of scholars have made a call to jettison traditional questions such as "Do women represent women" and "Do women in politics make a difference?" and to adopt a new research agenda that enables an analysis of the multiple actors, sites, goals and means of the substantive representation of women by asking questions like "Who claims to act for women?" and "Where, why and how does substantive representation of women occur?" (Celis et al. 2008: 99). This thesis takes up this call and looks at similar questions while examining women's negotiations with political power.

1.1.4 Women's interests: Interpretations and Classifications

The question of whether women's gendered interests can be conflated with a feminist agenda has resulted in deeper explorations into classifications like practical and strategic interests of women, feminine and feminist demands, and feminist and gendered interests. The differentiation between practical and strategic interests was first made by Maxine Molyneux in her study of the Nicaraguan Revolution and its impact on women (Molyneux 1985), which she further clarifies in her study of the women's movements in Latin America (Molyneux 2001). Molyneux's premise is that women's interests are

"politically and discursively constructed" rather than predefined by virtue of the fact that women advocate these interests (Molyneux 2001: 152). Molyneux argues that "the concept of women's interests… is… a highly contentious one. Because women are positioned within their societies through a variety of different means – among them class, ethnicity and gender – the interests which they have as a group are similarly shaped in complex and sometimes conflicting ways. It is therefore difficult, if not impossible, to generalize about the 'interests of women'." (Molyneux 1985: 232) To depart from the "false homogeneity" denoted by the term "women's interests", Molyneux introduces the concept of "gender interests" and further classifies them into strategic gender interests and practical gender interests (Molyneux 1985: 232). She defines strategic interests as "those involving claims to transform social relations in order to enhance women's position and to secure a more lasting repositioning of women within the gender order and within society at large" (Molyneux 1985: 232). Practical interests are defined by Molyneux as "those based on the satisfaction of needs arising from women's placement within the sexual division of labour" that "do not generally entail a strategic goal such as women's emancipation or gender equality" (Molyneux 1985: 233). Sonia Alvarez's study of the trajectory of the women's movement in Brazil in the 1970s and 1980s relies upon Molyneux's categorization to describe women's groups and organizations that advocate strategic gender interests as "feminist" and those that represent practical gender interests as "feminine" (Alvarez 1990: 24-25). Alvarez states that feminist demands challenge the roles and position of women in society and take up issues that are "specific to the female condition", while feminine demands do not reject the socially ascribed roles of women as wives, mothers and nurturers but advocate their rights in those roles (Alvarez 1990: 24-25). An example she quotes of feminine political mobilization is that of the urban neighbourhood movements and mothers' clubs in Brazil that protested against the rising cost of living in the mid-1970s (Alvarez 1990).

Anne M. Goetz and Shireen Hassim differentiate between three distinct stages of women's political engagement - access, presence and influence - to make the point that representation alone does not translate into "political effectiveness", which they define as "the ability to use 'voice' to politicise issues of concern to women, to use electoral leverage to press demands on decision makers, to trigger better responsiveness from the public sector to their needs, and better enforcement of constitutional commitments to women's equal rights" (Goetz and Hassim 2003: 29, 39). Access "involves opening

arenas to women for dialogue and information sharing", presence "involves institutionalising women's participation in decision making", and influence "brings women's engagement with civil society, politics and the state to the point where they can translate access and presence into a tangible impact on policy making, the operation of the legal system, and the organisation of service delivery" (Goetz and Hassim 2003: 40). A more recent and widely used categorization is that of "feminist interests" and "gendered interests", with feminist interests consisting of "claims that aim to transform existing gender roles in support of gender equality and social justice... includ(ing) liberal/progressive feminist as well as conservative feminist viewpoints", and gendered interests consisting of "claims that are about and for women, but are however not feminist in intent, and concern, for instance, material interests and non-feminist traditional women's interests and gender roles" (Erzeel and Celis 2016: 578). Increasingly, the scholarship on gender and politics has come to hold that both sides of the dual categories outlined above are legitimate modes of expressing the political needs and interests of women, with their own distinctive ways of contributing towards the substantive representation of women in politics (Celis and Childs 2020).

1.1.5 Shifting focus to the Global South

Another important shift that can be perceived in the scholarship on gender and politics over the years has been the changing focus from the Western industrialized polities of Europe and North America to the experience in developing countries and those governed by state socialism. As Maxine Molyneux highlights, "these states exhibited significant continuities and contrasts with the developed countries and brought about a substantial and in some ways distinctive mobilisation of women in their efforts to promote social change" (Molyneux 2001: 2). This shift has yielded diverse analyses of women's interaction with political power across countries, thus enriching and deepening our understanding of gender and politics. These include studies that have looked at specific instances of individual women in power, particularly heads of state and government (Genovese 1993, Mayhead and Marshall 2005), and that have employed the comparative method to look at the numbers of women active in the political sphere and the positions held by them across different countries and political systems (Norris and Inglehart 2000, Ballington and Karam 2005, Bauer and Tremblay 2011, Hoogensen and Solheim 2006). Other studies have focused on the impact of women's political

participation on specific issue areas concerning gender rights, like family and property rights, marriage and divorce laws, reproductive rights, sexuality and domestic violence, and equal rights (Htun 2003a, Mazur 2002). There have also been comparative studies of the impact made by women leaders in the Global South, who have reached the highest levels of executive powers, on the descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation of women and in changing the gendered nature of political discourse and policy making in their respective countries, ranging from the *Presidentas* of Latin America like Violeta Chamorro in Nicaragua, Michelle Bachelet in Chile, Isabel Martinez de Perón and Cristina Fernandez in Argentina, Laura Chinchilla in Costa Rica, and Dilma Rousseff in Brazil, to the women leaders of post-conflict African nations, like Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in Liberia and Luísa Dias Diogo in Mozambique (Adams 2008, Murray 2010, Thomas and Adams 2010, Bauer and Tremblay 2011, Genovese and Steckenrider 2013, Jalalzai 2013a, 2013b, 2016, Martin and Borrelli 2016, Montecinos 2017). The finding of most of these studies so far has been that even with the increase in the number of women elected to office, the gap between descriptive and substantive representation remains wide, as women executive heads have not uniformly given priority to women's issues or even made attempts to include more women on their cabinets. A number of intervening institutional and cultural factors determine the actual trajectory of descriptive representation getting translated into substantive representation, including the ideology of the ruling party and coalition partners, the degree of executive power and agenda-setting authority enjoyed by the woman leader, the existence of, and support from, women's organizations outside government, and the broader political context (Waylen 2007a, 2014, Jalalzai 2016, Jaquette 2017, Montecinos 2017, Schwindt-Bayer and Reyes-Housholder 2017).

1.1.6 Feminist International Relations and the significance of multi-level analyses

Feminist International Relations scholarship has also grappled with questions of gender and politics, stemming from an understanding of gender as "first, fundamentally social; second, an expression of power; and, third, an organizing principle for politics and political thought" (Sjoberg 2011: 110). Feminist IR has used "gendered lenses" to look for "gender in policy formulations, military decisions, the distribution of resources, social and economic status, leadership, and other areas of the international arena" (Sjoberg 2011: 111, Peterson and Runyan 1991, Steans 1998). While doing this, feminist

IR scholars have explicitly acknowledged the political agenda that drives their work – that of bringing women from the margins of the discipline and of global politics to its centre, a strong commitment to ending gender subordination, and "…a political act of commitment to understanding the world from the perspective of the socially subjugated" (Brown 1988: 472). Critiquing the rigid divisions between the three levels of analysis – Man, the State and War – posited by Kenneth Waltz (Waltz 1959), which remains a significant methodological paradigm for conventional IR theory till date, feminist IR scholars have argued that the three levels are "mutually constitutive" (Tickner 2001) and that "the gendering of women's lives cannot be separated from the gendering of man, the state, and war...the power relations between gendered constructions and institutions significantly alter all three levels of analysis and their interaction" (Sjoberg 2011: 111). J. Ann Tickner has further pointed out that the levels of analysis paradigm "emphasize(s) the gap between domestic politics and international relations", which is reflected in the "traditional split between International Relations and Comparative Politics as subdisciplines of Political Science", and the focus of IR on the state in the international arena as a unitary actor, independent of any impact from the operations of domestic level factors like political institutions or interest groups (Tickner 2001: 99). The feminist IR critique of the Waltzian ontology of the anarchic state and their alternative of "…an ontology of social relations in which individuals are embedded in, and constituted by, historically unequal political, economic, and social structures", has demonstrated the need to engage with multiple levels of analysis, all at once, without privileging any one of them and to question the gendered nature of the state (Tickner 2006: 24-25, Tickner 2001).

1.2 RATIONALE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE THESIS

An analysis of the available literature on women's political participation reveals the following critical gaps:

(1) Research so far has been largely limited to one specific level of analysis at a time, namely, the macro-level of women in power at the apex of the political systems in their countries, the meso-level of women within particular political institutions or political parties, or the micro-level of grass roots and community based political participation of women.

(2) Comparative studies in gender and politics have mostly focused on a particular arena of politics at a time; the electoral, the constitutional/legal and the bureaucratic/state sites of power have each been analysed in isolation across case study countries. As Christina Chiva has observed, "the overwhelming majority of studies of gender and political representation have tended to concentrate either on explaining the outcomes of a particular election in a single country case study or, alternatively, on accounting for variation among a specific cluster of case studies at a particular point in time" (Chiva 2018: 2).

(3) The problematique of the interplay between individual, cultural and institutional variables that in turn shape the political opportunity structure for women's political participation, has not been adequately explored from a comparative perspective.

This thesis intends to address the critical gaps identified above by simultaneously looking at the ways in which women negotiate power in political institutional arenas at multiple levels of analysis – namely, the electoral arena at the micro level of grass roots local government, the constitutional-legal arena at the meso level of constitutional negotiations and drafting, and the bureaucratic-state arena at the macro level of national executive authority. The significance of working with multiple levels of analysis is that the political opportunity structure and the nature of the gender regime is differently configured at each of these levels and therefore, women's negotiations with power are adapted accordingly. At the same time, each level has a bearing on the formal and informal institutional norms and practices of the other. This multi-level study of mutually constitutive levels of analysis, as feminist IR scholars see it, reveals very important inter-connections and synergies between individual factors and environmental factors, mediated by institutional factors, which in turn will help exemplify the relationship between the descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation of women. It also throws light on the ways in which the interactions between structure, process and agency in the political realm produce gendered impacts that shape women's negotiations with power.

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE THESIS

This thesis is located within a feminist institutionalist theoretical framework, which sees "institutions as gendered rules, norms and practices that shape actors' strategies and preferences…as the products of gendered power struggles and contestation" (Waylen 2014: 496). Feminist scholars have pointed out how political institutions "…embody a perpetually ingrained ethos of masculinity" that makes it even more difficult for women to access them (Fox and Lawless 2010: 311). From a feminist perspective, every political institution has a "gender regime", defined as "the historically produced state of play in gender relations within an institution", which has three main attributes – a "gender division of labour", a "structure of power" and a "structure of cathexis - the gender patterning of emotional attachments" (Connell 1990: 523-526). Sylvia Walby has identified two axes along which gender regimes determine gender relations – the place they attribute to women in the public/private divide, and the gender equations that they ascribe in the economic, political and civic life of societies (Walby 2004). A feminist institutionalist framework enables the mapping of gender regimes in political institutions and the identification of the political opportunities and constraints inherent in them. Women who stake a claim in political power have to negotiate gender regimes, as "political struggles are inevitably mediated by the institutional context in which they take place...institutions can shape not only actors' strategies and their outcomes, but also their goals..." (Waylen 2000: 769). As Fiona Mackay argues, "gendered institutions are crucial for understanding power inequalities in public and political life" (Mackay 2011: 182).

Feminist institutionalism as a theoretical paradigm draws upon the pioneering work done by Joan Acker in sociology to develop a 'theory of gendered organizations' based on the formulation that "gender is present in the processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life" (Acker 1992: 567, 1990). Though there was due recognition of the crucial role played by institutions in shaping the gendered nature of politics even earlier (Kenney 1996, Waylen 2000, Mackay 2004), one of the first concerted attempts to apply this theory to the arena of political institutions was taken with a collection of essays being published in the journal *Politics & Gender* in 2009, edited by Fiona Mackay and Georgina Waylen, in which feminist political scientists explored the possibility of using the insights of new

institutionalism to deepen feminist enquiries into the gendered nature of political institutions (Mackay and Waylen 2009). This endeavour was taken forward with the setting up of a global academic partnership of scholars called the Feminism and Institutionalism International Network (FIIN) and the publication of an edited volume titled *Gender, Politics and Institutions: Towards a Feminist Institutionalism* in 2011 (Krook and Mackay 2011).

At the core of new institutionalism and cutting across its many variants such as normative, historical, rational choice, sociological and empirical, lie the following tenets about institutions, as identified by B. Guy Peters (1999) and paraphrased by Louise Chappell:

> 1. [Institutions] are a structural feature of the society/polity. This means they transcend individuals to involve groups in some sort of patterned interactions that are predictable;
> 2. [Institutions] are stable over time but with some degree of mutability;
> 3. [Institutions] are able to affect individual behavior, usually through constraints; and
> 4. [institutions] provide a sense of shared values and meaning among the members of the institution. (Chappell 2010: 184)

Drawing on these tenets, feminist institutionalists explore the ways in which political institutions are deeply gendered (Waylen 2007a, 2014, Krook and Mackay 2011, Debusscher and van der Vleuten 2017, Weiner and MacRae 2017, Jenichen, Joachim and Schneiker 2019). Through the lens of gender, they redefine the "logic of appropriateness" underlying all institutions, as postulated by the pioneers of neo-institutionalism, James March and Johan Olsen, to reveal the masculine characteristics that underpin the institutional norms, values and expectations that prescribe and proscribe appropriate behaviour within each political institution, both formal and informal (March and Olsen 1989: 23-24, Chappell 2006, 2010, Chappell and Mackay 2017, Adams and Smrek 2018). Furthermore, the outcomes generated by political institutions in the form of legislations and policies are also contoured by these gendered norms, which in turn give rise to broader societal expectations of the way men and women behave in public life (Chappell 2006). From a feminist institutionalist perspective, "it is the interplay of formal and informal rules - and the interplay between political, cultural and economic institutional arenas - that explains political outcomes for women, and the promise and limits of

institutional innovation in a particular context, including the potential transformation of gender relations" (Mackay and Murtagh 2019: 9).

Feminist scholars have identified three distinct types of institutional arenas – the electoral, the constitutional/legal and the bureaucratic/state – as the contexts in which women engage as political actors (Chappell 2002a, Waylen 2007a). The significance of studying the way gendered power is exercised in different institutional sites is amply brought out by Joni Lovenduski – "The successful application of the concept of gender to the investigation of political institutions must acknowledge not only the complexity of gender but also the nature of the particular institution and the kinds of masculinities and femininities that are performed" (Lovenduski 1998: 348). This also leads to the understanding that each of these arenas is associated with a distinct political opportunity structure, which implies the "factors that lead to the emergence, development and influence of social movements" (Gelb 2016: 54). These could be "implicit or explicit in national norms and practices" and when they "specifically relate to assumptions about the role of and options for women, they may constrain or enhance opportunities for female access to political power" (Gelb 2016: 55). The "formal rules, shared norms and common practices" that institutions embody, define the political opportunity structure and their openness to gender interventions (Kittilson 2015: 450).

Not all interactions of women with political institutions are rigidly bound by the structure of the gender regime. When the political opportunity structure is conducive, women can assert their agency and negotiate with political power structures to create space for themselves. Feminist scholars have highlighted the possibilities for women to assert their agency within institutions, which in turn create the context for these institutions to be "re-gendered" (Beckwith 2005: 133) and re-structured (Hawkesworth 2005, Kenny and Mackay 2009). Thus, gender is perceived not just as a category of analysis, but further, as a process, "manifested as the differential effects of apparently gender-neutral structures and policies upon women and men, and upon masculine and/or feminine actors" (Beckwith 2005: 132). In the context of the interaction between Canadian feminists and the process of drafting the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Louise A. Chappell has termed the relationship between feminists and political institutions as "co-constitutive" and "reciprocal", with agents and structures continuously informing one another; on one hand, a political institution with "its

particular structural and normative features will influence whether an institution is closed or open to the demands of political actors" and on the other, "feminists are involved in shaping the political opportunity structures open to them" (Chappell 2002a: 4-6). The power equations within political institutions, both formal and informal, are therefore not static; they are ever-evolving and dynamic.

Feminist institutionalist scholars have also argued that critical junctures and transitions in the trajectories of political systems offer a unique opportunity to women to negotiate and redefine their engagements with political power (Waylen 1994, 2007a, 2007b, Jaquette and Wolchik 1998, Hughes and Paxton 2008). The scholarship on historical institutionalism defines institutional dynamism as the ability of institutions to change and adapt in response to shifting contexts and imperatives (Pierson 1996, Thelen 1999, Pierson and Skocpol 2002). Based on this understanding, Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier define critical junctures as "a period of significant change, which typically occurs in distinct ways in different countries… and which is hypothesized to produce distinct legacies" (Collier and Collier 2002: 29). James Mahoney understands critical junctures to be "moments of relative structural indeterminism when willful actors shape outcomes in a more voluntaristic fashion than normal circumstances permit… these choices demonstrate the power of agency by revealing how long-term development patterns can hinge on distant actor decisions of the past" (Mahoney 2002: 7). Transitions refer to "…political 'openings' in the broadest sense: there is a general willingness to rethink the bases of social consensus and revise the rules of the game" (Jaquette 1989: 13). Such moments and openings can redefine the political opportunity structure and thus create the ground for assertions of women's political agency. Alternately, they could also throw up new challenges for women's negotiations with power structures and political processes. The impact of democratic transitions brought in by the third wave of democratization on women's political participation and gender policy outcomes in Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe and Africa has been studied in detail by feminist scholars (Waylen 2000, 2007a, Htun 2003a, Schwindt-Bayer 2010a, Tripp 2015, Montecinos 2017). Post transition democracies including South Africa, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia have been specifically analysed, since they are characterised by two distinct institutional features, as identified by Leslie Schwindt-Bayer and Catherine Reyes-Housholder, i.e. "a recent political opening and weakly institutionalized democratic rules", both of which "can create different incentive

structures for political actors..." (Schwindt-Bayer and Reyes-Housholder 2017: 82, Rueschemeyer 1994, Waylen 1994, 2003). Further, Georgina Waylen has identified four critical variables that interact to determine the gender outcomes of transitions – "the nature of the transition, the role of women activists, the nature of the political parties and politicians involved in the transition, and the nature of the institutional legacy of the non-democratic regime" (Waylen 2003: 164). Hence, the wide-ranging feminist scholarship on critical junctures and transitions reveals significant differences in the trajectory of gender outcomes in diverse political systems. Latin America and Africa have witnessed a general trend of increased political participation by women in post-transition democracies, attributed to various reasons, including (i) women's status as political outsiders when the existent political elite is discredited (ii) stereotypes that hold women as being more incorruptible and ethical than men (iii) women's active participation in the resistance movements against authoritarian regimes, and (iv) their role in drafting and shaping the post-transition constitutions (Schwindt-Bayer 2010a, Jalalzai 2013b, O'Brien 2015, Tripp 2015, Schwindt-Bayer and Reyes-Housholder 2017). This, however, has not been the case in the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where gender equality came to be associated with the earlier communist regimes and the nationalist discourse dominated over every other representational demand (Rueschemeyer 1994, Yates and Hughes 2017).

Following the threads outlined above, this thesis looks at the gendered nature of the three different arenas of political institutions at the three different levels and the implications thereof, thereby attempting to reveal the interactions between structure, process and agency at each of the levels, which shape women's negotiations with political power. The study will be utilizing four conceptual analytical tools identified as crucial for looking at women and politics, namely gender, power, institutions and agency (Kantola and Lombardo 2017). It explores "how gender differences are constructed, deployed and recreated" (Kenney 1996: 451) at each of the levels of analysis and in each type of institution involved in the study. The thesis examines the distinction between the two different modes of women negotiating power in political systems that has been identified by Debra L. Dodson as "acting for women" and "acting as women" (Dodson 2006: 27). It will be informed throughout by the understanding that, far from being a homogenous and monolithic category representing similar vantage-points and interests, 'women' stands for an entire range of diverse positionings within political structures,

each of which has its own implications on women's empowerment. Hence, gender will be employed as a crucial and decisive category of analysis and as process, not as an all-encompassing, subsuming umbrella-term (Acker 1992, Peterson 1992, Hawkesworth 1994). This understanding also underlies the choice of focusing on the Global South by taking India, Brazil and South Africa as the countries for comparative study. It draws upon the Third World/Local feminist perspectives and looks at the specific experiences of women negotiating power in three historically and geographically distinct cartographies of the Global South, as opposed to a hegemonic Western/Euro-centric feminist paradigm (Jayawardena 1986, Mohanty 1991, 2003, Alexander and Mohanty 2010, Basu 2010, Desai 2015). However, given the fact that the three countries are from three different continents of the Global South with their own diverse experiences of democratization and widening political participation, this thesis also studies the uniqueness of the variables at play and the trajectories that women's political participation have taken in each of these countries.

1.4 CASES CHOSEN FOR THE THESIS

This thesis explores the following three case studies:

(1) Women's participation in the Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies of India as the electoral arena at the micro level of analysis

(2) Women's engagement with constitutional re-engineering in post-apartheid South Africa as the constitutional/legal arena at the meso level of analysis

(3) The presidentship of Dilma Rousseff, Brazil's first woman head of state as the bureaucratic/state arena at the macro level of analysis

The choice of these specific cases is inspired by the fact that they represent, as outlined earlier, three distinct institutional arenas at the three different levels of analysis, situated at the cusp of critical junctures/moments of transition, and therefore offer the possibility of looking closely at the challenges and opportunities thrown up in those contexts for women's political participation and negotiations with power. While focusing primarily on these three particular cases, the thesis also looks at the other two institutional arenas at the corresponding level in each of the countries, to make a comparative analysis of the relative predominance of particular variables. Thus, while delving in detail into women's participation in the electoral arena of Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies at the micro level in India, the thesis also looks at the experience of women in the Local, District and Metropolitan Councils of South Africa and the *Municípios* (Municipalities)

in Brazil, and the effectiveness of quotas in increasing women's political presence in those two countries. At the meso level of the constitutional/legal arena, the primary focus is on women's role in constitutional re-engineering in post-apartheid South Africa, while also examining the role played by women in drafting of the Constitution for independent India and in the making of the 1988 Constitution of Brazil during the transition from military rule to democracy. At the macro level of the bureaucratic/state arena, the main case for study is Dilma Rousseff's presidency in Brazil and its impact on the political participation and representation of women, while Indira Gandhi's tenures as Prime Minister of India and Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma's long stints as Cabinet Minister in South Africa holding portfolios like Foreign Affairs and Home Affairs, and as Chairperson of the African Union, are also examined.

India's experiment with electoral quotas for women in the grass roots level governance of the world's largest democracy is a fit case to research the effectiveness of quotas as a means of increasing women's political presence through descriptive representation and the impact it has in turn on the substantive representation of women. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments that came into force in 1993 mandated the setting up of elected bodies in all the panchayats and urban areas to enable local self-governance. For the first time in the country, the presence of women at any level of government was sought to be constitutionally secured by reserving seats for them, in this case not less than one-third of the seats filled by direct election and one-third of the posts of Chairpersons in all Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). Further, seats were also to be reserved for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in proportion to their population at each level, out of which one-third of the seats were to be reserved for SC/ST women. As is the case with any other political system where quotas are introduced, the rationale behind the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments was the paradigm of the politics of presence, whereby hitherto excluded, marginalized groups are brought into the mainstream of political life and given a voice to raise their demands and protect their interests (Phillips 1995, Menon 2000, Sharma 2004, Jayal 2013). It was expected that "the entry of a sizeable percentage of women into decision-making bodies would radically improve the empowerment of women and enable them to affect public policy and introduce women's perspectives" (Kasturi 1998). This posited a direct link between the descriptive and substantive representation of women who gain access to political power through grass roots level reservation.

However, the studies of the actual implementation of the quota for women in the PRIs and ULBs in India present a mixed picture. A number of institutional and socio-cultural intervening factors that vary from State to State have been identified as playing a decisive role in women's effective exercise of political power. These include existing traditional, cultural and social tropes about the legitimate role of women in public life, resistance from deeply entrenched male power centres aligned along caste and class lines, the levels of literacy and skill-sets of the elected women, and the autonomy, decision-making space, and resources made available to the PRIs that are still at the mercy of discretionary distribution and sharing of powers by the States (Jain 1996, Sharma 2004, Hust 2007, Buch 2010, Jayal 2013, Brahmanandam 2018). Nevertheless, women's access to political power at the grassroots level in India, which is where discriminatory social divisions along caste, class, and gender lines are played out at their starkest, undeniably has a transformative and empowering impact on women by offering a political opportunity structure for them to fundamentally renegotiate the terms of access to political power and alter the public discourse on women in politics.

The case of South Africa is particularly interesting as a post-transition democracy where women were able to negotiate effectively and gain access to political power. In fact, Georgina Waylen identifies South Africa as "one of the only cases in which women organized as women had some input into the negotiations that established a new political system as part of a transition to democracy" (Waylen 2007b: 522). The transition to a post-apartheid context opened up multiple possibilities for women members of the African National Congress (ANC), women's groups activists, academics, and politicians to form strategic alliances and stake their claim for women's rightful position in the political life, most significantly through their interventions in the drafting of the new constitution of the country, which in the case of South Africa was a full-fledged process of constitutional re-engineering of governance and political culture (Albertyn 2001, 2003, Goetz and Hassim 2003, Hassim 2003a, 2005, Waylen 2007a). A highlight of this process of negotiation was the fact that despite the constitution drafting process happening in the immediate post-apartheid scenario, women were able to overcome the historical and racial divides that had hitherto separated them and join hands across parties to prioritize the agenda of political inclusion of women in the new democracy. The formation of the Women's National Coalition (WNC) in 1992 played a very decisive and

crucial role in the drafting of the Constitution (Albertyn 1994, Meintjes 1996, Britton 2002b, Waylen 2006).

Consequently, as Catherine Albertyn observes, "women were written into the heart of the new democracy", gender equality came to be incorporated as a founding principle of the post-apartheid South African state, and women gained unprecedented representation in the Parliament, making up as much as 27.8% of the Members of Parliament (MPs) in the first elections held after the democratic transition in 1994, far ahead of the global average of 14% representation of women in national legislatures at that point in time (Albertyn 1994). This was facilitated by the introduction of a proportional representation electoral system and the introduction of quotas for women in party electoral lists, with the lead taken by the ANC, followed by other parties. The leap in the descriptive representation of women also translated into marked substantive representation of women, with several gender equality oriented legislations being passed in the first five years of the new Parliament, in areas like reproductive choice, status in customary marriage, protection against domestic violence and protection at the workplace (Albertyn 2001, 2003). According to Shireen Hassim, "a gender pact was instituted in South Africa as women were recognized and incorporated as an interest group into the policymaking process" (Hassim 2003a: 506). The setting up of a constitutionally mandated and independent body called the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE) to ensure accountability of government and the private sector towards the cause of women's empowerment was part of this gender pact (Albertyn 1995). However, in course of time, many constraints emerged in the extent to which women legislators and politicians were able to set the agenda regarding women's empowerment, stemming from their own lack of legislative experience, the demands of party loyalty and discipline, and their increasing distance from women's organizations outside the government structure (Geisler 2000, Britton 2002a, Hassim 2003b, Waylen 2007b).

Though there have been other female heads of state across the globe with better track records, Dilma Rousseff's rise to the presidency of Brazil assumes a special significance in this thesis. To begin with, Brazil has the distinction of being one of the few countries in Latin America and worldwide to have an elected woman president, who was also re-elected. This poses a "representational puzzle" for feminist institutionalist scholars (Gatto, dos Santos and Wylie 2022: 314), in the backdrop of the fact that Brazil

has the lowest percentage of women's representation across all levels of government in the whole of South America, despite women having historically played a very crucial role in Brazil's transition to democratic governance and the women's movement being very active (Alvarez 1990, Jaquette and Wolchik 1998, Molyneux 2001, Htun 2002, Schwindt-Bayer 2010a). Even the introduction of a quota law in 1995 that was subsequently reformed in 2009, mandating at least 30% of candidates for seats in the legislature to be from the under-represented gender, failed to make an impact (Alves 2012). Further, Brazil has a unified presidential system with the President holding the dominant decision-making position (Jalalzai 2010, 2013a).

Dilma Roussef's election to the Brazilian Presidency in 2010 and her re-election in 2014 can be viewed as critical junctures that presented great openings in the political opportunity structure of Brazil for women by breaking the highest glass ceiling of executive power. Furthermore, she was an exception to the general trend of women heads of executive in Latin America having some kind of political family ties, even though her path was paved by the backing of her charismatic and popular predecessor and mentor, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Jalalzai 2016). Her negotiations with power also reveal the intricate workings of the double bind that often confronts women seeking higher political offices, wherein they are expected to perform both leadership and feminine roles that are defined by contradictory socio-cultural norms. The circumstances that led to her becoming the first female elected head in the world to be impeached, that too on corruption charges, with some commentators terming it as a patriarchal coup, also opens up multiple interesting questions of inquiry into the formal and informal ways in which political institutions are gendered and the heightened susceptibility of women in power to come under public scrutiny for their actions and decisions (Macaulay 2017).

Table 1.1 presents a diagrammatic representation of the cases chosen in this thesis for analysing the three institutional arenas across the three levels of analysis.

Table 1.1: Case study framework of the thesis

	Electoral Arena/ Micro Level	Constitutional Arena/Meso Level	Bureaucratic Arena/Macro Level
India	**Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies**	Women in Constituent Assembly	The prime-ministership of Indira Gandhi
South Africa	Women in Local, District and Metropolitan Councils	**Women in post-apartheid constitution making**	Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma's tenure as Cabinet Minister and Chairperson of African Union
Brazil	Women in *Municípios*	1988 Constitution drafting	**Dilma Rousseff Presidency**

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following are the key research questions that this thesis engages with:-

(1) Do women negotiate power differently at the micro, meso and macro levels of political institutions and practice?

(2) At each level of analysis and in each institutional arena, what are the most crucial variables that determine the nature and extent of women's political participation?

(3) How do the dynamics between the descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation of women play out in varying political arenas?

(4) How do critical junctures and moments of transitions in the political trajectory influence the political opportunity structures available to women?

(5) What are the modes in which women's political participation gets shaped by the interactions between structure, process and agency?

1.6 HYPOTHESES

(1) Hypothesis 1: Women's access to political power becomes more tenuous as the level of analysis is scaled up, with the patriarchal backlash to women's increased

political presence being the most accentuated at the macro level of the bureaucratic-state arena.

(2) Hypothesis 2: The extent to which women political representatives advocate gender policy interests (substantive representation), rather than their numerical presence in political posts (descriptive representation), leads to the legitimization of women as political actors (symbolic representation).

(3) Hypothesis 3: Informal discursive norms perpetuated through political culture and media projections are a more formidable obstacle to women obtaining political power than formal institutional barriers to women's political participation.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This thesis engages with the research questions and hypotheses outlined above using the comparative methodology to study the different ways in which women negotiate political power in specific institutional contexts in the three cases, so as to unveil the commonalities and divergences in the relation between the descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation of women. The specific method that will be followed is a Comparative Politics of Gender, as distinct from a Gender in Comparative Politics approach (Chappell 2006, 2010, Weldon 2006, Beckwith 2010, Schwindt-Bayer 2010b, Tripp 2010). The latter looks at gender as a research area within the larger field of Comparative Politics, thus making it "neither truly comparative nor fully integrated" (Schwindt-Bayer 2010b: 177), and restricted to particular country or region specific case studies without integrating into comparative politics frameworks that strive to arrive at "generalizable explanations" (Schwindt-Bayer 2010b: 178). In contrast and as summarized by Aili Marie Tripp, a Comparative Politics of Gender (CPG) approach,

> … looks at gender as central to political processes and institutions… At its core is an interest in the ways in which political institutions, as well as social, cultural, and economic ones, are organized to maintain systematic gender-based inequalities and power relationships through norms and logics of domination. CPG looks at how these inequalities and forms of domination evolve, how they are maintained, and how they are dismantled… looks at gender as it creates mutually constituted identities

> based on gender, race, ethnicity, class, and other differences… (and) incorporates a notion of agency in so far as it pays attention to how various actors, including social movements, femocrats[1], and politicians are involved in challenging and transforming the gendered nature of institutions. (Tripp 2010: 192)

Thus, a Comparative Politics of Gender approach views gender as inhabiting the core of studies about political structures and processes of politics, and not as a parallel thread of analysis within a bigger spectrum of research. Hence, it is particularly suited for a comparative study of political institutions that seeks to reveal their gendered underpinnings (Chappell 2006).

This thesis will employ the inductive method by proceeding from an examination of three specific contexts of women negotiating power in the political arena and arriving at a broader multi-level, multi-variate analysis of the relationship between the descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation of women. It will also use the narrative method of "dense empirical description" to "tell a story" about the interplay of structure, process and agency involved in determining the scope and extent of women's political participation in different institutional contexts (Franceschet 2011: 68). As Maria Stern explains,

> When one constructs a story, events become meaningful through the act of narrating. Events certainly meant certain things when they were experienced; however, the process of making connections, of developing a plot (or many plots) in a narrative of one's life fashions new meanings to these events and to the representation of the self in these stories. The spoken story must also therefore be seen as inscribing, not only the narrative, but also the self/subject as character in the narrative, and the narrator. Furthermore, the act of narrating occurs in a particular political moment which crucially informs the story told. (Stern 2006: 184)

[1] The term 'femocrat' refers to "a powerful woman within government administration, with an ideological and political commitment to feminism" (Eisenstein 1996: 68). Though initially used to derogatorily refer to feminists who were co-opted into state structures, the term later acquired a positive connotation with scholars studying the impact of feminists working within governments in countries like Australia and Canada (Sawer 1990, Chappell 2002a, 2002b).

The narrative mode is distinguished by its embeddedness in spatial and temporal contexts of the research (Richardson 1995). The use of the narrative method enables the gathering of valuable insights into the interplay between the individual, cultural and institutional variables that together shape the contours of women's political participation and negotiations with power. This thesis relies on an in-depth study of archival documentation and secondary sources pertaining to the historical contexts, legal frameworks and political discourses of the three institutional sites, drawn from the three case study countries.

1.8 STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis has been organized into five chapters. This first chapter introduces the thesis by setting its theoretical context within the field of Gender and Politics in general and feminist institutionalism in specific. It includes a comprehensive literature review highlighting the existing focal areas of feminist research in these fields and the critical gaps. The chapter brings out the conceptual framework of the thesis based on the distinction between the descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation of women, and the focus on the lived experiences of women in politics in the Global South. The need for a multi-variate analysis of women's negotiations with political power in the three different institutional arenas across the three distinct levels of analysis is established, followed by an explanation of the rationale of the three case studies chosen for the thesis.

The second chapter titled "Women's Representation in Local Government Institutions: Accessing Power at the Grassroots" focuses on women negotiating power at the micro level electoral arena of local government institutions in India, which marks a significant critical juncture in the democratic process of the country with the introduction of a quota for women's political participation. It takes a close look at the evolution of debates on the need for quotas for women in politics, the typology of such quotas and their varying impacts on enhancing women's descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation. The contours of the institutional changes brought about by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments that introduced reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies, and their impact on women's political participation, are studied in detail. This chapter also looks at women's grassroot

level political experiences in the Local, District and Metropolitan Councils of South Africa, and the *Municípios* (Municipalities) in Brazil. The comparative study of the implementation of women's quotas with different designs in each of the three countries brings out the nuances involved in attempts to increase women's political participation and representation.

The third chapter titled "Shaping Constitutions, Engendering Democracy: Women's Participation in Constitutional Negotiations and Drafting" presents a detailed study of the meso-level constitutional/legal arena of constitutional re-engineering in post-apartheid South Africa, in order to bring out the role played by women in that crucial moment of transition and the consequences it had on the reshaping of the gendered nature of the political process. It also explores the role played by women in drafting the Constitution for independent India and in the making of the 1988 Constitution of Brazil during the transition from military rule to democracy. It looks at constitution drafting and re-engineering as decisive transitional moments from an institutionalist perspective when the descriptive representation of women could be translated very effectively into the substantive representation of women as equal citizens. It examines the factors that enable bridging of the gap between the mere presence of women in the formal arena of constitution drafting, and their ability to substantively represent women and push for gender justice in the new constitutions.

The fourth chapter titled "Women Holding Power as Executive Heads: Impact on Women's Representation" deals with the macro-level bureaucratic/state arena in Brazil by analysing the presidency of Dilma Rousseff, the first woman Head of State, which was a critical juncture in the political trajectory of the country. It situates Dilma Rousseff's presidency in the larger context of the increased representation of women at the highest executive levels of government with the rise of *Presidentas* in Latin America, and the trajectory of women's political participation in Brazil. It employs the conceptual tools of the double bind and gender frames to decipher the modes in which women aspiring to gain access to the highest executive positions negotiate political power. Dilma's pathway to executive authority is traced in detail and her two terms as *Presidenta* are evaluated on the basis of her gender policy performance and the impact it left on women's descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation in Brazil. The chapter lays particular emphasis on the gendered context of Dilma's impeachment by establishing

how it was ultimately the outcome of a misogynistic and conservative backlash against the disruption that her presence as *Presidenta* had caused to the hyper-masculine framework of Brazilian politics. The chapter then turns to a discussion of the prime ministerial tenures of Indira Gandhi in India and Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma's presence in the South African political scene and as Chairperson of the African Union vis-à-vis their impact on women's representation and political empowerment. The chapter compares and contrasts the political trajectories and leadership strategies of the three women leaders to analyse the factors that shape women's exercise of executive power.

The concluding chapter brings together the findings of the thesis to unveil the interconnections and divergences between women negotiating power in three different institutional sites at the three different levels of analysis in the three case study countries. These insights are then used to address the research questions, to test the hypotheses and to arrive at the conclusions of the thesis.

The overarching endeavour of this thesis is to contribute towards Feminist Institutionalist scholarship with a Comparative Politics of Gender approach towards women's political participation. By engaging simultaneously with multiple institutional sites at multiple levels of analysis, it seeks both to broaden and deepen the feminist perspectives from which women's negotiations with political power are viewed and understood.

CHAPTER 2
WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS: ACCESSING POWER AT THE GRASSROOTS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Women's negotiations with power at the local level of government present an extremely relevant foreground for analysing the impact of institutional factors on their political participation. The structure and functions of local government bodies, the electoral system within which they operate, and the political parties that act as gatekeepers controlling the access to potential candidates, together determine the political opportunity structure available for women's negotiations with grassroots political power (Lovenduski and Norris 1993, Kittilson 2006). Further, the extent to which women political representatives push for practical and strategic gender interests is demonstrated clearly at this level. On the one hand, women as primary care-givers are directly affected by grass roots decision making and service delivery structures, both in rural and urban areas. On the other hand, the decentralized local government bodies are more accessible and available to women, as compared to provincial/State and national government institutions. Local governments have been described as governments of proximity that are located closest to the lived realities of women and are best situated to engage effectively with women's interests (Gilly and Wallet 2001, Beall 2005, Justiniano et al. 2013, Ferwerda 2015). To quote Annette Evertzen,

> … eligibility criteria for the local level are less stringent, and local government is the closest to the women's sphere of life, and easier to combine with rearing children. It can be the first level that women can break into and as such it may serve as a springboard to national politics, by developing capacities and gaining experiences. Likewise local politics can be more interesting to women as they are well acquainted with their community, being the major users of space and services in the local community (water, electricity, waste disposal, health clinics, and other social services). They also participate actively in organisations in their neighbourhood, and it's easier to involve these organisations in formal political decision making at the local level. (Evertzen 2001: 2)

Civic participation in local government bodies both deepens the roots and widens the ambit of participative politics, thereby bringing hitherto excluded groups like women into the fold (Lama-Rewal 2001, Pini and McDonald 2011). Globally, women have made significant inroads into the electoral arena at the local government level, especially with the introduction of quotas of various types. As per the latest UN WOMEN data as of 1 January 2023, around 3 million women representatives form 34% of all elected members in local bodies, across 136 countries (UN WOMEN 2023). This is 7.5 percentage points more than women's representation in national parliaments, which is at 26.5%, as of 1 January 2023. Thus, local government structures are good testing grounds for studying the impact of quotas on the descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation of women.

2.2 QUOTAS AND WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

One of the most significant changes over the last three decades in women's political representation has been ushered in by the implementation of quotas for women. Argentina's introduction of the *Ley de Cupos* (Law of Quotas) in the election to the Chamber of Deputies in 1993 was the first instance of the transformative power of a quota for women (Bonder and Nari 1995, Gray 2003, Norris 2004, Marx, Borner and Caminotti 2009). The Argentinian law mandated a minimum of 30% placement of women in winnable rankings within the closed party lists; this resulted in a phenomenal increase of the women representatives in the Chamber of Deputies from 4% to 21% (Jones 1996, Paxton and Hughes 2014). Since then, quotas for women have been implemented throughout the world and currently, 137 countries have some form of such quotas in place (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance [IDEA] 2023). As per the latest Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Report released in 2023, parliamentary bodies with some type of quota for women had a markedly larger share of 30.9% women representatives on average, as compared to 21.2% in those without any quota (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2023).

2.2.1 Rationale behind Gender Quotas

The introduction of quotas worldwide is prompted by the recognition of women's stark under-representation in politics as a serious democratic deficit, which needs to be corrected by affirmative action on a fast-track (Krook 2004, Dahlerup and Friedenvall 2005, Mansbridge 2005, Dahlerup 2006a, Tripp and Kang 2008, Franceschet, Krook and Piscopo 2012, Lépinard and Rubio-Marín 2018, Hughes and Paxton 2019). Drude Dahlerup and Lenita Friedenvall have contrasted this fast-track mode with the "incremental track" of women's increased political representation in the Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Sweden and Norway, which took over 70 years to reach 30% (Dahlerup and Friedenvall 2005: 27). Lisa Baldez has characterized quotas evocatively as "exogeneous shocks" that redefine the rules of the game and shake up political institutions to pave the way for women's entry into the electoral fray (Baldez 2006: 104). Quotas are also viewed as institutional mechanisms to ensure the presence of a critical mass of at least 30% women in elected bodies, which in turn makes it possible for women representatives to further a gender agenda (Dahlerup 2006b, Krook 2006, Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer 2012). The symbolic significance of quotas has also been highlighted in feminist scholarship; the implementation of quotas demonstrates that the political sphere is open and welcoming to women, in turn encouraging them to overcome social and cultural barriers and come forward as willing candidates (Zetterberg 2009, O'Brien and Piscopo 2019). Further, they help in altering social expectations and perceptions and create a context of acceptance of women as political representatives (Kittilson 2005, Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer 2012). The spread of women's quotas within and between countries in a region have also been attributed to the contagion effect, whereby political parties adopt voluntary party quotas after their rivals introduce them, and quotas are adopted by other countries of a region in quick succession once one country from the same region implements them (Matland and Studlar 1996, Caul 2001, Meier 2004, Cowell-Meyers 2011, Weeks 2018). Coupled with this is the advocacy of quotas for women by international organizations such as the UN World Conference, Beijing in 1995 and trans-national feminists, as well as the influence of international peace-keeping forces in post-conflict countries (Htun and Jones 2002, Araújo 2003, Krook 2006, 2009, Bush 2011, Sater 2012, Bauer and Burnet 2013, Hughes, Krook and Paxton 2015). In their study of the evolution of quotas for women in Europe, Eléonore Lépinard and Ruth Rubio-Marín have succinctly summarized four distinct ways in which quotas are used:

(1) as “accessory measures” in countries that already have a relatively large number of women in politics
(2) as “transformative equality remedies” in countries that have a relatively large participation of women in the labour force but low presence in politics
(3) as “symbolic equality remedies” in countries where the implementation of quotas has been largely symbolic and has faced patriarchal resistance
(4) as “corrective equality remedies” in countries that have conservative gender regimes and are resistant to the adoption of legislated gender quotas but have voluntary party quotas (Lépinard and Rubio-Marín 2018: 33-34)

Scholarship on gender quotas has been constantly evolving, based on the experiences with quota implementation in different institutional settings. Mona Lena Krook and Pär Zetterberg characterize this evolution as two distinct generations of research (Krook and Zetterberg 2016). The first generation of research focused on the origins and the impact of quotas, especially on the descriptive representation of women, and the pathways through which quotas were advocated and adopted in different political systems (Krook 2004, Dahlerup 2006a, Tremblay 2008, Tripp and Kang 2008, Krook 2009, Schwindt-Bayer 2009, Paxton, Hughes and Painter 2010). The second generation of research moved forward to explore the impact that women elected through quotas have on gendering public policy and decision-making, and the extent to which they are able to substantively represent women (Hughes 2011, Franceschet, Krook and Piscopo 2012, 2013, Bauer and Burnet 2013, Kerevel and Atkinson 2013, Celis et al. 2014, Krook 2014, Meier 2014, Clayton 2015, O’Brien and Rickne 2016, Hinojosa, Fridkin and Kittilson 2017, Allen and Cutts 2018, Clayton and Zetterberg 2018, Barnes and Holman 2020, Lang, Meier and Sauer 2022). However, despite the fact that much research has gone into studying gender quotas, there are fewer comparative studies about their impact on the substantive representation of women (Allen, Cutts and Campbell 2014, Clayton and Zetterberg 2018, Hughes et al. 2019, Dahlerup 2023).

In line with the second generation research agenda, this chapter will focus on women negotiating power at the micro level electoral arena of local government institutions in India, which marks a significant critical juncture in the democratic process of the country with the introduction of a quota for women’s political participation. It will look closely at the debates on the need for quotas for women in politics, the typology of

such quotas and their varying impacts on enhancing women's descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation. The contours of the institutional changes brought about by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments that introduced reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies, and their impact on women's political participation, will be drawn out in detail. In an attempt to address the gap in comparative analyses of the impact of quotas on the substantive representation of women, this chapter will also look at women's grassroots level political experiences in the Local, District and Metropolitan councils of South Africa, and the *Municípios* (Municipalities) in Brazil. The comparative study of the implementation of women's quotas with different designs in each of the three countries will bring out the nuances involved in attempts to increase women's political participation and representation.

2.2.2 Typology of Quotas

Feminist institutionalist scholars have identified three predominant types of quotas for women (Htun 2004, Norris 2004, Krook 2009, 2018, Jalalzai 2013a, International IDEA 2014, Paxton and Hughes 2014, Dahlerup 2023):

(1) Reserved Seats: Separate electoral rolls, districts or seats in the legislature are mandated to be reserved for women by the Constitution or Electoral Rules. This guarantees that a minimum number of women are elected and is aimed at changing the exclusionary nature of formal institutions like the electoral system and party system. Reserved seats are in the range of 10-50% of the total number of seats and are more common in Asia and Africa. Reserved seats are used to ensure women's political participation in majoritarian electoral systems.

(2) Party Quotas: Individual parties commit to a certain number of candidates for political office being women. The enforcement of party quotas is done by the party leaders through self-regulation. This voluntary quota is effective in altering the formal and informal candidate nomination practices, by removing the entry barrier for women into candidate lists. Party quotas are widely implemented in the Proportional Representation (PR)/mixed electoral systems in Western Europe, as well as in certain countries with plurality/majority electoral systems, like Australia. However, their impact is more marked in the former case; in 2022, countries with voluntary party quotas in PR/mixed systems have recorded 31.5%

women's presence in national legislatures, as opposed to 24.3% in the case of such quotas in plurality/majority systems (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2023).

(3) Legislative Quotas: Political parties are mandated by electoral law or rules to nominate a certain number of women as candidates. While ensuring the presence of women in the candidate lists, this also makes it necessary for political parties to redefine their candidate selection norms. Legislative quotas may be with or without candidate ranking requirements known as placement mandates or rank-order rules that stipulate the even distribution of men and women candidates throughout the candidate list, to ensure the winnability of the women candidates and to avoid them being placed at the bottom of the list (Krook 2018, Hughes et al. 2019, Dahlerup 2023). They may also be with or without sanctions laid down for non-compliance of the quota requirements by political parties. Sanctions usually take the form of rejection of the party candidate lists or financial penalties/incentives (Gray 2017, Dahlerup 2023). Legislative quotas are predominantly implemented in the PR based electoral systems of Latin American countries.

2.2.3 Gender Quota Designs and Electoral Systems

It is widely held by scholars studying gender quotas that what determines their effectiveness is the degree to which a given quota design is a good fit for the electoral system and candidate selection norms prevalent in a country (Htun and Jones 2002, Jones 2009, Krook 2009, Paxton and Hughes 2014, Gray 2017). When the quota design is aligned well with the institutional framework, the introduction of gender quotas brings in a "harmonizing sequence of reforms" that are impactful in enhancing women's representation, as against a "disjointed sequence" that does not factor in the practical and normative aspects of political institutions (Krook 2009: 52-55). This explains why there are stark variations in the impact of the same type of quota across diverse electoral systems (Schmidt and Saunders 2004, Paxton and Hughes 2014). There is a general consensus that the impact of quotas on women's representation is highest in those electoral systems that are based on PR, accompanied by the additional features of closed lists, placement mandates and high district magnitudes (Caul 2001, Htun and Jones 2002, Norris 2004, Baldez 2006, Matland 2006, Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer 2012, Krook 2018, Hughes et al. 2019, Lang, Meier and Sauer 2022). In PR systems, seats are won as

per the proportion of votes gained by each political party, in contrast to a majority system based on a "winner-takes-all' principle (Norris 2004: 42,50). PR systems operate with either open or closed lists of candidates; in an open list scenario, the voters can choose a party and particular candidates from within the party list, whereas in the case of a closed list, the party determines the ranking of candidates within the list and the voter can only choose the party, not the candidates themselves (Norris 2004). An open list from which voters can choose individual candidates dilutes the impact of quotas for women significantly, as female candidates mostly do not have the same extent of financial resources or political capital to invest in their campaigns as male candidates (Gray 2017). As mentioned earlier, placement mandates lay down rules for placing women candidates in the party lists equitably. They are usually in the form of a proportionate placement linked to the percentage of quota or a zipper placement in which every alternate candidate is female (Matland 2006, Sacchet 2008, Gray 2017). District magnitude refers to the number of seats in each electoral district; larger district magnitudes are associated with more proportional representation of parties (Norris 2004). Large multi-member constituencies have been found to have more women candidates elected than single member districts, primarily because candidate selection does not become a zero-sum game where women are nominated by displacing male candidates (Baldez 2006, Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer 2012, International IDEA 2014, Krook 2018). However, some scholars argue that it is party magnitude that is more decisive than district magnitude in determining the effectiveness of quotas for women (Matland and Taylor 1997, Schwindt-Bayer, Malecki and Crisp 2010). Party magnitude refers to the number of seats that a party is likely to win, which in turn affects decisions regarding whether to field women and at which placements within the candidate list.

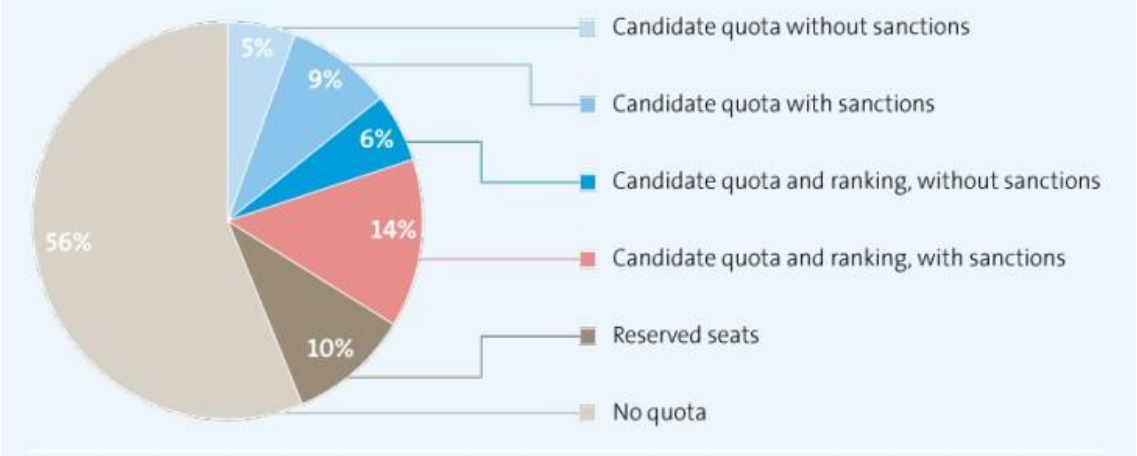
However, the general consensus on the preconditions that determine the effectiveness of quotas for women has also been problematized by some studies. In the case of post-communist countries, it has been observed that more women are elected in Single-Seat District majority systems than in PR systems (Moser 2001, Moser and Scheiner 2012). Recent data released by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 2023 reveals that the gap in women's representation between PR/mixed systems and plurality/majority systems may be getting bridged; while 31.4% women were elected in countries with gender quotas in a PR/mixed system, a very close 30.3% women were elected in countries with gender quotas in a plurality/majority system (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2023).

Such divergences in the impact of gender quotas have led Mona Lena Krook to posit a link between the type of quota and the specific aspect of the institutional framework that it seeks to address: "reserved seats alter systemic institutions, party quotas change practical institutions, and legislative quotas reframe normative institutions" (Krook 2009: 38). She defines systemic institutions as "the formal features of political systems", practical institutions as "the formal and informal practices that shape political behavior" and normative institutions as "the formal and informal principles that guide and justify the means and goals of political life" (Krook 2009: 38). She suggests that the gender quota implementation should factor in the multiplicity of intervening factors and the larger institutional framework, in order to be impactful (Krook 2009).

2.2.4 Gender Quotas in Local Government

As of 1 January 2020, quotas have been implemented by 44% of all countries with elected local bodies (Ballington and Berevoescu 2021). Countries that have implemented some form of quota have 7% more women representatives than those without quotas (Ballington and Berevoescu 2021: 10). Figure 2.1 shows the use of different types of quotas implemented worldwide in local government.

Figure 2.1: Distribution of countries worldwide with elected local bodies by type of gender quota, as of 1 January 2020



(Source: UN WOMEN – Women in Local Government Database: https://localgov.unwomen.org)

At the micro-level electoral arena of local governments, quotas take on a particular significance when it comes to addressing the entry level barriers that women

face. The pipeline theory of women's representation proposes that one of the most crucial factors that limit women's presence in politics is the lack of adequate number of women who have political experience, a base of supporters and the skills required to be considered as viable candidates (Mariani 2008, Thomsen and King 2020, Kaur and Philips 2023). Quotas at the entry level of local government ensure the availability of women for contesting at the State and national levels, who are competitive electoral players with prior exposure to politics (O'Connell 2020, Karekurve-Ramachandra 2022). Komal Preet Kaur and Andrew Q. Philips have traced how the increasing presence of women in local government through quotas leads to more women competing and getting elected to higher political levels. They attribute this co-relation to the "spill-over effects" of quotas that influence both the supply and demand side of candidate recruitment processes, by encouraging women who have won local level elections to contest for higher levels on one hand, and increasing their voter acceptability by recasting norms of the ideal candidate on the other hand (Kaur and Philips 2023: 681-682). Stephen D. O'Connell quantifies this effect as a 50% increase in women contesting for higher political offices (O'Connell 2020). The change in voter attitudes after observing the performance of women representatives in local government has also been documented (Beaman et al. 2009, Bhavnani 2009). The increased willingness of male political leadership to accept women as candidates based on their local government experience, and the increased ability of elected women at the local level to mobilize grassroots public support to influence party nomination decisions have been demonstrated by some scholars (Auerbach 2020, Barnes and Holman 2020, Goyal 2020, Goyal and Sells 2021). Most of these studies have looked at data sets emerging from women's participation in local government in India, which is widely seen as a successful quota experiment.

This chapter will now turn to a detailed examination of the contours of quotas for women in grassroots level politics in India, its impact on the descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation of women, and the ways in which it alters the political opportunity structures available for women's negotiations with power.

2.3 GENDER QUOTAS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE

Local government in rural India in the form of panchayats have deep roots in the collective conscience of the country. Panchayats were traditional dispute resolution institutions that held sway over village life well before they were institutionalized in colonial India (Buch 2004, 2010). Based on the recommendations of the Decentralisation Commission in 1909, followed by the GOI Resolutions passed in 1915 and 1918, the Panchayat Acts were enacted in the British Provinces and Princely States in the 1920s (Buch 2010). These Acts gave legal recognition to panchayats and attributed local civic functions including building and road maintenance, sanitation and resolution of petty disputes (Buch 2010). In the 1940s, the elected Congress governments in the Provinces attempted to broaden the ambit of panchayats, in keeping with the Gandhian vision of panchayats as the rock-beds of *Gram Swaraj*.

Meanwhile, the demand for the reservation of seats for women in the Provincial and Central Legislatures of colonial India was first raised by Begum Shah Nawaz and Kamala Subbaryon at the First Round Table Conference (November 1930-January 1931). This demand was heavily opposed by other nationalist women who held that "to seek any form of preferential treatment would be to violate the integrity of the universal decision of Indian women for absolute equality of political status" (Kumar, 1993: 81, Kasturi 1998, Basu 2008, Mazumdar 2008, Jensenius 2019). They presented a memorandum against reservation at the Second Round Table Conference (September-December 1931) on behalf of the All India Women's Conference (AIWC), the Women's Indian Association (WIA) and the Central Committee of the National Council of Women in India (NCWI), stating that

> to seek any form of preferential treatment would be to violate the integrity of the universal demand of Indian women for absolute equality of political status… We ask that there should be no sex discrimination either against or in favour of women under the new Constitution. (Sarojini Naidu and Begum Shah Nawaz's letter to the Chairman of the Minorities Committee, Second Round Table Conference, as reproduced in Dhanda 2008: 3)

Further, in a joint declaration issued in 1933, the AIWC and WIA condemned reservation of seats as "a pernicious and humiliating system", which would "engender an inferiority

complex" (Declaration by AIWC and WIA, 1933, as reproduced in Dhanda 2008: 6). Nevertheless, reserved seats for women were introduced by the colonial government through the Government of India Act, 1935. After Independence, the women members of the Constituent Assembly opposed the idea of reservations or separate electorates for women and minority groups as introduced earlier, because they felt it would be contrary to the spirit of an India to be built upon the foundations of a unified national identity. To a large extent, this opposition was shared by the women's movement in India right up to the 1970s, as reservation was seen as an affront to the idea of equality and equal merit of women (John 2008). Panchayats too did not find much traction in the Constitution of independent India, save a mention in Article 40 that laid down a Directive Principle of State Policy as follows: "the state shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to function as units of self government" (The Constitution of India 2022: 22). In 1957, the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee that was constituted to study the operationalization of Article 40 recommended a three-tier structure of Panchayati Raj with the Gram Panchayat at the village level, Panchayat Samiti at the block level, and Zilla Parishad at the district level (Government of India 1957). The main objective of this institutional framework was to utilize panchayats as subsidiary units at the local level for the implementation of government programs and policies, and not as self-governing bodies (Singh 1994, Mathur 2013, Sarma and Chakravarty 2018). Interestingly, the Committee also recommended the co-option or nomination of two women who were interested in working for the welfare of women and children to each Panchayat Samiti, which would have 20 members in all (Mohanty 1999, Mathur 2013).

The subsequent evolution of panchayats was haphazard, with States exercising their powers under the State List to set up panchayat structures in different ways. The State Legislatures of Haryana, Maharashtra, Punjab and Rajasthan passed laws mandating the co-option/nomination of women members in the panchayats, but this initiative did not create much impact (Mathur 2013). The Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) set up in 1974 suggested in its report titled "Towards Equality" that all-women's panchayats should be set up in each village to monitor programmes intended for women and children (Government of India 1974, Menon 2000). It recommended the election of women to these bodies, instead of nomination (Mohanty 1999). After prolonged internal debate, it was decided by the Committee to not

recommend the idea of reservation of seats for women in national and State legislatures. However, it recommended the adoption of voluntary party candidate quotas (Turnbull 2022). Subsequent to the "Towards Equality" Report, all-women panchayats were introduced in the States of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. The Report of the Ashok Mehta Committee in 1978 to revitalize Panchayati Raj recommended a uniform two-tier model consisting of District panchayats and Mandal panchayats and called for incorporating this provision in the Constitution (Government of India 1978). The objective was to change the status of panchayats from being mere implementing agencies to decision-making bodies with a degree of autonomy (Mathew 1995, Sarma and Chakravarty 2018). This Committee took forward the proposal of ensuring women's presence, through a mechanism of nominating women contestants who did not win the elections but got the highest number of votes at each level (Buch 2010). The initial draft of the National Perspective Plan (NPP) of 1985 suggested the introduction of reservation of 30% seats for women in all elected bodies across levels, with a proviso that these would be filled by nomination or co-option in the initial years. However, this was widely opposed by women's groups who proposed instead that the reservation should be for women in panchayats and municipalities only, with adequate representation of women from SC/ST communities, and to be operated through elections (Mazumdar 2008). Accordingly, the final NPP document recommended 30% reservation for women in the panchayats and municipalities through elections (Mazumdar 2008, Mohammed 2011). In 1989, the 64th Constitutional Amendment Bill was introduced to give constitutional protection to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs); it also included provisions for holding regular elections, devolving powers to PRIs and reservation of "as nearly as may be" 30% of seats in the village, block and district levels for women (Buch 2010: 8, Singh 1994). This Bill failed to get passed in the Rajya Sabha. Though women found marginal representation in local bodies in the intervening years by co-option, it was in the 1980s and early 1990s that States like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Kerala introduced reservation of women in local body seats (Lama-Rewal 2001, Singer 2007).

The most significant legislative effort to institutionalize PRIs took the form of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Bill introduced in 1992 and adopted as an Act on 22 December 1992. Together with the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, this rang in a new era of decentralized local governance in India, as it "enshrine(ed) in the Constitution certain basic and essential features of Panchayati Raj Institutions to impart certainty,

continuity and strength to them" (The Constitution [Seventy-third Amendment] Act, 1992). Panchayats were recast as local political institutions with a fixed tenure of five years and direct elections to all three tiers: Gram Panchayats at the village level, Taluka/Block Panchayats at the sub-district level and Zilla Parishad/Panchayats at the district level.[2] The Gram Sabha consisting of all voters in a village or group of villages was defined as the foundation of the PRI system, to which the Panchayat would be accountable (Mohanty 1999). The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts also brought into force the Eleventh and Twelfth Schedules, which enlisted the subjects to be devolved to PRIs and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). The Acts also stipulated the setting up of a Finance Commission to decide the pattern of sharing of funds between the State Governments and the PRIs/ULBs.

The following provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act enshrined the policy of reservation of seats for women for the first time in independent India:

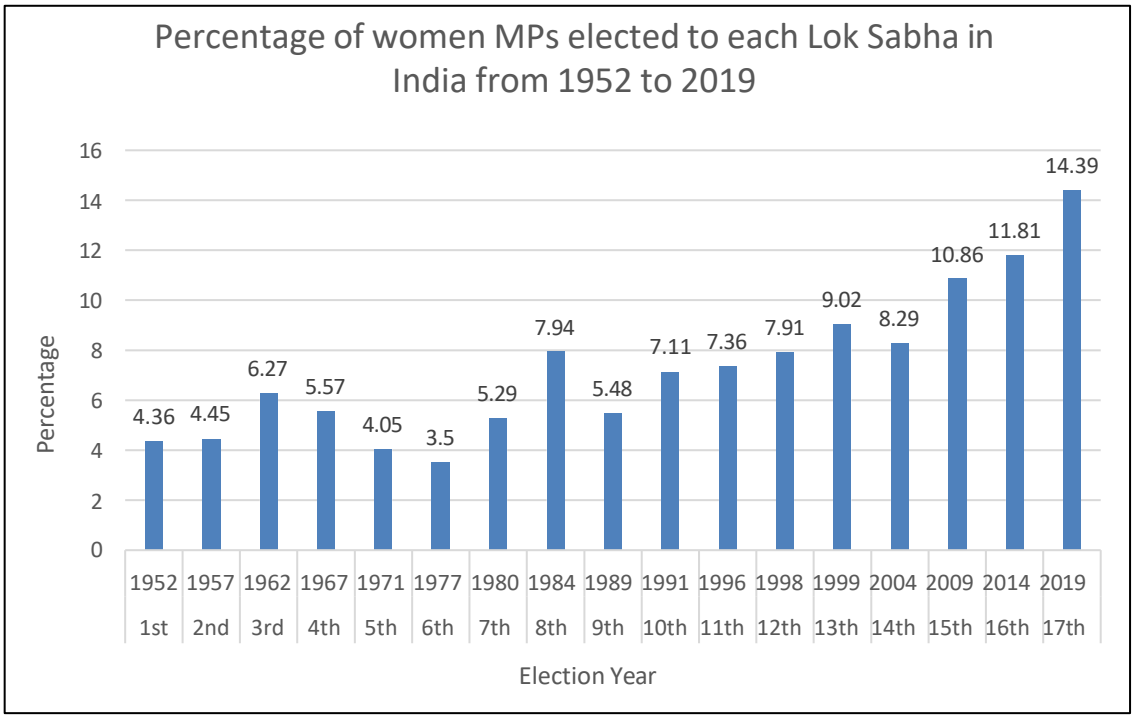
> Article 243D(3): Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.
>
> Article 243D(4): The offices of the Chairpersons in the Panchayats at the village or any other level shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide:
>
> … Provided further that not less than one-third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women
>
> … Provided also that the number of offices reserved under this clause shall be allotted by rotation to different Panchayats at each level.
>
> (The Constitution [Seventy-third Amendment] Act, 1992)

Similar provisions in the 74th Constitutional Amendment that dealt with Urban Local Bodies introduced reserved seats for women in the *Mahanagar*

[2] Within the Indian governance structure at the sub-national level, the States/Union Territories are broadly organized into three administrative units: the village as the basic unit, the taluka/block as a group of villages, and the district as a group of talukas/blocks.

Palikas (Municipal Corporations) for urban areas with more than one million population, *Nagar Palikas* (Municipal Councils/ Municipalities) for areas with less than one million population, and *Nagar Panchayats* (Town Councils) for areas transitioning from rural to urban. 21 States and 2 Union Territories have moved forward beyond the mandatory 33% reservation by passing laws to increase the number of reserved seats for women in panchayats to 50% (Ministry of Panchayati Raj 2023a). The lack of opposition from male politicians to a move that significantly impacted on their electoral prospects could be attributed to the fact that till the early 1990s, local government bodies were not seen as important sites of political power (Bhavnani 2009). In the first round of local government elections held after the constitutional amendments, more than one million women, including those from the marginalized SC and ST communities, gained access to local government, ushering in a dramatic shift in the composition of grassroots level electoral democracy in India through a "silent revolution" (Bhavnani 2009: 24, Gochhayat 2013). As per official figures, there are currently 3,188,981 elected PRI representatives across 260,512 Panchayats, out of which 1,454,488 are women, bringing the representation of women to 45.6% (Ministry of Panchayati Raj 2023b). Hence, in terms of descriptive representation, the reservation for women in local government has been hugely successful. This stands in sharp contrast to the representation of women at the national level in the Lok Sabha (the Lower House of Parliament in India); through the years from the first parliamentary elections of independent India in 1952 till the last one in 2019, it has increased only by a marginal 10 percentage points (from 4.36% to 14.39%), as is shown in Figure 2.2. In terms of elected parliamentary seats filled by women, India is ranked 142nd out of 185 countries as per data compiled by the Inter-Parliamentary Union as of 1 October 2023 (IPU Parline 2023).

Figure 2.2: Women's representation in each Lok Sabha in India from 1952 to 2019



(Source: Author, based on data from Election Commission of India: https://eci.gov.in)

In terms of descriptive representation, there are extensive studies on the impact of women's entry into local politics across India. Research has shown that the number of women as candidates was 7.4% more in the wards of the Brihan Mumbai (Greater Mumbai) Corporation that were previously reserved for women, which indicates that reservation has a sustained impact on women's participation and not just a short-lived one, including on the readiness of political parties to field women candidates (Bhavnani 2009). Further, the chances of women candidates winning in wards that had been previously reserved for women were five times more than that of previously unreserved wards (Bhavnani 2009). Similarly, there is research evidence to demonstrate that the number of elected women candidates doubled from 4.8% in PRI seats in the State of West Bengal that were never reserved for women to 10.1% in those that were twice previously reserved, which suggests that voter attitudes towards women candidates improves significantly after exposure to their performance (Beaman et al. 2009, 2010). There is also evidence that women's participation in local government provides them with an opportunity of upward political mobility. In his study of the political trajectories of women winning elections to the State Legislative Assemblies across 15 States, Varun Karekurve-Ramachandra has found that women entering local government bodies

through reserved seats are able to win State level elections at a later stage. He identifies this impact to be to the tune of a 3 percentage points increase in the proportion of women in State Legislatures (Karekurve-Ramachandra 2022). This impact is even more pronounced in certain States like Kerala that have seen very active participation of women in local government, where 70% of women representatives in the State Legislative Assembly in 2010 had prior experience of holding local government political positions (Karekurve-Ramachandra 2022).

Turning to the substantive representation of women in local government, the initial concerns that women representatives lacked in political experience, educational qualifications and the confidence to engage with local bureaucracies in a system where the rules of the game are imposed by men, have gradually given way in the course of around thirty years of operation of reserved seats, to narratives of how women are able to negotiate with local power structures, build partnerships with their electorate and set gender policy priorities for public service delivery. A strong body of research has established that women representatives demonstrate policy preferences that are different from that of male representatives in their decision-making roles; they prioritize and invest in the delivery of public goods that are more directly relevant to women, like health, education, food security and drinking water (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004, Duflo and Topalova 2004, Jayal 2006, Rai et al. 2006, Mohan 2008, Munshi and Rosenzweig 2010, Beaman et al. 2012, Clots-Figueras 2012, Halim et al. 2016). In the panchayats that have been reserved for women twice, the level of delivery by female representatives shows marked qualitative improvement, both for female and male public goods (Beaman et al. 2010). A link has also been posited between better substantive representation through effective gender policy performance of elected women in local government and symbolic representation in terms of changing public perceptions of women as leaders (Beaman, Pande and Cirone 2012). Symbolic representation is also manifested in the way women are more likely to attend and speak in the Gram Sabha meetings when the *Sarpanch* (Chairperson of the Panchayat) is a woman, in a clear expression of agency (Ban and Rao 2008, 2013, Beaman et al. 2010). It is pertinent to note that the reservation of a minimum of 33% seats of chairpersons of the Panchayats and Municipal Councils as mandated by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments ensures women's presence as heads of the local bodies in India, a provision that is missing from quotas for women in both South Africa and Brazil.

The limitations of the reservation policy have also been studied in depth by scholars. One concern has been that reservation operates within "the traditional male-centred institutions with limited space for women elected representatives to articulate their interests and gendering these institutions" (Mohan 2008: 327). The presence of elected women in large numbers in the local governance bodies does not always give them a larger say in decision making or in shaping and implementing women-centric policies. A lot depends upon the socio-cultural context prevailing within the States in terms of how entrenched the patriarchal structures are, as well as the institutional mechanisms through which the reservation policy has been translated into State-specific laws (Jayal 2006, Turnbull 2022). The dramatic increase in the number of women representatives in local bodies, together with the process of decentralization through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments have been termed as "top down" revolutions, thereby limiting the space for women to reinterpret the rules of the political game (Vyasulu and Vyasulu 2000: 42). The ploy of male members of the family to field women as 'proxy candidates' against reserved seats and to indirectly keep all decision making powers and authority with themselves has been pointed out as a major drawback of the reservation policy (Jayal 2006, Mohanty 2008, Turnbull 2019, 2022). Even while women elected members are conscious of the interests of the women they represent, they often do not speak up for gender-specific issues (Lama-Rewal 2001, Ghosh 2003). The feature of rotation of the seats reserved for women in every electoral cycle has been critiqued by many feminist scholars who hold that this erodes the opportunity for women to build up their core constituencies and sustain their gains in political experience (Kishwar 2000, Lama-Rewal 2001, Chathukulam and Moolakkattu 2000, Ghosh 2003).

2.4 GENDER QUOTAS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE

Local Government structures in South Africa date back to the apartheid era, during which they were racially segregated and amorphous (Wittenberg 2006, Ramodula and Govender 2020). Separate community councils were introduced in 1977 for each of the racial groups, in keeping with the larger objective of the balkanisation of South Africa. These councils only had advisory functions and had no substantive resources or powers at their disposal (Mbatha 2003). The main focus of decentralization during the apartheid regime was to maintain a strict control over the black population and not to

create viable and autonomous local bodies. The delivery of essential services was racially regulated, leaving it grossly inadequate in the areas inhabited by the black population (De Visser 2005, 2009, Koma 2012, Kaywood 2021). Anti-apartheid activists persistently targeted the racial segregation of local bodies (Binza 2005). They called for the institutional unification of local bodies so that local revenue was channelized for the benefit of all residents, irrespective of race.

With the end of apartheid, a transition was brought about in the paradigm of local government from "coercive decentralization" to "democratic decentralization" (Wittenberg 2006: 347). The post-apartheid structure of local government emerged from the provisions of the new Constitution of 1996 and were extensively deliberated upon through the Local Government Negotiating Forum formed in 1993. A crucial role in the process of transition was played by the Local Government Transition Act (LGTA) 1993, which laid down a road map for a phase-wise evolution of the local government framework (Cloete 1995, Binza 2005, Department of Provincial and Local Government 2007, Kaywood 2021). The three distinct phases that can be identified on this basis are:

(1) Pre-interim phase (1993-1995): Local government negotiating forums and interim municipal structures were formed to pave the way for the first post- apartheid municipal elections in 1995.

(2) Interim phase (1995-1998): The focus in this phase was initially to deracialize the municipalities and finalize the chapter on local government in the Constitution. The 1996 Constitution was "informed by a vision of democratic, accountable, effective, participative and developmental local governance", which included a commitment "to rectify the social, economic and political marginalisation of women" (McEwan 2003: 470, Hilliard and Kemp 1999). The vision of a new developmental local government was spelt out in a White Paper prepared by the Department of Constitutional Development in 1998 through a detailed process of consultation and negotiation. The focus later shifted from deracializing to democratizing the local government structures. The Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations Act of 1997, the Municipal Structures Act 1998 and the Municipal Systems Act 2000 provided the legislative framework for this process.

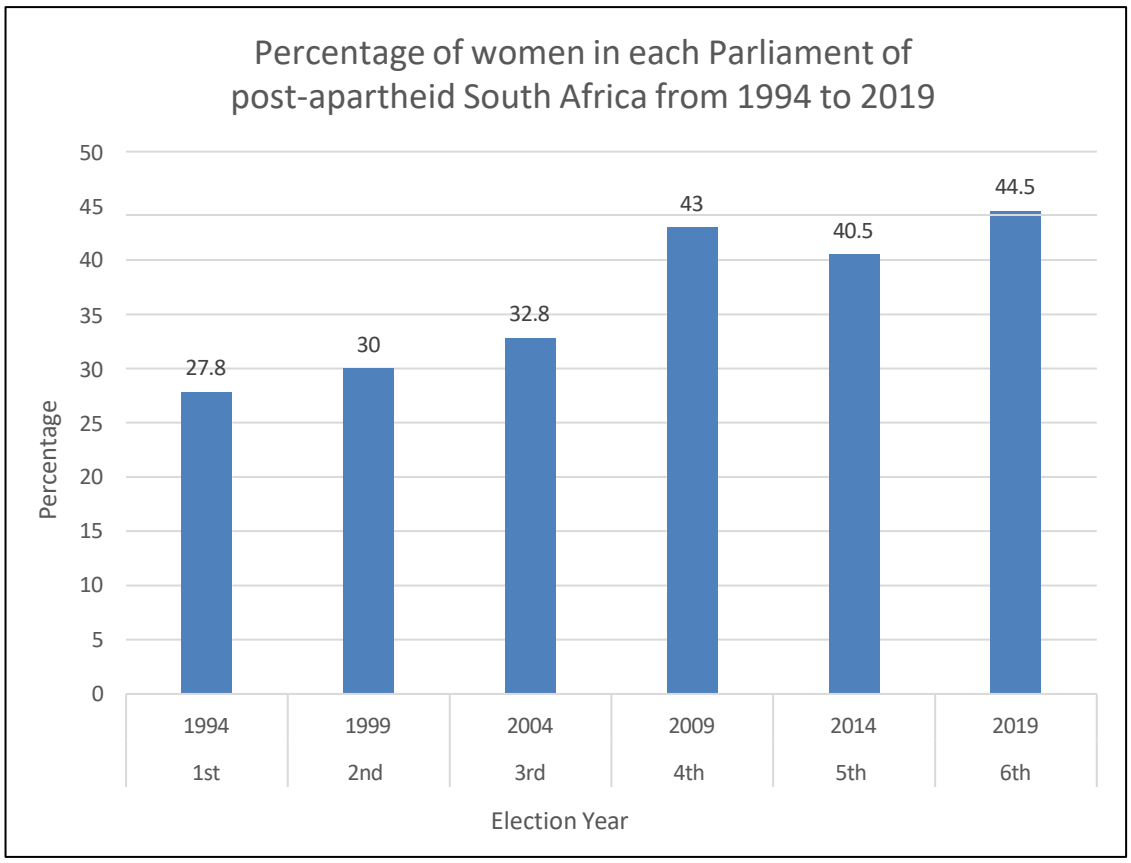
(3) Final phase (2000-2002): This phase witnessed a large scale re-demarcation of the municipal boundaries by the Demarcation Board, again through a broad-based consultative process. Reforms also included laying down the powers and

responsibilities of the different categories of municipalities, fine-tuning the fiscal framework for revenue sharing and improving local service delivery. The structure of post-apartheid local government in South Africa took full shape during this period, thereby establishing municipalities as self-governing bodies with executive and legislative autonomy in a distinct third sphere of government (Mbatha 2003, Thornhill 2014, du Plessis 2019). The Municipal Systems Act 2000 brought in progressive planning for local government bodies, while the Municipal Structures Act 2000 rationalized their institutional design in the interest of uniformity across three categories – Category A municipalities (Metropolitan municipalities), Category B municipalities (Local municipalities) and Category C municipalities (District municipalities) (Kaywood 2021, Joseph 2022a). One half of the representatives in these local bodies are elected from single member wards and the other half are elected by proportional representation from party lists.

Special provisions for increasing the political participation of women in South Africa have been in the form of a voluntary party quota at the national and provincial levels, adopted so far only by the African National Congress (ANC) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). This was the outcome of sustained efforts by the vocal feminist activists of the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL) to get a distinct space for women's issues on the party's agenda. Their efforts bore fruit with the introduction of a 30% minimum quota for women in candidate lists by the ANC (Meintjes 1996, Gouws 2004, Hassim 2014). The ANC lists for the first post-apartheid elections in 1994 contained 32% women candidates, placed in winnable positions, as a result of which the two-thirds majority won by the ANC translated into the new South African Parliament having one of the highest percentages of women representation, world over. Though other parties including the National Party and Democratic Party were opposed to such a quota, the demonstrative effect of the ANC's decision prompted them to include more women candidates. In 2007, the ANC raised the quota to 50% at national and provincial levels. The ANC also adopted a policy in 2009 that 50% of all ANC candidates for national elections will be women. Owing to the historic dominance of ANC in the post-apartheid political and electoral scene of South Africa, this voluntary quota in itself has had a huge impact on the descriptive representation of women. Women's parliamentary presence in South Africa shows a steadily rising trend, except for a marginal dip in 2014, as

shown in Figure 2.3. As of 1 October 2023, South Africa ranks 16th in the world in terms of women's representation in parliament (IPU Parline 2023). However, the question remains as to whether such high levels of women's representation will continue even when the ANC faces credible electoral threats, as has started emerging in recent times (Hicks and Buccus 2012). Further, when women are dependent on the voluntary action of political parties to keep places for them in the candidate list, it could lead to a situation where "women gain power only through access to men" and that the elected women feel obliged to owe allegiance to the party and prioritize party interests over those of the voter (Vincent 2004: 76, Piper and Deacon 2008).

Figure 2.3: Women's representation in each Parliament of post-apartheid South Africa from 1994 to 2019



(Source: Author, based on data from the People's Assembly Website: https://www.pa.org.za/blog/women-representation-parliament)

There are legislated quotas in place in all local government bodies in South Africa. The local government electoral system is characterized by Mixed Member/Closed List Proportional Representation. The Local Government Municipal Structures Act, 1998 mandates that "every party must seek to ensure that fifty per cent of the candidates on the party list are women and that women and men candidates are evenly distributed through the list" (Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 1998: 70). It also stipulates that there must be an equal number of women and men in Ward Committees. However, there is no penalty stipulated for non-adherence to these conditions. ANC's voluntary party quota ensures that the trend of high representation of women is visible at the local level too; it increased from 19% in 1995 to 29% in 2000 and after the ANC declared a commitment to reaching gender parity at the local government level during the 2006 election, it increased to 38% in 2011 and 41% in 2016 with a marginal dip to 40.73% in 2021. Yet, the statutory target of 50% representation of women remains far from being met (Vyas-Doorgapersad 2014, Vyas-Doorgapersad and Shava 2022, Joseph 2022b). It is pertinent to note that when the ANC declared a commitment to reaching gender parity at the local government level during the 2006 election, it met with stiff resistance from the male membership and was not uniformly effective (Hassim 2014). Equally illustrative is the fact that women's representation at the level of mayor was only 33% as of 31 August 2020, which could be attributed to the fact that the legislative quota in South Africa does not cover leadership positions in local government, unlike in India (Joseph 2022b, Vyas-Doorgapersad and Shava 2022, Ahiante and Ndaguba 2022).

In her incisive analysis of the latest local government elections held in 2021 in South Africa, Hlengiwe Ndlovu has demonstrated how women's representation at the level of local government is far from optimal, considering the fact that there are more female voters than male voters in the total electorate. Even more significantly, from a substantive representation point of view, none of the election manifestoes, be it of the ANC or the three principal opposition parties, the Democratic Alliance (DA), the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) or ActionSA, included a "gender-sensitive transformative agenda" (Ndlovu 2023). While a 'Gender Policy Framework for Local Government' was launched in 2007 by the then Department of Provincial and Local Government that provides for institutional mechanisms like a caucus of women councillors and gender equality committees at the council level, it has largely not been translated into actual practice and tangible outcomes (Hicks and Buccus 2012, Smout

2021). The absence of a gender agenda at the local level reflects that women local representatives in South Africa "face sexism, patriarchal attitudes, and sexual harassment… it is very difficult for them to make a difference by putting women's issues on the agenda" (Amanda Gouws, as quoted in Smout 2021: 1). The impact of the women's movement on local government is also limited resulting in virtually no redistribution of power at the local level (Hassim 2014). The presence of traditional authorities that are resistant to women's political participation as countervailing forces, especially in the rural provinces, also limits the potential of a women's agenda being actively pursued (Beall 2005, Hassim 2014). Women councillors in South Africa do work for practical gender interests (as against strategic gender interests), by virtue of the fact that women approach them with their daily livelihood issues more freely, but these interventions are mostly made "in a gender-blind manner" (Todes, Sithole, and Williamson 2006: 5).

2.5 GENDER QUOTAS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: THE BRAZILIAN EXPERIENCE

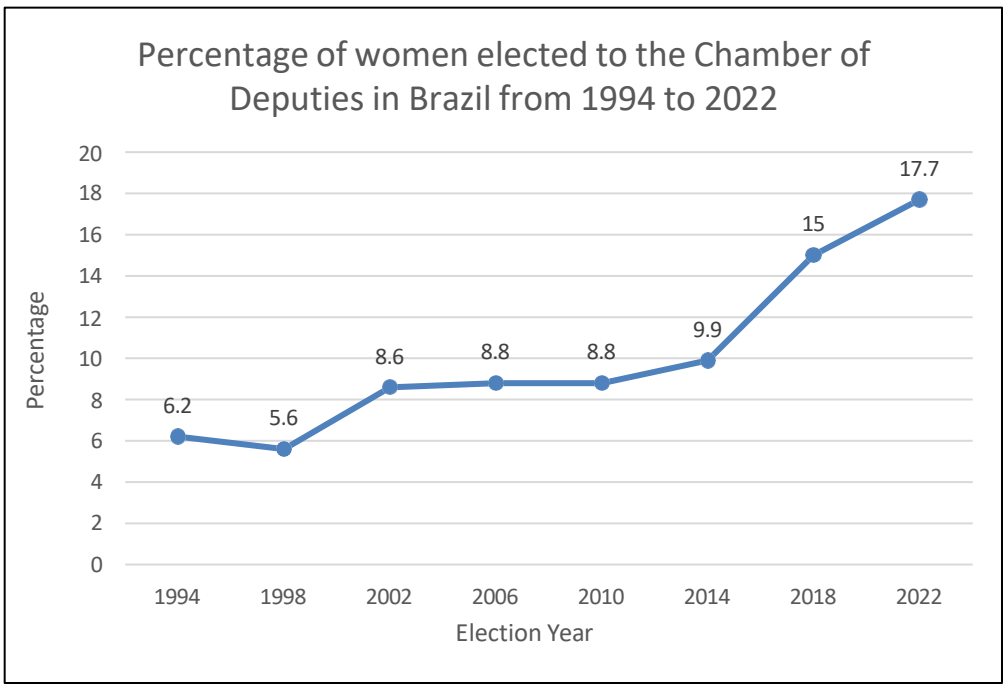
Brazil is widely considered to be one of the most decentralized countries in the world, with its model of participatory budgeting and participatory councils in the municipalities often being cited as successful innovations in local governance (Abers 2000, Baiocchi 2001, Souza 2001, Samuels 2004, Cornwall 2008, Avritzer 2009, Falleti 2010, Houtzager and Lavalle 2010). Direct elections are held in Brazil to three levels of government: the municipal, the state and the national. The executive head at the municipal level is the Mayor (*Prefeito/Prefeita*) and the legislative body is the Chamber of Councilors (*Câmara Municipal*). At the state level, the executive head is the Governor (*Governador/Governadora*) and the legislative body is the Legislative Assembly (*Assembleia Legislativa*). The President is the executive head at the national level and the legislative body is the bi-cameral Congress, which is constituted by the Chamber of Deputies (*Câmara dos Deputados*) and the Federal Senate (*Senado Federal*). The elections to the executive offices and the Senate are majority elections and the remaining are proportional elections (Miguel 2008). Brazilian municipalities consist of "the territorial area of a city and the surrounding regions circumscribed under its jurisdiction, including the periphery, villages, districts and the adjoining countryside" (Costa and Cornwall 2014: 260). Municipalities have been in existence in Brazil right from the time

of the establishment of the Brazilian republic in 1889. Their ambit was severely curbed during the years of military dictatorship. Subsequently, the 1988 Constitution recognized municipalities as constituent units of the national federation on equal footing with states. They were granted a distinct political identity as full administrative units with an elected executive and legislature and considerable fiscal autonomy, including the authority to institute and levy taxes, fees and improvement charges (Macaulay 2006). The fiscal decentralization introduced by the 1988 Constitution set in motion a process of "municipalization of revenue mobilization and service delivery" (Afonso and Araújo 2006: 384). Every municipality is mandated to set up five participatory councils focused on health (*Conselho Municipal de Saúde)*, social assistance (*Conselho de Assistência Social)*, social welfare programs (*Conselho de Controle Social do Bolsa Família)*, elementary education (*Conselho do Fundef*), and school meals (*Conselho de Alimentação Escolar)* (Cornwall 2008, Houtzager and Lavalle 2010, Funk 2017). These councils are intended to ensure active citizen and civil society participation in deciding the utilization of funds transferred to the municipalities. Since 1988, municipalities came to acquire a crucial role in formulating and implementing policy pertaining to public amenities and services like health, housing, education and urban management (Arvate, Firpo and Pieri 2017, Novellino 2017). Grassroots civil society groups and movements too have an institutional role to play in the municipalities through the community councils and the process of participative budgeting (Heller 2019). This creates openings for women's participation in local government at a much higher level than what is seen at the state and national levels, though it is regulated by variations in the size, resource availability and developmental patterns amongst the 5568 municipalities (Meier and Funk 2017).

Similar to the case of South Africa, the active intra-party campaign by women members of the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* – PT) resulted in the party implementing the pioneering 30% voluntary gender quota for all levels of party leadership in 1991. Subsequently, the impact of the Beijing World Conference on Women, 1995 and the demonstrative effect of the successful gender quota in Argentina led the Women's Caucus (*bancada feminina*) in the Brazilian national legislature to sponsor legislative quota bills in both the Chambers in 1996. The 1996 *Lei de Cotas* stipulated that parties should field a minimum of 20% women candidates in the proportional elections to the Chamber of Councilors. This candidate quota was not applicable to the direct elections for mayors. Subsequently in 1998, the quota was

extended to elections of deputies to the federal and state legislative assemblies. The quota was raised to 25% in 1998 and 30% in 2000. Further amendment in 2009 introduced the stipulation that all political parties should allocate at least 10% of their Free Electoral Political Advertising Time (HGPE – *Horario Gratuito de Propaganda Eleitoral*) and 5% of their public campaign funds to women candidates (Meier and Funk 2017). Reforms were also made in campaign financing to include a ban on corporate contributions to campaign funds in 2015 and the setting up of the Special Fund for Campaign Finance (FEFC) in 2018 that provides public funding to parties for candidate campaigns with 30% earmarked for women candidates. These have had an impact in terms of increasing the ratio of women's success rate in legislative elections to that of men (Wylie 2020, Janusz, Barreiro and Cintron 2022). However, Brazil's gender quota law is widely held by feminist scholars as being toothless (Htun 2002, Araujo 2003, Macaulay 2006, Sacchet 2012, 2018, Wylie and dos Santos 2016). In fact, after the introduction of the legislated quota, the number of women in the federal Chamber of Deputies initially dropped from 6.2% in 1994 to 5.6% in 1998, though it marginally increased thereafter to 8.6% in 2002, 8.8% in 2006 and 2010, and 9.9% in 2014. Subsequently, it has increased to 15% in 2018 and 17.7% in 2022 as shown in Figure 2.4.

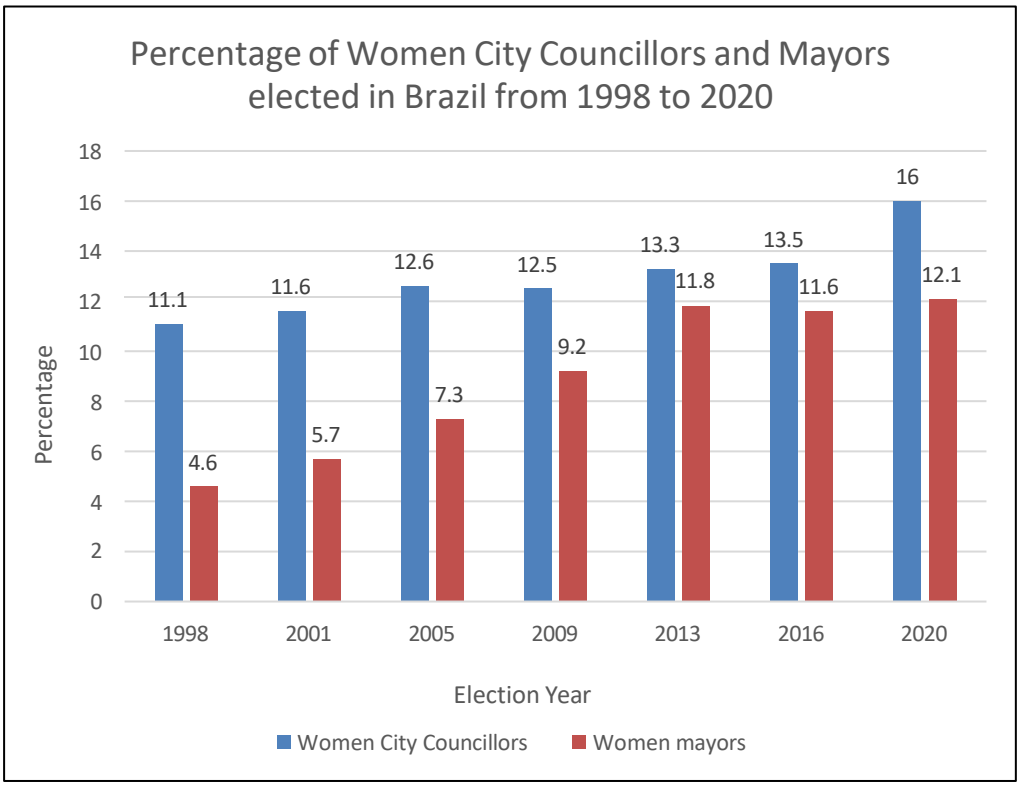
Figure 2.4: Women's representation in the Chamber of Deputies in Brazil from 1994 to 2022 after the introduction of quotas



(Source: Author, based on data from CEPALSTAT 2023)

In the case of local government, the percentage of women candidates has increased significantly after the introduction of the quota, especially at the level of city councillors. 33% of the candidates who contested the last municipal elections held in 2020 in Brazil were women; the corresponding figure was 31.9% in 2016 and 31.5% in 2012. However, the increase in the number of women elected has been very modest, thereby increasing the gap of women candidates' electoral success vis-à-vis male candidates. Brazil is one of the four Latin American countries that have not yet achieved at least 30% representation of women in city councils (CEPALSTAT 2023). Further, the exclusion of the leadership position of mayors from the ambit of the candidate quotas limits its impact. Figure 2.5 shows the percentage of women mayors and city councillors elected in Brazil from 1998 up to the last municipal elections held in 2020.

Figure 2.5: Women's representation as City Councillors and Mayors in Brazil from 1998 to 2020



(Source: Author, based on data from CEPALSTAT 2023)

As is evident from Figure 2.5, there has been a very gradual increase in the percentage of women elected as City Councillors from 11.1% in 1998 to 16% in 2020, and in the percentage of women elected as Mayors from 4.6% to 12.1%. One of the reasons attributed to the gap between the number of women contesting in local elections

and the number of women elected is the phenomenon of *candidaturas laranja* – those candidates who get zero or very few votes, predominantly women, parallel to the proxy candidate feature in local government elections in India. As Kristin Wylie, Pedro A.G. dos Santos and Daniel Marcelino illustrate, *candidaturas laranja* are "extreme non viable candidates" who fall into three main categories – "candidates who register but do not run a campaign – also called phantom candidates in the media –, those who actively run with no chances of winning (sacrificial lambs), and the "front-person", placeholder, or attack dog for another influential politician" (Wylie, dos Santos and Marcelino 2019: 5). This phenomenon represents the attempts by parties to nominally comply with the gender quota law and avoid punishment by the electoral courts while preserving the status quo of women's low representation, after the Supreme Electoral Court of Brazil (TSE – *Tribunal Superior Eleitoral*) mandated in 2012 through Resolution No. 23373 that the candidate lists of political parties that had not complied with the quota for women would be vetoed (Costa and Cornwall 2014). In 2014, the incidence of *candidaturas laranja* had been estimated at as high as 48.6% of the women candidates who contested for the Chamber of Deputies (Wylie, dos Santos and Marcelino 2019). Similarly, in the 2016 municipal elections, 89.3% of the 16,131 candidates who did not get any vote, not even their own, were women.

Feminist scholars have also drawn attention to the design flaws in the gender quota implemented in Brazil. A parallel regulation passed along with the introduction of the quota in 1996 allowed parties to present 50% more candidates in their list than the seats available, which became an 'escape clause' for the parties to continue nominating male candidates (Htun 2003b, Macaulay 2006, Silva, dos Santos and de Barcelos 2016, Gray 2017). In addition, there is neither a placement mandate for women candidates stipulated by the electoral law in Brazil nor any effective sanctions for non-compliance of the quota. In the context of Brazil's highly fragmented and weakly institutionalized party system, these flaws encourage non-compliance of the quota and compromise its effectiveness (Htun 2002, Araújo 2003, Miguel 2008, Sardenberg and Costa 2010, Araújo and Alves 2011, Wylie 2012, 2018, Wylie and dos Santos 2016). Brazil has an Open-List Proportional Representation electoral system, wherein voters cast their votes for individual candidates and the total of that determines the candidate's place in the party list, combined with an entrepreneurial political culture. Such an electoral system favours

incumbent male candidates who have more political capital and economic resources at their disposal (Macaulay 2006, Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2008, Marx, Bonner and Caminotti 2009, Daniel and Graf 2016, Araújo, Calasanti and Htun 2018, Wylie 2020). They are able to mobilize more campaign financing through clientelistic networks and to gain more television time as per Brazilian law that allocates two thirds of the Free Electoral Political Advertising Time (HGPE – *Horario Gratuito de Propaganda Eleitoral*: two hours in two slots available during the two months preceding elections) to parties according to their share of representatives in the National Congress (Sacchet and Speck 2012, Speck and Mancuso 2014, Moisés and Sanchez 2016, Araújo, Calasanti and Htun 2018). The glaring design flaws in the Brazilian gender quota can be attributed partly to the fact that its introduction was top-down and did not involve a process of consultation with the women's movement, and partly to the lack of any genuine interest amongst the male political leaders to increase women's political participation (Wylie 2012). Political parties do not actively encourage or support the candidature or campaigns of women with funding or resources, forcing them to mostly fall back upon family ties with influential male politicians rather than carving out independent political spaces for themselves (Marx, Borner and Caminotti 2009, Costa and Cornwall 2014). Women are often fielded as candidates by political parties in scenarios where the party is in a weak position vis-à-vis incumbent parties or candidates, or in less desirable municipalities with smaller budgets at their disposal, thereby handicapping their chances of winning or impacting their performance after being elected (Funk 2017). In an attempt to reform the quota for women, the Federal Senate in Brazil in July 2021 has approved a bill for the introduction of staggered reservation of seats for women instead of candidate quotas in the Chamber of Deputies, in the Legislative Assemblies of the states, in the Legislative Chamber of the Federal District and in the Chambers of Councillors in the municipalities, beginning with 18% in 2024 and culminating in 30% by the elections in 2038 (*Agência Senado* 2021). The bill is yet to be passed by the Chamber of Deputies and is currently under discussion.

In spite of the lack of effectiveness of the quota, the women who are elected in Brazilian municipalities are able to make an impact on women's lives; research has brought out that when the percentage of women councillors, mayors and vice-mayors increase, women-friendly policies are more visibly implemented (Meier and Funk 2017). The presence of women in mayoral positions is especially relevant in the Brazilian

context, given the discretionary spending and budgetary powers that vest with the mayor as per the *executivismo* system of strong executive heads of government presiding over weaker representative councils (Wampler 2007, Funk and Philips 2019). Research has demonstrated that municipalities with women mayors invest more public funds and demonstrate better performance in providing basic health and education facilities (Brollo and Troiano 2016, Funk and Philips 2019). During their tenures, women mayors recruit more women into the political parties they represent, in order to build a stronger support base and enhance chances of re-election (Goyal and Sells 2021). Further, women mayors also take measures to close the gender representation gap between men and women in local bureaucracies and to equalize salaries, thus increasing women's presence and stature in the municipal governance structures (Funk, Silva and Escobar-Lemmon 2017).

2.6 CONCLUSION

Women's participation in local governance is an important arena to examine the linkages between the descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation of women. While women have mostly benefited from the implementation of gender quotas in all the three case countries, there are divergences and variations in the extent to which quotas have enabled women in local government to become agents of transformation. A comparative analysis of the three cases brings out the variables that impact women's representation in the electoral arena of local government as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Comparative analysis of the variables impacting women's representation in the electoral arena of local government

Variables	India	South Africa	Brazil
Structure of local bodies	Three tiers in rural areas: Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti & Zilla Parishad. Single tier in urban areas: Municipal Corporation/ Municipal Council/ Town Panchayat. Elections through First Past the Post	Two tiers in rural areas: Local Councils and District Councils. Single tier in urban areas: Metropolitan Councils. Elections through Mixed Member/Closed List Proportional Representation	Single tier: Municipal Chambers, *(Câmara municipal)* headed by the mayors *(prefeito)*. Elections through Open List Proportional Representation
Form of election to local bodies	Direct, with participation of local political parties	Direct, political contest dominated by ANC	Direct, with participation of local political parties
Level of autonomy of local bodies	Constitutionally guaranteed political autonomy; limited fiscal autonomy	Constitutionally guaranteed political and fiscal autonomy	Constitutionally guaranteed political autonomy; fiscal autonomy uneven across regions
Sphere of authority	Making local acts related to the health, safety, education and socio-economic well-being, entering into contracts, and acquiring and disposing of property	Making by-laws, levying local taxes, and managing the local budget	Legislating on subjects of local interest, supplementing federal and state legislation, organizing essential public services, instituting and collecting taxes

Type of Quotas for women	Reserved Seats: Constitution mandates minimum 33% seats in Panchayats and Municipal Councils to be reserved for women. 33% minimum chairperson seats of panchayats and municipal councils to be reserved for women	Candidate Quota with rankings: Electoral law mandates that parties must seek to ensure that 50% of the candidates on the party list are women. Candidates of each sex to be evenly distributed throughout the list	Candidate quota without ranking: Electoral law mandates that party candidate lists must consist of 30-70% candidates of each gender
UN WOMEN Global ranking based on proportion of elected seats held by women as of 1 January 2023	11th (44.4%)	20th (40.7%)	107th (15.7%)

The criticality of the design of quotas and the larger political and socio-cultural context that they are being implemented in, cannot be over-emphasized. The legal enforceability of quota conditions determines the extent of compliance and in turn, the extent to which women's pathways to political power at the grassroots level open up. The impact of women's participation in local governance also depends on the functional and fiscal autonomy the local government bodies enjoy. In terms of both descriptive and substantive representation, the Indian model of reserving seats for women at the local government level, especially in leadership positions, can be seen as being more consistently impactful than the heavily party-dependent model of prescriptive legislated quota in South Africa, and the weakly designed and enforced candidate quota in Brazil.

CHAPTER 3
SHAPING CONSTITUTIONS, ENGENDERING DEMOCRACY: WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CONSTITUTIONAL NEGOTIATIONS AND DRAFTING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Constitutions form the cornerstones of modern political systems, and are of particular relevance for democracies, as they define the very essence of what it means to be a citizen of a democratic state and what rights and responsibilities that entails. To quote one of the prominent scholars who have extensively studied the interaction between feminist ideals of equality and constitutional paradigms,

> Constitutions occupy a space at the intersection of legal, social and political life. At their simplest, constitutions are legal documents – foundational laws that establish the powers and structures of the state. Although they differ in age, length and detail, most constitutions set out the institutions, rules and principles that organise power and decision-making within a state, and identify the rights and duties that govern the relationship between the state and its people. Beyond this, constitutions express the character of a nation, define its 'people' and set out their values and collective aspirations. Crucially, constitutions are products of politics, embedded within a particular state's historical, social, economic and legal context. (Albertyn 2019: 752)

From a feminist institutionalist theoretical framework, constitutions are overarchingly important institutional paradigms that are based on a gender regime and in turn play a decisive role in defining the gender regimes for other institutions and the practices that characterize various political systems. As Helen Irving puts it, "...constitutions frame women's membership of, or absence from, the constitutional community… constitutional provisions can promote, or alternatively, present obstacles to gender equity and agency." (Irving 2008: 1). Ever since its birth in the late 18th century, the discourse and practice of constitutionalism traditionally reinforced the public-private divide by looking at civil and political rights guaranteed by constitutions as pertaining strictly to the public sphere of men governed by principles of freedom and equality, and not to the private realm of

women and families. It is only with the advent of women's suffrage and the emergence of women as political actors with the onset of the 20th century that women have begun to be "read into" or "written into" constitutions (Rubio-Marin and Chang 2012: 301).

3.2 WOMEN'S INTERVENTIONS IN CONSTITUTIONAL DRAFTING AND NEGOTIATIONS

The constitutional/legal arena is one of the three distinct types of institutional arenas identified as feminist scholars as the contexts in which women engage as political actors, the other two being the electoral and the bureaucratic/state arenas. Examining the role of women in drafting and negotiating constitutions enables both a detailed mapping of gender regimes and the identification of the political opportunities and constraints inherent in them, which must be traversed by women who stake a claim to political power. As Louise A. Chappell brings out in her study of the role played by Canadian feminists in the constitutional-legal arena, primarily in debating and drafting the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the political opportunity structure both shapes and in turn gets shaped by feminist interventions (Chappell 2002a). The importance of appreciating "*when, where* and *how* women insert themselves into constitutional conversations", i.e., the specific historical and social contexts in which women participate in the processes and debates of constitutional drafting, cannot be over- emphasized, as these play a crucial role in determining the nature and extent of women's interventions, the choices they make as to which demands to pursue, and the effectiveness of their roles (Dobrowolsky 2003: 238, italics in original). However, even while acknowledging the contextual differences, it is very illuminating to engage in a comparative study of such interventions of women in constitutionalism in more than one country. This explains why one of the crucial questions that feminist scholarship in the discipline of comparative politics has been looking at globally is the extent to which women have played a role in the drafting of constitutions in newly independent and transitional democracies and thereby, in shaping their political histories. Besides defining the rules of engagement of the political system, constitutions are also significant as "regime markers, signalling a normative break with the preceding regime, with constitutional revision a key issue in political transitions" (Macaulay 2006: 21). Hence, feminist institutionalist scholars view this as a critical juncture that offers a unique opportunity for women who are organised and mobilized around the cause of their increased political participation, to renegotiate

the terms of political discourse and to regender national institutions that regulate the nature of women's access to political power and agenda-setting (Waylen 1994, 2007a, Jaquette and Wolchik 1998, Hughes and Paxton 2008).

The central argument of this chapter is that constitution drafting and re-engineering are decisive transitional moments from an institutionalist perspective when the descriptive representation of women could be translated very effectively into the substantive representation of women as equal citizens. However, the mere presence of women in the formal arena of constitution drafting does not translate into the gender agenda being addressed adequately in the new constitution. The gap between the descriptive and substantive representation of women gets bridged only when women are present as gender-conscious agents of transformation, who can redefine the terms of the constitutional negotiations and make them unambiguously oriented towards gender justice. This chapter endeavours to exemplify this argument by studying in detail the meso-level constitutional/legal arena of drafting of the post-apartheid constitution in South Africa, in order to bring out the aspects of the role played by women in that crucial moment of transition, and the consequences it had on the reshaping of the gendered nature of the political process as well as determining the tone and tenor of women's subsequent engagements with politics. It also explores the role played by women in drafting the Constitution for independent India and in the making of the 1988 Constitution of Brazil during the transition from military rule to democracy. By engaging in a comparative analysis of South Africa, India and Brazil, this chapter seeks to draw out the factors that impinge on the nature and extent of women's involvement in the constitution drafting process and its resultant impact.

3.3 NEGOTIATING RACE AND GENDER: THE CASE OF SOUTH AFRICA

Transitional democracies and liberation movements around the world have not always lived up to the promise of gender equality and women's empowerment, despite the fact that women have played significant roles in the struggle against pre-democratic or colonial regimes; this includes Latin American countries like Brazil and Chile (Alvarez 1990, Jaquette 1994, Waylen 1994, 2000, Franceschet 2001), post-communist European countries like Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia (Einhorn 1993, Funk and

Mueller 1993, Matynia 1995, Gal and Kligman 2000) and African countries like Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe (Ranchod-Nilsson 1994, Scott 1994, Sheldon 1994). The common experience of women activists with post-transition scenarios has been one of deep disenchantment, with their demands and articulations for gender justice being conveniently forgotten by the new regimes. Gisela Geisler quotes a Zimbabwean woman leader, who, despite becoming a deputy minister in the newly independent country's first democratic government in 1980, had this to say: "We did not get our act together, we should have tried really hard, because it is much better to push what you want during the transitional period, before you are starting, before people get used to certain ways, when you still have the fever of victory… We thought that we fought, that we won, and that is it" (Geisler 2000: 607). As Georgina Waylen puts it, "…there is no necessary connection between playing an important part in any stage of the process of democratization and having any particular role during the period of consolidation" (Waylen 1994: 329).

However, the South African case is often cited as an example of how the transition from an authoritarian regime into a democratic form of government was accompanied by a positive context for the increased participation and substantive representation of women in politics. South Africa is seen by feminist scholars as one of the few post-transition democracies where women organized as women representing gender interests were able to negotiate effectively and gain access to political power and played a direct role in ensuring that the very terms of the transition incorporated the concept of gender equality (Goetz and Hassim 2003, Waylen 2006, 2007b). To quote Gay W. Seidman,

> What is surprising in light of South Africa's own history, as well as in light of the tendency for general discussions of democracy to overlook issues of gender in the construction of new states is that the makers of South Africa's new democracy discuss citizenship in explicitly gendered terms, paying close attention to the ways in which gendered identities and interests play out in the consolidation of democracy. (Seidman 1999: 288)

The post-apartheid Constitution of South Africa that was ratified in 1996 after a long-drawn process of negotiations and consultations in which women played a crucial role, has been described as "one of the most advanced liberal democratic instruments in the world" (Southall 2000: 147). It evolved out of the specific anti-apartheid, anti-colonial context that suffused the political discourse in South Africa in the 1990s. What makes it especially significant from the perspective of this thesis is that through it, "women were

written into the heart of the new democracy" (Albertyn 2003: 99). A number of contributing factors have been identified to explain why the gender agenda left an indelible mark on the final text of the South African Constitution (Hassim and Gouws 1998, Britton 2002a, 2002b, Hassim 2006, Waylen 2007b). These include:

(1) The presence of an organized women's movement that was politically very active in the anti-apartheid movement and that represented the political demands and aspirations of women as equal citizens.

(2) Strategic and synergistic organizing of women around a well-articulated gender agenda.

(3) A favourable political opportunity structure and the prominence of the African National Congress (ANC).

Each of these three factors will now be examined in detail.

(1) The presence of an organized women's movement that was politically very active in the anti-apartheid movement and that represented the political demands and aspirations of women as equal citizens

The pernicious system of settler colonialism based on white supremacism and racial segregation, that was further entrenched by the apartheid regime established by the National Party upon assuming power in 1948, had divided the South African population into four main categories – the Whites (people of European descent), the Coloureds (people of mixed race), the Indians (people who had come from the Indian subcontinent and settled in South Africa) and the Blacks (the indigenous black South Africans spanning numerous ethnic groups). The South African anti-apartheid movement saw the prolonged and sustained participation of women as agitators and activists, right from its early inception (Walker 1991, Seidman 1993, 1999). Women's experiences with colonialism, segregation and apartheid in South Africa were defined by the intersectionality of identities (Crenshaw 1989) based on race, class and sex; this resulted in women encountering a complex "patchwork quilt of patriarchies" in apartheid South Africa (Bozzoli 1983: 149). The impact of apartheid era restrictions and legal frameworks was hugely different for white women and black women; though the patriarchal norms that informed the settler society way of life deemed white women to be subordinate to white men and they were granted the right to vote only after 1930 (Kimble and Unterhalter 1982). In addition to the South African law under which even white women

themselves were denied rights to property, reproductive choices or protection against domestic violence, black women were doubly subjected to the customary law under which their legal status was not considered to be that of adults; they were placed under the "perpetual tutelage of men", with wives being treated as minors under the guardianship of their husbands and who did not have the right to own land, to claim guardianship of children, to file for divorce, to hold public office, or to become chiefs of their tribal groups (Andrews 2001: 697, Waylen 2007b, Tripp 2009). The Black Urban Area Consolidation Act, 1945 brought into being a migrant labour system that "locked women into a spiral of dispossession and disadvantage" and "a cycle of dependency in which their livelihood depended on absent husbands and, sometimes, on absent sons, who sent meager amounts earned in the city for the upkeep of spouses, parents, and children." (Andrews 2001: 695, 696). Black women faced severe restrictions to their free movement and labour with the imposition of the pass system by a segregationist state that was keen to restrict their increasing mobility towards urban areas and confine them to the reserves that were designated as the "true homelands" of the African people (Walker 1991: 7, Wells 1993). The emergence of Black women on the political stage was marked by the Bloemfontein anti-pass protests of 1913 organized by them in the Orange Free State, which was the first region where the provincial government imposed the pass system uniformly on both African men and women. With the rise in urbanization, women's exploitation as part of the industrial labour force and their exposure to the trade union movements, Black women were further politicized and made conscious of their socio-economic rights. During the years of the Second World War, the political consciousness of Black women evolved around grass roots level issues such as the squatter movement, shortage of housing in urban shanty towns, restrictions on home brewing of beer, increasing prices and shortage of food (Walker 1991). Though Coloured and Indian women were exempted from the pass system, they too faced the brunt of the apartheid regime's discriminatory economic and social policies.

Thus, women from all racial and ethnic backgrounds were victims, in different ways and to different degrees, of a regime of 'gender apartheid' since 1948 that was governed by the ideology that women were second-class citizens in South African society (Ramphele 1989, Seidman 1999, Andrews 2001). This ignited women's active involvement in the anti-apartheid struggles. Women gained membership in the African National Congress (ANC) from 1943 onwards, the year in which the ANC Women's

League (ANCWL) was constituted. The segregationist instrument of the passes – documents including the residents' permits, special entry permits and work permits – was employed as a pervasive tool by the White minority government to curtail the freedom of movement of African men initially, and was gradually extended to include African women too. With the introduction of the Native Laws Amendment Act, 1952 and the new instrument of the reference book, a more pervasive form of the erstwhile pass, through the Natives (Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents) Act, the pass laws were tightened and extended to new provinces. This prompted an extensive political mobilization of African women in the anti-pass campaigns and the formation of the first national level women's organization called the Federation of South African Women (FSAW) in 1954 under the leadership of pioneer women activists like Ida Mtwana, Lilian Ngoyi, Ray Alexander, Gladys Smith, Bertha Mkize, Florence Matomela and others. Cherryl Walker observes that the FSAW was "a real and serious attempt to incorporate women into the political programme of the national liberation movement on an equal footing with men" (Walker 1991: 276). The FSAW mobilized women to agitate against a range of apartheid laws like the pass laws, the Group Areas Act, the Population Registration Act and the Bantu Education Act (Klugman 1994, Kemp et al. 2005, Britton and Fish 2008). The FSAW was also at the forefront of drafting the first Women's Charter that was "the first comprehensive statement of principles by the new women's movement" and had a "strong feminist streak woven through it" (Walker 1991: 156-57). The Charter included demands for universal adult franchise across races, equality of opportunity in employment, equal pay for equal work, equal property rights, marriage and children, abolition of unequal laws and customs, paid maternity leave, facilities of childcare for working mothers, and free and compulsory education for all children. Women participated in huge numbers, often taking their place right at the forefront, in the civil disobedience movements of the 1950s like the Defiance Campaign of 1952, the anti-pass demonstrations in Pretoria in 1955 and Johannesburg in 1958, and the historic Women's March to the Union Buildings in Pretoria in 1956, during which around twenty thousand women protestors famously challenged the then Prime Minister, J. G. Stridjom with the song "*Wathint` abafazi, Strijdom! Wathint` imbokodo uzo kufa!*", which translates as "Now you have touched the women, Stridjom! You have struck a rock, you have dislodged a boulder, you will be crushed!" (Thipe 2010: 43, Walker 1991, Andrews 1998).

Image 3.1: The Women's March outside the Union Buildings, Pretoria, 9 August 1956

(Source: Bailey's African History Archives: https://baileysafricanhistoryarchive)

Despite the radicalization and political mobilization of women in the anti-apartheid movement, women's issues initially did not find much traction with the male political leadership of the movement. To them, these were subordinate to the larger cause of national liberation and were legitimate only to the extent that such issues were in pursuance of the patriarchally ascribed roles of women. As delineated by Elaine Unterhalter, South African nationalism was premised upon a construction of a public realm of "heroic masculinity… (that) stresses autonomy, adventure, comradeship and a self-conscious location in history", as opposed to the private sphere of family constituted by the supportive, feminine woman (Unterhalter 2000: 157). The auxiliary role that was ascribed to women within this heteronormative paradigm was primarily that of "inculcating children with nationalist aspirations and agitating against oppression as it manifested itself in the specific areas of child rearing" (Kimble and Unterhalter 1982: 22). Even within the ANC, women were considered as auxiliary members of the party

with no voting rights till the year 1943. The situation did not change much even after the formation of the ANC Women's League (ANCWL) in the year 1948. As Cheryl Walker observes, the main role identified for women was "to provide the catering and organize the entertainment at meetings and conferences – the community of interests of African men and women did not extend to the kitchen. There was, at that stage, little effort to broaden established views on women's role on the part of either the men or the women of the ANC" (Walker 1991: 33).

Given this context, South African women first sought to overcome male resistance to their changing roles and greater political participation by invoking their identities as mothers who were fighting for the protection of their families and the future of their children, which has been termed as a 'motherist' perspective on women's political participation (Walker 1991, Geisler 2000, 2004, Britton and Fish 2008). Motherism, as Julie Wells defines it, is "a women's politics of resistance [which] affirms obligations traditionally assigned to women and calls on the community to respect them." (Wells, as quoted in Walker 1991: xix). Within a motherist framework, women found the political space to fight for and advocate practical gender interests that were linked to their gender roles as mothers and housewives who were nurturers and service providers trying to secure services and resources for their families (Molyneux 1985, Cock 1997, Hassim 2006). This helped women bridge the public-private divide by linking their political activities to their familial responsibilities and to carve out a legitimate foothold within the larger political arena (Radcliffe and Westwood 1993, Fester 1997, Meintjes 1998, Geisler 2000). The widespread and active participation of women in the anti-pass demonstrations was also cast in the motherist framework and was clearly expressed in an FSAW statement that was presented to local government officials in various parts of South Africa in 1957, which asserted that "As wives and mothers we condemn the pass laws and all they imply". An FSAW pamphlet used to make an appeal to white women to support the opposition to issuing of passes for African women on the grounds of the shared experience of motherhood posed the question – "In the name of humanity, can you as a woman, as a mother, tolerate this?" (quoted in Kimble and Unterhalter 1983: 26). The resistance demonstrated by women in the anti-pass movement that "far exceeded the actions of their male counterparts in militancy" (Wells 1993: 1) marked their indisputable presence in the arena of struggle and they began to be acknowledged as a "significant political constituency" (Hassim 2006: 28).

However, even while women adopted radical and militant ways to fight racial and gender oppression, "this militancy was ensconced in claims of preserving and upholding traditional gender roles", thereby limiting the transformative potential of their activism (Britton and Fish 2008: 6). As Jacklyn Cock has observed in her detailed study of gender and militancy in South Africa, even women guerillas of the uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the armed wing of the ANC that was formed after it was banned by the apartheid government and forced into exile in 1960, were inducted and trained as freedom fighters who would save the nation for their children (Cock 1991). Though these female fighters were touted in popular imagination as strong, liberated women, the reality was that within the MK, they were usually assigned tasks relating to office work, maintaining communication channels and security, and rarely ever found a place in the military command structure (Geisler 2000, 2004, Brechenmacher and Hubbard 2020). The women members of the MK came to be known as "knitting needle guerillas" due to their modus operandi of carrying handbags with knitting needles displayed clearly to appear as ordinary as possible during covert reconnaissance operations (Cock 1991: 151). They were thus invisible actors in a narrative of armed struggle that was being dictated by the male leadership, in which female soldiers remained 'women' while men were simply 'soldiers', as Thenjiwe Mtintso, former commander of the MK and later ANC MP points out (quoted in Geisler 2004: 53).

(2) Strategic and synergistic organizing of women around a well-articulated gender agenda

The evolution of women as gendered political actors, having their own aspirations as citizens with equal rights that co-existed alongside the nationalist agenda of liberation from colonial and apartheid rule, began with the formation of regional women's organizations in the early 1980s, like the United Women's Organisation in the Western Cape (UWO), the Federation of Transvaal Women (FEDTRAW), and the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW), community-based civic women's groups, and the Rural Women's Movement (RWM). While analysing the nature and context of women's political activism in South Africa in this period, Shireen Hassim has identified the beginning of a shift from practical to strategic gender interests, as defined by Maxine Molyneux and discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis (Molyneux 1985, 2001, Hassim and

Gouws 1998, Hassim 2006). Hitherto, a clear articulation of the voice of women *qua* women was conspicuous by its absence in the political roles taken up by women, particularly in terms of feminist discourse. Feminism was largely perceived as a Western, Euro-centric concept that was foreign to the lived experiences of black women and prioritized gender over race and class identities, and that could lead to divisiveness and fissures within the nationalist liberation movement (Driver 1991, Ginwala 1991, Hendricks and Lewis 1994, Britton and Fish 2008). Given this context, women's organizations had to choose between raising gender issues and mobilizing women for a mass movement, because most women would be sceptical of identifying themselves with a predominantly gender-based agenda, as opposed to a program premised on national liberation and racial equality (Kemp et al. 1995).

UWO, FEDTRAW and NOW were the first women's organizations that cut across cultural and racial divides to oppose apartheid and they articulated "a new consciousness about the relationship between women's emancipation and national liberation" (Meintjes 1998: 55, Waylen 2004, Hassim 2006). They raised gender issues like state violence against women, the subordination of women in the household, and the lack of women's access to clean water and quality health care, thus expanding the scope of their activism beyond national liberation (Patel, L. 1988, Beall, Hassim and Todes 1989, Britton and Fish 2008). UNO, FEDTRAW and NOW affiliated with the umbrella body called the United Democratic Front (UDF) that was formed in 1983 with a membership of over 400 anti-apartheid organizations as the main platform through which the nationalist struggle would be led. The influence of the new gender consciousness on the women members was evident in the fact that they demanded for equal status as political actors within the organization and succeeded in ensuring that the UDF adopt the principle of 'non-sexism', which was a significant advance in the recognition of women's political participation in their own right (Kemp et al. 1995, Meintjes 1998, Geisler 2000, Britton and Fish 2008). Hannah Britton identifies this strategy adopted by South African women activists as an illustration of "double militancy", a term coined by the feminist scholar Karen Beckwith to describe the ways in which women political activists simultaneously occupy the dual positions of those who fight alongside men for the cause of their community or nation as well as challenge the patriarchal norms being imposed and perpetuated by men within the community or nation (Beckwith 2000: 443, Britton 2002b). Some feminist scholars have alternatively seen this as the rise of a distinct brand

of South African feminism informed by motherism that was premised on the understanding that the triple oppression of race, class and gender divides faced by women were mutually determined and that, even while the interplay of these identities created specific experiences of subordination, there were certain common interests of women, that transcended these differences and required to be included in the agenda of political struggles (Cock 1997, Fester 1997, Meintjes 1998, Hassim 2006, 2023, Gouws 2017).

Thus, by the late 1980s and early 1990s, women activists in South Africa began to deliberate on and raise the question of how national liberation would impact women's rights, in what was a marked departure from the earlier phase when they accepted the primacy of the nationalist cause and deliberately avoided addressing women's interests as a distinct group (Albertyn 1994, Seidman 1999, Waylen 2007a). This decisive shift was also partly propelled by the synergistic linkages forged with the international women's movement and between the ANC women who were in exile outside South Africa and those who were in the country (Waylen 2004). The focus of UN Decade of Women (1976-1985) on the gender agenda in various parts of the world had its impact on both South African women at home and in exile. According to Frene Ginwala, a prominent ANCWL leader and one of the leading figures in the South African women's movement of the time, the consultations and discussions held in the run-up to the World Conference of Women held in Nairobi, Kenya in 1985 were an important turning point as they encouraged articulations of women's emancipation as an outcome of not just social change and the liberation of South Africa, but also of women acquiring political and economic power (Ginwala, as cited in Daniels 1992: 21-22).

Another significant landmark was the Malibongwe Conference that was organized by the ANC and the Women's Committee of the Dutch Anti-Apartheid Movement in Amsterdam in January 1990, a forum where women activists from within South Africa as well as those in exile, and from Cuba, Philippines and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), came together to discuss issues ranging from "the future democratic constitution to the political participation of women in political positions to violence, health care, and customary law – in ways that prefigured gender debates about the constitution and about policy during the transition to democracy" (Hassim 2006: 113). The tension between the nationalist cause and the women's agenda that was inherent in the framing of gender issues throughout the evolution of the women's movement in

apartheid South Africa, albeit latent, came to the fore during the Malibongwe Conference, when it was openly discussed that there was a possibility of women's concerns getting subsumed under the national struggle, which needed to be prevented through collective strategizing (Hassim 2006). The Program of Action that emerged from the Conference stated as follows:

> The emancipation of women in South Africa requires national liberation, the transformation of gender relations and an end to exploitation. We believe that our emancipation can only be addressed as part of a total revolutionary transformation of the South African social and economic relations. National liberation does not automatically guarantee the emancipation of women. (Malibongwe Conference Programme of Action, 1990, as quoted in Charman, de Swardt and Simons 1991: 59)

The Malibongwe Conference also saw an open assertion of demands for gender equality framed in terms of feminist discourse and an inclusion of the term 'feminism' in the final resolution (Hassim 2006, Waylen 2007a). For instance, Frene Ginwala, in her key-note address, exhorted that a post-apartheid constitution should include an explanation of gender oppression and its effect in its preamble and contain an equality clause; she further urged the need for the constitution to make it the constitutional duty of the state to uphold race and gender equality, to offer protection to women from discriminatory cultural practices, and to recognize reproductive rights (Ginwala, as cited in Hassim 2006: 113). This recognition about the need for women activists to focus on gender rights, combined with the wide consensus amongst the participants of the Malibongwe Conference on the need for a strong autonomous national women's movement and for women to engage with the process of the making of the new Constitution to ensure that gender equality found its rightful place in the new democratic ethos of post-apartheid South Africa, set the stage for women's active participation and involvement in the constitutional negotiations (Albertyn 1994, Hassim 2002, Waylen 2007a).

Image 3.2 : Participants at the Malibongwe Conference, Amsterdam, January 1990

(Source: *SPEAK* Magazine, January 1990)

The formal beginning of South Africa's negotiated transition to democracy was made with the unbanning of the ANC and other political organizations by the National Government, two weeks after the Malibongwe Conference. The contours of the post-apartheid political system were to be shaped through a series of talks and negotiations between the main political groups, which continued through the years 1990 and 1991 and culminated in the formation of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) in December 1991. The women's interest groups that were closely observing the course of the constitution drafting process were able to recognize early on that the political rhetoric of gender equality that cut across parties was not being translated into the adequate representation of women in the various negotiating platforms. This was borne out by the fact that all political parties opted for almost all-male representation on their negotiating teams for CODESA, resulting in fewer than 15 women finding a place amongst the 200 odd representatives. As Shireen Hassim puts it, "the omission of women lit a flame that had until then been flickering only faintly" and there was a "groundswell of anger" amongst women's organizations (Hassim 2002: 700,701). Helen Suzman, a prominent woman leader of the Democratic Party and a member of the apartheid Parliament for over 30 years, came out strongly against both her party and the CODESA for their failure to include women (Hassim 2002). A group of leading women intellectuals and political leaders placed a newspaper advertisement, making a demand for greater representation of women in the negotiations. The "shared sense of exclusion" from this decisive critical juncture in the history of their country stoked a sense of urgency amongst

women activists to overcome the historical and racial divides that had hitherto separated them and to join hands across parties to prioritize the agenda of political inclusion of women in the new democracy (Cock 1997: 310, Finnemore 1994, Goetz 1998, Albertyn 2003, Brechenmacher and Hubbard 2020). They formed the Women's National Coalition (WNC) in 1992, a broad-based "triple alliance of women academics, politicians, and activists", including members who were avowedly feminist, cutting across geographical, racial and class lines (Waylen 2007a: 524).

The WNC was an "organic women's organization" which drew from a wide spectrum of women's constituencies, ranging from the women's sections of political parties and community organizations to occupational and religious groups (Cock 1997: 311, Hassim and Gouws 1998). Feminist observers have held that this recognition of the diversity in women's experiences and their material conditions, rather than an insistence on a universalist and essentialist definition of women and their interests, made the WNC capable of representing a wide ideological, political and socio-economic spectrum of South African women, "sutured across South African women's multiple identities and differences" (Salo 2010: 29, Meintjes 1996, Cock 1997, Murphy 2003). Described by Frene Ginwala, its co-convenor, as a "conspiracy of women", the WNC had the twin objectives of starting a nation-wide grassroots campaign to draft a charter for women's equality and exerting pressure for the inclusion of women in the drafting of the post-apartheid Constitution (Hassim 2002: 700, Albertyn 1994, Cock 1997). By 1994, the WNC had ninety national organizations and fourteen regional coalitions as members, which goes to show how far it represented the diversity of women's interests and issues in the South African society of its times (Waylen 2004).

Image 3.3: Steering Committee Members of the Women's National Coalition, South Africa

The steering committee: (From left to right): Mirriam Stein; Jennifer Kinghorn; Frene Ginwala; Anne Letsebe; Thoko Msane.

(Source: *SPEAK* Magazine, June 1992)

Women as a potent pressure group were uncompromising in their insistence that gender should be an important issue to be negotiated upon during the process of constitution drafting; if they were being kept out of it, they would have to force their way into the negotiations. As expressed by ANC MP Mary Turok, "Nowhere in the world have women been handed equality on a plate; everywhere they have had to fight for it. South Africa will be no exception. We do not want our daughters to turn on us in the years to come and ask: 'Where were you when the Bill of Rights and the new Constitution were being drafted?' " (Turok 1992:13). Women activists first pressed for an advisory role in the constitutional negotiations through the establishment of a multiparty Gender Advisory Committee (GAC) that would look at the gender impact of the agreements emerging from the talks. Though the role of the GAC was limited, it was still a significant step forward, as "it meant that for the first time the idea that women had specific political interests and concerns had forced its way onto the formal negotiation agenda" (Friedman, 1993: 129). Meanwhile, the climate of escalating political violence led to the calling off of the CODESA in mid-1992 and it was replaced by the Multi-Party Negotiating Process (MPNP) in March 1993, which consisted of a Plenary, a Negotiation Council, a Planning Committee and seven Technical Committees. The MPNP was to be the medium through

which the contours of an interim constitution and the mechanism of elections would be shaped. The elected representatives would then draft the final constitution that would have to be certified by the new Constitutional Court as being based on a set of basic constitutional principles finalized in the MPNP, failing which it would not come into force. Despite this crucial role of the MPNP in determining the political future of South Africa, the representation of women again was very minimal.

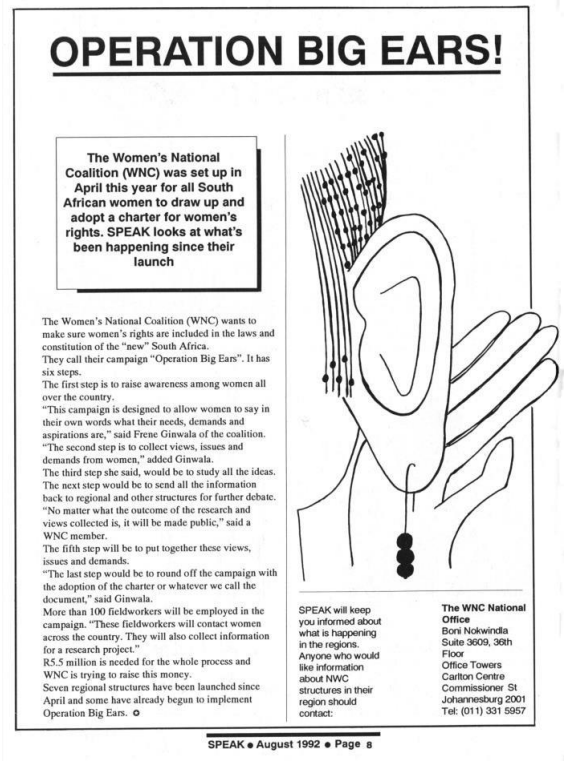
However, this time around, the more well-organized women activists demonstrated that they were not unwilling to resort to open confrontation with the male-stream negotiating process when the occasion demanded it. In March 1993, women ANC activists stormed the meeting of the Negotiating Committee and blocked discussions until women were included as members on it (Seidman 1999). The ANCWL threatened to boycott the first post-apartheid elections with the slogan "no women, no vote" (Hassim and Gouws 1998: 64). As compared to an advisory role in the CODESA round of negotiations, women organizations staked a claim for a place at the main negotiations table in the MPNP. The WNC proposed that the party delegations be expanded to include four delegates, out of which one would necessarily be a woman with full voting rights. After sustained pressure from women activists, this proposal was accepted by the Negotiation Council. Thus, 50% of the official delegations during the main negotiating process and at least one of the representatives on the Technical Committees that had a crucial role to play in the drafting process came to be women. It was for the very first time in history that a constitution making body came to include an equal number of male and female members (Klug 1996). A women's caucus was also set up, which consisted of delegates from the various political parties. Despite the presence of women members in the Technical Committees, their influence on the process of drafting was limited because they lacked prior political and technical expertise (Waylen 2007). A need was therefore felt to exert influence on the MPNP from outside the formal negotiating bodies and to this effect, the Multi-Party Negotiation Process Monitoring Collective was set up by the WNC in July 1993, which helped keep a close watch on the proceedings of the MPNP, advise the women's caucus and legally analyse the draft documents (Albertyn 1994, Hassim 2002). The Constitutional Assembly that was elected through the first non-racial, democratic elections held in 1994 and had the role of drafting the Final Constitution, comprised of almost a quarter of women members (Grenfell 2016).

The WNC was also instrumental in the preparation and finalization of a 'Women's Charter for Effective Equality', a document that was envisaged to serve as a touchstone for the drafters of the Constitution when it came to protecting women's rights (Cock and Bernstein 2001). While speaking at the launch of the WNC in April 1992, Frene Ginwala had exhorted her fellow members as follows:

> …to make sure we incorporate the views of all South African women we have to start by listening to them. Let us grow "big ears" that reach the farthest corners of our land. Let us encourage women to speak of their problems and how they understand and experience gender oppression in their daily lives. Let us work out a programme that will allow us to systematically listen to women. (Ginwala, as quoted in Hassim 2006: 142)

The Charter campaign of the WNC, or 'Operation Big Ears' as it came to be called, lived up to this objective through a sustained participative and consultative process of mobilizing and bringing forth the demands of women, with over 100 fieldworkers conducting focus-group discussions and circulating questionnaires over a period of eighteen months, tapping the aspirations of over two million women across the country (Albertyn 1994, Meintjes 1998, Hassim 2002). Five core issue-areas were identified as the basis of the campaign: (i) women's legal status (ii) women's access to land, resources and water (iii) violence against women (iv) health, and (v) work (Hassim 2006). The campaign was used as a twin tool, both for collating the needs and aspirations of women in a Charter that would form the basis for negotiations with the constitution drafting process, and for consciousness-raising and mobilization, thereby linking women at the grassroots to the national level political scene (Geisler 2000, Hassim 2002).

Image 3.4 : A pamphlet announcing the launch of 'Operation Big Ears' in August 1992



OPERATION BIG EARS!

The Women's National Coalition (WNC) was set up in April this year for all South African women to draw up and adopt a charter for women's rights. SPEAK looks at what's been happening since their launch

The Women's National Coalition (WNC) wants to make sure women's rights are included in the laws and constitution of the "new" South Africa.
They call their campaign "Operation Big Ears". It has six steps.
The first step is to raise awareness among women all over the country.
"This campaign is designed to allow women to say in their own words what their needs, demands and aspirations are," said Frene Ginwala of the coalition.
"The second step is to collect views, issues and demands from women," added Ginwala.
The third step she said, would be to study all the ideas.
The next step would be to send all the information back to regional and other structures for further debate.
"No matter what the outcome of the research and views collected is, it will be made public," said a WNC member.
The fifth step will be to put together these views, issues and demands.
"The last step would be to round off the campaign with the adoption of the charter or whatever we call the document," said Ginwala.
More than 100 fieldworkers will be employed in the campaign. "These fieldworkers will contact women across the country. They will also collect information for a research project."
R5.5 million is needed for the whole process and WNC is trying to raise this money.
Seven regional structures have been launched since April and some have already begun to implement Operation Big Ears. ✪

SPEAK will keep you informed about what is happening in the regions. Anyone who would like information about NWC structures in their region should contact:

The WNC National Office
Boni Nokwindla
Suite 3609, 36th Floor
Office Towers
Carlton Centre
Commissioner St
Johannesburg 2001
Tel: (011) 331 5957

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Source: *SPEAK* Magazine, August 1992

The document that emerged from this process was an emphatic assertion of women's rights and a clarion call for gender equality, as is evident from the following extract:

> At the heart of women's marginalisation is the patriarchal order that confines women to the domestic arena and reserves for men the arena where political power and authority reside… If democracy and human rights are to be meaningful for women, they must address our historical subordination and oppression. Women must participate in, and shape, the nature and form of our democracy. (Women's Charter for Effective Equality 1994)

The Women's Charter asserted the imperative for redefining and interpreting human rights and democracy in ways that would reflect women's experiences, and for an all-encompassing shift from gendered social and economic inequality in the public and private spheres to substantive equality that would ensure women's meaningful participation in the national mainstream of a new South Africa (Preamble of the

Women's Charter for Effective Equality 1994). The comprehensive strategy and program evolved by the WNC to draft the Women's Charter, especially with its outreach campaign that connected women at the grassroots and across various sectors of society to the exercise, lent "unquestionable political credibility" to the stature of the WNC as the authentic representative of the collective aspirations of South African women in the constitutional negotiations (Hassim 2006: 143). The Women's Charter included a wide array of demands like assuring women's reproductive rights, full equality at the workplace and at home, the presence of women at all levels of decision making, protection against sexual harassment and violence, the need for affirmative action to increase women's presence in formal employment, and access to adequate childcare facilities (Seidman 1999, Murphy 2003). The Women's Charter had a significant impact on the drafting of the Bill of Rights, which includes the most relevant justiciable provisions relating to gender equality in the post-apartheid Constitution. The WNC's continuous efforts ensured that gender equality was enshrined as a fundamental principle in the Constitution and that the attempt by traditional leaders to exempt customary law from the equality provisions of the Bill of Rights was defeated after prolonged discussions (Albertyn 1994, Murray 1994, Hassim 2002). To quote Christina Murray, a woman member of the expert panel established to advise the South African Constitutional Assembly on drafting the new Constitution,

> Issues of gender equality were prominent through the entire drafting process. This concern is particularly evident in the Bill of Rights provisions, which protect equality and spell out that the right to security of the person includes a right to be free from private forms of violence and to make decisions concerning reproduction. But we also attempted to reflect this concern for the equality of women and men in the language of the constitution... (Murray 2001: 827-828)

The interventions of "a women's movement explicitly committed to a feminist vision of democratization" in the constitutional dialogues and negotiations ensured that "a gendered understanding of citizenship in the construction of new democratic institutions" permeated the South African Constitution (Seidman, 1999: 302). Non-sexism came to be incorporated as a founding principle of the post-apartheid South African state and the rights to equality including equal protection and benefit of the law and non-discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status,

colour and sexual orientation also found a place in the constitutional provisions (Sections 9(1) and 9(2) of the South African Constitution). Penelope Andrews has incisively analysed the language used in these sections and has pointed out that for the purposes of elimination of discrimination, gender and sex have been accorded equal importance as race in the South African Constitution; it "provides a firmer ground for women than that found in American constitutional jurisprudence, which subjects sexual discrimination to intermediate scrutiny and racial discrimination to strict scrutiny" (Andrews 2001: 699). Further, by prohibiting both direct and indirect discrimination, the Constitution "implicitly acknowledges the invidiousness and tenacity of institutionalized discrimination", an acceptance that feminists have often argued for (Andrews 1998: 328). The inclusion of both sex and gender as grounds for non-discrimination, Andrews observes, makes it apparent that the constitutional intent is to address discrimination "based not only on biological or physical attributes, but also on social or cultural stereotypes about the perceived role and status of women" (Andrews 2001: 700). Section 12(1) of the Constitution provides that "everyone has the right to freedom and security of the person, which includes the right to be free from all forms of violence from either public or private sources", which offers a strong protection against domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence (Andrews 1998). A prime example of the gender equality orientation of the Constitution is the fact that after prolonged efforts by the feminist representatives, the Constitutional Assembly finally accepted the inclusion of a right to make decisions concerning reproduction (Section 12(2)(a)) and a right to reproductive health care services (Section 27 (1)(a)) (Andrews 1998). Thus, South Africa became "the first and only country to explicitly recognize a positive right to both reproductive decision making and reproductive health care in its Constitution" (Rebouché, 2012: 305). The South African Constitution also included a provision for the setting up of an independent constitutional body to promote gender equality (Section 187), the Commission for Gender Equality.

(3) A favourable political opportunity structure and the prominence of the African National Congress (ANC)

Apart from the presence of an organized and active women's movement that was deeply engaged in the anti-apartheid struggle and that represented the political demands and aspirations of women as equal citizens, another decisive factor in determining the

success of women's interventions was the favourable political opportunity structure shaped by the negotiated, long-drawn process of transition and by the prominence of the ANC that was already positive towards the women's agenda (Hassim and Gouws 1998, Hassim 2005, 2006, Waylen 2007a). The transitional moment of the shift to non-racialism and democracy in South Africa was a critical juncture as elaborated in Chapter 1 of this thesis; a context in which space opened up within the mainstream political discourses for discussions on the meaning of democracy, the nature of democratic institutions and the terms of the new political and social order. The political opportunity thrown up by the protracted and negotiated transition based on the principle of mutual consensus amongst the stakeholders was invaluable to the goal of furthering the gender agenda (Waylen 1994, Hassim 2006). It offered an "opening for new issues and new ways of doing politics" (Jaquette and Wolchik 1998). Even the foundational principles of the new Constitution, to be enshrined in the Bill of Rights, were to be arrived at through debates and discussions. The women's movement was able to use this emergent space to put forth and gain acceptance for a rights-based approach to citizenship, premised on non-sexism, substantive equality and non-discrimination (Brechenmacher and Hubbard 2020). As Shireen Hassim suggests, the success of the WNC in ensuring that the women's agenda got the attention it deserved in the transition to post-apartheid South Africa is indicative of the fact that "a change in the structure of political opportunity is only meaningful if women perceive these conditions as opportunities, if they perceive them in gendered terms, if they perceive the conditions as requiring them to take action and if they are able to develop a successful organizational form through which to channel their action." (Hassim 2005: 181).

However, the presence of an active women's coalition alone would not have culminated in the great advances made by women in their political representation and participation during the transition period. The existence of the ANC as the main political player of the times that advocated a transfer of political power from a racial political elite to a non-racial one along with a fundamental transformation in the socio-political structure, including the mitigation of gender inequalities, was also a decisive factor (Hassim 2002, Waylen 2007b). The fact that the ANC was predisposed towards gender-based demands was in itself the outcome of sustained efforts by the vocal feminist activists of the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL) like Frene Ginwala, Pregs Govender, Thenjiwe Mtintso and others to get a distinct space for

women's issues on the party's agenda, including a 30% quota for women in the candidate list from the 1994 elections onwards (Meintjes 1996, Gouws 2004, Hassim 2014, Brechenmacher and Hubbard 2020). At the Malibongwe Conference, Frene Ginwala had openly challenged the ANC's ambiguous stand towards gender equality by stating that the "ANC would not be true to its principles and values if it did not now seriously address the question of the emancipation of women" (Ginwala, as quoted in Geisler 2000: 611). This triggered debates within the ANC that led to the adoption of the 'Statement on the Emancipation of Women in South Africa' by the National Executive Committee of the ANC on May 2, 1990. The Statement was an embodiment of the idea of substantive gender equality that women activists within the ANC were actively pushing for (Meintjes 1996, Erlank 2005, Albertyn 2018). It declared that:

> Gender oppression is everywhere rooted in a material base and is expressed in sociocultural traditions and attitudes… which are supported and perpetuated by an ideology which subordinates women. In South Africa it is institutionalised in the laws as well as the customs and practices of all our people. Within our racially and ethnically divided society, all women have a lower status than men of the same group in both law and practice. And as with racism, the disadvantage imposed on them ranges across the political, economic, social, domestic, cultural and civil spheres. (Statement of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress on the Emancipation of Women in South Africa 1990: 20)

The Statement underlined the legitimacy and importance of women's rights as an end in itself, independent of the nationalist cause, by asserting that

> … the liberation of women is central to our people's struggle for freedom… The experience of other societies has shown that the emancipation of women is not a by-product of a struggle for democracy, national liberation or socialism. It has to be addressed in its own right within our organization, the mass democratic movement and in the society as a whole. (Statement of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress on the Emancipation of Women in South Africa 1990: 19)

Further, it identified that the post-apartheid transition to democracy would have to

> … address simultaneously the material base, the political and other institutions and the ideological and cultural underpinnings of gender oppression… Laws, customs, traditions and practices which discriminate against women shall be held to be unconstitutional. Patriarchal rights, especially but not only with regard to family, land and the economy need serious re-examination so that they are not entrenched or reinforced. (Statement of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress on the Emancipation of Women in South Africa 1990: 22)

The Statement also acknowledged the need for the structure and functioning of the ANCWL to be redefined in order to give women more space as autonomous political actors and enjoined women to initiate a debate on the contours of a Charter of Women's Rights (Waylen 2004, Hassim 2006). The ANCWL was re-launched in August 1990 as an autonomous women's organization connected to the ANC, but not controlled by it. The need to bridge the gap between the ANC's rhetorical commitment and the actual willingness of its male leaders to concede political space to women came starkly to the fore when the ANCWL's proposal at the 48th Congress of the ANC held in July 1991 to earmark a 30% quota for women on the National Executive Council of the party was rejected (Meintjes 1998). Women activists within the ANC continued to lobby for the quota and their efforts succeeded in getting the ANC to later adopt a 30% quota for women in the party lists for the 1994 elections, as mentioned in Chapter 2 of this thesis. The ANC lists contained 32% women candidates, placed in winnable positions, as a result of which the two-thirds majority won by the ANC in the 1994 elections translated into the new South African Parliament having one of the highest percentages of women representation, world over (Seidman 1999). Though other parties, including the National Party and Democratic Party, were opposed to such a quota, the demonstrative effect of the ANC's decision prompted them to include more women candidates. This was also a recognition of the fact that South African women had become a strong political constituency in themselves and were no longer mere instruments of mass mobilization for the anti-apartheid, national liberation struggles (Hassim 2006).

In terms of descriptive representation, women gained an unprecedented representation of 27.8% in the South African Parliament formed after the first post-apartheid elections in 1994, with 111 out of the 400 representatives being women. With

the second election of 1999, this further increased to 30%. The first cabinet had 2 women out of 27 ministers and this number kept increasing in the first two years of the Mandela presidency (Seidman 1999). In 1994, 15% of ministers and 56% of deputy ministers were women and in 1996, the number of women ministers increased to 33%. What is even more significant is that this leap in the descriptive representation of women also translated into marked substantive representation of women, with several gender equality-oriented legislations being passed in the first five years of the new Parliament, in areas like reproductive choice, status in customary marriage, protection against domestic violence, and protection at the workplace (Britton 2005, Hassim 2006, Makhunga 2014, Gouws 2019). These included the Domestic Violence Act (Act 116 of 1998), the Maintenance Act (Act 99 of 1998), the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (Act 120 of 1998), and the Choice of Termination of Pregnancy Act (Act 92 of 1996). The role played by ANC as the ruling party in enabling such legislative reforms was significant. For instance, it was the strategic alliance that women's organizations struck with the ANC that resulted in the enactment of the Choice of Termination of Pregnancy Act, one of the most progressive reproductive rights legislations of the world even till date (Albertyn et al. 1999). Several ANC MPs, including women, were not in favour of legislating abortion and had threatened to vote against the proposed legislation. This prompted the ANC leadership to institute a closed vote and to issue a whip that all party MPs were to vote strictly in accordance with the party's official stand that was in favour of the legislation (Britton 2005, Makhunga 2014).

During the constitutional negotiations, women activists had proposed a robust National Gender Machinery comprising of a range of new state institutions that would safeguard the constitutional commitment to gender equality across decision making structures and policy initiatives of the government, thus ensuring what Anne Marie Goetz has termed as "institutional gender responsiveness" (Goetz 1992: 8). The aim was also to avoid the fate of many other countries where women's issues were separated from the mainstream political agenda and "ghettoized" into women's ministries that clubbed women with children, health and nutrition (Hawkesworth 2012: 235). The National Gender Machinery put in place by the post-apartheid government led by the ANC included an Office of the Status of Women attached to the Office of the President, a Women's Empowerment Unit in the Office of the Speaker, a body to monitor all the working of all departments, called the Joint Monitoring Committee on the Quality of Life

and Status of Women, a multi-party gender caucus in parliament, gender desks both at the national and provincial level in all departments and the Commission for Gender Equality (Gouws 2019). Though feminist scholars have critiqued the recent track record of the South African state in gender equality, especially in view of the disturbingly high rates of gender based violence and the state capture of gender machinery bodies (Mtintso 2003, Andrews 2008, Gouws 2016, 2021), the constitutional legacy of gender equality enshrined in the post-apartheid Constitution and the progressive legislations that followed remain as abiding institutional touchstones.

3.4 NEGOTIATING NATIONALISM AND GENDER: THE CASE OF INDIA

In contrast to the South African experience, women's participation in the Constituent Assembly of India was predominantly in their role as nationalist women who were guided by Gandhian ideals and who had been active in the struggle for independence from British colonial rule. The role played by Gandhi in women's political mobilization during the pre-independence period has been, on the one hand, highlighted by those scholars who credit him for bringing women into the mainstream of the anti- colonial nationalist movement (Desai 1957, Kishwar 1985, Jain 1986) and, on the other, criticized by those who hold that his perspective on the roles of women was conventional, uncritical of their ascribed roles as wives and mothers and limited due to its non- recognition of female sexuality (Patel, S. 1988, Arya 2000, Lal 2000). The Gandhian perspective on the women's question finds clear expression in the following quote:

> To call woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength, then, indeed, is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her, man could not be. If nonviolence is the law of our being, the future is with woman. Who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than women? (Gandhi 1930: 57)

Gandhi's call for women's active participation in the national movement was taken up by a large number of women. While women were active in a range of other political movements of the time, such as the Ambedkarite Dalit movement (Jogdand

1995, Guru 1998, Rege 2006), workers' mobilizations (Chakravarty 1980, Ray 1999, Sen 1999), peasants' struggles (Lalitha et al. 1989, Kumar 1990) and tribal uprisings (Saldhana 1986, Custers 1987), the hegemony of the Indian National Congress-led struggle for independence was such that these alternate political voices of women were not acknowledged as much as that of nationalist women who prioritized the demand for independent India over the assertion of women's rights. In fact, the protagonists of the first wave women's movement that took concrete shape with the formation of the Women's Indian Association (WIA) in 1917, National Council of Women in India (NCWI) in 1925, and the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) in 1927, many of whom were also active participants in the nationalist movement, desisted from using the word feminist to describe their activities and claims. The reason for this reluctance was that feminism was considered to be a Western idea based on opposition to males and essentially unpatriotic because it implied that women were placing their own interests above those of the nation (Forbes 1982, Kasturi 1998, Thapar-Björkert 2006, Anagol 2008).

By the 1920s, all the major players in India's nationalist movement including the Indian National Congress (INC), the India Home Rule League and the Muslim League by and large recognized the importance of women's active participation in the anti-colonial struggle and accepted the need for women's franchise and educational and employment opportunities for women (Roy 2005, Jensenius 2019). However, there was friction between the notions of women's rights and nationalism when it came to more contentious issues like child marriage, legislation on women's access to property and their rights within the family, *purdah* and changes to customary law (Forbes 1982). The nationalists were especially not in favour of "any radical re-structuring of power relations within the family" (Roy 2010: 410). The way the women's question was predominantly framed by the nationalist leaders was that "women's true liberation was intimately tied with the liberation of India" (Forbes 1982: 532). The women activists who were also participants in the nationalist movement were thus confronted with the dilemma of whether to prioritise the question of women's rights or nationalism. This led to differences in approach and orientation within the women's movement, with women leaders like Sarojini Naidu standing for the latter and more radical leaders like Saraladevi Chaudhurani advocating the former. For instance, Geraldine Forbes brings out the contrast in the approaches of these two women leaders to the demand for women's

suffrage (Forbes 1996). While speaking in support of women's suffrage at the Special Session of the INC held at Bombay in 1918, Sarojini Naidu had the following to say while responding to the objection that women's entry into politics would make them less feminine:

> Never, never, for we realize that men and women have their separate goals, separate destinies and that just as man can never fulfill the responsibility or the destiny of a woman, a woman cannot fulfill the responsibility of man… We ask for the vote, not that we might interfere with you in your official functions, your civic duties, your public place and power, but rather that we might lay the foundation of national character in the souls of children that we hold on our laps, and instill into them the ideals of national life. (as quoted in Forbes 1996: 93-94)

On the other hand, while presenting the resolution in favour of extending the vote to women at the 33rd session of the INC held the same year, Saraladevi Chaudhurani contended that the "fanciful division of intellect and emotion being the respective spheres of men and women" was outdated and that the "sphere of women" included "comradeship with men in the rough and tumble of life and to being the fellow-workers of men in politics and other spheres" (as quoted in Forbes, 1996: 93-94). At the Bengal Women's Congress, organized in August 1931, while critiquing the attitude of Congress leaders towards the question of women's rights, she remarked that the Congress "assigned to women the role of law-breakers only, not law-makers" (as quoted in Forbes 1996: 143). Another instance of conflicting positions was over the demand for the reservation of seats for women in the Provincial and Central Legislatures. This demand was raised by Begum Shah Nawaz and Kamala Subbaryon at the First Round Table Conference (November 1930-January 1931), only to be heavily opposed by other nationalist women, as has been mentioned in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

These differences in approach amongst the prominent women leaders of the time ultimately meant that there was no consensus within the women's movement about the way in which women's rights should be asserted and the form in which they were to be incorporated in the Constitution for an independent India. Combined with this was the larger political backdrop of the struggle for independence mostly directed by the Gandhian ideal of self-sacrifice and silent suffering, of which women came to be seen as the exemplars (Liddle and Joshi 1985, Thapar-Björkert 1993). The assertion of women's

rights was circumscribed by this nationalist symbol of the selfless woman for whom nothing was more sacrosanct than the freedom of the nation. As Mary E. John observes, "At the height of political nationalism, the public glorification of femininity became the very ground for persuading women of the illegitimacy of their demands" (John 2000: 3824) Thus, over time, the more radical female voices within the nationalist movement like those of Saraladevi Chaudhurani gave way to the moderate, accommodative approach of nationalist women like Sarojini Naidu that came to be the dominant voice of the women's movement in the years leading up to the drafting of the Constitution.

As per the provisions of the Government of India Act 1919, the colonial government had left the decision to enfranchise women or not to the newly elected provincial assemblies. Though the right of women to vote was accepted by all Provincial Assemblies by 1930, women had to meet the preconditions of being wives, being educated and owning property (Jensenius 2019). In 1927, B. Muthulakshmi Reddy became the first woman legislator when she was nominated to the Madras Legislative Council (Forbes 1996, Basu 2008). Despite the opposition of the dominant section of the women's movement to the idea or reservation of seats for women, the Government of India Act 1935 introduced reserved seats with separate electorates for women in both houses of the Federal Legislature and in the Provincial Assemblies (Forbes 1996, Jensenius 2019). As per the Act, the franchise was extended to women over 21 years of age who possessed property and educational qualifications, or were the wives or widows of men qualified to vote (Liddle and Joshi 1985, Singer 2007). The new Provincial Assemblies elected in 1946 as per the provisions of the Government of India Act 1935 elected members to the Constituent Assembly, which included 15 women. At a later stage, two more women members were elected, but two of the original members moved to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan after Partition (Chetan 2022). Thus, 15 women found their way into the Constituent Assembly that was to draft and finalize the constitution of independent India.

Image 3.5: Women Members of the Constituent Assembly of India
(Standing, left to right: Kamala Chaudhari, Sucheta Kripalani, G. Durgabhai, Qudsiya Aizaz Rasul, Purnima Banerji, Dakshayani Velayudhan. Sitting, left to right: Renuka Ray, Hansa Mehta, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Annie Mascarene, Ammu Swaminathan)

(Source: "Women at the Midnight Hour" - Calendar issued by the Centre for Women's Development Studies (CSDS) in 2018)

There have been many incisive studies on the limitations of the representativeness of the Constituent Assembly, the dynamics of the Constituent Assembly Debates and the ways in which the deliberations in the Constituent Assembly were often dominated by the nationalist paradigm that underplayed the differences of opinion and emphasis that found expression in the articulations of some of the members , in favour of carving out a homogeneous national culture and laying the foundations of the nation's unity (Nigam 2004, Jha 2004, Bhargava 2008, Bajpai 2011, Bhatia 2018). However, curiously enough, gender as a category of analysis does not figure prominently in these explorations. This erasure of gender can be attributed to the fact that women did not participate and make their presence felt in the Constituent Assembly as representatives of their gender who stood up and spoke for substantive women's rights and gender justice; rather, they continued to don the symbolic role bestowed upon them by the nationalist discourse. In a recent work, Achyut Chetan has presented a viewpoint that the women members of the Constituent Assembly were the "missing mothers" of the Indian Republic, whose agency has been sought to be erased by most scholarship on the Constituent Assembly

deliberations (Chetan 2022: 42). He makes the point that the presence of women was more marked in the work of the Committees of the Constituent Assembly, rather than on the main floor of the Constituent Assembly, which was "predominantly masculine and patriarchal in idiom and structures" and where women mostly occupied the back benches (Chetan 2022: 128). However, even in the Committees, women worked "in a self-effacing way so that their moves did not invite undue resistance" (Chetan 2022: 133). The contrast with the case of women's participation in the South African post-apartheid constitutional negotiations cannot be more vivid.

This is not to say that the makers of the Indian Constitution did not seek to promote gender equality; women are meant to be equal beneficiaries of the provisions on universal adult franchise (Article 326) and the Fundamental Rights of equality before law (Article 14), the prohibition of any form of discrimination (Article 15) and equality of opportunity (Article 16(1)). Specifically, Article 15(3) empowers the State to make any special provision for women and children and Article 16(2) forbids discrimination "in respect of any employment of office under the State" on the grounds only of "religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any one of them". Though non-justiciable, the Directive Principles of State Policy include the right to an adequate means of livelihood for men and women equally (Article 39(a)), equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39 (d)), protection of the health and strength of workers – men, women and children – from abuse and entry into avocations unsuited to their age and strength (Article 39 (e)), and just and human conditions of work and maternity relief (Article 42). However, many more meaningful inclusions for securing women's substantive equality could have found a place in the Indian Constitution, had there been a larger and more effective presence and influence of women, particularly those with a distinctive feminist voice, in the drafting process, as is evident from the South African case. There were only fifteen women members in the Constituent Assembly that came to have 299 members post-Partition and there was no woman member on the Drafting Committee that had the most direct and influential role in the finalization of the Constitution of independent India. The women members opposed the idea of reservations or separate electorates for women and minority groups as introduced earlier through the Government of India Act, 1935, because they felt it would be contrary to the spirit of an India to be built upon the foundations of a unified national identity. An analysis of the speeches of the women members of the Constituent Assembly reveals that the topics dealt with by them

predominantly included Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy, education, untouchability, protection of children, and representation of religious minorities; there appears to have been no advocacy of rights for women as a distinct group. Their expectation seems to have been that if women could find representation in the Constituent Assembly, they would definitely be given ample opportunities to enter political life through elections in an independent India. This sanguine hope found expression in the words of Ammu Swaminathan, one of the women members of the Constituent Assembly who spoke during the discussion on the motion by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to pass the draft Constitution on 24 November 1949,

> People outside have been saying that India did not give equal rights to her women. Now we can say that when the Indian people themselves framed their Constitution, they have given rights to women equal with every other citizen of the country. That in itself is a great achievement and it is going to help our women not only to realise their responsibilities but to come forward and fully shoulder their responsibilities to make India a great country that she had been. (*Selected Speeches* 2012: 3)

This hope was to be belied, with the main political parties in independent India predominantly nominating men as candidates in the elections to the national and state legislatures, leaving women with hardly any space. It was precisely such false expectation that the women who were actively involved in the transitional politics of South Africa were consciously guarding against when they insisted on the idea of gender equality being taken beyond political rhetoric and intrinsically incorporated into the new South African Constitution as well as in political representation. Thus, the impact of the presence of the women members in the Constituent Assembly of India on the substantive representation of women as equal citizens in the new political order was limited, because of the gap between formal equality as enshrined in the Constitution and the absence of substantive equality in the social and political life of independent India (Kapur and Cossman 1993, Kasturi 1998, Agnes 1999, Spary 2007). The lack of progress on the gender equality agenda even after 27 years of Indian independence was starkly brought out in the report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India titled "Towards Equality" released in 1974 (Government of India 1974). Evidently, the social revolution that the Indian Constitution was supposed to ring in remained quite limited in the extent

to which it sought to redefine gender relations and herald women's rights (Austin 1966, Chaube 1973).

3.5 NEGOTIATING AUTHORITARIANISM AND GENDER: THE CASE OF BRAZIL

Despite the fact that Latin America boasts of the highest percentages of women political representatives across the globe, Brazil remains an outlier in the region with a very low level of women's political representation at all levels of government. As per the Inter-Parliamentary Union's data, Brazil is ranked 132nd out of 185 countries, with women constituting only 17.54% of the parliamentarians (IPU Parline 2023). This stands in sharp contrast to the descriptive and substantive political representation of women in South Africa, despite the fact that the Brazilian feminist movement, described as "perhaps the largest, most radical, most diverse, and most politically influential of Latin America's feminist movements" (Sternbach et al. 1992: 414) has been and continues to be a very vibrant and effective agent of gender-based reforms and social change, even more so than in South Africa and India.

The political under-representation and marginalization of women has been a historical trend in Brazil, which has been attributed by feminist scholars to a number of factors, including the rigid gender roles entrenched in Brazilian society wherein women were identified with the domestic sphere, the structure of the political party and electoral system, and the specific political culture rooted in patronage, patriarchy and clientelism (Araújo 2003, da Silva and Wright 2015, dos Santos and Thomé 2020). Brazilian women remained totally excluded from the political scene until the second half of the 19th century, notwithstanding the legacy of women's active participation in the anti-slavery and anti-monarchy struggles. With the abolition of slavery in 1888 and the dawn of the Republic on 15 November 1889 that proclaimed its aims as "full liberty and fraternal equality", the vote was extended to all literate men and the political system showed signs of gradual opening up (Hahner 1980: 89). Urban middle class and upper-class white women started gaining minimal access to public life and the suffragist movement gathered steam. A small group of early feminists started questioning the patriarchally ascribed roles of women in Brazilian society and advocated rights for women in the economic and socio-political life of the country, using the press as a tool for awareness

generation (Hahner 1980, 1990). The pioneering women's organizations were *Partido Republicano Feminino* (Female Republican Party, formed in 1910), *Partido Liberal Feminista* (Feminist Liberal Party, formed in 1920), and the *Fundação Brasileira pelo Progresso Feminino* (Brazilian Foundation for Female Progress, founded in 1922, and which spearheaded the suffragist movement). These groups revived the demand for the women's vote, which was finally accepted by the initially liberal ruling dispensation under President Getúlio Vargas, and in 1932 Brazil became one of the first countries in the Americas to give women the right to vote (Hahner 1980, Otto 2004, Rodriguez 2014). Bertha Lutz, founder of the *Fundação Brasileira pelo Progresso Feminino* and one of the earliest and most active Brazilian feminists of her times, contributed as a woman member of the Drafting Commission that gave shape to the Brazilian Constitution of 1934, which granted women new rights including the confirmation of suffrage, holding political office and public positions, relaxation in labour laws and social welfare provisions (Macaulay 2000). The right to vote motivated several women to become candidates for the local and national elections in 1934, but only a single woman, Carlota Pereira de Queirós, was elected to the National Chamber that had 215 seats. Despite the fact that gaining the right to vote was a momentous step forward for women, June E. Hahner has rightly pointed out that in Brazil, "women's suffrage was a largely middle-class movement for political rights, for a juridical change to give the vote to women who met the same qualifications as men, not an attempt to revolutionize the role of women in society or that society itself" (Hahner 1982: 85).

President Getúlio Vargas' move to dismantle his own government and bring in the authoritarian regime of the *Estado Novo* (The New State) marked a big departure from the previous seven years of his presidentship, during which women's suffrage was granted. During the *Estado Novo* period (1937-1945), the gains made by the women's movement were reversed and women were denied the few political opportunities that were still available (Hahner 1980). Women employed in consular services abroad were withdrawn, positions in government departments were denied to them and the status of women was sought to be relegated to the traditional spheres of home and family (Rachum 1977). The corporatist and clientalistic nature of the Brazilian political system that was heralded by the *Estado Novo*, which was "a legal hybrid combining elements of Salazar's Portugal and Mussolini's Italy", impeded women from gaining a foothold in the arena of the State and its institutions (Macaulay 2000: 348). The authoritarian regime sought to

co-opt potential women leaders from the women's movement and the workers' movement. It also propagated the nostalgic myth about a return to the traditional demarcation between male and female roles in the public and private spheres respectively, where men were the sole breadwinners and women were mothers and homemakers who nurtured their children (Wolfe 1994). The contributions of the women workforce were devalued and actively discouraged, with the Ministry of Labour avowedly taking upon itself the cause of "protecting women, morally and physically" because they were "by nature, more fragile" than men (Wolfe 1994: 86).

Women made marginal gains in accessing political office and increasing their presence in public life during the democratic hiatus from 1945 to 1964. A different aspect of women's activism also came to the fore during this period – that of middle-class women who got together in associations like CAMDE (*Campanha da Mulher pela Democracia* – Women's Campaign for Democracy) and the Association of Housewives, and protested against the João Goulart government, in the interest of preserving the Brazilian family and opposing a purported communist take-over of the country (Rodriquez 2014, Daniel and Graf 2016). Their agitations culminated in the *Marcha da Familia com Deus pela Liberdade* (mass marches 'of the Family with God for Liberty') across the major cities in 1964, which was part of the chain of events that led to the coup d'etat and the military take-over of the government in Brazil (Rachum 1977, Hahner 1982). The long military regime of 21 years between 1964 and 1985 that followed resulted in the objective of women's empowerment going almost totally off the radar. The hyper-masculine character of Brazilian politics was underscored by the military dictatorship's approach of appointing men to hitherto elected positions and the permitted presence of only two mainstream parties: the pro-government ARENA (*Aliança Renovadora Nacional* – Alliance for National Renovation) and the opposition MDB (*Movimento Democrático Brasileiro* – Brazilian Democratic Movement), thereby severely circumscribing the already constrained political space available to women (dos Santos and Wylie 2019). The initial decades of military rule saw civil society organizations consolidating into an anti-authoritarian democratic front, which left little room for the nuances of distinctive group needs and demands to come to the fore. In this context, the articulation of demands for women's rights was superseded by the need to put up a united anti-authoritarian front. Women were very active in the new social movements initiated by the workers groups and human rights groups and were an integral

part of the over 1,00,000 CEBs (*Communidades Eclesias de Base* – Ecclesiastical Base Communities) set up by the Catholic Church. The women who were radicalized by their participation in the Catholic movement went on to form neighbourhood groups that rallied around calls for the basic necessities of urban life, such as water, electricity, health care, schools and housing (Alvarez 1990, Caldeira 1990, Corcoran-Nantes 1993, Baldez 2003, Waylen 2007b, Maluf 2011). Though women made their presence felt both numerically and effectively in this period through a subversion of the *marianist* trope that identified women with the domestic sphere, their efforts were concentrated on fighting political oppression and not on strategic gender interests. As Jacqueline Pitanguy describes,

> During the 10 years that followed the coup in Brazil, resistance and survival characterized most civil society organizations; they constituted a democratic front with little room for individuation of political agendas. The opposition was committed to forming a broad front under the slogan "People united against dictatorship." These "people," in political terms, had no sex, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. (Pitanguy 2002: 807)

With the weakening of the military dictatorship by the late 1970s and the debates generated by the UN International Year of Women in 1975, the activist women across groups began to resuscitate the women's cause. In an interesting analysis of the shift in the basic orientation of the feminist movement in Brazil from the accommodative tone of the early 20th century suffragist movement onwards to the radicalization of women's groups in the 1970s, the feminist scholar Ana Alice Alcântara Costa describes the former as "*feminismo bem comportado*" i.e., well-behaved feminism and the latter as "*feminismo de resistência*" i.e., feminism of resistance (Costa 2009: 54, 57). The process of radicalization was fuelled by the active involvement of the women in exile who returned to Brazil from Europe and North America, where they had been exposed to feminist movements and had acquired a new vocabulary to address gender inequalities (Sardenberg and Costa 2010). They stressed on the need for the women's movement to maintain autonomy from other social movements so that the gender agenda was kept in direct focus (de Brito 1986). The experience of women exiles who returned from Italy also drew home the possibility of feminist movements taking root even in cultures where the Catholic Church's role was over-arching (Baldez 2003). In the mid-1970s, a number of autonomous women's groups were formed which questioned discrimination against

women in various social settings such as universities, labour unions, professional associations and neighbourhood groups. The *Centro da Mulher Brasileira* (Brazilian Women's Center), the first avowedly feminist organization in Brazil, started functioning in Rio de Janeiro. Newspapers were started by groups of feminists that advocated the need for public policies oriented towards women's empowerment (Snyder and Wolff 2019). A landmark event during this period was the two-day Women's Congress that was organized in Sao Pãulo on March 8, 1979 on the occasion of International Women's Day. The Congress saw the participation of nearly one thousand women from feminist organizations, trade unions, mothers' clubs, neighbourhood groups, black women's groups and professional associations. Sonia Alvarez calls it "a unique contribution to the struggle for a democratic Brazil, proclaiming that power relations in the family, in daily life, in civil society and not just in the state and political society, must be democratized" (Alvarez 1994: 28). This was followed a month after by the First National Women's Conference in Rio de Janeiro. The women's movement sought to engender democracy by going beyond the public sphere to include other aspects of social relations that impinged on women's lives, like legalizing abortion and criminalizing violence against women, thereby politicizing the personal and redefining civil and political rights to incorporate gender equality (Pitanguy 1998, Baldez 2003, Sardenberg and Costa 2010). In the process, it had "sparked a burgeoning political movement that appeared to span all social classes, races and ideologies" (Alvarez 1990: 113).

Women were active in *Diretas Já* (Direct Now), the pro-democracy movement of the 1980s calling for direct presidential elections that heralded the return to civilian rule and for bringing back the exiled proponents of the anti-authoritarian oppositional groups in the amnesty movement that followed. As the democratization wave gained further strength in the mid-1980s, feminists took advantage of the political opportunities presented by the moment of transition to democracy and worked towards gaining some space within the political structure (Alvarez 1990, 1994, Macaulay 2000, Daniel and Graf 2016). In the *Abertura* (opening) phase, that has been identified by feminist scholars as a decisive moment of transition in which women got a chance to restructure existing gendered political norms, new political sites began to surface with the weakening of the military authoritarian regime and with the emergence of parties like the PMDB (*Partido do Movimento Democratico Brasileiro* – Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement), the PT (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* – Workers' Party) and the PFL (*Partido da Frente*

Liberal – Liberal Front Party). These parties sought to solicit the support of women for expanding their political base and reciprocated by accepting the demands of women's groups (Baldez 2003, dos Santos 2012). For instance, the PMDB put in place Women's Councils, set up women's police stations for women victims of domestic violence and started programs for women's health in Sao Paulo (Santos 2005, Rodriguez 2014). The formation of the CNDM (*Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher* – National Council for Women's Rights) within the Ministry of Justice in 1985 under the aegis of the PMDB federal government was a very significant step forward. The CNDM was the outcome of a proposal given by the multiparty Parliamentary Women's Commission and the demands from women activists and legislators, who saw it as the continuation of the women's councils that were established in some of the cities. Its membership consisted of women legislators from the PMDB, the PFL and the PT, civil society representatives associated with the autonomous women's movements and academics working in the area of women's studies. The CNDM reported directly to the President and was given the mandate to promote policies aimed at eliminating discrimination against women (Alvarez 1994, 1997, Macaulay 2003). It became a medium of state feminism through which a common women's agenda was forged and taken forward (Sardenberg and Costa 2010). The PT had significant feminist presence both at the grassroots and at the parliamentary level and helped set up political networks in support of a broadly feminist agenda. Women Secretariats were established in the municipal and State administrations led by the PT, through which feminist activists entered the executive branch of government. In the 1982 elections to the National Congress, there were 42 women candidates, out of whom 8 got elected (Pinheiro 2007).

With the restoration of the direct election of a civilian president in 1985 through which Jose Sarney came to power, the stage was set for the 1986 elections to the new Congress that would form the Constituent Assembly for drafting the new Constitution. The election of 26 women as members of the Chamber of Deputies, who went on to form the *bancada feminina* (Women's Caucus), was a truly historic moment for Brazilian women. As observed by Jacqueline Pitanguy, the then president of the CNDM which played a crucial part in women's interventions in the constitutional design, "the feminist movement seized on the occasion as a unique opportunity to enlarge women's citizenship rights and promote gender equality" (Pitanguy 2002: 810). The multifarious women's organizations came under the common umbrella of the CNDM, which was akin to the

role played by the WNC in South Africa. The effectiveness of the CNDM in channelizing the women's movement "proved that it was possible to identify a common agenda to unite diverse groups and interests, and that the state was now more receptive to women's demands. It also utilized women activists' invaluable practical experience in lobbying legislators and navigating the rapids and backwaters of parliamentary and legislative procedure" (Macaulay 2000: 3550). The CNDM held consultations between feminists, lawyers, law makers and members of the public through seminars held in various parts of Brazil to analyse the legal status of women and to draft the proposals for the constitution that took the form of a *Carta das Mulheres* (Women's Letter) from women to the *Assembléia Constituinte* (Constituent Assembly), widely held to be one of the most important documents in the history of the feminist movement and the women's movement in Brazil (Alvarez 1997, Pinto 2007, da Silva and Wright 2015, Carvalho 2017). The *Carta* included demands for changes in labour legislation, family law, day-care, reproductive rights, social security and a clear acknowledgement of the principle of equality between men and women. It also had a specific focus on the scourge of violence against women and called for the physical and psychological integrity of women to be legally protected, in particular through the creation of special police stations for battered women. Though it stopped short of defending the legalization of abortion, it mentioned the importance of the right of a woman "to know and decide about her own body" (Machado and Cook 2018: 191, Htun 2002). The *Carta* was presented before the members of the Constituent Assembly during a plenary session held on March 26, 1987. The momentousness of the occasion and the relevance it had for the women's movement finds expression in the following two extracts from the speeches of the women members of the Chamber of Deputies during the plenary session:

> *Estamos reclamando o direito à cidadania. Somos legítimas representantes daquelas que, em silêncio, possibilitaram que os senhores (dirigindo-se aos deputados) estejam sentados aí.* (Benedita da Silva – PT / RJ, as quoted in de Azevedo and Rabat 2012: 138)
>
> (translated as below)
>
> We are claiming the right to citizenship. We are legitimate representatives of those who, in silence, made it possible for you (referring to the Members of Parliament) to be seated there.
>
> *Vamos começar dizendo a vocês que não será em vão a luta da mulher quando, com todos os percalços e sacrifícios, até mesmo contrariando*

posturas de partidos políticos que discriminam a mulher, porque a discriminação contra a mulher começa dentro dos partidos políticos. Nós chegamos aqui com minoria, e não era isso que queríamos. Nós queríamos que mais da metade desta Constituinte fosse composta de mulheres, porque a mulher brasileira representa a maior fatia do eleitorado brasileiro. Mas, quero dizer a todos vocês que, apesar de sermos minoria nesta Assembleia, as nossas propostas, com absoluta certeza, irão fazer coro forte, firme, corajoso e altivo na consciência de todos os constituintes desta Assembleia… (Beth Azize – PSB-AM, as quoted in de Azevedo and Rabat 2012: 138-39)

(translated as below)

Let's start by telling you it won't be in vain for the woman's fight when, with all the pitfalls and sacrifices, we are here; even at times contradicting party postures when politicians discriminate against women, because discrimination against women starts within the political parties. We came here with a minority, and that's not what we wanted. We wanted more than half of this Constituent Assembly to be made up of women, because the Brazilian woman represents the largest slice of the Brazilian electorate. But I want to tell everyone; although we are a minority in this House, our proposals, with absolute certainty, will make a strong, firm, courageous and proud chorus in the conscience of all constituents of this Assembly…"

CNDM also staged demonstrations throughout Brazil and held a sit-in at the Brazilian Congress, to draw public attention to the demands of the women's movement. Much like in South Africa, women's groups through the mechanism of CNDM joined hands with the *bancada feminina* of 26 women members to push for the gender agenda to find place in the constitutional text. This strategic alliance of feminists came to be known as *a bancada do batom* - the 'lipstick lobby'- and played a pivotal role in the inclusion of the gender agenda in the 1988 Constitution (Sardenberg and Costa 2010, da Silva and Wright 2015, Daniel and Graf 2016, Carvalho 2017).

Image 3.6: The members of the *bancada do batom* photographed on the ramps of the National Congress of Brazil, on the occasion of the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution on 5 October 1988

Image 3.7: A recreation of the historic moment above, by the current members of the Women's Caucus in the National Congress, during the celebrations marking the 35th year of the 1988 Constitution on 3 October 2023

(Source of Images 3.6 and 3.7: *Câmara dos Deputados* (Chamber of Deputies) Official Website: https://www.camara.leg.br/)

The *bancada do batom* presented thirty amendments in the new Constitution that would bring in women's rights and the CNDM mobilized and coordinated the efforts of the women's groups throughout Brazil to collect signatures supporting the amendments (Sardenberg and Costa 2010). Also significant was the inclusion of two women in the fifty members of the Brazilian Constitutional Studies Commission (the Arinos Commission), which was set up in 1985 to prepare draft proposals for the consideration of the Constituent Assembly. One of the members, the legal expert Florisa Veruchi who authored the influential book, *A Mulher e o Direito* (Women and the law), had the specific task to "propose articles that would redefine the family in a democratic direction" (Veruchi and Patai 1991: 561) She was able to draw upon the discussions in feminist circles and women's rights circles on this important aspect and to identify "the overriding need to alter the legal definition of the family and to redistribute authority within the family" (Veruchi and Patai 1991: 561). The 1988 Constitution departed from the structure of previous constitutions by laying down fundamental rights in its first chapter and not the organization of the state. It gave women equal legal rights and obligations as men, both within the family and outside it (Article 5, Item I) and made any discrimination in violation of this punishable by law (Article 5, Item XLI), thereby "profoundly alter(ing) the legal status of women" (Veruchi and Patai: 558). The idea of the husband's leadership (*chefia*) of the conjugal unit that had plagued all earlier Constitutions was finally revoked and the new Constitution declared that "the rights and duties relating to the conjugal unit are exercised equally by the man and the woman" (Article 226, §5°) (Veruchi and Patai: 562). The right of couples to adopt family planning and the responsibility of the State in disseminating information about it was recognized (Article 226, §7°). The protection of women's position in the labour market was to be ensured by providing them with 120 days of paid maternity leave (Article 7, Item XVIII) and also by prohibiting sex discrimination in employment (Article 7, Item XX). The Constitution also recognized the rights of domestic workers and extended social security benefits to them (Article 7, sole paragraph). Article 226, §8° of the new Constitution laid down the creation of mechanisms to prevent family violence as a duty of the state (Htun 2002, 2003a). In a major victory, the *bancada do batom* also succeeded in ensuring that the protection of life from conception did not find a place in the text of the Constitution, despite all efforts of the Catholic Church and Evangelist lobby, which paved the way for later reforms in the abortion related legislation (Baldez 2003, Htun 2003a, dos Santos and Wylie 2018, Machado and Cook 2018).

The Brazilian Constitution of 1988 is regarded as one in which the demands of women activists found resonance, but which failed to increase the political representation of women both in descriptive and substantive terms. On the descriptive front, the new Constitution did not change the situation of under-representation of women, as political parties slowly but surely returned back to business as usual, when it came to the question of ceding effective political leadership to women. Even the introduction of the candidate quotas for women in 1995 that was expanded in 2000 to mandate 30% of women candidates at all levels of elected government and further reformed in 2009, has not changed this scenario, as is discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. On the substantive front, the Constitution ended up as an unwieldy document that could not bridge the gap between legal entitlements on paper and actual rights of women. Even though women's aspirations and demands found ample space in the drafting of the Constitution, it was "frustratingly inoperable", in the absence of legal reforms to the existing discriminatory laws that would bring the statutes in line with the progressiveness envisaged by the constitutional provisions (Macaulay 2000: 358). One instance among many of this drawback was that the reforms in the Brazilian Civil Code that were necessary to bring the family equality provisions of the 1988 Constitution into practical effect did not see the light of day (Htun 2002, Waylen 2006). Similarly, the State's duty to curb domestic and family violence against women was included in the Constitution, but it found legal expression only with the enactment of the *Maria da Penha* Law in 2006. The pay equity provision in the Constitution was made enforceable only after 35 years, with the passage of the Brazilian Labour Law (*Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho*) in July 2023 (Takano, Tavares and Germiniani 2023). In her incisive study of the evolution of the women's movement in Brazil, Sonia Alvarez points out that issues such as the right to abortion that threatened to upset existing gendered power relations were deliberately excluded from the final draft of the Constitution (Alvarez 1990). Further, she argues that given the fact that women's negotiations with the drafting of the Constitution came to be spearheaded and coordinated by the CNDM, which played the role of an agency of state feminism, women did not form their own autonomous lobby, independent of the state, to shape the discourse. This in turn affected the extent to which the Constitution was able to reflect the gender agenda. The imbalanced and gendered dynamics of power in the institutional arenas of Brazilian politics remained well-entrenched, even after the critical juncture of the making of the 1988 Constitution was seized by the women's movement.

3.6 CONCLUSION

The South African, Indian and Brazilian contexts of constitution drafting shared the ethos of 'transformative constitutionalism', wherein the constitutions were intended to be "ambitious normative documents" that would make a decisive break with the past and herald a new democratic era based on equal political rights and universal adult franchise (Vilhena, Baxi and Viljoen 2013: 3, Fowkes 2017). Further, the trajectory of the struggle for political assertion was determined largely in all three cases by the presence of dominant parties, the Indian National Congress (INC) in India, the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa and the PMDB (*Partido do Movimento Democratico Brasileiro* – Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement) and the PT (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* – Workers' Party) in Brazil, which in turn shaped the contours of women's political engagement and involvement in the process of drafting the new constitution. However, while India represents the case of a post-World War II, post-colonial new republic, which nevertheless relied heavily upon the "old constitutionalism" that was the legacy of colonial legislations like the Government of India Act, 1935, South Africa and Brazil stand for post-conflict/post-authoritarian transitional democracies that adopted the path of "new constitutionalism" that is "characterized by a greater degree of deliberation and choice among a wide array of constitutional models" (Irving 2008: 26). A comparative analysis of the trajectories of women's participation in constitutional negotiations and drafting in the three countries reveal a number of variables that determine the effectiveness of women's political engagement at the meso-level with the constitutional/legal arena and the divergent degrees in which these variables were present or absent in each of the three contexts, as is summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Comparative analysis of the variables determining the effectiveness of women's participation in constitutional negotiations and drafting

Variables	South Africa	India	Brazil
Historical legacy of women's political participation	Yes; active in anti-apartheid movement	Yes; active in anti-colonial movement	Limited by military authoritarian regime
Presence of feminist strategic alliance	Yes; in the form of the WNC	No	Yes; in the form of CNDM and *bancada feminina*
Political Opportunity Structure	Conducive	Restrictive	Partly Conducive
Exposure to the international women's movement	Yes; through exiled members of the ANC	Limited; due to historical reasons	Yes; through women exiled by the military regime
Autonomy of the women's movement	Yes; maintained consciously	No; co-opted by nationalist movement	No; co-opted by the party system and state feminism

As is evident from the table above, the variable factors that facilitate meaningful and effective interventions by women in the process of constitution drafting were present to the largest degree and extent in the case of South Africa, whereas in the case of India and Brazil, they were mitigated by the fact that other forces were also at play. The resultant Constitutions also reflect the relative strengths and weaknesses of the process. The South African Constitution was able to lay the foundations of both the descriptive and substantive representation of women, primarily due to the fact that women *qua* women strategically lobbied for justiciable and implementable gender-sensitive provisions. The Indian Constitution, while including provisions granting equality and rights to women, did not bear the mark of gender-conscious interventions that could bring

about wide-spread social and political change, since the women did not overcome their identity as bearers of nationalism. The Brazilian Constitution, though progressive in its language and orientation, was handicapped by the lack of adequate women's political presence in other institutional structures and clout to put in place the legislative and social changes required to activate the gender-friendly provisions.

CHAPTER 4
WOMEN HOLDING POWER AS EXECUTIVE HEADS: IMPACT ON WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The executive levels of government across the globe have proved to be particularly difficult for women to reach, with very few women leaders having gained access to the highest political offices. As observed by Georgia Duerst-Lahti, the executive branch is arguably "the most masculine branch of the government" that is embedded and embodied in hegemonic masculinity, and is based on the principles of unity of command, hierarchy and centralization (Duerst-Lahti 1997: 18, 2008). This is attributable to reasons such as the evolution of executive power from the close ties between the military and the bureaucracy, the centralized and hierarchical power structure of the executive branch, and the association of the notion of executive power with the 'great man' model of leadership (Fox and Oxley 2003, Sczesny et al. 2004, Paxton and Hughes 2014). In such a masculinist paradigm, women have mostly remained as "the other" in executive power (Duerst-Lahti 1997:18-19). The executive branch of government has been termed as the highest glass ceiling that limits women's access (Reynolds 1999b, Jensen 2008, Kerevel 2019). As per the data analysed and reported by UN WOMEN as of 15 September 2023, there are only 15 countries with a woman serving as Head of State and 16 countries with a woman serving as Head of Government. Only 22.8% of government ministerial posts worldwide are held by women and only 13 countries have 50% or more cabinet posts being held by women. The prognosis made by UN WOMEN is that at the current rate of annual increase in the number of women holding the highest executive posts, gender equality in numerical terms on this front will not be reached for another 130 years (UN WOMEN 2023). Meanwhile, statistics show that there is a definite rise in the number of women gaining access to executive power at the highest levels in the past three decades. The number of women heads of state was just three in the 1960s, six in the 1970s and seven in the 1980s, while there were twenty-six women presidents and prime ministers in the 1990s (Bauer and Tremblay 2011). Over three-quarters of all women who have become presidents and prime ministers assumed office since 1990 and there have been 29 women heads of executive in the period from

2000 to 2010 (Jalalzai and Krook 2010, Jalalzai 2013a). Geographically, Europe and Latin America are the two regions where the trend of more women becoming heads of the executive can be perceived.

While many studies on women in the executive have revolved around tracing the pathways to power traversed by individual women leaders and identifying the trends in women's access to executive power in different countries and regions (Richter 1991, Genovese 1993, Opfell 1993, Liswood 1995, 2007, Watson, Jencik and Selzer 2005, Hoogensen and Solheim 2006, Murray 2010, Genovese and Steckenrider 2013), feminist institutionalist scholars have gone beyond to analyse how the executive is particularly configured as a gendered institution (Bauer and Tremblay 2011, Jalalzai 2013a, 2017, Waylen 2016). From a feminist institutionalist perspective, examining the gender regimes that structure the macro-level bureaucratic/state arena is hugely significant in identifying the gap between the descriptive and substantive representation of women in politics (Jaquette 2017). The presence of women as executive heads is an important aspect of the symbolic representation of women; it can have a deeper impact on the way citizens as voters perceive women's political participation due to the power, prestige and visibility associated with executive power (Desposato and Norrander 2009, Morgan and Buice 2013, Schwindt-Bayer 2018, Alexander and Jalalzai 2020). As Farida Jalalzai and Pedro A.G. dos Santos note, "…when a woman is elected for the first time to the country's most powerful position, her own gender identity is likely to influence discourse and policy making. A president's female gender identity may affect what representation means for the president, for society, and for the political system as a whole" (Jalalzai and dos Santos 2015: 122). Going beyond the distinctly discernible gendered aspects of formal executive power, feminist institutionalist scholars have unearthed facets of the "hidden life of institutions" that emerge from the interaction between formal rules and informal norms and practices (Chappell and Waylen 2013: 608, Annesley and Gains 2010). They have focused on delineating the institutional factors that influence women's access to executive power, such as prevalent gender norms of leadership, kinship ties, the presidential vs. parliamentary system, and inter-branch contagion, i.e., the movement of women from legislatures to executives (Jalalzai 2008, 2010, 2013a, Thames and Williams 2013, Schwindt-Bayer and Reyes-Housholder 2017). Feminist institutionalist research has also looked closely at the changes in the political opportunity structures that are brought about by democratic transitions and post-conflict critical junctures in the

political histories of countries, which in turn could facilitate the rise of women to positions of executive leadership (Waylen 2007, Adams 2008, Beckwith 2015, Montecinos 2017). One of the prime examples of a woman leader rising to executive power at the highest level in a post-conflict background is that of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in Liberia. The political opportunity structure that emerged in Liberia at the end of a long period of strife re-defined the gender balance and opened up the space for Johnson-Sirleaf's presidency, which made her the first female elected head of state in sub-Saharan Africa. Johnson-Sirleaf was able to effectively harness the emergence of Liberian women as peace-makers and the support of women activists to legitimize and bolster her presidential campaign, despite not having any links to a male politician or to a dominant political party (Adams 2008, Bauer and Tremblay 2011, Paxton and Hughes 2014).

Drawing from and building upon the afore-mentioned insights of feminist institutionalism, this chapter will deal with the macro-level bureaucratic/state arena in Brazil by analysing the presidency of Dilma Rousseff, the first woman Head of State, which was a critical juncture in the political trajectory of the country. It will also discuss the prime ministerial tenures of Indira Gandhi in India and Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma's presence in the South African political scene vis-à-vis their impact on women's representation and political empowerment. First, Dilma Rousseff's presidency will be situated in the larger context of the increased representation of women at the highest executive levels of government in Latin America and the trajectory of women's political participation in Brazil.

4.2 WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICAN POLITICS: THE RISE OF THE *PRESIDENTA*

In the last 25 years, there has been a particularly dramatic increase in the number of women becoming Presidents in countries of the Latin American region, like Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Panama and Nicaragua. While there was no woman who had won the presidency through a democratic process prior to 1990, two women became presidents between 1990 and 2000, and four more, between 2001 to 2010, with three

women winning a second term [3] (Barnes and Jones 2011, Reyes-Housholder and Thomas 2018). This trend continued between 2010 and 2018, with four women presidents, namely Michelle Bachelet in Chile, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner in Argentina, Laura Chinchilla in Costa Rica and Dilma Rousseff in Brazil, holding the highest executive office. The rise of women to the presidency in Latin America was paralleled by the increase of women's presence in national legislatures of the region from 13.7% in 1995 to 30.7% in January 2019. There was also a noticeable increase in the share of women cabinet ministers in the region from 8% in 1998 to 28.7% in 2023 (Swiegart 2019, CEPALSTAT 2023).

Feminist scholars have conducted extensive studies on women's rise to presidential positions in Latin American countries, yielding deep insights into the interplay of formal political rules of the game and informal norms. The historical narratives of the rise of post-colonial independent Latin American states are built on heroic projections of male leaders as the fathers of the nation (Mallon 1995, Dore 2000). Continuing in the same vein, male populist presidents in Latin America have time and again invoked paternalism in their public discourses to legitimize their political agendas (Conniff 1999, Dore and Molyneux 2000, Thomas 2011). As a result, women's exclusion from politics and political power in Latin America has been foregrounded in rigid divisions between the public and private realms. While men in the public realm of politics are seen to personify *machismo* with character traits such as competence, strength, assertiveness, toughness and decisiveness, women are identified with the domestic realm of the home, where the expected qualities are femininity, compassion, self-sacrifice and virtue, moulded in the frame of the Virgin Mary and thus typified as *marianismo* (Stevens 1973, Neuhauser 1989, Caldeira 1998, Craske 1999, Baldwin and DeSouza 2001, Craske and Molyneux 2002). This leads to women aspiring for political power typically facing a situation that Pierre Bourdieu has termed as the double bind. As Bourdieu puts it, "if they behave like men, they risk losing the obligatory attributes of 'femininity' and call

[3] Isabel Martínez de Perón was elected as Vice-President of Argentina in 1973 in democratic elections and she succeeded her husband Juan Domingo Perón to the presidency in 1974 after his death. The two women who were elected as presidents in Latin America between 1990 and 2000 are Violeta Chamorro (Nicaragua) and Mireya Moscoso (Panama). The four women who were elected as presidents between 2001 and 2010 are Michelle Bachelet (Chile), Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (Argentina), Laura Chinchilla (Costa Rica) and Dilma Rousseff (Brazil), with Bachelet, Kirchner and Rousseff winning second terms.

into question the natural right of men to the positions of power; if they behave like women, they appear incapable and unfit for the job" (Bourdieu 1998: 67-68). Thus, double binds present "lose-lose scenarios in which women are at once penalized for being too feminine and too masculine, are considered either too young or too old, or too connected or too independent, and are often criticized for a lack of experience when attempting to emphasize their novelty" (Wylie 2018: 47). The double bind becomes even more accentuated in the case of women attempting to gain access to the highest executive positions, given the default identification of national leadership positions with men in popular imagination (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995, Duerst-Lahti 1997, Thames and Williams 2013, Paxton and Hughes 2014, Reyes-Housholder and Thomas 2018). To quote Deborah Alexander and Kristi Andersen, "Successful women candidates are welcomed into the political fray, as long as they bring with them their traditional skills, capabilities and vestiges of their roles as mother and spouses. At the same time, they have to demonstrate their power, toughness, and capacity to win, traits assumed by most voters to be inherent in most male candidates" (Alexander and Andersen 1993: 542). This leads to a predicament for women executive heads wherein "conforming to their gender role can produce a failure to meet the requirements of their leader role, and conforming to the leader role can produce a failure to meet the requirements of their gender role." (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt 2001:786)

Feminist research has brought out how the double bind shapes the ways in which women project themselves and their leadership styles when they venture into politics (Jamieson 1995, Trimble and Arscott 2003, Lawrence and Rose 2005, Carlin and Winfrey 2009, Murray 2010, Sykes 2016, Schwindt-Bayer and Housholder 2017). In her pioneering work on women and politics in Latin America in the late 1960s, Elsa Chaney coined the term 'supermadre' to describe those women who gained access to the political arena by projecting it as an extension of their domestic roles as mothers and wives and focused on issues "relate(d) to the family, children, the elderly, food prices and inflation, peace, moral questions", once they occupied office (Chaney 1979: 20,164). When she later revisited the concept of supermadre, Chaney still found strong resonances of it in the way women participated in Latin American politics (Chaney 1998) and other scholars have also pointed out its continued relevance (Pinheiro 2007, Wylie 2012). However, Leslie Schwindt-Bayer has contested the relevance of the supermadre descriptor in her study of the gender differences in the attitudes and bill initiation behaviour of women

legislators in Argentina, Columbia and Costa Rica. She argues that gender roles have changed over the years in Latin America resulting in women no longer perceiving their political roles only as an extension of their domestic roles. They are more likely to take up "feminist" issues as opposed to "female" or "feminine" ones (Schwindt-Bayer 2006: 571). The evocation of maternalism by women for political legitimacy has also been studied through the lens of 'militant motherhood' (Alvarez 1990, Jaquette 1994, Baldez 2003) and 'political motherhood' (Schirmer 1993, Werbner 1999). While militant motherhood refers to the mobilisation of women in opposition to the oppressive military regimes that dominated the political scene of Latin America from the 1960s to the 1980s, political motherhood denotes the ways in which women utilise their biological and cultural role as mothers as a medium for political mobilisation. When women utilise their social locations as mothers within the domestic sphere as a launching pad for their participation in public life, they fundamentally challenge the assumption that the public is separate and distinct from the private. In this way, both militant motherhood and political motherhood imply a redrawing of the boundaries between the public and the private lives of women and demonstrates that the personal is indeed political.

In more recent research, Susan Franceschet, Jennifer M.Piscopo and Gywnn Thomas have argued that though changing social and political contexts have meant that Latin American women politicians have moved beyond the supermadre and militant mother projections, they continue to strategically deploy four distinct cultural frames rooted in "culturally acceptable, gendered terms" and linked to maternalism:

(1) "Traditional supermadre: wherein women present motherhood as central to their political identity and concerns" (Violeta Chamorro – Nicaragua's President from 1990-1997)

(2) "Technocratic caretaker: wherein women emphasise their professional credentials over their maternal identity, though their technocratic skills are frequently tied to expertise in social issues related to caretaking" (Michelle Bachelet – Chile's President from 2006-2010 and 2014-2018)

(3) "Macho minimiser: wherein women perceive a need to soften their aggressive image with cultivated appeals to femininity" (Dilma Rousseff – Brazil's President from 2011-2016)

(4) "Difference denier: wherein women deny that gender inequality shapes men's and women's political opportunities, dismissing claims of sexism in politics"

(Laura Chinchilla – Costa Rica's President from 2010-2014) (Franceschet, Piscopo and Thomas 2016: 3)

Feminist institutionalists have identified and critically analysed the factors that may have created relatively conducive political opportunity structures for women heads of state to emerge in the Latin American context from the 1990s. The active participation of women in civil society mobilization and democratization movements gave them the necessary political experience and networking resources to make viable attempts to contest for the presidencies (Reyes-Housholder and Thomas 2018). Farida Jalalzai's research has emphasized on the role played by family and kinship ties with male leaders in bringing women to the helm of government in many Latin American countries (Jalalzai 2010, 2016, 2017). The political identity of such women heads is closely linked to the legacy of the male family members they replace as wives or daughters, which Jalalzai perceives as a continuation of the *marianismo* trope (Jalalzai 2016). Magda Hinojosa has developed a three-fold typology of political widows in Latin America –

(1) widows with little or no political experience who inherit a dead husband's position without being popularly voted
(2) widows who actively campaign for the husband's post
(3) widows with political experience who campaign for office (Hinojosa 2012)

She attributes the rise of political widows to the recognition of their family names and legacy, the political socialization that occurs within the families and the trust that they evoke in popular imagination (Hinojosa 2012).

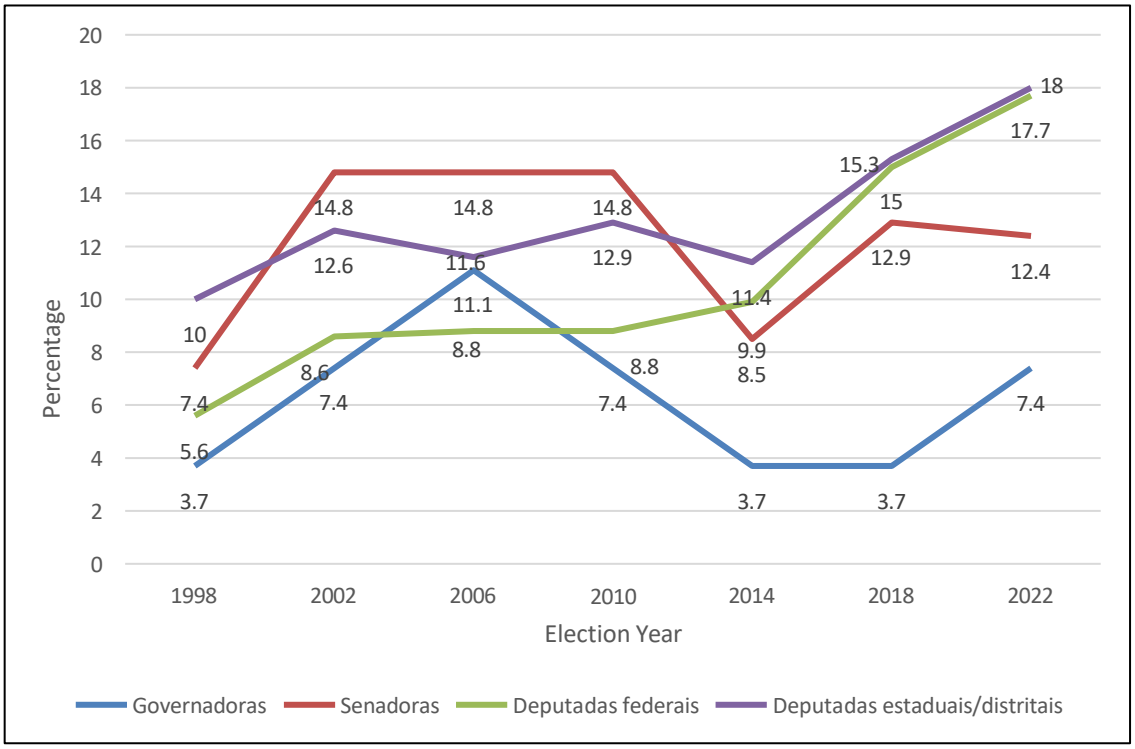
On the other hand, the relevance of family ties in women's ascent to presidential power has been problematized by other scholars who argue that this has not been a decisive factor in the recent wave of Latin American *Presidentas*. They point towards women presidents like Michelle Bachelet, Laura Chinchilla and Dilma Rousseff who have had no family or kinship ties with leading male politicians (Reyes-Housholder and Thomas 2018). Another such contested factor has been the impact of the rise of ruling leftist parties in Latin America from the 1990s, referred to as "the pink tide", on women's increased political participation and rise to positions of executive power (Funk, Hinojosa and Piscopo 2017: 399). Left parties in Latin America have been heralded as "the most forceful advocates of gender equality" (Htun 2003c: 128), leading the way in the introduction of gender quotas and feminist policies, facilitating the entry of women into

political office and increasing the public acceptability of women presidents (Htun and Power 2006, Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2005, Sacchet 2009, Alles 2014, Reyes-Housholder and Thomas 2018). However, the impact of the pink tide on women's representation in Latin America has been critiqued by other scholars who have argued that despite left parties appearing to be more receptive to women, this does not translate into the increased nomination and election of more women. Further, left presidents, including *Presidentas*, have not contributed to the strengthening of quota laws once in government (Funk, Hinojosa and Piscopo 2017). Another set of factors identified as being instrumental in the rise of women presidents in Latin America has been the contagion effect of women in executive positions in the region as a whole on reducing the gender gap and increasing the political involvement of women (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2005, 2009, Desposato and Norrander 2009). The effect of elite cues (i.e., male political elites signalling support for gender equality by nominating more women to higher executive offices), and the position of women as political outsiders in situations where public trust in the status-quo is declining and there is a desire for change from politics as usual, have also been studied (Morgan and Buice 2013, Reyes-Housholder and Thomas 2018).

4.3 THE CONUNDRUM OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN BRAZIL

One of the enduring questions that have agitated feminist scholars who study women's political participation in Latin America is how Brazil has one of the lowest levels of women's participation in Latin America and in the world at all legislative levels, especially at the national level, despite having a vibrant women's movement, socio-economic empowerment of women and a gender quota law in operation since 1996 (Htun 2002, Wylie 2012, 2018, Araújo, Calasanti and Htun 2018). Figure 4.1 exhibits the trend in women's political representation at the state and the federal level in Brazil from 1998 to 2022.

Figure 4.1: Women's representation as *Governadoras* (Governors in the State), *Senadoras* (Members of the Federal Senate), *Deputadas federais* (Members of the Federal Chamber of Deputies) and *Deputadas estaduais/distritais* (State/District Deputies) in Brazil from 1998-2022



(Source: Author, based on data from CFEMEA 2018, and Araujo and Gama 2023)

The chronic under-representation of women in Brazilian legislative politics continues unabated; in the latest general elections of 2022, women's presence in the Chamber of Deputies has increased marginally from 15% in 2018 to 17.7%, while it has come further down from 12.9% to 12.4% in the Senate (IPU Parline 2023). Two women found a place among the 27 State Governors elected in the gubernatorial elections of 2022, as opposed to just one woman Governor in 2018, bringing their percentage to 7.4% (*Poder360* 2022, Araujo and Gama 2023). Women's presence as State/district deputies increased marginally to 18% after the 2022 elections. This under-representation continues despite the supply side dynamics of women candidates available for electoral politics improving over time with more women gaining access to education and employment; in fact, 44.3% of all political party membership and 53% of all registered voters in Brazil are women (Araújo, Calasanti and Htun 2018, Wylie 2020, Melo 2022). From the demand side perspective too, there is increasing public acceptance of women as political leaders in Brazil. As per the Brazil 50-50 IBOPE/ UN WOMEN Survey conducted in August 2018,

81% of Brazilians believe that the presence of women politicians and decision-makers improves the quality of politics and democracy. Further, 77% feel that it should be mandatory for legislatures at all levels to have gender parity, with equal women's representation (IBOPE and UN WOMEN 2018).

The persistence of the gender gap in Brazilian politics can be attributed to a multiplicity of institutional factors. One such factor is the Open-List Proportional Representation electoral system, wherein voters cast their votes for individual candidates, and seats that are proportionally distributed to parties are in turn allocated by the parties to their candidates based on the number of preference votes they have polled (Htun 2002, Araújo 2003, Shugart, Valdini and Souminen 2005, Miguel 2008, Sardenberg and Costa 2010, Araújo, Calasanti and Htun 2018). As has been examined in detail in the second chapter of this thesis, quotas for women in the Open List Proportional Representation system followed in Brazil have been far from successful in bridging the gap in women's political participation (Araújo 2003, Wylie and dos Santos 2016). In a candidate-centric system that places a huge premium on individual attributes and personal resources, women face a huge disadvantage at the outset due to their lack of political capital (Samuels 2008, de Souza 2011, Wylie 2018, Wylie, dos Santos and Marcelino 2019). This deficit of political capital in turn is caused by the historical marginalization of women in Brazilian politics, specifically reinforced during the *Estado Novo* period from 1937 to 1945 and the era of military dictatorship from 1964 to 1975. Pedro A.G. dos Santos has incisively analysed these periods using the Historical Institutionalist tool of path dependence (dos Santos 2021). He demonstrates how the formal and informal institutional norms that were established and entrenched during this period (including the Open-List Proportional Representation system), the repression of all forms of civil society movements (including the women's movement) and the total marginalization of women in party politics, all led to the subsequent political path of women in post-authoritarian Brazil continuing to be difficult (dos Santos 2021). The lack of political capital manifests itself as a gender gap in political ambition and reluctance for self-nomination amongst women, which perpetuates a vicious cycle of exclusion (Pinheiro 2007, Fox and Lawless 2004, 2010, Lawless and Fox 2010, Hinojosa 2012, Wylie 2018, 2020, Piscopo 2019). Brazil's entrepreneurial electoral system favours incumbent male candidates who have been active in politics and have held office previously, since they have more political capital and economic resources at their disposal and are more likely

to self-nominate (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2008, Wylie 2020). They are able to mobilize more campaign financing through clientalistic networks and to gain more television time as per Brazilian law that allocates two thirds of the Free Electoral Political Advertising Time (HGPE – *Horario Gratuito de Propaganda Eleitoral*: two hours in two slots available during the two months preceding elections) to parties according to their share of representatives in the National Congress, to the clear disadvantage of women (Sacchet and Speck 2012, Speck and Mancuso 2014, Moisés and Sanchez 2016, Araújo, Calasanti and Htun 2018).

Coupled with this is the weakly institutionalized, male-dominated and inchoate party system that is inhabited by fragmented parties (Mainwaring 1999, Htun 2002, Samuels 2003, Macaulay 2006, Daniel and Graf 2016, Araújo, Calasanti and Htun 2018, Wylie 2018). Feminist institutionalist scholars have extensively brought out the criticality of political parties as gendered organizations that in turn propagate the gendering of other institutions through their roles as gatekeepers that can enable or constrain the entry of women into the political arena (Sacchet 2005, Macaulay 2006). As Fiona Macaulay puts it, "parties are both gendered organizations that reflect the gender ideology of their membership and leaders through their internal culture and practices, and gendering institutions that act as gatekeepers, framing, encouraging or restricting women's political agency as party supporters, activists, leaders, candidates and representatives, and (re)producing normative conceptions of gender relations through their electoral campaigns, party policies and legislative activity" (Macaulay 2006: 7). In Brazil, political parties on the whole lack well-defined programs or robust recruitment networks, resulting in personalist, individually dominated agenda-setting and the acceptance of a "norm of non-compliance" with electoral laws like the quota for women (Wylie 2018: 9, Wylie and dos Santos 2016). Therefore, women are not able to derive much institutional support or opportunities for political leadership from them. As Kristin N. Wylie explains in her study of the impact of party institutionalization on women's political representation in Brazil, the political parties are "…ill-equipped to provide women with the requisite psychological, organizational, and material support for confronting Brazil's entrepreneurial system" (Wylie 2018: 22-23). In addition to lacking the capacity to do so, she adds, Brazilian political parties also lack the will to encourage women's political participation in a way that would aid them in overcoming other institutional barriers (Wylie 2018, 2020).

4.4 THE DILMA ROUSSEFF CASE: WOMEN'S RISE TO THE PRESIDENCY IN BRAZIL

Despite the abysmally low representation of women in Brazilian politics which is accentuated in the executive branch, Brazil has the distinction of being one of the few countries in Latin America and worldwide to have an elected woman president, who was also re-elected: Dilma Rousseff (the rest of this chapter will refer to her as Dilma, in keeping with how she is publicly referred to in Brazil). This poses a "representational puzzle" for feminist institutionalist scholars (Gatto, dos Santos and Wylie 2022: 4), especially so because Brazil has a unified presidential system with the President holding the dominant decision-making position (Jalalzai 2010, 2013a). In fact, the Brazilian President has been described as an "imperial president, that power being stronger than the American President" (David Fleisher, as quoted in Jalalzai 2016: 33) due to the wide-ranging powers vested in the post, including the powers to evoke an executive decree termed *Medida Provisoria*, make amendatory observations in bills, use legislative initiative to present bills, and budgetary control (Cox and Morgenstern 2001, Aleman and Tsebelis 2005, Jalalzai 2016). From a feminist institutionalist perspective, it would be very instructive to analyse how Dilma overcame the many impediments to women's access to political power in Brazil that have been outlined in the previous section of this chapter. Further, Dilma's election to the Brazilian Presidency in 2010 and her re-election in 2014 can be viewed as critical junctures that presented great openings in the political opportunity structure of Brazil for women by breaking the highest glass ceiling of executive power. It is therefore extremely relevant to evaluate whether and to what extent Dilma's presidency furthered the cause of political representation of women and the factors that enabled or hindered this process. Further, the circumstances of her election, her two terms as President, and her eventual impeachment on 31 August 2016 can reveal crucial insights into the formal and informal ways in which political institutions are gendered.

4.4.1 Dilma's pathway to executive power

Dilma's rise to prominence in Brazilian politics in itself was unique, as she was an exception to the general trend of women heads of executive across the world and in Latin America relying on some kind of political family or kinship ties to come to power

(Richter 1991, Hodson 1997, Haas 2001, Jalalzai and Krook 2010, Jalalzai 2016, Reyes-Housholder and Thomas 2018). From a young age, she was active in the armed struggle against military dictatorship in Brazil as a member of a faction of the Brazilian Socialist Party called the Command of National Liberation (*Comando de Libertação Nacional* – COLINA). COLINA was merged with the Popular Revolutionary Vanguard by Dilma and her colleagues from the Brazilian Communist Party to form a group called the Palmares Revolutionary Armed Vanguard (VAR Palmares). In 1970 at the age of 23, she was arrested in 1970 along with her partner, Carlos Araújo, and other members of VAR Palmares by the military police, tortured for 22 days and jailed for 28 months for being associated with anti-state activities. After being released from imprisonment, she took a graduate degree in Economics from Rio Grande do Sul Federal University in 1976 and worked with Carlos Araújo to revive the Democratic Labour Party (*Partido Democrático Trabalhista* – PDT). She took up her first executive position as the Treasury Secretary in the municipal government of Porto Alegre, followed by stints in the state government as Secretary for Mines, Energy and Communications. She left the PDT to join the Worker's Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* – PT) in 2000. Her adept management led to the state of Rio Grande do Sul not having to ration energy during a nation-wide crisis, which drew the attention of the then President, Luiz Inácio 'Lula' da Silva (popularly known as Lula). Lula selected her as the Minister of Mines and Energy in his cabinet, as well as the chair of the state-owned Brazilian oil corporation, Petrobras, a position that she held from 2003 to 2010 (dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021). When Lula's Chief of Staff José Dirceu had to resign in 2005 in the aftermath of the *mensalão* scandal (monthly cash payments were alleged to be made by PT from the advertising budgets of state-owned agencies to Brazilian Congress members in exchange for their votes), Lula chose Dilma to occupy that important Cabinet position, which marked her emergence significantly on the national scene (Rodriguez 2014, dos Santos and Jalalzai 2014, 2021, Macaulay 2017, Araújo, Calasanti and Htun 2018).

After two terms as President, Lula could not contest for a third consecutive time in 2010 as the Brazilian Constitution does not permit it, and he handpicked Dilma to be the PT candidate for the presidential elections. This was then seen as an unconventional choice, since Dilma was not one of the popular founding members of the PT, nor was she one of the prominent women activist leaders of the party or an active participant in the Brazilian women's movement (dos Santos and Jalalzai 2014, Macaulay 2017). Lula's

choice has been attributed to a number of reasons, including his wish to decide his successor on his own rather than relying on the party's views, his strategic plan to return as a presidential candidate in 2014, and the need to project an image of an outsider candidate who remained untouched by the *mensalão* scandal (Downie 2010, Goertzel 2011, de Souza 2011, Romero 2012, Reyes-Housholder and Thomas 2018). What is often missing from the political analysis of that period is that Dilma had proved her sound administrative credentials in the series of executive posts that she had held previously. By no means was she a newcomer on the Brazilian political scene as her guerrilla activist past attested. However, as will be brought out in more detail subsequently in this chapter, the tendency of the political class and the media was to not focus primarily on Dilma's competency but to look at the image that she conveyed as Brazil's first female Presidential candidate through gendered lenses. This was contrary to how Dilma's background as an economist and her ability to handle crises situations as a tough, experienced administrator were perceived as the reason for her earlier appointments as Minister of Mines and Energy and Lula's Chief of Staff, which are seen mostly as technocratic positions (Carvalho 2005, Scolese and Flor 2005, Biroli 2010, dos Santos and Jalalzai 2014).

The double bind faced by women in politics brought out earlier in this chapter can be seen at play vividly in the way Dilma's candidacy was discussed and debated, and the way she and her party countered it in their campaign. An analysis of the mainstream media projections of Dilma reveals "the role the media plays as a gendered mediator, perpetuating the gender double bind that constrains female political leaders, as they negotiate the demand to demonstrate masculine leadership attributed without tarnishing the feminine qualities expected of them" (Wright and Holland 2014: 78). Dilma could not be easily fitted into the predominant gendered boxes used to slot women political leaders – the wife, the nurturer, the peacemaker and the unifier (Cantrell and Bachman 2008). An analysis of the mainstream media coverage in the run-up to Dilma's election throws up two contradictory threads. On one hand, she was described as Lula's "apprentice candidate" who was invented or created by him, and who was so inexperienced that she had to be constantly mentored and prepped by her godfather, Lula (Santos and Romualdo 2017: 375-376, Goertzel 2011). There were constant comparisons between the huge popularity that the charismatic Lula could boast of and the anonymity of Dilma. It was even predicted that if elected, Dilma would be totally dependent on Lula

and would never be able to establish her own identity (Santos and Romualdo 2017, dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021). This type of projection flowed from a gender stereotype that a female candidate inherently lacked the (masculine) qualities that are necessary in a President. On the other hand, the media drew from her tenure as Minister and Chief of Staff to portray her as a tough, abrasive, uncharismatic technocrat who lacked enough feminine finesse and was too masculine in her appearance and conduct (Fernandes 2012). While such qualities as authoritativeness and toughness would have been seen as desirable and even essential leadership qualities for a male presidential candidate, these were sought to be looked down upon in a female candidate by the mainstream Brazilian media. To quote from the popular Brazilian weekly magazine *ÉPOCA*, "Dilma projects the image of a manager who is tough but lacks flexibility, sensitivity and team spirit… qualities associated with the feminine style of leadership, fairly or unfairly" (*ÉPOCA*, 2010: 48, as quoted in Santos and Romualdo 2017: 380). There was also a lot of media attention on Dilma's attire and physical appearance, once her candidature was announced (dos Santos and Jalalzai 2014). Such a tendency to focus on the body of high-profile female political candidates and leaders has been observed in other countries as well (Coupland and Gwyn 2003, Carlin and Winfrey 2009, Murray 2010, Heldman, Conroy and Ackerman 2018). Kristina Sheeler and Karin Anderson have described the rampant sexualization of political images of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin during the US Presidential Election of 2008 as the "pornification" of the presidential body (Sheeler and Anderson 2013: 133). As Verónica Montecinos observes, "the leader's female body is prodded and judged against the harsh light typically used to justify the social devaluation of women. Her body speaks; it is often showcased and vilified in ways that reflect the misogyny of conventional politics and media" (Montecinos 2017: 14). This proclivity is amply evident in an article that appeared in 2009 in the popular Brazilian weekly magazine, *Veja*, in which it was reported as follows – "With diet, plastic surgery, and a radical change in her haircut, Dilma Rousseff shows the (good) results of her own PAC, a Plan for Cosmetic Improvement. It is the first step in her way to become Lula's successor" (*Veja* 2009, as quoted in Gomes 2011: 23). When Dilma was diagnosed with lymphoma and she fought the cancer successfully, the media attention was still on the wig that she wore during her treatment and the change in her hairstyle (dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021).

The dichotomy of the media coverage on Dilma's candidacy greatly influenced the way in which the PT and her campaign managers built her image as a presidential candidate and Lula's successor. Given the huge popularity enjoyed by Lula, it was imperative for the PT to signal that Dilma's candidature was a continuum from the Lula presidency. At the same time, they had to effectively counter the barbs of the opposition parties and the media that questioned Dilma's capacity and independence as a candidate and degraded her personality. This balancing act was sought to be done by what Reyes-Housholder calls "gender strategic mobilization", the deployment of women's multiple gender identities to cultivate a core constituency of women voters (Reyes-Housholder 2018: 70). Right from the time when Dilma's candidature was announced at the PT's National Convention held at Brasilia on 12 June 2010, one of the main slogans of the campaign was "*Para o Brasil seguir mudando*" (So that Brazil continues to change). The departure was that this time there would be a woman President to take the process of change forward. This is exemplified in Dilma's acceptance speech made at the same occasion:

> *Não é por acaso que depois desse grande homem o Brasil possa ser governado por uma mulher, uma mulher que vai continuar o Brasil de Lula, mas que fará o Brasil de Lula com alma e coração de mulher…*
> *O presidente Lula mudou o Brasil e o Brasil, por essa mudança, quer seguir mudando. A continuidade que o Brasil deseja é a continuidade da mudança. O que queremos é seguir mudando para melhor, com mais crescimento e inclusão social.* (Rousseff, as quoted in Passarinho 2010)
> *Chegou a hora de uma mulher governar este país. Nós mulheres nascemos com o sentimento de cuidar, amparar e proteger. Somos imbatíveis na defesa da nossa família e dos nossos filhos.* (Rousseff, as quoted in Bencke 2010)
> (translated as below)
> It is not by chance that after this great man, Brazil can be ruled by a woman, a woman who will continue Lula's Brazil, but who will make Lula's Brazil with the soul and heart of a woman…
> President Lula changed Brazil and Brazil, through this change, wants to continue changing. The continuity that Brazil wants is the continuity of change. What we want is to keep changing for the better, with more growth and social inclusion.

> It is time for a woman to govern this country. We women are born with a sense of caring, supporting, and protecting. We are unbeatable in our defence of our family and our children.

To counter the discourse on Dilma's lack of femininity, the PT and Dilma herself deliberately tried to project her through a maternalist frame of reference that has been described as "macho-minimizer" by Susan Franceschet, Jennifer M. Piscopo and Gywnn Thomas in their 2016 study, referred to earlier in this chapter (Franceschet, Piscopo and Thomas 2016: 3). During her presidential campaign, Dilma was projected as the '*Mãe do Povo*' (Mother of the People), 'Mother of Brazil' and '*Dilmãe*', which was also in continuity with Lula's public image as the "*Pai do Brasil*" (Father of Brazil) (Wolfe 2010, Reyes-Housholder 2017, dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021). Lula had earlier in 2008 referred to Dilma as "*A Mãe do PAC"* (The Mother of the PAC – *Programa de Aceleração de Crescimento* or Growth Acceleration Program), a major infrastructural and industrial development program introduced by his government, the execution of which was overseen by Dilma as Lula's Chief of Staff (Rodriguez 2014: 131). Through this reference, Lula was seeking to transmute the bureaucratic attributes of control and technical expertise for which Dilma was well-known into the more acceptable norms of maternal care (Pires 2011, Fernandes 2012, Macaulay 2017, Sosa 2019). On a later occasion during Dilma's campaign, Lula characterized Dilma's "toughness" as that of a mother who intervenes to ensure equality when any one child wants to eat a bigger piece of meat than her other children (dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021: 24). Dilma herself used the maternalist appeal on several occasions during her interviews and campaign speeches. In one of her speeches, she stated: "The president left a legacy, that of taking care of the Brazilian people. I will be the mother of the Brazilian people" (Rousseff, as quoted in dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021: 25). Such invocations of motherhood dovetailed closely with the welfarism inherent in PT's political ideology and embedded in Lula's policies like *Bolsa Familia*, which were centred on relations within the family members and care-giving as a means of economic redistribution (Fried 2012, Sosa 2019). Though Dilma was a divorced single mother, which did not confirm with patriarchal norms of an ideal family, that identity was re-negotiated by her and her campaign team to emphasize on the nurturing aspect, especially when she became a grandmother. Her campaign promises included new health services for pregnant women, infants and improved childcare, as part of her gender mobilization strategy of "maternal developmentalism" (Sosa 2019:

730). She also laid claim to a maternal leadership style as women are "capable of making decisions, of directing, of being good leaders and constructing an environment of understanding and comprehension" (Rousseff, as quoted in Delgado 2010 and translated).

One of the issue-areas in which the gendered projection of Dilma and her attempt to counter it comes to the fore is her stand on decriminalization of abortion. Abortion remains a socio-politically fraught issue in Brazil, with the predominance of the Catholic Church and the rise of the Evangelical movement. As per the Brazilian Penal Code, 1940, procuring, consenting to, or assisting in the termination of a pregnancy is a crime punishable with 1-4 years of imprisonment (Machado and Cook 2018). It is legally permissible only in cases of danger to the pregnant woman's health or rape. Dilma had spoken up in favour of the legalization of abortion before becoming a presidential candidate, in line with her party's position. During the campaign period, Dilma's political opponents and Christian groups attacked this stand and projected that if elected, she would legalize abortion in Brazil (Lazaro 2011). It is pertinent to note that this was a gendered attack that sought to undermine the image of Dilma as a 'caring' mother. This becomes even more evident in the backdrop of the fact that it was her principal opponent in the presidential campaign, José Serra of the Brazilian Social Democratic Party (*Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira* – PSDB), who had earlier brought in abortion reforms during his tenure as Minister of Health in the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, which were strongly opposed by the Catholic Church and the Evangelicals. However, during the presidential campaign, it was Dilma who came under attack for her past statements in favour of legalizing abortion and not Serra, a clear instance of "gendered double standard" (Araújo, Calasanti and Htun 2018: 218). Serra's wife, Mônica Serra stated publicly that Dilma was "in favour of killing little children", in an attempt to erode the maternalistic image that Dilma's campaign was trying to evoke (Reyes-Housholder 2018: 90). In response to this type of gendered attacks, Dilma altered her earlier public stand on the legalization of abortion to declare on September 29, 2010 that she was "personally against abortion and believed that every woman sees abortion as a form of violence", just two days before the first round of voting in the presidential election (Macaulay 2017: 130). In a public statement titled "Message from Dilma" made on 15 October 2010 before the run-off round of the election, she reiterated that she personally opposed abortion and defended the current laws banning the procedure and that as President, she would not take steps to propose new laws pertaining to abortion (*Folha de*

São Paolo 2010). This turn-around was criticized by feminist groups and highlighted as a sign of Dilma lacking a gender-oriented platform in her campaign and of her readiness to compromise on gender issues in the interest of gaining votes (Fernandes 2012).

4.4.2 Gendered Implications Of Dilma As *La Presidenta*

Dilma's victory in the 2010 presidential elections with a 55% vote share in the runoff round was a momentous occasion marking a woman's entry into the highest echelons of Brazilian politics. The gendered symbolism of the breaking of the presidential glass ceiling was especially stark, given the traditional exclusion of women from the political sphere in Brazil. In her inaugural speech delivered on 1 January 2011, Dilma acknowledged the symbolic importance of her presidency as follows:

> To take on this responsibility, I have with me the strength and the example of the Brazilian woman. I open my heart to receive, at this moment, a spark of her immense energy.
>
> And I know that my presidential term must involve the most generous interpretation of this brave vote that the people have made: after electing a man of the people, of the working class, to the presidency, they have decided to call on a woman to take the helm in the country's destiny.
>
> I am here to open doors so that in the future many other women can also be President; so that, today, all Brazilian women may feel proud and happy to be themselves. (Rousseff 2011a) (from the official English transcript of Rousseff's full speech, as released by Brazil's Ministry of External Relations)

Image 4.1: Dilma Rousseff receiving the presidential sash from Lula da Silva during the swearing-in ceremony held at the Planalto Palace in Brasilia on 1 January 2011

(Source: Fabio Rodrigues Pozzebom, *Agência Brasil* – https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/)

Along the same lines, Dilma underlined her identity as Brazil's first female president during her speech at the 66th United Nations General Assembly on 21 September 2011:

> For the first time in the history of the United Nations, a female voice opens the General Debate. It is the voice of democracy and equality reverberating from this, which has the commitment of being the most representative podium in the world. It is with personal humility, but with my justified pride as a woman, that I meet this historic moment. I share this feeling with over half of the human beings on this planet who, like myself, were born women and who, with tenacity, are occupying the place they deserve in the world. I am certain that this will be the century of women. (Rousseff 2011b)

It is interesting to note that during the initial period of her presidency, Dilma was often seen as a *faxineira*, a 'cleaning lady' who would act tough against political corruption in Brazil (Macaulay 2017, Schwindt-Bayer and Reyes-Housholder 2017). She was one of the few top leaders of the PT who was not involved in the *mensalão* scandal during Lula's second term. In her first fifteen months as *Presidenta*, Dilma removed seven ministers from her cabinet against whom there were allegations of bribery, including those who were close to Lula, a move that demonstrated her will to tackle corruption and to act independently (Rodriguez 2014). She also brought in significant legislation like the Freedom of Information Act, Clean Companies Act and Tax Transparency Law, and created an Open Data Portal. Together, these measures represented a departure from the status quo of accepting patronage and lack of public transparency that hitherto prevailed in Brazilian politics. For instance, the Freedom of Information Act was instrumental in exposing the Operation *Lava Jato* in which many prominent politicians including from the PT came to be implicated. Though she was advised to not allow the probe under Operation *Lava Jato* to continue, Dilma refused to interfere in the federal investigation process (Encarnación 2017, Ansell 2018). The *faxineira* image of Dilma points towards a public tendency to see women leaders initially as political outsiders who are supported when there is dissatisfaction with the old-boy patronage networks perpetuated by male politicians, as identified by scholars like Jana Morgan and Melissa Buice (Morgan and Buice 2013). However, as Morgan and Buice go on to argue, such support is highly contingent and could undergo sudden reversals when the outsider status of the women leaders gets eroded over time in office, as it is not foregrounded on a commitment to female political equality. Dilma's fall from grace and eventual impeachment is a prime example of such a reversal.

Despite the fact that the Brazilian president enjoys a host of important powers, political analysts point out that Brazil in fact has a coalitional presidential system, as the presidential powers are tempered by the pressures of keeping together the disparate legislative coalition partners who have become critical in ensuring the survival of post-transition governments (Pereira 2011, Arantes and Couto 2012, Limongi, Guarnieri and Freitas 2016, Melo 2016, Gatto, dos Santos and Wylie 2021). One of the mechanisms by which earlier Presidents, including Lula, managed to keep coalition partners together was by leveraging the distribution of ministerial posts and patronage in the form of 'pork' and coalition goods, the two most important elements in a coalition president's toolbox

(Raile, Pereira and Power 2011, Power 2014, Limongi, Guarnieri and Freitas 2016, Melo 2016). Women cabinet ministers formed at the most only 5% of the cabinet in the period from 1985 to 2002. This figure doubled to around 10% during the Lula presidency from 2003 to 2014, with 7 women being appointed as Cabinet members during both his terms (Gatto, dos Santos and Wylie 2022). Dilma came to power at a time when the fragmentation of the party system was underway at a fast pace, increasing both the number of coalition partners and their ideological heterogeneity (Santos and Canello 2015, Melo 2016, Macaulay 2017). Dilma Rousseff's presidential style replaced "…'knowable' masculine informality, personalism, clientelism and other patriarchally favourable interaction rules, with a formality that distances male political favour-seekers from her" (Higgins 2016: 1). Her Vice-President, Michel Temer of the PMDB, resented the fact that he was not being taken into confidence in her decision-making processes. Dilma's aversion to political give and take (*toma-la-da-ca*) and pork-barrel management has been seen by many political analysts as a major disadvantage in her presidential style, as it increasingly handicapped her ability to set the agenda in a context of coalitional presidentialism and eventually paved the way for her impeachment (Pereira 2011, Limongi, Guarnieri and Freitas 2016, Melo 2016, Chalhoub et al. 2017). In her first term, Dilma's government had nine parties as coalition partners, while in her second term, it had increased to thirteen. However, Dilma did not demonstrate any willingness for back-door negotiations and compromises with coalition partners or with legislators. Her choice to maintain the Presidential palace as a private space rather than as a political space for building political loyalties was a departure from the established practice of male Presidents including Lula (Chalhoub et al. 2017).

In her first term, Dilma appointed nine women to her cabinet with 25% representation of women, the highest ever in Brazilian history, leading to media reports calling it the 'Palace of the Amazons' (Glüsing 2012, Rodriguez 2014). The cabinet portfolios occupied by women included key ones like the Chief of Staff, Institutional Relations and Planning, considered widely as three of the four power positions in the Brazilian Cabinet (Jalalzai and dos Santos 2015, Jalalzai 2016). This is in deviation from the trend identified by Maria Escobar-Lemmon and Michelle M. Taylor-Robinson in their extensive studies of Latin American cabinets, of women being part of gendered cabinets where they hold 'feminine' cabinet positions, as opposed to the more prestigious and powerful masculine posts (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2005, 2009). The

women ministers in Dilma's cabinet were mostly technocrats who were selected for their expertise, rather than along partisan lines. Evidently, appointing women as cabinet ministers was more of a priority for Dilma than using the cabinet berths as tools to balance and manage coalitional pressures by placating political partners (dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021). Dilma also appointed the first female head of the state-owned oil company Petrobras, the first female admiral and several women judges. However, Dilma could not accommodate as many women in her second-term Cabinet and the female representation came down to 18.7%, owing to a reduced majority for the PT giving rise to factional demands from within the party and increasing coalitional pressures after her re-election in 2014 (Gatto, dos Santos and Wylie 2022). Nevertheless, women's representation in cabinet during the total tenure of Dilma's presidency remains the highest ever in Brazilian politics till date. This assumes more significance in contrast with the abysmally low representation of women in the cabinets of the two Presidents who succeeded her. Michel Temer's cabinet initially did not have a single woman member and later had just two women ministers, bringing female representation to 4%. In Jair Bolsonaro's cabinet, there continued to be only two women members, but the percentage of representation went up to 9% because of the reduction in the total number of cabinet positions (dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021). The breaking of the presidential glass ceiling by Dilma is also held by some feminist scholars to be the reason for the increase in the number of women mayoral candidates and the number of women elected as mayors in the Brazilian elections of 2012, which saw a percentage increase of 21.3 % and 31.5% respectively as compared to the 2008 elections (Jalalzai 2016). The marked impact that Dilma had on the increased descriptive representation of women in Brazilian politics has been termed as the "Dilma Effect" (Jalalzai and dos Santos 2015: 117, Jalalzai 2016).

Image 4.2: Dilma Rousseff and the Cabinet members in her first term; with 9 women, this Cabinet had women representation of 25%, the highest ever in Brazilian history.

(Source: *Agência Brasil* – https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/)

The double bind that Dilma had to encounter during her presidential campaign became even more apparent during her presidency. After assuming office, Dilma insisted that she be referred to as *Presidenta* instead of *Presidente*. This can be interpreted as a "symbolic move seeking to empower women and to normalize the presence of women in masculine spaces" (dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021: 48). However, this step was criticized by her opponents and was resisted by most of the Brazilian media. Further, the misogynistic satirical nick-name of *Presidanta* (*Presidente* combined with *anta*, a term colloquially used to refer to an incompetent person) was coined for Dilma as a challenge to her competence as a woman president (dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021, Prengaman and Savarese 2021). The media often projected Dilma as being too masculine and hard, both in terms of her physical appearance as well as her characteristics as a leader (Rodriguez 2014, Sosa 2019). She was often described as *'uma mulher dura'* (a hard woman), to which she once famously retorted that she was a "tough woman in the midst of the most charming, docile men" (Rousseff, as quoted in Sosa 2019). They used unflattering images of Rousseff to project her as "too serious, not feminine and bossy and at the same time hysterical, and emotionally unstable" (Snyder and Wolff 2019: 98). Her leadership style was characterized as being rude, abrasive, aggressive and harsh, rather than being accommodative, benevolent and conciliatory. Thus, Dilma as president came to be seen

as an aberration who violated the logic of appropriateness when it came to female politicians (Chappell 2006, 2010). In her own words, "A woman in authority is called hard, while a man is called strong." (Rousseff, as quoted in Leahy 2016)

In her government's policy making, Dilma made attempts to prioritize a gender parity agenda focused on women's practical interests rather than strategic interests (as distinguished in Chapter 1 of this thesis), which Brazilian feminists did not always approve of (Macaulay 2017). In 2013, she increased the budgetary support for the *Secretaria de Políticas para Mulheres* (SPM), a body with ministerial status created by Lula in 2003 to aid and assist the federal government in envisaging and executing women related policies, to the highest ever ratio of the federal budget. This enabled the enactment of more gender equality laws than ever done by previous governments (Macaulay 2017). As a part of the cost-cutting efforts during the economic downslide during her second tenure as President, Dilma merged the SPM with two other bodies to form the Ministry of Women, Racial Equity, and Human Rights. However, the earmarked funds for women's policies formed 49.5% of the new Ministry's budget, the highest such allocation till then (dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021). While maintaining continuity with Lula's flagship social sector policies, Dilma incorporated a gender dimension in them that was aimed at benefiting women, by "directly acknowledge(ing) the economic burdens women face as a result of traditional family roles and directly engag(ing) seemingly neutral policies as gendered" (Jalalzai 2016: 237). This acquired added significance in the context of the rising feminization of poverty and the large number of women-led households in Brazil since the 1980s (Simão and Monsueto 2008, Daniel and Graf 2016, Chalhoub et al. 2017, Snyder and Wolff 2019). *Bolsa Família*, a hugely popular and impactful conditional cash transfer program catering to the poorest Brazilian families, was gender neutral in its impact when first introduced by Lula. Dilma brought in a gendered orientation to *Bolsa Família* by emphasizing how it was primarily being used by women for the betterment of their children and families (dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021). In 2012, she also introduced a component to *Bolsa Família* named *Brasil Carinhoso* (Caring Brazil) aimed at extending health, education and nutrition to extremely poor families with children below six years. The symbolic linkage that Dilma sought to make with motherhood and 'womanly' qualities of nurturing and caring was evident both from the name of the program and its announcement on the Mother's Day of May 13, 2012. The poorest women in Brazil stood to gain with the delinking of the

benefits from the limit of three children imposed under *Bolsa Família*, and the inclusion of day care in the list of available services. Some Brazilian feminists criticized the program on account of Dilma's emphasis on the role of women as mothers, which they felt would reinforce patriarchal notions of women's social position (Fernandes 2012, Jalalzai and dos Santos 2015, Reyes-Housholder 2019).

Dilma also enacted a program called *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* (My House, My Life) through a *Medida Provisória* (the power enjoyed by Brazilian presidents to order for a Provisory Measure through executive decree) that aimed at providing loans for the construction of one million affordable homes by low-income families. This program too was given a gender focus with its announcement on International Women's Day on 8 March 2012 and the inclusion of the condition that when a couple opted for a divorce, the woman would continue to own the house (Jalalzai 2016). Dilma made it a point to emphasize on how her social sector policies were directly aimed at empowering women, especially from the poorer sections of Brazilian society. To quote her:

> *Por isso, nas nossas políticas sociais as mulheres são titulares de 93% dos cartões do Bolsa Família, para que tenham mais poder de decisão sobre os gastos que são feitos com este benefício. Nós também conferimos preferência à mulher, a toda mulher do Minha Casa, Minha Vida, principalmente da parte do Minha Casa, Minha Vida que é aquela que beneficia a mulher mais destituída de posses, que é a primeira fase [faixa 1]. E, como tal, hoje, essas mulheres, que são, na maioria dos casos ou chefes de família ou dividem com seus maridos a chefia, hoje elas, em 87% das moradias, na faixa do programa que beneficia as famílias de menor renda, têm a moradia em seu nome. Isso significa empoderamento da mulher.* (Rousseff 2015)
>
> (translated below)
>
> That is why, in our social policies, women hold 93% of the *Bolsa Familia* cards, so that they have more decision-making power over the spending that is done with this benefit. We also give preference to the woman, to every woman of *Minha Casa, Minha Vida*, mainly from that band of the program that benefits the most deprived women under the first phase. And, as such, today, these women, who are, in the majority of cases heads of family or share with their husbands the leadership, have the dwellings in

> their name in 87% of the houses for the lower income families. That means empowering of women.

After declaring March 2011 as 'Women's Month' as an extension of the International Women's Day, Dilma introduced policies for poor women to get better health and child care access, especially neonatal services, and mandatory reporting to the government of domestic violence cases (Rodriguez 2014, Daniel and Graf 2016). In 2013, Dilma approved a constitutional amendment supported by left parties and feminists called *PEC das domésticas* (Domestic worker amendment) that sought to strengthen the rights of domestic workers in Brazil (Girard-Nunes and Silva 2013). In continuation to her altered stance on abortion during the presidential election campaign, Dilma did not support legislation to make abortions legal in 2012. However, a change was brought in the law to permit the abortion of anencephalic foetuses (those with a fatal malformation of the neural tube) (Machado and Cook 2018). Dilma also approved another law sponsored by the *bancada feminina* in the Brazilian Congress that made it mandatory for private hospitals to provide services for legally permissible abortions, just as it was for state hospitals (Macaulay 2017). In 2013, she piloted and brought into effect a law that enabled rape victims to get access to emergency contraception (Rodriguez 2014). Nevertheless, feminists saw Dilma's reluctance to take a strong stand in support of abortion as stemming from the absence of a feminist agenda, since she never identified herself with the feminist movement in Brazil (Fernandes 2012, Jalalzai 2016).

Some of the gender initiatives Dilma took either met with sharp opposition from feminists or did not take off as planned for. One such example is the initiative called *Rede Cegonha* (Stork Network) announced by Dilma in March 2011, through which it was envisaged that 9 billion Brazilian *reals* would be invested in providing increased social assistance, prenatal and postnatal services, to pregnant women and new-born babies. (Jalalzai and dos Santos 2015, Ribas 2016, Macaulay 2017). The decree implementing this initiative mandated the registration and monitoring of all expecting mothers, which was hugely opposed by feminists, including the two largest Brazilian women's organizations – *Marcha Mundial das Mulheres* and *Articulação de Mulheres Brasileiras* (Reyes-Housholder 2019). It was viewed as an attack on the privacy of women, especially the poorer sections, and as a regressive 'motherist' and sexist move to pander to the Catholic and Evangelist lobbies by treating such women as 'baby incubators' (Lemes

2011, Macaulay 2017, Reyes-Housholder 2019). The widespread feminist opposition resulted in the decree dying a natural death after its time period expired. More recent evaluations, however, have held that whatever limited interventions that could be made under *Rede Cegonha* resulted in a noticeable decline in maternal and infant mortality and an increased focus on women's health (Nascimento et al. 2018, Pacheco 2018, dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021). In 2015, Dilma initiated a new program named *Casa da Mulher Brasileira* (House of the Brazilian Woman) "to centralize and streamline all of the public apparatus used to combat violence against women" so that all services catering to the needs of women who were victims of violence would be provided at one single point (dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021: 98). These were to be set up at each of the 27 state capitals in Brazil by the end of Dilma's second term and she kept their financing intact even during the heights of economic crisis in Brazil in 2015 and 2016. However, only seven of them came to be constructed before her impeachment (dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021). The failure of the *Casa da Mulher Brasileira* program is an example of how the lack of legislative support in the complex configuration of the Brazilian Congress during her second term greatly handicapped Dilma's presidential agenda (Muñoz-Cabrera and Rangel 2018). Even while accepting that the legislative balance in an increasingly conservative Congress had tilted against Dilma during her second term, feminists criticized her unwillingness to strongly advocate reproductive and LGBTQ rights (Sosa 2019).

Dilma's gender policy performance has often been contrasted with that of Michele Bachelet, who was the president in neighbouring Chile, and is widely seen as an example of a woman *Presidenta* making a marked gendered impact (Stevenson 2012, Waylen 2016, Montecinos 2017, Reyes-Housholder and Thomas 2018). On the descriptive representation front, the pattern discerned in Dilma's appointment of women members to the presidential cabinet is more or less mirrored in Bachelet's tenures. After Bachelet brought in a gender parity cabinet in the beginning of her first term in 2006 with 52% women, the percentage went down in the course of the term and after she came back to power in 2014 (Staab and Waylen 2014, Franceschet and Thomas 2015, Franceschet 2016, Reyes-Housholder 2016). On the substantive representation front, Bachelet's initiatives for gender equality, like expanding childcare sponsored by the state, reforming pension laws to equalize men's and women's pensions and strengthening domestic violence laws were similar to the steps taken by Dilma to address practical gender

interests (Staab and Waylen 2020). However, while Bachelet's gender agenda is seen to be linked to her feminist consciousness and her close networking with a core constituency of Chilean feminists, Dilma remained aloof from the women's movement in Brazil (Staab and Waylen 2014, Staab 2017, Reyes-Housholder and Thomas 2018, Reyes-Housholder 2019). She also emphasized on mainstreaming gender in all ministries and identifying specific women-oriented goals, that in turn "began a process of re-gendering the institutions of the Chilean state" (Thomas 2016: 115). Bachelet piloted a bill in 2007 for introducing quotas for women in political representation, which was not passed by the legislature. During her second term, another electoral reform bill which included quotas for women in the candidature of political parties was passed in 2015 (Jalalzai 2016). Bachelet used the full extent of her presidential power, including invoking a presidential decree, to uphold the decision of her government to make the distribution of emergency contraceptive tablets universal (Sepúlveda-Zelaya 2016). She introduced a bill in 2015 to liberalize the complete ban on abortion that prevailed in Chile and to permit it when a woman's life was at risk, in case of rape or when a foetus is not viable, which came to be approved by Chile's constitutional court in 2017 (Peña, Aguayo and Orellana 2012, Kozak 2017). Feminists hailed this as a significant victory for Bachelet's gender empowerment agenda.

4.4.3 The Gendered Context Of Dilma's Impeachment

Dilma's fateful second term as *Presidenta* has been characterized as a "perfect storm", in terms of the combination of adverse factors that quickly gained destructive strength and culminated in her becoming the first elected female head of state in the world to be impeached (Melo 2016: 52). Dilma's problems began right from the time of her re-election campaign. During her first term, Dilma had emerged out of Lula's shadow and established her independent credentials as a leader. In fact, her public approval ratings as President were higher than all previous Presidents, reaching up to as high as 79% in March 2013 (Power 2014, dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021). However, this was not to last, as the early warning signs of a downslide in the Brazilian economy became more visible with sharper falls in the commodity prices of Brazil's key exports and an adverse foreign exchange balance (Rapoza 2012, Rohde 2012, *The Economist* 2014, Reid 2015). Public discontent with living conditions, especially costlier public transportation and corruption in government, started finding expression in protests spread across State capitals in June-

July 2013 led by the *Movimento Passe Livre* (Free Fare Movement), and soon fructified into an *antiPetismo* (anti-Workers Party) wave (Holston 2013, Saad-Filho 2013, Sosa 2019). The brutal reaction from the federal police to the protests further aggravated negative sentiments. The huge expenditure being incurred for organizing the Confederations Cup Football Tournament and for the preparations for hosting the FIFA World Cup event in 2014 and the Olympics in 2016 triggered off widespread protests and demonstrations against Dilma's government. The perception that the government prioritized building stadiums over providing better hospitals and schools was widespread (Melo 2016). By July 2013, Dilma's approval ratings had sharply plummeted to 31% (dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021).

Thus, it was an embattled Dilma who sought re-election as president in 2014. Interestingly, her campaign strategy saw a significant shift from the maternalist image projected during her first bid to the presidency, to that of a *mulher guerreira* (warrior woman) (dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021). This was accentuated by the negative nature of the campaigning by all sides; the 2014 election, especially the run-off phase, has been described as "the most negative in Brazil's democratic history" (dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021: 30). Dilma's campaign managers invoked her past guerrilla movement involvement and her imprisonment as reference points to project that she would bravely fight against attacks on her government. At the PT National Convention in July 2014, Dilma's campaign jingle titled *"Dilma Coração Valente"* (Dilma brave heart) was released, which built upon the warrior woman image (Rovai 2014). Dilma's victory margin in the run-off round of the presidential election held in October 2014 against Aécio Neves of the PSDB was only 3.28% of the votes, which was the closest victory margin ever in Brazil, till Lula's victory in 2022 against Jair Bolsonaro with a margin of 1.8% of votes. On her return as *Presidenta*, Dilma had to grapple with one of the most conservative compositions of the Congress in Brazil's post-military dictatorship era. It was dominated by the BBB caucus (*bancada da bíblia, boi, e bala*: the 'bible, bull and bullet benches') – an alliance of agro-industrialists, anti-gun control lobbyists and Evangelical Christian leaders that symbolized a clear rightward shift in the political contours of the country (Santos and Canello 2015, Chalhoub et al. 2017, Macaulay 2017, Sosa 2019). The coalition that she had to manage as *Presidenta* was highly fragmented with thirteen different parties. Her unwillingness to cater to political patronage networks through the distribution of cabinet posts as pork resulted in the PT getting 46% of the

seats with only 27% share of the legislative seats, while the PMDB, the main coalition partner, with 24% seat share got only 16% of the cabinet posts (Limongi, Guarnieri and Freitas 2016). The increasing disgruntlement of the PMDB in the face of an oppositional Congress added to Dilma's problems. The election of Eduardo Cunha, an evangelical conservative from the PMDB, as the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies in February 2015 was another setback. When Dilma refused to pre-emptively pardon key members of Congress, including Eduardo Cunha, from charges arising from the *Operação Lava Jato* (Operation Car Wash) investigation, the battle-lines came to be drawn more clearly and Cunha formally declared his oppositional stance (Melo 2016, Santos and Guarnieri 2016, Chalhoub et al. 2017). He spearheaded the parliamentary opposition against Dilma and ensured that none of her measures to ease the economic situation overcame the Congressional gridlock. Instead, he piloted conservative bills to define the family as strictly heterosexual with two parents, and to make abortion more difficult to access for rape victims (Araújo, Calasanti and Htun 2018). The erosion of Dilma's legislative control is evident from the fact that in 2014, she could not get any bill sponsored by the executive passed in the Congress (Macaulay 2017).

The exposé of the *Lava Jato* scandal – a kickback scheme operated through Petrobras, the state-owned oil company and the construction company Odebrecht, as per which 3% of all contract amounts went into the PT's and its key allies' campaign funds – ignited further public opposition in March 2014. Among the politicians implicated were Eduardo Cunha, the president of the Senate, Michel Temer and Dilma's Chief of Staff Antonio Palocci. Lula was also one of the accused against whom the federal judge Sergio Moro, who went on to become the Minister of Justice in Jair Bolsonaro's cabinet, ordered investigations, thereby giving a fatal blow to the PT's reputation. Lula was convicted and imprisoned in 2017 for the charges (Lula's sentence was quashed by the Supreme Federal Court of Brazil in 2021 on the grounds that Moro was biased against Lula in the criminal trial). The *Lava Jato* revelations coincided with new austerity measures creating higher cost of living and taxes as well as budgetary cuts for public services. Together, these led to millions of Brazilians taking to the streets to demand Dilma's resignation by June 2015. Though Dilma was on the Board of Directors of Petrobras while she was part of Lula's cabinet, she was never personally implicated in the *Lava Jato* scandal. Nevertheless, she became the focal point of public discontent, as a woman who was found to be incapable in her job as President. By December 2015, Dilma had the lowest

approval ratings of any Brazilian President since 1985; it had dipped to as low as 7%. Some feminist scholars have studied the phenomenon of women leaders being subjected to harsher public and media criticism in the wake of corruption, scandal or deterioration in the socio-political climate of countries, and being eventually expelled (Carlin, Carreras and Love 2019, Reyes-Housholder 2020). This has been evocatively described by Michelle K. Ryan and S. Alexander Haslam as being pushed off "the glass cliff", in a parallel to the term "breaking the glass ceiling" that is used to describe the rise of women to positions hitherto denied to them (Ryan and Haslam 2005: 81, 2007, Folke and Rickne 2016). When crisis builds up within the political system, public ire has found a target more easily in women presidents than their male counterparts across the world. Public perceptions of women executive heads who are associated with corruption are far more negative than in the case of men and elicit extreme responses and harsher punishments, a tendency that has been associated with the gendered notion that women are more incorruptible than men (Dollar, Fisman and Gatti 2001, Swamy et al. 2001, Hoogenson and Solheim 2006, Wright and Holland 2014, Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer 2018, UNODC 2020). In Dilma's case, this was accentuated by the ironical fact that while she was not accused of having been personally corrupt, many of her male opponents who were behind the impeachment motion were themselves facing corruption charges, including Eduardo Cunha and Michel Temer. Though Dilma suffered the steepest fall off the glass cliff by being the first elected female head of state in the world to be impeached, it is pertinent to observe that even Michelle Bachelet faced a similar situation in her second term when corruption scandals erupted regarding the funding of political parties and campaigns. Her son and daughter-in-law were accused to have got the benefit of a loan and real estate deal through unfair means, even though Bachelet's own involvement was not proved. Yet, it took a big toll on her reputation and her mandate, with her public approval ratings falling sharply (Reyes-Housholder and Thomas 2018).

The official charge that formed the basis of the impeachment petition against Dilma related not to corruption but to *pedaladas fiscais* (fiscal pedalling) – an accounting practice used to mask and manoeuvre the actual deficit in the federal budget, in order to gain more time in making repayments to the Central Bank (Macaulay 2017, Sosa 2019). Senators from the conservative BBB coalition, led by Eduardo Cunha and her own Vice-President, Michel Temer, relied on the findings of the TCU (*Tribunal de Contas da União* – Federal Court of Auditors) that Dilma had indulged in fiscal pedalling to finance the

social welfare spending of her government, to push forward the petition calling for Dilma's impeachment. Dilma and her supporters argued that fiscal pedalling had been resorted to by earlier Presidents too and that it was not an impeachable 'crime of responsibility' (Chalhoub et al. 2017, Encarnación 2017). However, this defence did not gain traction in the larger context of anti-Dilma and anti-PT sentiments. As Fabiano Santos and Fernando Guarnieri put it in their perceptive analysis of the event, "the idea of impeachment preceded the existence of the purported crime. The opposition parties, led by the PSDB, decided on a strategy to topple the president by means of an impeachment and *then* proceeded to come up with a crime" (Santos and Guarnieri 2016: 491, 492, italics in original). They used the public unrest and protests, which by then were dominated by neo-conservative groups like the *Movimento Brasil Livre* (MBL- Free Brazil Movement), *Vem Pra Rua* ('Come to the Streets') and *Revoltados online* (Online Revolters), to legitimize their move of getting the impeachment bill passed in the Congress (Ansell 2018). Ironically, the Senate voted to legalize fiscal pedalling two days after it had voted to impeach Dilma on the same charge (Lima 2020).

Many political analysts have characterized the impeachment as a parliamentary coup orchestrated through "lawfare" – a term defined by Susan Tiefenbrun as "a weapon designed to destroy the enemy through the use, misuse and abuse of the legal system and the media, to raise the public outcry against that enemy" (Tiefenbrun 2010: 31, Comaroff and Comaroff 2006, Junior and Sassara 2016, Santos and Guarnieri 2016, Santos and Szwako 2016, Snyder and Wolff 2019, Sosa 2019). The judiciary led by Sergio Moro was an active participant in creating the narrative of corruption and inefficiency against Dilma (Boito and Saad-Filho 2016). When the possibility of Lula being arrested for his alleged involvement in the *Lava Jato* scandal became strong, Dilma appointed Lula as her Chief of Staff, purportedly to shield him from imminent arrest. Before he could be sworn in, Sergio Moro released an earlier recorded conversation between Dilma and Lula in which she mentioned that he could use the document of his appointment in case of need (Lissardy 2016). Lula ended the conversation by saying "*Tchau, querida*" (Bye, dear). This became a catch-phrase for Dilma's opponents and was frequently chanted and displayed on placards in the Chamber of Deputies during the impeachment trial of Dilma. Feminist analysts see this as a sexist way of stating that Dilma as a woman president was not welcome and had to exit from the political space forthwith (Biroli 2016, Higgins 2016, dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021, Prengaman and Savarese 2021, Jalalzai et al. 2022).

The Brazilian media in their turn launched a hostile media campaign actively supporting the demand for Dilma's removal (Santos and Guarnieri 2016, de Albuquerque 2017, van Dijk 2017, Prudencio, Rizzotto and Sampaio 2018). It is pertinent to note that the mainstream Brazilian media corporations are predominantly owned by a few business families (Porto 2012, de Melo and Drumond 2014). As Valenca Lima analyses, "instead of being an instance of mediation of the public sphere, assuring the circulation of disputed arguments, the mainstream media is an instrument of private interests that are exposed as if they were public interests" (Lima 2020: 73). In their analysis of the media coverage in three leading national newspapers, *Folha de São Paulo*, *O Globo* and *O Estado de São Paulo*, during the period of January 2014 to December 2016, João Feres Júnior and Luna de Oliveira Sassara have shown how negative articles targeting Dilma increased three-fold, which they describe as a "media massacre" (Júnior and Sassara 2016: 179). The media sought to normalize the impeachment by focusing on the public protests and glorifying the protagonists like Michel Temer and Sergio Moro (Prudencio, Rizzotto and Sampaio 2018, Lima 2020).

Image 4.3: Scene from the Chamber of Deputies after the vote for starting of impeachment proceedings against Dilma Rousseff. Several banners displaying '*Tchau Querida'* are visible.

(Source: BBC News Website, 12 May 2016 – https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-36255606)

While a complex cocktail of issues coalesced in the demand for Dilma's impeachment, it was equally the product of a misogynistic and conservative backlash against the disruption that Dilma's presence as *Presidenta* had caused to the hyper-masculine framework of Brazilian politics. Recent studies have highlighted the array of misogynistic tropes that were deployed against Dilma in the run-up to the impeachment (Biroli 2016, Encarnación 2017, Reyes Housholder and Thomas 2019, Sosa 2019, dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021, Jalalzai et al. 2022). Many of the protestors across cities resorted to a practice of banging pots and pans, known as *panelaço* in South America, every time there was a televised address by Dilma. Though this is a traditional strategy adopted by protestors in the region, it acquires a specifically sexist connotation when seen as an attempt to silence a woman President (Sosa 2019). This can be seen in conjunction with the widespread use of the hashtag *#calabocadilma* (shut up, Dilma) by her opponents in their anti-Dilma posts on social media (Sosa 2019). She was also derogatively described as a *vagabunda* (slut) and a *puta* (whore) during the protests. In an explicitly misogynistic expression of dislike, there were car stickers of Dilma with her legs spread apart that were stuck around the gas tank inlets, suggestive of sexual violence being inflicted each time the car was refuelled (Biroli 2016, Encarnación 2017). Yet another instance of such violent misogyny directed against Dilma is the statement made by Senator Aloysio Nunes at a seminar in March 2015 – "I don't want impeachment, I want to see Dilma bleed" (Nunes, as quoted in Chalhoub et al. 2017: 39-40). Based on their analysis of the various misogynistic ways in which Dilma was attacked by the protestors, political opponents and media, Pedro A.G. dos Santos and Farida Jalalzai argue persuasively that Dilma was a victim of symbolic, psychological and sexual violence (dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021). Dilma herself referred to the gendered nature of the attacks against her, in an interview to the *New York Times* given on 13 April 2017, as follows:

> There was a very misogynist element in the coup against me. They had double standards for men and women. They accused me of being overly tough and harsh, while a man would have been considered firm, strong. Or they would say I was too emotional and fragile, when a man would have been considered sensitive. I was seen as someone too obsessed with work, while a man would have been considered hard-working. There were also other very rude words used. I was called a cow about 600,000 times. (Rousseff, as quoted in Londoño 2017).

It is also interesting to note the conservative tone of the speeches made by Dilma's opponents during the impeachment trial. There was hardly any mention of the legal charge of fiscal peddling that was the basis of the impeachment petition; instead, those who supported the impeachment dedicated their vote "in the name of the family, God, and against communism" and to "restore the foundations of Christianity" (Santos and Szwako 2016: 19, Encarnación 2017: 87, Macaulay 2017). During his speech, Jair Bolsonaro, then a Congressman representing Rio de Janeiro, made a personal attack invoking Dilma's past as a revolutionary fighter against the military dictatorship. He dedicated his vote to Carlos Alberto Ustra, the military colonel in charge of the torture site where Dilma was imprisoned in 1970, whom he described as "the terror of Dilma Rousseff" (Falcão 2016, Chalhoub et al. 2017, Encarnación 2017, Snyder and Wolff 2019). The "retro-macho" backlash against Dilma resulted in Michel Temer taking over as the interim President with an all-white male Cabinet, with 15 out of the 23 new Cabinet members facing corruption investigations (Encarnación 2017: 83, 90). Notably, one of the first actions of the Temer government was to abolish the Ministry of Women, Racial Equality, and Human Rights (Lima 2020). The conservative turn in Brazilian politics that began with the dominance of the BBB caucus after the 2014 Presidential elections and consolidated itself with Dilma's removal from office, culminated finally in Jair Bolsonaro's ultra-conservative presidency in 2018. However, his defeat by Lula in the bid for a second term in October 2022 suggests a resistance to the conservatism that has been fuelled, amongst other factors, by the feminist opposition to the Bolsonaro regime (Faria 2022). Dilma's impeachment had a lasting impact on feminist mobilization in Brazil, represented in the massive marches and social media campaign by women's groups in the run up to Bolsonaro's election under the banner of 'Women United Against Bolsonaro' and the hashtag *#EleNão* (Not him) (Carranca 2018, Sosa 2019, dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021). The sustained efforts of this 'crisis feminism' drew a large number of women who opposed Bolsonaro's macho-aggressive posturing to the 'Out with Bolsonaro' movement (Snyder and Wolff 2019). With Lula appointing a record number of eleven women to his Cabinet, his return as President has renewed hopes of women regaining some of the political space that was lost with Dilma's ouster. This resurgence resonates with the spirit of Dilma's speech at the conclusion of the Senate trial and the vote to remove her from the presidency on 31 August, 2016:

> To the Brazilian women, who showered me with flowers and tenderness, I ask that you believe you can. Future generations of brasileiras will know

> that, the first time a woman took the position of President of Brazil, machismo and misogyny showed their ugly faces. We opened a one-way road to gender equality. Nothing will make us retreat. (Rousseff, as quoted in dos Santos and Jalalzai 2021: 135)

4.5 THE INDIRA GANDHI CASE: INDIA'S FIRST (AND ONLY) FEMALE PRIME MINISTER

Indira Gandhi became India's first woman political executive head, and only the second in Asia after Sirimavo Bandaranaike in Sri Lanka, in 1966. Her ascendancy to the most powerful political office in the world's largest democracy was momentous. Unlike Brazil and South Africa, India has a dual-executive political system with both a President as the head of the State and a Prime Minister as the head of the Government, with the position of the President being largely that of a figurehead. In the course of her years as Prime Minister from 1966-1977 and 1980-1984, Indira Gandhi further cemented this primacy by concentrating power in her office. Her father, Jawaharlal Nehru, was one of the most prominent leaders of the Indian National Congress who spearheaded the freedom movement against British colonialism and became the first Prime Minister of independent India. The most significant political events in India's journey to independence punctuated Indira Gandhi's childhood, with her grandfather, father, mother and aunts being imprisoned by the British. This political socialization from an early age, albeit indirect, had a definite role in shaping her political career (Hodson 1997). Despite the fact that she did not take over the prime-ministerial mantle directly from her father, she is often cited as a prime example of the dynastic route to political power that women in South Asia are most likely to take (Richter 1991, Everett 1993, Steinberg 2008, Jalalzai and Krook 2010, Genovese and Steckenrider 2013, Jalalzai 2013a, Paxton and Hughes 2014, Rai and Spary 2019). This is primarily due to the huge role that her identity as Nehru's daughter played in Indira Gandhi's political biography, which helped her circumvent the disadvantages of being a woman in the male world of Indian politics (Jensen 2008, Paxton and Hughes 2014). As has been observed as a trend in South Asian politics, the political party of the Indian National Congress became the vehicle through which Indira Gandhi came to derive her dynastic legitimacy (Suvarova 2019). She was appointed as a member of the Congress Working Committee in 1955, specifically to represent the interests of women (Hoogenson and Solheim 2006, Guha 2007). In this

role, Indira Gandhi toured throughout the country to speak about women's rights and responsibilities. This stands in sharp contrast to her disavowal of the relevance of a gendered experience after she became the Prime Minister. She was elected as the President of the Congress Party in 1959, but remained largely in the background. While Nehru was Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi played the important role of being his hostess and one of his political confidantes (Hoogenson and Solheim 2006, Jensen 2008, Steinberg 2008, Everett 1993). With his death in 1964, her entry into mainstream politics was imminent. She was elected as a member of the Lok Sabha (the Lower House of Parliament in India) in the same year and was appointed as the Minister of Information and Broadcasting in the cabinet of Lal Bahadur Shastri, who succeeded Nehru as Prime Minister. With Shastri's sudden death in 1966, the scene was set for a leadership change.

The choice to make Indira Gandhi the Prime Minister was a calculated move by the dominant Congress party leaders of the time, known as the Syndicate. Each of these regional satraps were ambitiously strategizing to gain dominance at the national level within the party. In yet another manifestation of the double bind that women leaders confront once in power, they expected Indira Gandhi to be demure, passive and pliable and in no way a challenge to their own power, while bringing the Nehruvian legacy as a defence against the likes of Morarji Desai, who were seeking to gain more influence within the party (Brecher 1967, Masani 1975, Steinberg 2008, Suvorova 2019, Jaffrelot and Anil 2020). To quote Sudipto Kaviraj, "the greatest qualification of Indira Gandhi at the time of her accession was her weakness, and the fact that she was not too strongly associated with any policy line to give offence to any of the groups which dominated the polycentric structure of the Congress party after Nehru's death" (Kaviraj 1986: 1697). The Syndicate thought of themselves as the "puppet masters" of Indira Gandhi, who was initially described with the derogatorily sexist epithet '*Goongi Goodiya*' – a dumb doll (Moraes 1980: 123, Malhotra 1989, Maiorano 2015, Rai and Spary 2019). However, it was not long before Indira Gandhi started asserting herself in opposition to the dominant party line of the Syndicate on matters of policy, like the party's choice of the presidential candidate in 1967 and the nationalization of banks, eventually triggering the split of the party in 1969 into those for her and against her. The split consolidated her dominance within the Congress and as the Prime Minister, garnering international attention. A New York Times article published immediately after the event observed that "she…proved herself a courageous, tough-minded politician, as well as an exceedingly skillful tactician

– a prime minister in her own right, and not a transitional figure trading on her legacy as the daughter of Nehru" (quoted in Masani 1975: 211). Indira Gandhi's growing assertiveness became evident in her own statements like the following:

> If it is necessary to deviate from past policies, I would not hesitate to do so. I must pursue policies which are in the best interests of the country as a whole. If you do not like these policies, you have every right to remove me and have your own leader… The Congress is big, but India is bigger. (Malhotra 1989: 138)

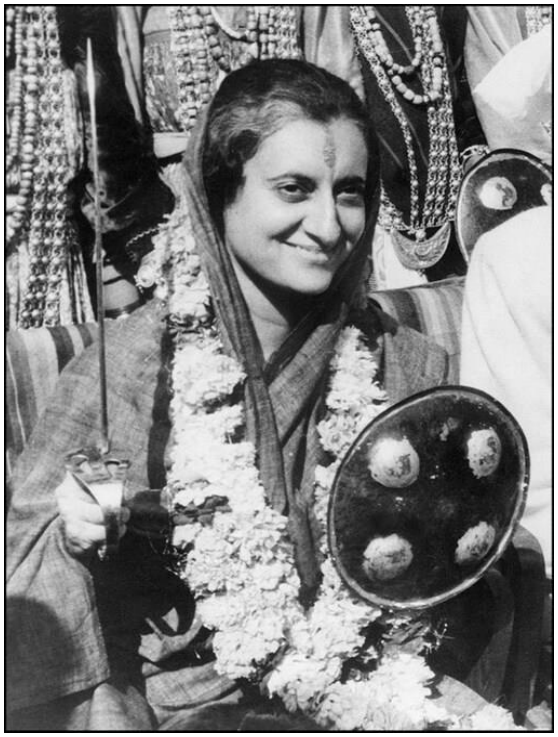
Indira Gandhi pledged to remove poverty and alleviate the living conditions of the masses to establish a direct and populist connect with the voters, without her party or other institutions as intermediaries (Kothari 1988, Manor 1988, Everett 1993, Harriss 2010). She sought to position herself as a bulwark between party interests and national interests, with her allegiance to the nation being unassailable. Over time, this identification of herself with the nation became more prominent in her political discourse, especially during election campaigns (Rajan 1993). Her supporters reinforced this self-identification with coinages like "Indira is India, India is Indira" (Dev Kanta Barooah, as quoted in Steinberg 2008: 81). She portrayed herself as the self-sacrificing servant of the nation; her public image was that of 'Mother India', a mother of the nation who was selflessly serving the people as her children (Everett 1993, Rajan 1993, Suvarova 2019). At a personal level too, Indira Gandhi repeatedly stressed on her role as a mother to her two sons and used it to garner public sympathy and support. The mother trope played a big role in ensuring her acceptability by the masses in the patriarchal social context that prevails in India, and helped her tackle the double bind. In her study of Indira Gandhi's political career from a gender perspective, Jana Everett has posited that the logic of survival that Sudipta Kaviraj identifies as the moving force behind her actions also dictated survival strategies with a gender angle (Kaviraj 1986, Everett 1993). Indira Gandhi's evocation of the Mother symbol can be seen as one such survival strategy that helped her surmount the machinations of the male centres of power within her own party. Similarly, her denial of gender being a factor at all in her political life can also be seen as her survival strategy to cope with a deeply patriarchal Indian society.

Even though it could be said that Indira Gandhi inherited power as a family heirloom, she had to face fierce political opposition to win parliamentary elections in

1969 and 1971, and to continue in power (Suvarova 2019). The landslide election win of Indira Gandhi's Congress (R) in 1971, India's victory against Pakistan and the role played by India in the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971 were all seen as outcomes of her decisive leadership; from the '*Goongi Gudiya*', she had transformed into '*Maa Durga*', the Hindu Warrior Goddess who was "invincible and bellicose" and the embodiment of the divine feminine force of *Shakti* (Suvarova 2019: 119, Richter 1990, Everett 1993). She had become "indisputably the most powerful politician in India and probably the most powerful woman in the world" (Steinberg 2008: 75). This discursive transformation in the narrative of Indira Gandhi's political life is very significant from a feminist point of view; it demonstrates how gendered cultural tropes can be used by women leaders to mould the political opportunity structure in their favour. Her deification in the public imagination of India symbolized that she had acquired full political authority and legitimacy, laying to rest any doubts about her ability to lead the country. Patricia Lee Sykes offers an interesting insight into the gendered construction of the 'Iron Lady' that was used by the media to describe Indira Gandhi and other female leaders like Margaret Thatcher. She suggests that it was not due to their leadership styles evoking masculinist traits; instead, it shows how the malestream media "…transforms strength and determination (so admired in men) into rigidity and insensitivity (perceived as flaws in women): Women are supposed to be 'soft,' not hard as iron" (Sykes 1993: 227). As per the Franceschet-Piscopo-Thomas cultural frames typology of women leaders referred to earlier in this chapter, Indira Gandhi can be seen as a "difference-denier" (Franceschet, Piscopo and Thomas 2016: 3). She never acknowledged any impact of gender on her ascendance to power and countered descriptions of her as the first Indian female prime minister with statements like "I don't think of myself as a woman when I do my job" (Palestini 2013: 83) and "As Prime Minister, I am not a woman. I am a human being" (Carras 1979: 48). Indira Gandhi's 'toughness' during the Bangladesh Liberation war of 1971 and negotiations with Pakistan after it are often cited as examples of her 'masculine' leadership traits. In an interesting gender role reversal steeped in patriarchal notions of authority, she was described as "the only man in a cabinet of old women" when she was still a minister, following her initiative to visit the military control room in Kashmir, soon after thousands of Pakistani infiltrators were found in the State in the run up to the 1965 Indo-Pak war (Malhotra 1989: 84). India's entry into the nuclear league with the first nuclear detonation in Pokhran, Rajasthan in 1974 enhanced Indira Gandhi's image as a tough and decisive leader. Despite the fact that she denied the role of gender in her

political rise, the cultural tropes of 'Mother India' and '*Maa Durga*' were crucial elements in the process of her transformation from the reticent and reserved daughter of Nehru to the undisputable and strong-willed leader of India. As Ashis Nandy has commented, "Mrs Gandhi, long before she imposed her Emergency rule, had managed to affirm convincingly that she was the sole depository of power in the country" (Nandy 1980: 120).

Image 4.4: Indira Gandhi holding a sword and shield during an event at Talkatora Gardens, New Delhi, 1974; she was deified as 'Maa Durga' after the Bangladesh Liberation War, 1971.



(Source: Agence France-Presse (AFP) via Getty Images)

However, societal unrest was brewing in the background fuelled by rising inflation, food shortage and increasing corruption. The discontent amongst the masses was channelized into an oppositional movement led by the veteran leader J. P. Narayan (Kaviraj 1986). Indira Gandhi's personalization and centralization of power had de-institutionalized the Congress party structure, making her the sole target of all opposition to government (Kaviraj 1986, Brass 1988, Maiorano 2005, Harriss 2010, Jaffrelot and Anil 2015). She responded with the declaration of a state of Emergency in India on 25 June 1975 to tide over her conviction by the Allahabad High Court on 12 June 1975 for electoral law violations. This kicked off a phase of aggrandizement of power by Indira

Gandhi to herself and her son Sanjay Gandhi. Over the 21 months of the Emergency, she forced through significant amendments to the Constitution of India to curb the independence of the judiciary, censor the press and to grant herself immunity from criminal charges. Almost all prominent opposition leaders were jailed, along with anyone who questioned the legitimacy of the Emergency and the government's actions. Indira Gandhi conflated threats to her power as threats to the nation in order to defend her draconian decisions (Carras 1979, Guha 2007, Steinberg 2008, Jaffrelot and Anil 2020). On 11 November 1975, she gave a national address in which she portrayed herself as a mother reluctantly serving the best interests of her sick child:

> But many of the friends in the country were rather puzzled as to what has Indiraji done? What will happen to the country now? But we felt that the country has developed a disease and, if it is to be cured soon, it has to be given a dose of medicine even if it is a bitter dose. However dear a child may be, if the doctor has prescribed bitter pills for him, they have to be administered for his cure… So we gave this bitter medicine to the nation… Now when a child suffers, the mother suffers too. Thus we were not very pleased to take this step… But we saw that it worked just as the dose of the doctor worked. (Official translation of the Hindi version) (Gandhi 1976)

It is interesting to note how Indira Gandhi's legitimacy in the public imagination declined sharply when her decisions were perceived to be driven by maternal instincts, not as the Mother of the Nation but as the mother of a politically ambitious son. When she announced national elections on January 18, 1977, marking the end of the Emergency, she expected a comfortable win for the Congress. However, it was the Janata party coalition that came to power, the first non-Congress government since independence. Indira Gandhi was targeted by the opposition and jailed for abuse of authority. Perhaps the best indicator of her political resilience was the comeback she made in the 1980 elections, which was facilitated by the debacle of the Janata government and its policies. With the death of her son Sanjay Gandhi in a plane crash in 1980, her elder son Rajiv Gandhi made his entry into politics, further validating the dynastic route to power. Her second term was beset by insurgencies in some of the States, particularly Punjab, which she sought to suppress with the use of force (Guha 2007, Van Dyke 2010). She was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards on 31 October 1984, an incident that

spiralled into violent retribution by the Congress workers against the Sikh community in Delhi and adjoining areas. Her death marked the end of a highly centralized, de-institutionalized and personalized era in Indian politics, leaving behind the mixed legacy of a woman leader who led her country decisively through difficult times, but at great cost to its democratic values.

Indira Gandhi's ascension to the highest executive post in India has been identified by feminist scholars as yet another example of women becoming Prime Ministers and Presidents in countries where the socio-economic status of women in general is low and there are severe constraints on women's entry into public life (Jalalzai 2008, Jalalzai and Krook 2010). Far from challenging the gendered norms of the political landscape, Indira Gandhi derived "gender power" from them, "power… resulting from the practices of people performing gender within the normative constraints gender modes impose" (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995: 20). The recurrent use of the images of the Mother of the Nation and Durga to buttress her popularity and authority represent Indira Gandhi's reliance on gender power. In the process, she reinforced and legitimized traditional stereotypes (Spary 2007). In terms of both descriptive and substantive representation of women, Indira Gandhi's tenures as Prime Minister of India did not leave any impact. She did not include any women in her cabinet, nor did she give any priority to a women's political agenda. Indicators like women's literacy and employment as well as the sex ratio even showed a decline during her tenures as prime minister (Everett 1993). At the symbolic representational level, Indira Gandhi's stature as one of the prominent world leaders of her times could have added more impetus to women's political struggles, if not for her outright rejection of the gender relevance of her premiership. Indira Gandhi's impact on the women's movement in India was counter-intuitive: the assault on civil liberties and fundamental rights during the Emergency galvanized the second wave of women's activism that had gone into dormancy with Independence (Gandhi and Shah 1992, Kumar 1993).

4.6 THE NKOSAZANA DLAMINI-ZUMA CASE: THE FIRST WOMAN PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA WHO NEVER WAS

Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma is one of the most prominent women politicians in South Africa, having the unparalleled record of serving as a Cabinet minister with all the four post-apartheid Presidents of her country – Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, Jacob Zuma and Cyril Ramaphosa. The executive post of Cabinet minister is very influential within the cabinet government system that prevails in South Africa, in which the President and Cabinet govern together and are collectively responsible to the Parliament (Butler 2005). Contrary to the general tendency of women holding less prestigious and important cabinet portfolios around the world, women cabinet ministers in Sub-Saharan Africa have typically been appointed to 'hard' posts (Davis 1997, Reynolds 1999a, Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2005, 2009, Tripp et al. 2009, Bauer 2011, Bauer and Tremblay 2011). Dlamini-Zuma has held high profile positions as Health Minister (1994-1999), Foreign Affairs Minister (1999-2009), and Home Affairs Minister (2009- 2012), as well as Minister for the National Planning Commission for Policy and Evaluation (2018-19) and Minister for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (May 2019 till March 2023). Currently, she is holding the post of Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities. Further, she was also elected as the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) in 2012, a position that put her at the helm of the continental body for 54 African member-States.

Despite these strong political credentials and her vast experience dating back to the anti-apartheid struggle, Dlamini-Zuma could not break the executive glass ceiling. As has been seen in the previous chapters, South Africa has one of the highest legislative representation of women in the world and the post-apartheid Constitution enshrines a wide array of gender equality principles. However, the highest executive political position remains a chimera for South African women, with Dlamini-Zuma being the person who came closest to it. This suggests that "from a cultural point of view, the patriarchal society that South Africa is continues to be suspicious about female leadership" (Mtshiselwa and Masenya 2016: 3). Another puzzle that makes her case relevant to this thesis is that while family ties are seen as one of the most decisive factors paving the way for women's entry into politics, it has served precisely the opposite purpose in the case of Dlamini-Zuma. Notwithstanding the fact that she divorced him

way back in 1998, her perceived connections with ex-husband Jacob Zuma has been one of the most crucial factors in limiting her political potential. Dlamini-Zuma's political trajectory demonstrates "how intertwining political and personal networks not only shape the political ascent of 'big men', but also determine the involvement in and rise of women to the highest levels of government" (Séverin 2022: 263).

Dlamini-Zuma's persona as a leader has been examined from tangentially different perspectives by contemporary political analysts in South Africa. As aptly put by Carien du Plessis, "the contradictions about Dlamini Zuma (*sic*) run deep. She is a rural woman who ended up heading a continental body; a gender rights activist who married a patriarchal polygamist; someone with a track record that includes clean governance, yet who allowed a president, rooted in patronage and corruption, to run her campaign; and a very popular leader in the ANC by vote, but with a low level of charisma" (du Plessis 2017a: 101). As a young woman, Dlamini-Zuma overcame traditional barriers to girls' education and attended high school at Adams College in the erstwhile Natal province that was an ANC stronghold; it was here that her political consciousness was initially groomed (Séverin 2022). After graduating from the University of Zululand, she became one of the few women admitted to the University of Natal's medical school, while also serving as the Vice-President of the South African Students' Organization (SASO), a radical students' body mobilized around the idea of Black Consciousness, and as a member of the ANC Underground (Dlamini-Zuma 1977, Gevisser 1996, Frederikse 2015). The volatile political situation abruptly forced her into exile in 1976 and she escaped to the United Kingdom. She completed her medical degree in the University of Bristol and held the post of chairperson of the youth section of the ANC in Great Britain between 1977 and 1978 (du Plessis 2017a, Tolsi 2017). She travelled extensively in Britain and Europe to mobilize support for ANC's anti-apartheid struggle. Dlamini-Zuma returned to Africa in 1980 and practised medicine in Swaziland for five years. During this period, she was an active member of the ANC Underground and met fellow comrades Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma, both of whom had a big impact on the way her political career moved forward in the future (Séverin 2022). She married Jacob Zuma in 1982 with whom she had four children. She worked in the ANC's Health Department in Lusaka, Zambia and provided health care to South African exiles (D'Alessandro and Léautier 2016). She shifted back to Durban, South Africa in 1991 where she became a member of the ANC Southern Natal Provincial Executive Committee and worked in the Medical

Research Council till 1994. She actively engaged with the ANC Women's League in Southern Natal and stressed on the importance of not letting gender priorities be undermined in the post-apartheid era, as can be seen from the following quote:

> We have to ask ourselves, when the ANC forms part of the government, whether it will still have women's issues on its agenda, or will they be submerged beneath other issues such as the economy, education and health? And will the ANC be able to convince its other partners in the government of the importance of women's issues? (from Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma's speech at the ANC Women's League Conference of Southern Natal Province held in 1993, quoted in du Plessis 2017a: 1033).

During the CODESA negotiations for the shaping of the post-apartheid constitution and government, Dlamini-Zuma was one of the prominent members of the Gender Advisory Committee (du Plessis 2017a, Séverin 2022).

When Nelson Mandela was elected as the first post-apartheid President of South Africa, he appointed Dlamini-Zuma as the Health Minister. During her tenure as Health Minister from 1994 to 1999, she implemented ANC's National Health Policy and put in place a free public health care for the poor, particularly pregnant women and children below six years (Gevisser 1996, Dempster 1999). She started a doctor exchange program with Cuba that was controversial at the time but continued for decades. She also introduced compulsory community service for medical students, an initiative that greatly helped in extending medical help to the rural and far-flung areas. Dlamini-Zuma's most significant intervention was the introduction of the Tobacco Products Amendment Bill in 1999, which banned advertisements of tobacco products, restricted smoking in public places, classified nicotine as an addictive drug and promoted health education in schools that discouraged smoking (Dlamini-Zuma 2013). She was resolute in the face of stiff resistance from the tobacco companies to implement these measures, which led to a drastic drop of smoking habits in South Africa (Dempster 1999, Davis 2015, du Plessis 2017a). In a move to improve access to medication for the poor Black population, she pushed for the introduction of cheaper generic drugs as against branded ones sold by international pharmaceutical companies. She prevailed in the face of opposition from the global pharmaceutical industry and their domestic supporters. Another initiative of hers that was significant from the gender perspective was the enactment of the contentious Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act in 1996 that legalized abortion in South Africa

(du Plessis 2017a, Tolsi 2017). Dlamini-Zuma courted controversy when she allocated a huge sum of 14 million Rands to her friend, producer-playwright Mbongeni Ngema, for the production of an AIDS awareness play called *Sarafina II*, without following the proper tender process or prior clearance from the European Union that had provided the budget, as she had informed the Parliament (Daly 1996, Gevisser 1996, du Plessis 2017a). The Sarafina II episode came to be known as the first in a series of corruption scandals that involved the ANC in subsequent years (Davis 2015, van Onselen 2016, Louw-Vaudran 2017b). Another controversial incident that happened during Dlamini- Zuma's tenure as Health Minister was when Thabo Mbeki, the then Deputy President, and she championed a drug called Virodene that was touted by its South African makers to be a cure for AIDS (Boyle 2012, Davis 2015, Tolsi 2017). Despite the refusal of the Medicines Control Council to grant license for the drug, Mbeki and Dlamini-Zuma overtly supported it as an African solution to the intractable problem of AIDS. When it came to light that Virodene contained a toxic industrial solvent, Dlamini-Zuma's credibility took a hit and she began to be associated with Thabo Mbeki's denialism of HIV as the cause of AIDS and the efficacy of retro-virals in treating it (Gumede 2007, Nattrass 2011, Campbell 2012, Louw-Vaudran 2017b).

Dlamini-Zuma's appointment as Foreign Affairs Minister by Thabo Mbeki came as a surprise to many political analysts, since she was generally projected to be abrasive, brusque and undiplomatic in her demeanour (Dempster 1999, du Plessis 2017a, Tolsi 2017). One of her critics from the opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) party equated the move to "sending the bull into the China shop" and a BBC News article reporting her appointment was titled "Godzuma unleashed on foreign affairs" (Dempster 1999: 1). It was assumed that with her appointment as Foreign Affairs Minister, President Mbeki was grooming her to be his successor, as against her controversial ex-husband and Deputy President Jacob Zuma, who was sacked from his position by the President later in 2005 (Ludman and Stober 2004). William Mervin Gumede sees this primacy that his ex-wife had in Mbeki's political scheme of things as one of the reasons for the acrimony between Mbeki and Zuma (Gumede 2007). In fact, Mbeki had offered the Deputy Presidentship to Dlamini-Zuma first; however, she refused it in the face of stiff opposition from Zuma and his supporters. When Jacob Zuma was forced to resign as Deputy President in 2005 after he was named in multiple fraud and corruption cases, Mbeki again offered the post to Dlamini-Zuma. However, personal considerations intervened when her children urged

her not to take over a position from which their father was expelled, and she refused yet again (du Plessis 2017a, Séverin 2022).

Dlamini-Zuma continued in the portfolio of Foreign Affairs for ten years, leading South African foreign policy from the incoherence and confusion that hitherto plagued it, to decisiveness and direction (Ludman and Stober 2004, du Plessis 2017a). During this period, South Africa's foreign policy showed a keen pan-African orientation and a commitment to maintaining the continental peace and security architecture (Sidiropoulos 2007). Soon after assuming the post, she was able to effectively steer the South African negotiations to resolve the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (Dempster 1999, Sidiropoulos 2007). She also succeeded in diffusing the crisis in Burundi through her interventions. Taking forward Thabo Mbeki's vision of South Africa's leadership in an African Renaissance, she was instrumental in effecting the transition of the regional architecture of the continent from the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to the African Union (AU) and chaired the first meeting of the AU in Durban in 2002 (Sidiropoulos 2007, Cilliers and Okeke 2012, Malala 2012, Allison 2017, Tolsi 2017, van Wyk 2020). It was during this meeting that the Constitutive Act of the AU was finalized, which included a gender parity clause mandating four out of the eight AU Commissioners to be female (du Plessis 2017a). She skilfully engineered deals with the Bretton Woods organizations, Nordic countries and Britain among others and laid the foundations of the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (Malala 2012, Davis 2015, Allison 2017). She used South Africa's presence as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council to advocate multilateralism and humane globalization and to oppose the 'War on Terror' campaign of the United States post 9/11 (du Plessis 2017a). However, her tenure was not without its share of problems; South Africa's soft-pedalling in the wake of conflicts created by dictators in Zimbabwe, Libya and Côte d'Ivoire was widely criticized, both domestically and internationally (Gumede 2007, Spies 2011, Boyle 2012, Malala 2012).

Dlamini-Zuma's next innings as the Minister for Home Affairs in Jacob Zuma's cabinet from 2009 to 2012 was her most successful and celebrated stint. It is significant to note that she was inducted into Zuma's cabinet despite the fact that she was initially part of the Thabo Mbeki panel that was defeated by the Zuma panel during the ANC's 52nd Conference at Polokwane in 2007, which paved the way for Mbeki's ouster and

Zuma's entry as President (Tabane 2011, Munusamy 2012, Séverin 2022). It is a testimony to Dlamini-Zuma's political skills that she was able to bridge the deep divide between the Mbeki and Zuma administrations, despite being identified as a staunch Mbeki loyalist (Cilliers and Okeke 2012, Séverin 2022). Having weathered the political storms that had brewed during her earlier career, she emerged resilient and resolute in transforming the corrupt and incompetent Home Department that she had inherited. During her three year long tenure, she brought about a complete turn-around in the functioning and public perception of the Department (Malala 2012, Saurombe 2014, Louw-Vaudran 2017a). She put in place financial controls, hired skilled staff and streamlined the process of issuing identity documents and passports. The number of duplicate IDs circulating within the country dropped drastically and the entry of foreign nationals from other African countries into South Africa began to be systematically documented (Malala 2012). Under Dlamini-Zuma, the Home Department came to be seen as one of the most efficient and responsive Government Departments (Munusamy 2012). This received further acknowledgement when the Auditor General certified that the Department had achieved a clean audit for the first time in 16 years (Tabane 2011, Davis 2015).

Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma's election to the post of Chairperson of the African Union in July 2012 after a highly competitive process, with a two-thirds majority of 37 out of 51 Member-state votes over the incumbent Jean Ping from Gabon in the second round, was a critical juncture for South Africa and the African Union. Though not equivalent to the post of Presidency of a country, the post of Chairperson of the AU is a significantly commanding vantage point for political participation at a continental level. The AU Chairperson is both the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Accounting Officer, and performs the functions of "leading the commission's meetings and other deliberations, promoting the AU, administering the AU and improving its performance, preparing the AU budget, and liaising with member states and regional economic communities" (van Wyk 2020: 2). Dlamini-Zuma's credentials as "…a consummate technocrat… possess(ing) a track record of effective management at both national and international level" helped South Africa's high-octane diplomatic campaign to project her as the apt candidate to be supported by the regional blocs like the South African Development Community (SADC) and AU Member States (Saurombe 2014: 41, van Wyk 2020). It was a historic occasion for gender representation in a continent with only

two female Presidents till then – Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia (2006-2018) and Joyce Banda, President of Malawi (2012-2014). Important women's right bodies like the 'Gender is My Agenda Campaign' (GIMAC) and *Femmes Africa Solidarité* (FAS) came out vocally in support of Dlamini-Zuma's candidature (van Wyk 2020). Her election was perceived as a major step forward for African women, which is evident from the following statement issued by the ANC Women's League (ANCWL) after her victory:

> This is not a South African victory or even a [Southern African Development Community] victory, but rather a victory for the women of the African continent who have long suffered under the oppression of colonialism, wars, poverty, and patriarchy… Her election as the first woman to hold the most powerful position in the AU speaks volumes for the gains made in fighting patriarchy on the African continent. (as quoted in *News24* 2012)

Dlamini-Zuma willingly acknowledged her role as the first woman head of the AU and often spoke of her election as a victory for all women (du Plessis 2017a).

Image 4.5: Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma attending a meeting as Chairperson, African Union in May 2016

(Source: African Union portal – https://www.peaceau.org/en/)

Jacob Zuma's nomination of Dlamini-Zuma as the South African candidate to the AU Chairpersonship was a decision driven more by his political calculations than by an ambition for South Africa's leadership in the continent. By 2012, Dlamini-Zuma had emerged as a major contender for the post of President in the run up to ANC's Mangaung Elective Conference, where Zuma himself was to contest for a second term as ANC President, which would secure his return to the South African Presidency. It is widely held that nominating Dlamini-Zuma for the AU Chairpersonship based at Addis Ababa in Ethiopia was his strategic move to keep her totally out of the South African political scene (Jobson 2012, Munusamy 2012, Patel 2012, Allison 2017, du Plessis 2017a). Dlamini-Zuma seemed to be determined not to let Zuma have his way because she made numerous visits back to South Africa during her tenure as Chairperson, AU and kept her role in the ANC's power struggles alive. In fact, it became a major ground for criticism that she "spent her term at the AU with one foot in South Africa", especially when she decided to deliver the 2016 'State of the Continent' address from Durban in South Africa and not from Addis Ababa (Allison 2017: 3, Kotch 2013, Amimo 2016, Adebajo 2017, Louw-Vaudran 2017a, du Plessis 2017b, *The Economist* 2017).

Since Dlamini-Zuma's reputation as an experienced diplomat and a reformer of institutions preceded her, she was expected to be able to transform the AU and increase its effectivity (Spies 2011, Saurombe 2014, Amimo 2016, Louw-Vaudran 2017a). However, when Dlamini-Zuma decided not to run for a second term at the AU in 2016 and instead returned to South Africa to stake her claims in the highly contested ANC President elections, she left a mixed legacy behind. After her election, she had promised to find 'African solutions to African problems', to make the AU more people-centric and to establish peace in the continent. However, during her leadership the AU took a more hands-off approach to regional conflicts and focused more on developmental issues like poverty (Abba 2017, Allison 2017, Louw-Voudran 2017a). Military intervention was resorted only when the situation became dire, and in peace-keeping missions the focus was less on asserting the power of the AU and more on protecting vulnerable groups like women and children, in keeping with Dlamini-Zuma's 'Women, Peace and Security' agenda (Abba 2017, du Plessis 2017a). This new style of conflict resolution was not fully effective in regulating the dictator-led governments in Libya, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, or diffusing the crises in Burundi, Somalia or South Sudan (Abba 2017, du Plessis 2017b, Louw-Voudran 2017a). One of the rare instances

of AU proactiveness in crisis management during her tenure was when Dlamini-Zuma suspended Egypt's membership from the AU after the military coup by General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in 2013, despite the fact that Egypt is one of the biggest contributors to the AU budget (Adebajo 2017). The AU's strategy of managing the Ebola virus outbreak in 2014 was initially criticized for being too slow and insufficient, as it kicked into action only five months after the first case was reported and two weeks after the WHO declared it as an international public health emergency (du Plessis 2017a). However, it eventually came to be assessed as an effective intervention, largely due to Dlamini-Zuma's success in mobilizing funding to the tune of $ 34 million for humanitarian aid from the private sector (Amimo 2016, Frykberg 2016, du Plessis 2017a).

Dlamini-Zuma's long-standing contribution to the AU was the Agenda 2063, a 50 year pan-African strategic plan that envisaged "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena", which was unveiled in 2013 (African Union Commission 2015: 1, Amimo 2016, Frykberg 2016, Lebhour 2016, Allison 2017, du Plessis 2017b, Louw-Vaudran 2017a, Gwatiwa 2023). It included novel ideas like an all-Africa e-passport and high speed rail network for continental connectivity, while reiterating the need for economic growth, access to education and public health, democratic governance, peace, stability and human development. Gary Quince, the then European Union representative to the AU, termed it as "her biggest deliverable… For the first time, the AU has a blueprint and a vision" (as quoted in Amimo 2016). The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was a key initiative introduced through the Agenda 2063, which has subsequently played a big role in the economic integration of Africa (van Wyk 2020). The Agenda 2063 also emphasized on the need for professionalization of the AU's bureaucracy, which Dlamini-Zuma actively pursued by reviving the Administrative Tribunal as a means to settle personnel disputes, by accelerating recruitment and by introducing stringent finance and accounting norms (Adebajo 2017, Allison 2017). She also attempted to make the AU less dependent on foreign funding and more self-sufficient by sourcing funds from within Africa, through initiatives like the AU Foundation (Amimo 2016, Louw-Vaudran 2017a, 2017b).

From the perspective of this thesis, the most important facet of Dlamini-Zuma's AU Chairpersonship was her consistent and unabashed focus on women's political

representation and the gender agenda, both descriptively and substantively. In terms of the Franceschet-Piscopo-Thomas cultural frames typology of women leaders referred to earlier in this chapter, Dlamini-Zuma's work as Cabinet Minister and as AU Chairperson falls within the "technocratic-caretaker" gender frame (Franceschet, Piscopo and Thomas 2016: 3). Adekeye Adebajo throws light on the extent to which Dlamini-Zuma prioritized gender during her Chairpersonship:

> Gender was the major priority that Dlamini-Zuma consistently championed, assigning gender officers to AU peacekeeping missions and collaborating with gender ministries and women's organisations across Africa. In virtually every speech, she called for gender equality across Africa, backed the education of the girl child, advocated an end to gender violence, and pushed for women to be given access to land, capital, and agricultural inputs. (Adebajo 2017: 1).

At the organizational level, she insisted on gender parity in recruitment to the bureaucratic positions in the Commission and the presence of women representatives in every meeting she chaired (Adebajo 2017, du Plessis 2017a). She created the post of Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security and appointed prominent women's activist Benita Diop to it, an initiative that went a long way in drawing attention to the vulnerability of women in conflict situations within Africa, especially in South Sudan (Hendricks 2015, du Plessis 2017a, Haastrup 2019). At the AU's Gender Pre-Summit of 2015, she introduced the Gender Scorecard to measure in objective terms the progress made by member-States on women's empowerment and gender equality that are objectives enshrined in Section 4(1) of the AU's Constitutive Act (Dlamini-Zuma 2016, Amimo 2016, Haastrup 2019). Under her leadership, 2015 was declared as the Year of Women's Empowerment and three AU Summits had gender equality as the main theme. At the last AU Summit that she chaired in January 2017, she announced the establishment of a Pan-African Women's Organisation as an agency of the AU that would serve as a network of women's activists throughout Africa. She also took up the cause of campaigning against child marriages, a scourge in many African countries, and joined hands with the UN Children's Fund for combined action (du Plessis 2017a, 2017b). One of Dlamini-Zuma's most impassioned calls for transformative gender equality can be seen in her opening statement at the AU's Gender Pre-Summit in 2016:

> Let us look at ourselves and ask, are we driving this transformation agenda, or are we comfortable in the positions, and institutions we find ourselves,

> or too scared to rock the boat? It may be becoming easier to make into the man's world, but we are then sucked into this man's world and into that culture. Are we CONFORMING or TRANSFORMING? The problem may be that we think that because we are appointed by men (since men still dominate all structures), we must therefore conform to the patriarchal environment, otherwise we may loose (*sic*) our positions. We must not be scared to rock the boat. We cannot transform gender relations unless we are prepared to stand up consistently to raise women's issues wherever we are. We must not care when they say: there she goes again. We know from our religious institutions, that the same messages are repeated, because they know that if we repeat messages, it will be internalized and help with changing attitudes and behaviour. (Dlamini-Zuma 2016)

When she demitted office as Chairperson of the AU, she implicitly made her preference for a woman successor known; her choices included Amina Mohammed, Foreign Minister of Kenya and Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi, Foreign Minister of Botswana (du Plessis 2017b). In an expression of patriarchal backlash, there was a campaign led by some of the member-States with the catch-phrase 'Not another woman', and it was Moussa Faki Mahamat, a male candidate from Chad, who was elected as the next Chairperson.

Dlamini-Zuma's bid for the ANC Presidential Elections at the 54th National Conference of the ANC that was to be held at the Nasrec Expo Centre in Johannesberg in December 2017, was an open declaration of her political ambition. It is a well-established precedent in post-apartheid South Africa that a candidate who wins the elections to the ANC party presidency becomes the president of South Africa in the event of the party winning a majority in the parliamentary elections (Séverin 2022). Therefore, Dlamini-Zuma's ANC President bid for 2017 was actually aimed at the South African Presidency elections of 2019. Though there were many contestants in the fray, the main battle was acknowledged to be between Dlamini-Zuma and Cyril Ramaphosa, the incumbent Deputy President of the ANC and South Africa (Hartley 2018, Mathekga 2018). Dlamini-Zuma enjoyed strong support declared by the ANC Women's League (ANCWL), the ANC Youth League, the ANC Veteran's League and leaders from the KwaZulu-Natal province, while Ramaphosa was backed by the National Mineworkers' Union (NMU), Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and leaders from

Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, and Gauteng provinces (Whittles 2016). Interestingly, the ANCWL's open endorsement of Dlamini-Zuma was viewed by Gwede Mantashe, the Secretary General of the ANC, as a violation of his diktat that no leadership preference was to be declared before the ANC Conference. He described the ANCWL's action of endorsement as "deviant behaviour" to which the ANCWL retorted that the women's organization was being singled out as a soft target, when many other ANC allied groups were openly declaring their support (Mtshiselwa and Masenya 2016: 2, Jika et al. 2015, Letsoala 2015). In the run-up to the Nasrec Conference, the ANC was split into two major factions: the traditionalists loyal to the incumbent ANC President Jacob Zuma, who supported "socially conservative and highly redistributive policies… through a centralised state" and the reformists led by Cyril Ramaphosa who were "urban social democrats" endorsing "inclusive economic growth" (Cilliers and Aucoin 2016: 1). The Nasrec Conference was seen as the most contested and crucial elective conference in ANC history, which would decide the future course of the party, and by implication, the country (Mathekga 2018, Muringa 2019, Muringa and McCracken 2021).

Dlamini-Zuma soon came to be identified with the traditionalist faction and as an extension of Jacob Zuma's political legacy, despite the fact that they were divorced. On the personal front, this was due to the traditional Zulu belief of marriage as a permanent bond, even more so where children were involved (du Plessis 2017a, Muringa and McCracken 2021). On the political front, the linkage can be attributed to the fact that though she was independent through most of her career, her entry as Minister of Home Affairs in the Zuma cabinet was a sign of their alignment. Further, the Zuma loyalist factions actively pitched for her as ANC President in 2017 and she accepted the support from the traditionalist strongholds in the North West and Free State provinces that this brought her. She refused to support the move to call for Zuma's resignation during the National Executive Committee Meeting of the ANC in December 2016 (Kotze 2016). At this juncture, Jacob Zuma was facing the prospect of criminal prosecution and arrest in as many as 783 criminal charges due to his association with the discredited business tycoons, the Gupta brothers, and his former financial adviser Schabir Shaik (du Plessis 2017a, Pauw 2017, Onishi 2018). Zuma's reputation was also marred by revelations about his use of public money to renovate his Nkandla homestead (Onishi 2018). The fact that Dlamini-Zuma was the most popular leader at the ANC's Manguang conference in 2012 to serve on the party's national executive committee,

gaining more votes than Zuma himself, would have definitely alerted him to the extent of her popularity (du Plessis 2017a). One of the reasons that was attributed to Zuma's support of Dlamini-Zuma's candidature was that he wanted to gain some degree of protection against the corruption charges, which it was assumed would be extended by Dlamini-Zuma to the father of her children, once she became President (Louw-Vaudran 2017a, Séverin 2022). The widely held perception of Jacob Zuma as the embodiment of everything that was corrupt and wrong with the South African political system rubbed off on Dlamini-Zuma by sheer force of association. Dlamini-Zuma made repeated attempts to distance herself from Jacob Zuma and assert her independence during her campaigns through statements like "I am my own woman and I have worked hard to be here" and "We must not allow people to say *uwumuntu kasibanibani* (you're so and so's lover). A comrade is a comrade." (du Plessis 2017a: 1744, Mngadi 2017). However, these did not serve the purpose of disassociating her from Zuma's battered public image and from the 'patronage faction' that his supporters who campaigned for her represented (Friedman 2016, Tolsi 2017). One of the social media campaigns on Facebook in the run up to the ANC National Conference used the catch-phrase 'Not Another Zuma' (Koza 2017, Séverin 2022). Thus, the shadow of Jacob Zuma hung over her presidential bid, discrediting her as one of his allies who would continue his corrupt regime (Haffajee 2015, Koza 2017, Pauw 2017, *The Economist* 2017, Tolsi 2017).

The role played by media in reinforcing this linkage by constantly juxtaposing the name of Dlamini-Zuma with Jacob Zuma in the run up to the Nastec ANC Conference was very significant. Enhle Lucinda Khumalo's study of the different portrayal of Black female versus Black male political leaders in South African print media revealed that reports on the Nastec ANC Conference routinely deployed the familial stereotype of Dlamini-Zuma as Jacob Zuma's ex-wife to negatively portray her (Khumalo 2018). In his detailed analysis of 100 news articles from two prominent media outlets, *News 24* and *IOL*, Tigere Muringa has brought out how gendered framing of Dlamini-Zuma in media reporting established an inseparable link between her and Zuma, creating the image that she was "a mere appendage of Zuma" (Muringa 2019: 219, Muringa and McCracken 2021). This "misrepresentation… came at the expense of her credentials in the political arena being footnoted" (Khumalo 2018: 47). While she was reduced to a secondary character overshadowed by her corrupt ex-husband in the narrative of her own election bid, Cyril Ramaphosa was portrayed in terms of his

professional qualifications and capabilities to transform the political and economic system and to fight against corruption (Khumalo 2018, Muringa and McCracken 2021). The "gendered erasure" of Dlamini-Zuma's leadership credentials, built over decades of active participation in the trajectory of her country's political history, is a telling testament to how the double bind that women encounter in public life is furthered by media (Khumalo 2018: 45, Muringa 2019, Muringa and McCracken 2021). The result was Dlamini-Zuma's defeat to Ramaphosa by a slim margin of 179 votes (Burke 2017). Ramaphosa went on to become the President of South Africa in February 2018, when Jacob Zuma was forced by his party to resign one and a half years before the end of his tenure (Onishi 2018). Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma's political career continues till date as Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities in Ramaphosa's cabinet, a recognition of her tenacious relevance as one of the most experienced leaders of the ANC.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to explore the political trajectories of three women leaders who assumed the highest executive position, or came closest to assuming it, in their countries: Dilma Rousseff, Indira Gandhi and Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. It has looked closely at how these leaders used different gender frames to negotiate the double bind that women have to constantly encounter in public life. A comparative analysis of the three narratives reveals a range of variables that determine the effectiveness of women's political engagement at the macro-level with the bureaucratic/state arena and the varying degrees in which these variables were present or absent in each of the three contexts, as is summarized in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Comparative analysis of the variables determining the effectiveness of Dilma Rousseff, Indira Gandhi and Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma as women executive heads

Variables	Dilma Rousseff	Indira Gandhi	Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma
Familial political ties	No; though she was a protégé of Lula da Silva, former President and predecessor	Yes; daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first PM of India	Yes; ex-wife of Jacob Zuma, former President of South Africa
Prior experience in politics	Yes; was a member of the resistance movement against military dictatorship, PDT and PT	Yes; was a member of the Indian National Congress and had been its President	Yes; was an anti-apartheid activist as a member of SASO and ANC
Cabinet Position held	Yes; was Minister of Mines and Energy in the Lula Cabinet and his Chief of Staff	Yes; was Minister for Information and Broadcasting in PM Shastri's cabinet	Yes; has served as Cabinet Minister in all the post-apartheid governments
System of Government	Unified Presidential	Dual Executive, with dominance of PM	Cabinet Government
Involvement with Women's Movement	No	No	Yes; an active member of ANCWL
Gender frame employed to negotiate the double bind	Macho minimizer	Difference denier	Technocratic caregiver

Gender strategic mobilization to cultivate women's constituency	Yes	No	Yes
Impact on Gender Agenda	Significant	Non-existent	Significant
Political Opportunity Structure	Conducive in first term; adverse in second term	Adverse in first term; conducive in subsequent terms	Conducive for AU Chairpersonship; adverse for South African Presidency

The cases of Dilma, Indira Gandhi and Dlamini-Zuma exhibit wide variations in the context of their political rise and their impact. While Indira Gandhi relied heavily on her familial political ties to enter public life, Dlamini-Zuma's marital ties with Jacob Zuma, albeit severed, continued to be detrimental throughout her political career. Dilma offers an example of a woman leader who cracked the executive glass ceiling without having any family ties, only to then be pushed off the glass cliff. All three women leaders had different approaches to their identity as gendered executive heads. While Dilma and Dlamini-Zuma asserted their identity as women, Indira Gandhi built upon a leadership paradigm that did not acknowledge the significance of gender. For the same reason, Dilma and Dlamini-Zuma were able to leave a marked impact on the gender agenda of promoting both the descriptive and substantive representation of women. On the other hand, Indira Gandhi's prime ministership did not leave any legacy of women's empowerment or gender equality, save what symbolic impact it may have had on future women politicians in India. Between these three cases, we see a unique range of political experiences of women traversing the highly patriarchal and masculine path of executive power.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters, this thesis has examined the contours of women's negotiations with political power in the electoral arena at the micro level of grass roots local government, the constitutional-legal arena at the meso level of constitutional negotiations and drafting, and the bureaucratic-state arena at the macro level of national executive authority. Spanning three countries of the Global South – India, South Africa and Brazil – in three different continents, this thesis has adopted a Comparative Politics of Gender method to bring out the convergences and divergences in the experiences of women engaging with politics in each of the case study countries. In this concluding chapter, the key findings of the previous chapters will be drawn on to unveil the interconnections and divergences between women negotiating power in three different institutional sites at the three different levels of analysis in the three case study countries. These insights will then be used to address the research problems specifically and to test the hypotheses postulated in this thesis.

5.1 KEY FINDINGS

After Chapter 1 that set forth the theoretical and methodological moorings of the thesis, Chapter 2 delved into women's negotiations with power at the micro level electoral arena of local government institutions. It looked specifically at women's local government participation in India, which marks a significant critical juncture in the democratic process of the country with the introduction of a quota, women's grassroots level political experiences in the Local, District and Metropolitan councils of South Africa, and the *Municípios* (Municipalities) in Brazil. The chapter identified the following variables that impact women's negotiations with power in the electoral arena at the micro-level of local government politics: the structure of local bodies, the form of election to local bodies, the level of autonomy of local bodies, their spheres of authority, and the type of quota introduced for women at the local government level. The comparative study of the implementation of women's quotas with different designs in each of the three countries brought out the criticality of quota design in ensuring the descriptive representation of women. It also demonstrated that the larger socio-cultural

context and extent of decentralization with fiscal autonomy achieved by local government institutions defines the political opportunity structure that determines whether the descriptive representation of women in turn gets translated into substantive and symbolic representation.

Chapter 3 examined the role played by women in the constitutional-legal arena at the meso level during the critical juncture of the drafting of the post-apartheid constitution in South Africa, and its impact on the subsequent political processes and women's political participation in the country. It also dealt with women's involvement in drafting the Constitution for independent India, and in the making of the 1988 Constitution of Brazil during the transition from military rule to democracy. It exemplified the various ways in which existing gender regimes and the political opportunity structures that emerge in transitional or newly independent democracies inform the process of women's participation in constitutional negotiations and drafting. While arguing that constitution drafting and re-engineering are decisive transitional moments from an institutionalist perspective, when the descriptive representation of women could be translated very effectively into the substantive representation of women as equal citizens, it also established that the mere presence of women in the formal arena of constitution drafting does not translate into the gender agenda being addressed adequately in the new constitution. It brought out the criticality of the presence of women as gender-conscious agents of transformation, who can redefine the terms of the constitutional negotiations and make them unambiguously oriented towards gender justice.

In Chapter 4, the focus was on women's negotiations with political power as executive heads in the bureaucratic/state arena at the macro-level. It analysed the presidency of Dilma Rousseff, the first woman Head of State in Brazil, which was a critical juncture in the political trajectory of the country, while also discussing the prime ministerial tenures of Indira Gandhi in India and Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma's presence in the South African political scene and as Chairperson of the African Union. The conceptual tools of the double bind and gender frames were employed to decipher the modes of women creating pathways to executive power at the highest level, and their impact on women's representation and political empowerment. The chapter traced Dilma's rise to executive authority in detail and evaluated her two terms as *Presidenta*

on the basis of her gender policy performance and the impact it had on women's descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation in Brazil. It also highlighted the gendered context of Dilma's impeachment by establishing how it was ultimately the outcome of a misogynistic and conservative backlash against the disruption that her presence as *Presidenta* had caused to the hyper-masculine framework of Brazilian politics. The chapter compares and contrasts the three women leaders to argue that while Dilma and Dlamini-Zuma asserted their identity as women, Indira Gandhi built upon a leadership paradigm that did not acknowledge the significance of gender. For the same reason, while Dilma and Dlamini-Zuma were able to leave a marked impact on the gender agenda of promoting both the descriptive and substantive representation of women, Indira Gandhi's prime ministership did not leave any legacy of women's empowerment or gender equality, save what symbolic impact it may have had on future women politicians in India.

5.2 ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Question 1: Do women negotiate power differently at the micro, meso and macro levels of political institutions and practice?

As has been demonstrated in the different chapters of this thesis, there are distinct modes in which women engage with politics at the micro, meso and macro levels, given the distinct gender regimes that govern them and political opportunity structures that emerge in them. At the micro level, women often engage with local government political institutions as primary caregivers who are most directly and acutely affected by issues of daily living, like health, education, civic amenities, water supply and sanitation. Therefore, when women are elected to local government bodies, practical gender interests take the centre stage on their agenda, while strategic interests often do not find a place in their political activity. They are bound by the frameworks defined by the political parties or families that nominate and support their election campaign.

At the meso level, this thesis has demonstrated how women negotiated race, nationalism and authoritarianism in South Africa, India and Brazil respectively, while carving out spaces for articulating a gender agenda in the process of constitution drafting and re-engineering, with varying degrees of success. When women organized and

synergized as women speaking for strategic gender interests, even while acknowledging the diversity of women's experiences, as was the case in post-apartheid South Africa at the time of the making of the 1996 Constitution, they were able to make effective use of the political opportunity structure that was open to negotiations by newly empowered groups, and furthered the gender cause. In addition to the formal presence of women in the constitution making institutions, the influence of women's groups from outside the formal process played a decisive role in shaping the contours of a constitution that enshrines gender equality. Such effective participation of women at the meso level also helped in configuring political institutions and ensuring that the descriptive representation of women is translated into their substantive representation as well. However, where the gender cause got subsumed and subordinated to the nationalist cause, as was the case in newly independent India, the extent of the impact of women who participated in the constitution drafting was limited when it came to the substantive representation of women. In the case of women's participation in the constitutional negotiations of the post-authoritarian Brazilian Constitution of 1988, it was limited in its impact on the gender agenda by the fact that women involved in the formal process were co-opted by the predominant party system and state feminism, and that there was no involvement of an autonomous women's movement that could influence the constitutional agenda from outside the formal process.

Moving to the macro level, the formal and informal norms, structures and processes that govern political participation at the national executive stage of a country are even more patriarchally entrenched than at the micro and meso level, since the stakes are much higher for male politicians forced to cede power to women at this level. For this reason, women's negotiations with political power at this level are more complex and fraught with multiple layers of gender discrimination, and women leaders face the risk of being forced off the glass cliff. Women seeking political power as executive heads have to navigate the double bind that socio-cultural expectations and the media impose upon them. They strategically deploy gender frames essentially rooted in maternalism to increase their cultural acceptability amongst the public. When such gender frames give women leaders the space to assert their identity as women who represent a gender agenda, there is a clear impact on women's descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation. This is demonstrated in the cases of Dilma Rousseff in Brazil and Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma in South Africa. However, when the woman executive head chooses not to

acknowledge her gender identity as a significant factor in her leadership, there is hardly any long-standing impact that she makes on the patriarchal moorings of national executive institutions or the practice of malestream politics, as is demonstrated in the case of Indira Gandhi in India.

Research Question 2: At each level of analysis and in each institutional arena, what are the most crucial variables that determine the nature and extent of women's political participation?

As per the findings of this thesis, the most crucial variables at the micro level electoral arena of local government institutions that impact the extent of women's descriptive and substantive representation are the structure of local bodies, the form of local elections, the level of functional autonomy of local bodies, their spheres of authority, and the design of the quotas for women. At the meso level constitutional-legal arena, the effectiveness of women's political engagement in constitutional negotiations and drafting is determined by the historical legacy of women's political participation, the presence of a feminist strategic alliance, the political opportunity structure, exposure to the international women's movement, the autonomy of the women's movement, and the role played by dominant political parties. In the case of the bureaucratic/state arena at the macro-level, women's access to political power as executive heads and their impact on women's descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation is impacted by the family ties of women aspiring for positions of leadership, prior political experience, cabinet positions held, the institutional system of government, prior involvement in the women's movement, the specific gender frame employed by the women aspirants in negotiating the double bind faced by women negotiating political power, their impact on the gender agenda, and the level to which they adopt gender strategic mobilization to cultivate women's constituencies within their ranks of supporters.

Research Question 3: How do the dynamics between the descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation of women play out in varying political arenas?

Across the three arenas – electoral, constitutional-legal and bureaucratic-state – and in all the three case countries, the presence of women on the political stage ensures the descriptive representation of women. When the participation of women gets limited

to descriptive representation, the women politicians become mere tokens who are used by patriarchal political parties and institutions to defend and preserve their stronghold over authority and agenda-setting. Even when there is a critical mass of women in terms of numbers in politics, it does not necessarily transform the lived experience of women or the reality of gender discrimination that they face, unless and until women politicians are able to stand for a clearly articulated gender agenda and push it forward. They should acknowledge their gender identity and use that vantage-point to negotiate political power and the political opportunity structures, and to advocate gender policy interests, thereby redefining gendered notions of political decision-making and women's political participation. Only then does the substantive representation of women ensue that holds the potential to transform gendered norms, practices and frameworks of political institutions.

When women political representatives make a substantive impact on patriarchal power structures and political processes, their political presence as women is legitimized and they are able to symbolically represent women. Symbolic representation is crucial, as it helps in recasting gender roles and norms in society and leads to greater public acceptability of women in politics, which leads to more women coming forward to participate actively not just in politics, but across various walks of life. Thus, symbolic representation feeds back into descriptive representation by increasing the number of potential women who could join politics and seek political power, and a "virtuous cycle" of women's representation is set in motion (Alexander 2012: 439). In the electoral arena, this thesis has demonstrated how the increased descriptive representation of women in local government in India has been translated into substantive and symbolic representation by virtue of women representatives renegotiating the distribution of public resources to cater to gender interests. Similarly, the descriptive representation of women during the post-apartheid constitutional negotiation process in the constitutional-legal arena of South Africa had an abiding impact on the substantive representation of women by virtue of establishing the role of women as equal citizens and including non-sexism and non-discrimination on the basis of sex and gender as foundational principles of the new constitution. The constitutional framework had a direct impact on the symbolic representation of women and a new acknowledgement of women's roles as autonomous political actors, which was reflected in women gaining unprecedented levels of representation in the South African Parliament after the first post-apartheid election. In

the bureaucratic-state arena, the examination of the political trajectories of Dilma Rousseff and Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma has revealed their efforts to substantively and symbolically represent women by asserting their gender identity, while Indira Gandhi's exercise of executive authority in denial of her significance as a woman leader did not translate into the substantive or symbolic representation of women.

Research Question 4: How do critical junctures and moments of transitions in the political trajectory influence the political opportunity structures available to women?

Critical junctures and moments of transition in the historical and socio-political trajectories of countries are contexts in which hitherto accepted norms of political power distribution and regulation of social life are thrown open to be questioned and remoulded in terms of new priorities and imperatives. The political opportunity structures become more malleable and amenable to negotiations by new actors like women. Depending on whether they were active participants in the process of bringing about the critical juncture or moment of transition, and on whether they are guided and informed by a gender agenda, women are able to assert their agency effectively to gain access to political decision-making processes, and to further advance the gender agenda. The cases of more than one million women entering local government bodies in India in the first round of elections held after the introduction of the reservation of seats for women, women in South Africa asserting their presence to participate effectively in the constitutional negotiations and drafting of the post-apartheid Constitution, and the election of Dilma Rousseff as the first *Presidenta* of Brazil, are significant instances of enabling political opportunity structures for women presented by critical junctures and moments of transition. On the other hand, the introduction of an imperfectly designed quota for women in Brazilian politics in 1996, women participating in post-independence India's constitution drafting process more in their role as nationalist women than as advocates of gender equality, and Indira Gandhi's negation of the relevance of her gender identity after assuming power as India's first woman Prime Minister, are instances of when the political opportunity structures did not give enough space for a fundamental questioning of gendered power structures.

Research Question 5: What are the modes in which women's political participation gets shaped by the interactions between structure, process and agency?

The patriarchal structures and gender regimes that shape political institutions play a very crucial circumscribing role in determining the nature and extent of women's political participation. Drawing from such political institutions, the political practices that inform, and are also informed by, socio-cultural norms also play an important part in restricting women's access to political power. However, when the political opportunity structure becomes malleable and open to negotiations during critical junctures and moments of transition in a country's trajectory, women are able to assert their agency to address the gender biases of political institutions and processes. In such contexts, women often subvert heteronormative paradigms of motherhood and traditionally assigned roles as caregivers to carve out political space for themselves, using maternalist and political motherhood tropes to their advantage. Such a subversion was evident in the case of women entering the mainstream of political agitations against the apartheid regime in South Africa. Women political leaders also employ gender strategic mobilization to build up their support base amongst women by focusing on their gender identities, as has been seen in the case of Dilma Rousseff's presidential election campaigns. If and when informed by a gender agenda, such assertions of women's agency open up pathways to political power that have a significant impact on redefining the accepted paradigms of political participation and representation in gender-sensitive ways and modes. On the other hand, when individual women seek and gain political authority solely on grounds of family influence, political party support or personal ambition, without being animated by a clearly articulated gender focus, it does not unsettle patriarchal structures, re-configure political institutions or undermine gender biased political processes. When women's political participation takes the form of descriptive representation unaccompanied by substantive representation, the agency of women finds very limited expression, and fails to influence or shape political structures and processes.

5.3 TESTING THE HYPOTHESES

This thesis adheres to the epistemology of scientific research propounded by Karl Popper, which holds that hypotheses must be put to the test of falsification to be of scientific value (Popper 1959, 1963). The evidence gathered in the course of research

should be used to falsify hypotheses, rather than to confirm them. Until it is falsified, a hypothesis stands provisionally validated. The robustness of social science research is established through a constant pursuit to advance knowledge by trying to falsify existing theories and arriving at new formulations. Accordingly, each of the hypotheses proposed in Chapter 1 will now be examined to see if they stand falsified or not by the findings of this thesis.

Hypothesis 1: Women's access to political power becomes more tenuous as the level of analysis is scaled up, with the patriarchal backlash to women's increased political presence being the most accentuated at the macro level of the bureaucratic-state arena.

Even while women have been gaining increased access to political power in the past three decades across the globe, the barriers and impediments to be surmounted by them continue to be multifarious and deeply entrenched. A comprehensive examination of the variables brought out in each of the chapters of this thesis that deal with a separate level of analysis reveals that women are able to access pathways to political leadership with differing measures of success. At the micro level of local government institutions, women face less resistance from patriarchal structures and electoral processes to be selected as candidates and successfully contest elections. Once they gain access to political institutions at the local level, they are able to use their positions to represent the interests of women as well as local communities, which helps legitimize their presence and viability as political representatives. Women have been able to negotiate gendered expectations and cultural norms more successfully at the local level, as is evident from the case of India, where the discourse has shifted from the overwhelming influence exerted by male family members over the agency of women *Sarpanches*, to the immense potential opened up by the silent revolution of millions of women being empowered as decision-makers. In the cases of South Africa and Brazil too, it has been demonstrated how women were able to make their presence felt in the local level of government, thereby advancing the gender agenda, even within the limited spaces offered by the political opportunity structures in place. Furthermore, once women gain initial access to local government institutions aided by gender quota, there is a predominantly upward trend in the numbers of female candidates who get elected in each successive election. Building up from the micro-level, women are also able to build up their political support base and access sub-national and national political positions.

At the meso-level, the barriers impeding women's entry into the institutions and processes defining the constitutional-legal contours of political life are significantly more restrictive than at the micro-level, because of the limited agency attributed to women as equal citizens and participants in national agenda-setting. The common thread that has emerged in this thesis from a study of women's participation in constitution drafting in South Africa, India and Brazil has been the inclination of national leaders to strictly define the role of women as self-sacrificing mothers who are to raise the future citizens of the nation, and not as women who are politically aware participants pursuing a gender agenda. The cause of women's empowerment or political participation was considered subordinate to the larger cause of liberation from apartheid, colonial or military rule. In South Africa, women were able to substantially subvert this definition and to form the Women's National Coalition (WNC) that strategically and synergistically organized women across geographical, racial and class lines around a well-articulated feminist agenda. As a result of this gender-based mobilization, women who were hitherto kept out of the constitution drafting process gained direct access to the main negotiations and acted as gender-conscious agents of transformation. They utilized the favourable political opportunity structure to orient the post-apartheid Constitution unambiguously towards gender justice. In the case of India, the women members of the Constituent Assembly continued to play the role of nationalist women who did not speak up to advocate the rights of women as a distinct group. Therefore, they could not substantively make an impact as women representatives on the discourse and agenda of the Constitution of independent India. In the case of Brazil, the attempts made by gender-conscious women, who were part of the CNDM and the *bancada do batom* alliance, to influence the tone and tenor of the 1988 Constitution did succeed to a certain extent; however, it was not enough to fundamentally alter the highly patriarchal and masculine framework of political and legal institutions in Brazil that thwarted the initiation of legal reforms necessary to translate the constitutional vision of gender equality into actual practice. Hence, both the descriptive and substantive representation of women in Brazilian politics continued to remain limited.

When the analysis is shifted to the macro level of women as executive heads leading their countries, the tenuous nature of women's access to political power is amplified, reflecting the higher stakes that male politicians have at this level. Women

face the highest glass ceiling in the executive branch of government, accompanied by a steep glass cliff, as explained in the fourth chapter of this thesis. Even while the number of women gaining access to political power at the highest levels has been rising in the past three decades, the gender regimes that inform executive political institutions in the bureaucratic-state arena continue to be highly constrictive and rigid, thereby making the transformation of the descriptive representation of women to substantive representation all the more difficult. The double bind of having to display masculine traits of exercising power that are linked to decisive leadership in the public imagination, even while meeting expectations of femininity, weighs down women who reach the top level of political leadership. The informal discursive norms delegitimizing women's presence at the head of executive political institutions that are perpetuated through political culture and media projections, also create an adverse political opportunity structure for women at the macro level. The severity of patriarchal backlashes against women assuming executive power at the macro level is much higher than male reactions to women participating in politics at the micro and meso levels. The impeachment of Dilma Rousseff is a very telling illustration of such a backlash masterminded by the conservative and hypermasculine leaders who teamed up to take advantage of troubles faced by the PT and Brazilian economy to cut short the huge stride in women's political leadership that her ascendancy to the Presidentship symbolized. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma's case also highlights women's heightened vulnerability when they aspire for higher political power; family ties that are normally advantageous to both men and women in politics proved to be obstructing and damaging in her bid for becoming the President of the ANC, and eventually the President of South Africa.

Hence, the findings of this thesis do not falsify, and thereby provisionally validate, the hypothesis that women's access to political power becomes more tenuous as the level of analysis is scaled up, with the patriarchal backlash to women's increased political presence being the most accentuated at the macro level of the bureaucratic-state arena.

Hypothesis 2: The extent to which women political representatives advocate gender policy interests (substantive representation), rather than their numerical presence in political posts (descriptive representation), leads to the legitimization of women as political actors (symbolic representation).

The number of women gaining access to political power at the micro, meso and macro levels is on the rise globally. This increase can be mostly attributed to the implementation of quotas for women in electoral politics. If the critical mass theory held by a section of feminist scholars were to hold good, the presence of a significant percentage of women in elected political posts would automatically have a transformative impact on the power structures within political institutions and the practice of politics. In other words, the descriptive representation of women would in itself bring about the substantive and symbolic representation of women. However, multiple instances narrated in this thesis show that the impediments that women have to face in their negotiations with political power in all three political arenas – electoral, constitutional-legal and bureaucratic-state – at the micro, meso and macro levels continue to be numerous and formidable. In fact, in the absence of substantive transformation in the political culture and societal norms, a patriarchal backlash to women's entry into politics can lead to vicious malestream and misogynistic attacks aimed at dragging women down or pushing them off the glass cliff, as has been demonstrated in the case of Dilma Rousseff's impeachment. The change in societal reactions to, and increased acceptability of, women in politics stems more from a substantive redefinition of the praxis of politics, creating space for women leaders to represent gender policy interests. When women activists in South Africa prioritized the goal of enshrining substantive gender equality and women's rights in the text of the post-apartheid Constitution, their substantive representation redefined the role of women in South African politics and created legitimate spaces for women's increased representation in electoral politics. Even in the case of the micro-level local government bodies, where the descriptive representation of women is significantly more than in the meso and macro levels of politics, the findings of this thesis show that it is only when the elected women representatives stand for substantive gender interests that they are able to slowly but surely carve out spaces for women's symbolic representation and transform political culture and norms. It is the substantive representation of women, and not mere descriptive representation, that lies at the heart of changes in political discourse that pave the way for women's participation as legitimate political actors. This buttresses the feminist institutionalist understanding of the interactions between descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation and the ways in which they impact on women's political participation.

Hence, the findings of this thesis do not falsify, and thereby provisionally substantiate, the hypothesis that the extent to which women political representatives advocate gender policy interests (substantive representation), rather than their numerical presence in political posts (descriptive representation), leads to the legitimization of women as political actors (symbolic representation).

Hypothesis 3: Informal discursive norms perpetuated through political culture and media projections are a more formidable obstacle to women obtaining political power than formal institutional barriers to women's political participation.

The political narratives that have been studied in this thesis reveal how women face barriers at multiple levels and in multiple arenas of politics. These barriers stem both from formal institutional structures, and the normative frameworks generated by the political culture and media projections of women who seek access to political power. At the micro level electoral arena of local government, women have to face formal institutional barriers imposed by male-dominated political parties that act as gate-keepers controlling access to political power, and electoral systems that are structured around preserving male monopolies. Simultaneously, their agency is constrained by informal norms stemming from traditional, cultural and social tropes about the legitimacy of women as political actors, as well as class, caste and race hierarchies. When women seek to gain access to the constitutional-legal arena at the meso level of political institutions, they encounter the barriers of male-dominated drafting and negotiating bodies, in which they are able to make an impact on the substantive representation of women only if they are strategically mobilized around a clearly articulated gender agenda. The informal norms of male-stream political culture have a predominant hold on the discourses of constitutional negotiations; women are able to subvert these discourses only if they are able to assert their collective voice and agency, autonomous of the agenda-setting strategies of dominant political parties. At the macro level of executive power in the bureaucratic-state arena, women face the most constraining institutional barriers, since hegemonic masculinity continues to define the contours of leadership in the highest political offices. They also encounter the burden of stereotypes shaped by the political culture and media projections that pre-define their roles in terms of masculinist tropes, thereby limiting the political space available to them. This thesis has also elaborated on the double bind that confronts women who aspire for executive power at the macro level,

when they are torn between the societal expectations of performing their leader roles and gender roles simultaneously. The double bind plays a major role in shaping the ways in which women evolve their leadership styles, as has been demonstrated in the cases of Dilma Rousseff, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and Indira Gandhi.

The cases analysed in this thesis do not point towards informal discursive norms as being more formidable than formal institutional obstacles facing women who negotiate political power. In fact, this thesis has demonstrated how the interplay of formal structures on one hand, and informal discursive norms on the other, together constitute what feminist institutionalist scholars characterize as the hidden life of institutions, which shape women's pathways to political power. On one hand, the structures and processes of political institutions continue to be patriarchally determined, despite the increasing number of women in politics. On the other hand, the extent to which patriarchy is entrenched in existing social structures, the male-centric narratives of social life, and the ways in which media reinforces these, informally create discursive norms that discourage women's active participation in political life. The tenacity of formal institutional barriers to women's entry into politics is what makes gender quotas continually relevant, the latest instance being the passing of the Women's Reservation Bill 2023 in India that mandates reserving at least 33% of the seats in the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies for women.

Hence, the findings of this thesis falsify the hypothesis that informal discursive norms perpetuated through political culture and media projections are a more formidable obstacle to women obtaining political power than formal institutional barriers to women's political participation.

5.4 FURTHER DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

This thesis is the outcome of a feminist institutionalist enquiry into women's political participation on a comparative scale, not only in terms of the case studies it engages with, but also in terms of the levels of analysis and the arenas of political power that it examines. The findings of the thesis portray the pathways by which women negotiate political power in the Global South. Even while each of the case study countries have been analysed with the awareness that they have evolved through specific socio-

political trajectories, the common threads that have emerged in the experiences of women across these countries are testimony to the strength of a feminist institutionalist conceptual framework to investigate women's political participation. The domain and scope of feminist institutionalist theorizing can further be broadened by future studies that compare and contrast the experience of women in the Global South with the Global North through multi-level, multi-arena analyses, and that look at discursive norms from an intersectional perspective to see how they affect women, not only as political representatives but also as political participants in their roles as citizens and voters.

APPENDIX 1

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AfCFTA – The African Continental Free Trade Area

AIWC – All India Women's Conference

ANC – African National Congress

ANCWL – African National Congress Women's League

ARENA – *Aliança Renovadora Nacional* (Alliance for National Renovation)

AU – African Union

BBB – *bancada da bíblia, boi, e bala* (bible, bull and bullet benches)

CAMDE – *Campanha da Mulher pela Democracia* (Women's Campaign for Democracy)

CEBs – *Communidades Eclesias de Base* (Ecclesiastical Base Communities)

CFEMEA – *Centro Feminista de Estudos e Assessoria* (Center for Feminist Advocacy and Studies)

CGE – Commission on Gender Equality

CNDM – *Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher* (National Council for Women's Rights)

CODESA – Convention for a Democratic South Africa

COLINA – *Comando de Libertação Nacional* (Command of National Liberation)

COSATU – Congress of South African Trade Unions

CPG – Comparative Politics of Gender

CSWI – Committee on the Status of Women in India

DA – Democratic Alliance

EFF – Economic Freedom Fighters

FAS – *Femmes Africa Solidarité*

FEDTRAW – Federation of Transvaal Women

FEFC – *Fundo Especial de Financiamento de Campanha* (Special Fund for Campaign Finance)

FIIN – Feminism and Institutionalism International Network

FSAW – Federation of South African Women

GAC – Gender Advisory Committee

GIMAC – Gender is My Agenda Campaign

GOI – Government of India

HGPE – *Horario Gratuito de Propaganda Eleitoral* (Free Electoral Political Advertising Time)

IBOPE – *Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística* (Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics)

INC – Indian National Congress

International IDEA – International Institution for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

IPU – Inter-Parliamentary Union

LGTA – Local Government Transition Act

MBL – *Movimento Brasil Livre* (Free Brazil Movement)

MDB – *Movimento Democrático Brasileiro* (Brazilian Democratic Movement)

MK – uMkhonto we Sizwe

MP – Member of Parliament

MPNP – Multi-Party Negotiating Process

NCWI – National Council of Women in India

NMU – National Mineworkers' Union

NOW – Natal Organisation of Women

NPP – National Perspective Plan

OAU – Organization of African Unity

PAC – *Programa de Aceleração de Crescimento* (Growth Acceleration Program)

PDT – *Partido Democrático Trabalhista* (Democratic Labour Party)

PFL – *Partido da Frente Liberal* (Liberal Front Party)

PLO – Palestinian Liberation Organization

PMDB – *Partido do Movimento Democratico Brasileiro* (Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement)

PR – Proportional Representation

PRI – Panchayati Raj Institution

PSDB – *Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira* (Brazilian Social Democratic Party)

PT – *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers' Party)

RWM – Rural Women's Movement

SC – Scheduled Castes

SPM – *Secretaria de Políticas para Mulheres* (Secretariat of Policies for Women)

ST – Scheduled Tribes

TCU – *Tribunal de Contas da União* (Federal Court of Auditors)

TSE – *Tribunal Superior Eleitoral* (Supreme Electoral Court of Brazil)

UDF – United Democratic Front

ULB – Urban Local Body

UN – United Nations

UWO – United Women's Organisation

WHO – World Health Organization

WIA – Women's Indian Association

WNC – Women's National Coalition

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